

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Mount Jordan Middle School
9360 South 300 East
Sandy, Utah 84070**

March 10-11, 2010



**Utah State Office of Education
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Mount Jordan Middle School
9360 South 300 East
Sandy, Utah 84070**

March 10-11, 2010

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase the quality of instruction and student achievement. In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes in a three-step evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 10-11, 2010, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Mount Jordan Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Misty Suarez is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Mount Jordan Middle School and for their professional attitude which made it possible for them to see weaknesses and strengths and to suggest procedures for improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is most important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Mount Jordan Middle School.

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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MOUNT JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Matthew Watts Assistant Principal
Doug Hallenbeck Assistant Principal

Counseling

Carla Coleman Counselor
Barbara Lynn Counselor
Doug Buerger School Psychologist

Faculty

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Landon Smith
Maria Soriano
Albert Spencer-Wise
Alicia Tilley
Michael Tuckfield
Rebecca Washburn
Ron Wood

MOUNT JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to work in concert with our community to help all students become responsible, caring citizens, life-long learners, and healthy individuals.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

1. We believe that all children, with instruction and timely interventions, are capable of learning new information and skills and should have equal opportunities to do so.
2. We believe students develop self-worth through accomplishing meaningful and manageable tasks
3. We believe that for students to be successful in their class work and become life-long learners they must become proficient in reading, writing, and math.
4. We believe that every student should have an adult advocate.
5. We believe that teachers should be well-trained professionals who adapt instruction to meet the needs and learning styles of individual students.
6. We believe that discipline problems are reduced when learning activities and classroom management strategies are well planned and organized.
7. We believe that teachers must be life-long learners and model the skills of life-long learning with their students.
8. We believe that teachers must work in unison across the curriculum to help students acquire a functioning knowledge base that relates to the “real world.”
9. We believe that each classroom must have adequate and appropriate technology for instruction of students.
10. We believe that Mount Jordan Middle School must create a safe environment free from danger, fear, and harassment for students, teachers, and staff.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Mountaineers are responsible, caring citizens who respect self and others, attend school regularly, behave appropriately, and actively participate in school activities and service opportunities.

Mountaineers are lifelong learners who set goals, continually improve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and math skills, and develop good study habits.

Mountaineers are healthy individuals who engage in activities that promote physical, mental, and emotional health, and who avoid substance abuse.

Date of visit: March 10-11, 2010

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Nancy L. Jadallah, Eisenhower Junior High School, Granite School District,
Chairperson

Shannon Buchanan, Utah State Office of Education

Shauna Makintosh, Wasatch Junior High School, Granite School District

Barbara Springer, Timberline Middle School, Alpine School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
MOUNT JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Mount Jordan Middle School is located in an older section of Sandy, Utah near the Wasatch Mountains. The school has a high mobility rate and an increasing number of minority students. Mount Jordan Middle School enjoys a wide array of diversity of students. The ethnic diversity has increased over the last several years. The minority population continues to grow each year while the enrollment declines as the homes with children within their boundaries decline. However, it was evident from speaking with both staff and students that Mount Jordan Middle School is a tradition in the family as many of their parents and grandparents attended Mount Jordan Middle School. There is a sense of pride and tradition among the community and staff.

The past year has been financially difficult for many of the school's families. Free and reduced-price lunch percentages have jumped from 37 percent to 45 percent in one year.

Being a 55-year-old school, Mount Jordan Middle School is rich with local history. The swimming pool has been a community center for aquatics for many years for the young and old. Another defining feature, which has already been mentioned, is this school's diversity. Parents commented on how they sent their child here because of the diversity and role it will have in shaping their child. We feel this diversity needs to be celebrated and shared more extensively with the community and the students who attend here.

A year ago, Jordan School District split into two smaller districts. Mount Jordan Middle School is now located in the new Canyons School District. There have been many changes, both organizationally and philosophically. One noticeable change has been the inception of "built-in" collaboration time for teachers and staff.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

There were few significant findings in the profile, as there were limited data included in the report. One finding was that there was a significant increase in the number of students who are on free and reduced-price lunch, most likely due to the current financial situation. There has also been an increase in the number of minority students.

While data were not included in the report, it was reported by staff and parents that safety has been an issue, specifically bullying in the halls. On the other hand, a sample set of students, including the student body officers, indicated with a score of 9/10 that they felt very safe at school. They indicated that students, for the most part, were very happy and friendly and felt that Mount Jordan has a very positive school climate.

The students were most concerned about the loss of programs due to declining enrollment. Many students indicated that they might consider switching schools if programs are not reinstated. Dance was one program that was mentioned.

The staff mentioned that there was a need for members of the office staff to be more positive with the students, staff, and parents.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team felt that the school should have included pertinent data in its report. Such data could have included AYP and U-PASS data, student discipline data, attendance and tardy data, safe school and district referral data, truancy and court referral data, demographics, disaggregated data, mobility and stability, and survey results (ISQ and school-generated surveys). An appendix with the survey questions would be helpful to the Visiting Team.

On the CRT data, there were no comparative data against which readers of the report could compare Mount Jordan Middle School's performance.

A summary of the professional development and collaboration activities would also have been helpful to the Visiting Team.

- c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

To a very limited extent, the school's self-study included relevant data about the school's current strengths and limitations. The Visiting Team did ascertain information regarding the school's strengths and limitations through conversations with staff and students; however, the report itself did not contain data to substantiate it.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The school should include all relevant student achievement and demographic data in the self-study report.
- Surveys should be included in the self-study from all stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

- a) *To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?*

The Visiting Team determined that the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs were revised collaboratively by the staff to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school that supports student achievement. The school is now located in the newly created Canyons School District. After the split from Jordan School District, there was a reorganization of the district, including newly created departments and a different philosophy of education. In light of this reorganization and philosophy, the mission statement, vision, and belief statements were revised. The staff met several times over a two-month period, and made these revisions to reflect their own personal beliefs as well as those of the newly formed district.

- b) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?*

To a moderate extent, the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs. The mission statement refers to creating responsible citizens and lifelong learners. These two concepts are heavily embedded in the DRSLs.

- c) *Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.*

The departments have all created rubrics indicating levels of performance for each of the DRSLs. However, they have not identified specific indicators or the instruments by which the DRSLs can be quantitatively measured.

- d) *To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?*

To a moderate degree, the school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and appear evident in the culture of the school. Lifelong learning is one of the DRSLs that appears to have been institutionalized at Mount Jordan Middle School. This DRSL is posted in each of the rooms throughout the school, is in the language of the students and the staff, and is evident in many of the lessons in several of the departments. One

constantly hears the phrase “as lifelong learners” embedded in the lessons being taught at Mount Jordan Middle School.

Curriculum:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The staff at Mt. Jordan Middle School has been through a transitional period during which its original district was split, positioning Mount Jordan Middle School in a new district that is currently providing training for more extensive alignment with Utah Core Curriculum. Thus, Mount Jordan Middle School, facing a declining and increasingly transient population, is in the process of establishing new norms and instructional objectives, but core classes continue to adhere to the Utah Core Curriculum.

Teachers whose subjects are not supported by Utah Core are meeting with other teachers in the district to establish curriculum and standardize expectations. Teachers indicated that they are developing curricula on grade level and meeting with other district teachers in subject areas, but there is no documentation as whether the new collaboration schedule has allowed teachers to implement common assessments and measure their impact on student learning.

The DRSL that best reflects the attitude and conversation of teachers is “lifelong learning,” yet there is no documentation reviewing the component elements of this DRSL. Mount Jordan Middle School needs to establish and document whether or not students have developed good study habits, set goals, and improved their skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and math.

Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear from conversations that departments are committed to working toward measurable goals and using that information to inform their teaching strategies. The teachers were particularly positive about the collaboration time given them to discuss students who are struggling, which has led to more before- and after-school enrichment opportunities. This will improve the development of good study habits, but there is no documentation to reflect improvement among struggling students in the self-study. However, writing success is reflected in the school’s Direct Writing Assessment results, which shows that Mount Jordan Middle School ninth graders passed with a 20.1. Since the Visiting Team is already aware that Utah’s proficiency score is 18.0, Mount Jordan Middle School’s language arts students scored very well; however, there is no way to determine how well Mount Jordan Middle School performed compared with the district or state without comparative documentation.

The conclusion of the Visiting Team is that, while data is available through administrative collection, there is limited information to reflect the positive programs through subsequent and measured results.

- b) *To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?*

During the course of Visiting Team observations, classes displayed varying levels of student engagement. Some classes had over 40 students, and some core classes were under 20. Classroom management weighs heavily upon student participation and understanding, so classes that were respectful of the learning environment reflected effective engagement of the subject. In one class, silent reading was followed by an interactive discussion with all students. In another class, the teacher read and asked for predictions about a book, and received excellent feedback and inferences from the students. However, there were some classes where blatant disrespect from a student towards his/her teacher was disruptive to the entire class. While professional development will definitely help the teachers move toward their goals in Professional Learning Communities, it is recommended that classroom management strategies be reviewed for struggling teachers. Students cannot be engaged in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills unless the classroom climate is stable.

The new collaboration time allows the teachers greater opportunities to address these issues. Some teachers addressed the DRSL “lifelong learner,” but most did not state any of the DRSLs in classes—although there is a positive and determined attitude among teachers and students. A natural progression would be to address the disconnect and take measures to reinforce the DRSLs, even though formal references to link the DRSLs to the students’ lives students were rarely made.

The measures to assess the school’s progress in assessing the DRSLs are under construction. Summative testing data from CRTs, ITBS, and the DWA are included, but there is no data to compare how Mount Jordan Middle School is performing with other schools in the district or in the state.

- c) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?*

The Visiting Team noted that, to a moderate degree, the teaching staff works collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school’s DRSLs. The staff has begun a new collaboration program that allows all teachers to work together on late-start Fridays. The teachers alternate two-and-a-half-hours weekly, between grade level and cross-curricular planning on the school level and professional development at the district level. The morale among teachers suggests a positive response to the new schedule, and many commented that the additional time has focused their instructional strategies. Each department

indicates that the Utah Core requirements drive curriculum planning, and professional development has complemented the Professional Learning Community philosophy as teachers strive to implement “best practices” while working on common assessments.

Learning objectives are written on whiteboards in most disciplines. This is a strong validation of teacher commitment, but teachers in departmental analyses suggest that communication needs to be increased and improved in bringing everyone on board to focus on DRSLs. New teachers, in particular, seem not to understand how the DRSLs were chosen and how each staff member is supposed to address them and use each to inform and improve instruction. The Visiting Team noted that, when they met with a diverse group of students randomly selected from teachers’ classes, none of the students knew what their school DRSLs were. With more focus from administrators and school staff, students and future students will have the opportunity to see the DRSLs move from posters on the walls to being a significant aspect of their education at Mount Jordan Middle School.

Some teachers addressed the DRSL “lifelong learner,” but most did not state any of the DRSLs in classes. Although there is a positive and determined attitude among teachers and students, a natural progression would be to take measures to reinforce the DRSLs and explicitly teach and align school curricula to the DRSLs. The measures to assess the school’s progress in assessing the DRSLs are under construction. Since the DRSLs are listed in the mission statement, the Mount Jordan Middle School staff is working to establish the importance of each component in the education of their students. It is clear from conversation that the school’s mission and beliefs embrace their DRSLs effectively, and that the staff is eager to work together to support continued development of a focused curriculum.

- d) *How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?*

The Visiting Team noted that, to a moderate extent, the staff uses assessments to drive the curriculum to ensure that all student reach the intended learning outcomes. While data to support this was not included in the self-study, conversations with multiple departments confirmed that the school and staff use assessments to monitor progress toward intended learning outcomes. For example, the school has used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, DWA, and My Access to monitor progress. Programs have been instituted to help students before and after school in any class where a student is struggling.

The school does collect data, and the Visiting Team recommends that the information/data be published in the self-study in order to reflect all of the successful programs in curriculum development that have been addressed and that are being implemented.

Instruction:

- a) *To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?*

The Visiting Team observed several different strategies in use within the different subject area classrooms to enhance student learning. It is clear that the staff is working both individually and collectively to utilize a variety of instructional methods that engage a variety of students. The Visiting Team observed teachers using discussion, group assignments, student presentations, technology-enhanced instruction, reinforcement activities, one-on-one guidance, student-led demonstrations, and Socratic questioning, to name a few.

While many of the teachers have obviously adopted and implemented the use of multiple teaching strategies, the Visiting Team would recommend that all teachers continue to explore “best practices” that will actively engage students in learning, especially with regard to the needs of ELL and resource students.

- b) *To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?*

The Visiting Team observed that, to a very limited extent, the staff has developed explicit strategies for instruction that build capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSLs in every classroom. The Visiting Team suggests that the staff revisit the DRSLs and identify not only the indicators of each DRSL, but which instrument will be used to measure the DRSL. While there is a developed rubric that is meant to measure student performance, there is not a developed document or plan that identifies instructional strategies or addresses best practices. According to the self-study document, teachers individually identified successful instructional strategies and then reported those to their colleagues, which generated a table of “suggested strategies.” The Visiting Team has no way of identifying the use of this document by individual teachers due to the lack of information provided.

- c) *To what extent is the school’s professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?*

To a limited extent, the Visiting Team noted that the school’s professional development program is guided by identified instructional needs and provides opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning. This year, a late-start Friday with block scheduling was implemented in order to allow for more teacher collaboration time. This new

schedule has provided two hours each Friday, which allows the professional staff time to meet in identified groups in order to discuss specific needs. The staff has been assigned to a variety of groups, such as the school's PLCs, departments, grade levels, and district wide groups, in order to address a range of identified needs. Friday collaboration time has also been used as a means for delivering professional development at both the district and school levels. Because this is the first year that Mount Jordan Middle School is under the Canyons School District, several of the Friday late starts have been used for district-level training.

In conversation with the Visiting Team, the staff mentioned the use of both teacher and student surveys; however, there is no observable data or information contained in the self-report. Because of this, it is difficult to know whether the survey data is used as a measurement for the development of instructional design strategies. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff use survey data as a method of informing the need for change.

- d) *To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?*

To a large extent, the Visiting Team noted that teachers are proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective of their own practice. Teachers are identified as being highly qualified in their area of instruction. The implementation of teacher collaboration time has allowed time for teachers to reflect on their current practice as well as share strategies and ideas for improvement with colleagues. In a conversation with the Visiting Team, the teachers expressed gratitude for the collaboration time and the opportunities that it has provided for professional growth.

- e) *To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?*

To a large extent, the Visiting Team noted that the school effectively implements a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction and assessments. The integration of technology into instruction was observed in all classrooms visited. Each classroom has been enhanced with ceiling-mounted LCD projectors and audio enhancement devices. Other forms of technology, such as computers and document cameras, are also used for instruction and assessment.

Assessment:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

To a moderate extent, the Visiting Team noted that the staff has developed classroom and school-wide assessments, with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement. While this was not directly observed, it was noted that teachers have developed and used common departmental assessments; however, there is no mention of this in the school self-study.

- b) *To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?*

To a moderate extent, the Visiting Team noted that the school has a process to fairly and equitably assess the school-wide and individual progress of students' achievement. During conversations with teachers, the Visiting Team was able to identify the use of common assessment within departments and across the district; however, there is no mention of this in the school self-study. Teachers discussed the use of these assessments not only as a tool for determining individual achievement, but as a tool for informing instructional design.

- c) *To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?*

The Visiting Team noted that the self-study document refers to the use of summative test scores when discussing academic achievement; however, there is an absence of data in the self-study report. The Visiting Team was unable to identify the use of this data.

- d) *To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?*

The Visiting Team observed that, to a moderate extent, the school's professional development program allows for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies. The late-start Friday has allowed for a two-hour block of teacher collaboration time. Teachers have identified the use of that time for developing and discussing both departmental and district-wide common assessments. Through conversation with teachers, the Visiting Team also learned that there is a district movement toward common benchmark assessments. According to teachers, the district has used some of the Friday collaboration time to discuss this plan.

- e) *To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?*

Only to a very limited extent did the Visiting Team note any organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified life-long learning DRSL. While each department has developed rubrics that identify the significance of lifelong learning with regards to teaching and learning in the classroom, there is currently no tool in place that assesses the effectiveness of the rubric, nor the extent to which students are achieving this DRSL. There is no reported data that the rubric serves as a measuring tool for performance.

The design of each departmental rubric was initiated by teacher conversation and based on current practice, but the implementation of the rubric as an assessment tool is yet to be done. The Visiting Team recommends that teachers implement the rubrics, then revisit the design for areas of strength and weakness.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?*

To a moderate degree, the school leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning. This year, the leadership (both district and school) have implemented a late-start Friday that frees up collaboration time for teachers. Two Fridays a month are spent in either specific professional development activities at the school or with other middle schools in the district, working in either horizontal or vertical teams.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?*

The Visiting Team had a difficult time assessing this point, as the self-study did not include student achievement data other than the CRT and Iowa scores. There were references to it made in conversations with that staff and administration, but the data were not included in the report. Consequently, it is hard to ascertain the extent to which the leadership employs data-driven, research-based practices to make decisions.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?*

To a moderate extent, the leadership provides skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment that aligns with the school goals and promotes school improvement. The leadership provides adequate resources for the staff and students. Students feel that the school is safe, and expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the staff efforts and the administration in providing a great school.

The leadership has created programs within the school day, such as the Climbers' Lab and the CLIMB (advisory period), that maximize the impact of instruction on struggling students. On Fridays, students who are struggling with grades and/or concepts being taught are assigned to the Climbers' Lab so they can get additional, intensive instruction/assistance. Other students who are passing are given the opportunity to enroll in an enrichment class. Examples of enrichment opportunities include the Civil Rights Movement re-enactment, cultural awareness, cultural bingo, letters to and a visit from local soldiers stationed in Iraq, the Circle of Wagons activity (book talk), guest speakers, a visit from a real mountain man, dance enrichment, Zoomania, kids vs. faculty basketball, and other fun activities.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?*

To a moderate extent, the school leadership empowers the entire school community and encourages commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning. This is more evident now that the school has created Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Twice a month at minimum, grade level teachers come together and discuss student learning, assigning non-learners to the Climbers' Lab and successful learners to enrichment classes.

Mount Jordan's teachers, in collaboration with other teachers in the district, meet twice a month to work on common assessments in the content areas. These assessments and conversations with grade-level teachers are an attempt to find effective interventions for struggling students, as well as ways to modify instruction to make it more effective.

- e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

To a moderate extent, the school has established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows and advocates for the student in meeting the school-wide expectations for student learning. Through the CLIMB period (advisory), the school was introduced to the Power in You program created by Utah's First Lady, MaryKay Huntsman. Students spoke of the significance of this program in their daily lives. Students mentioned that bullying was not a problem anymore since they had adopted the Power in You components into their daily lives. They felt more empowered to be the best they could be, to be able to speak up if someone was to bully them, to speak their minds and express their opinions openly, and to be a positive force.

The advisory period (CLIMB) is very effective, according to students, as they receive a weekly progress report indicating areas of success as well as areas needing improvement.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process, that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?*

To a large extent, the Mount Jordan Middle School faculty has a clear commitment to professional development. Beginning in the 2009-10 school-year, the Mount Jordan Middle School faculty implemented a late-start Friday schedule. The school utilizes a block schedule on Fridays. On "B" days, first period is used for grade level teams; teams identify essential skills in each of their subject areas and are expected to teach these skills during the subsequent two-week period. On "A" days, faculty members collaborate with department colleagues or colleagues from other schools in the district.

The new Canyons District Board implemented the PLC collaboration model in the 2009-10 school year.

The absence of disaggregated data made it difficult for the faculty to clearly identify school improvement goals for subgroups in the school. This data is particularly important as the school did not make AYP in mathematics or language arts.

- b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

To a limited extent, the school meets this standard. The district has set the goal to develop PLCs in each of the schools. While the school has created PLCs and the PLCs do focus on school-wide goals, the lack of disaggregated data in the report made it difficult to see the alignment between the school's needs and the professional development that was offered to the staff.

The school's professional development plan included an opportunity for staff members to attend a national conference on PLC and receive training on the SRI reading program, which aligned with the school's reading goals. However, there was no particular professional development for the school's mathematics goal, or for the positive school climate.

The self-study included neither goals nor professional development for meeting the needs of the subgroups that did not meet AYP (Hispanics and students with disabilities), nor did it address the stated concerns regarding school safety, bullying, or reported gangs in the school. It was interesting to note that the parent and student surveys reported that students felt unsafe in the halls, but when questioned, students said they felt safe.

- c) *To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

To a moderate extent, the new school-wide action plan is adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up. In October, 2009, the School Steering Committee met and discussed major revisions for the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The action plan timelines were all moved to "ongoing," with no specific deadlines for completion. The Visiting Team recommended that the action plan have specific deadlines. The Visiting Team felt that disaggregated data were necessary for the staff to adequately address the needs of the students who are not succeeding and that it was important to address them specifically in the action plan.

- d) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

To a moderate extent, the Visiting Team observed that the school creates conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement. The administration and Canyons School District support a culture of continuous improvement. The faculty meets weekly in teams and departments; every other week, the faculty meets with either the district or other middle schools to identify essential skills in each subject area that need to be addressed and/or other pressing educational issues.

- e) *What significant progress has been made in implementing the original action plan since the last full visit?*

The steering committee met and made several modifications to the original action plan. Mount Jordan Middle School's district split and reorganized, so many changes in both philosophy and organization that have been implemented.

The major shift is that the school/district is moving toward the PLC collaboration model. The timeline for the action plan was basically changed to "ongoing," with no set deadlines. The Visiting Team observed that most of the action plan items were deleted, moved to be included within other items, or revised. This was partly due to the split of the district and the consequent new focus.

- f) *What significant progress has the school made in addressing the **major** recommendations of the previous Visiting Team and/or review team?*

Three major recommendations were offered by the past Visiting Team. The first recommendation was to implement a data management system to provide the staff with easy access to disaggregated data, allowing staff members to make informed decisions about student learning. Due to the split in the district, the new Canyons district has adopted a new student information system called Skyward. The school is still "working out the bugs," and while the system is not yet working to its fullest potential, the district remains optimistic that it will be beneficial.

The second recommendation was to continue to explore best practices for middle-level students. The school is attempting to address best practices, but within the confines of its new focus on the PLCs.

The third recommendation was to continue dialogue with the district leadership regarding increased collaboration time. This recommendation was addressed by the district, and the school now provides a weekly late-start day. Teachers collaborate with their colleagues and/or other middle school teachers, as well as district staff members, during this built-in collaboration time.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

To a large extent, the Visiting Team observed that the school fosters community building and working relationships within the school. Mount Jordan Middle School has instituted many programs in the last several years to build culture and school spirit within the school and community. The PTA has worked in tandem

with the staff to build unity in the school. The faculty vs. students basketball game has become an effective fundraiser, and an annual high point for the students. While it was suggested that the staff support the activity, 100 percent of the faculty attended this fundraiser. The students were also welcomed by a “Hot Dog Hello” that set the stage for a positive experience for all in attendance. The staff welcomed students wearing Mountaineer shirts, while the assistant principals cooked over 250 hot dogs. Students have been given exposure to a myriad of outside speakers, including a teacher’s son who served in Iraq, and the renowned BYU professor and successful author Chris Crowe. Many other programs connect Mount Jordan Middle School as a student body and heighten students’ awareness of educational and cultural programs, including: Climber Lab, Higher Education Night, accelerated reading, book clubs, Power in You, Culture Fairs, guest speakers, Success Week, and even a medieval contest between a teacher at Mount Jordan Middle School and his mother, both of whom are knights in the SCA.

The Climber Lab is a successful intervention and extension for any student who struggles in any of his/her classes. Teachers identify these students from post-tests in specific subject areas, then send the students to an alternating Friday schedule where they are given individual help in achieving mastery on the prescribed test information. During Higher Education Night, teachers talked to the students about their individual college experiences, and worked to build student enthusiasm about the importance of college education. One of the most effective programs in the eyes of students is the Power in You program, which instills a belief in themselves among students. The media center coordinator reported that almost 12,000 books have been checked out, and teachers are giving up their lunch periods to conduct book clubs that had over 40 students in attendance last month. Literacy is important at Mount Jordan Middle School, and students are “catching the bug.” In addition, posters adorn each door showing students what their teachers, administrators, and other staff members are reading.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

To a large extent, the Visiting Team noted that Mount Jordan extends the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning. Teachers have been positively engaged in discussions about students. Bullying is addressed through a network that involves student reporting, teacher intervention, and administrative follow-through. The PTA has increased its Community Council participation from 0 to 10, which is significant for this community. The PTA has not only sponsored many events, but has established a school website and blog to inform students and parents of upcoming calendar news. In addition, the PTA is promoting a volunteer parent group to assist with school-related projects. The PTA president has survey results that are being published, but were not included in the self-study. It is recommended that those survey results be made public to reflect the collaborative network they are supporting. The organization is also active in peer tutoring, recycling programs, and instilling

pride in academic success among the students. Technology in the classroom includes LCD projectors and integrated technology programs.

- c) *To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

To a moderate extent, the Visiting Team noted that the school engaged the community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students. While it was noted that students were not directly involved in the process, the students do feel that they have a voice in the affairs of the school and that all students have the opportunity to be involved. The entire staff appeared to have been included in the self-study, as were the parent groups. Students were not aware of the term “DRSL” but, for example, the DRSL “lifelong learner” was posted throughout the school.

- d) *How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?*

To a very minimal extent, the Visiting Team noted that the results of the school improvement were identified, documented, used and communicated to all stakeholders. While the self-study includes a reflection of the tremendous heart of this school, the documentation is too limited to identify or use the information pertinent to all stakeholders. When the school draws all stakeholders together to clarify DRSLs and data collection, the results will inform and validate Mount Jordan Middle School’s commitment to educational excellence in its students and its community.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the staff members on their positive relationships with and altruistic attitudes toward the students at Mount Jordan Middle School.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff on its efforts to create common assessments for students by content area.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff on the enrichment programs and the Climbers’ Lab held on B-Fridays to assist struggling students with missing concepts and offer enrichment opportunities for successful students.

- The Visiting Team commends the media center and its coordinator for efforts to maintain high circulation rates for students, as well as create a warm, inviting, and inspiring climate for student learning.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for their focus on and implementation of the accelerated reading program.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for providing students with weekly progress reports that aid in identification of areas for improvement in student achievement.
- The Visiting Team commends the efforts of the professional staff to communicate directly with parents/guardians and provide information regarding student performance.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for being visibly involved in the implementation of the action plan, and for its willingness and acceptance of feedback.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and students for embracing and supporting a community of caring throughout the school.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for addressing the issue of safety, as identified in the survey results.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school collect all relevant data, including school and stakeholder surveys, student discipline and subsequent district and court referrals, attendance, and student achievement in the self-study report.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the self-study process be open to and include all stakeholders, and ensure all stakeholders are familiar with the findings of the report.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff revisit the action plan and set definitive timelines for goals, remembering that SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (trackable).
- The Visiting Team recommends that there be alignment between the self-study report and the action plan. Both documents should reflect Mount Jordan Middle School's progress toward the goals in the last action plan, as well as revisions or additions and specific timelines.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be revisited and made to specifically outline all programs and interventions so that all stakeholders have knowledge of the programs and interventions that are available.
- The Visiting Team recommends the school disaggregate student data, identify the particular subgroups that did not make AYP, and include in the action plan specific interventions for these students, as well as specific professional development/training for teachers to be able to adequately meet the students' needs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school provide a school/district mentoring program for provisional teachers in order to increase the use of effective instructional strategies and improve classroom management skills.
- The Visiting Team recommends that departments and teachers implement the performance indicator rubrics and revisit the design of those rubrics to identify areas of strength and weakness.