

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Riverview Junior High School
751 West Tripp Lane
Murray, Utah 84123**

February 3-4, 2009



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

Riverview Junior High School

**751 West Tripp Lane
Murray, UT 84123**

February 3-4, 2009

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase 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. It is a three-phased 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, February 3-4, 2009, 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 Riverview Junior High 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 Shauna Ballou is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Riverview Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about 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 even more 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 Riverview Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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Rod PaceSupervisor, Buildings & Grounds
David Trujillo.....Supervisor, Child Nutrition Program

RIVERVIEW JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Shauna Ballou Principal
James Bouwman Assistant Principal

Counseling

Earl Kauffman..... Counselor
Pam Mantle Counselor

Support Staff

Keith Bell	Christin Jacketta	Janie Moysh
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Shirleen Burkinshaw	Kay Lindorff	Anita Rubino
Kirsten Campbell	James Lobato	Anne Smith
Gerri Cox	Katie McBride	David Stallings
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Karen Craig	John McConnell	Elizabeth Wagstaff
Janeal Crane	Rochelle McGowan	Janet Wayman
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Ron Gray	Delight Page	Brenda Wright
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Brandon Harrison	Amy Roberds	

VISITING TEAM REPORT
RIVERVIEW JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to create a developmentally responsive middle level school that nurtures each student's progress physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Student learning is the primary purpose and central goal of our school
- Every student is a valued individual, whose academic, technological, and artistic success is encouraged and recognized.
- A variety of academic opportunities and educational experiences which accommodate multiple learning styles is provided for all students.
- Instruction and curriculum develop responsible citizenship and character that reflects accepted community standards.
- Students are prepared and motivated to become confident, self-directed, life-long learners in a rapidly changing world.
- Students participate in a variety of physical activities that develop fitness and habits of healthy living.
- A safe, secure, and supportive learning environment is maintained.
- Our school community honors diversity, promotes cultural awareness, and practices acceptance of self and others.
- Students, parents, school staff, and community members are committed to on-going assessment and continuous school improvement procedures.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Communication Skills

- Students demonstrate grade level proficiency with basic literacy skills: reading, writing and computation.
- Students write clarity and purpose to accurately convey information.
- Students use technology to enhance a message.
- Students use reading and comprehension skills appropriate to the situation.

Thinking and Reasoning Skills

- Students use various reading and writing strategies to organize, interpret, analyze, and comprehend information.
- Students understand how to compute numbers when strategically solving new problems.
- Students integrate new learning with existing knowledge and experience.

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Students show respect for all students and staff.
- Students demonstrate the core values of the school community: respect, honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and caring.
- Students demonstrate consideration of, and empathy for the experience and perspective of others.

Desired Results for Student Learning – Kid Friendly Versions

Communications and Thinking and Reasoning

- *“If I can read, write, and do math, I can choose my own path”*

Personal and Social Responsibility

- *“I will treat others the way I want to be treated. I will be respectful, honest, responsible, tolerant and caring.”*

Date of visit: February 3-4, 2009

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Verneita R. Hunt, Granite School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Valerie Dimas, Mueller Park Junior High School, Davis School District

Gerolynn Hargrove, Coordinator, Curriculum and Instruction, Utah State Office
of Education

Sandra LeCheminant, Indian Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Barbara Springer, Timberline Middle School, Alpine School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
RIVERVIEW JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Riverview Junior High School was built in 1961, opening for the 1961-62 school year. There are 740 students, one principal, one assistant principal, 36 teachers, four counselors, and numerous support staff members. The science wing was added in 1990, with the whole school being remodeled in 2003. The auditorium was remodeled in 2005, and the parking lot was reconstructed for safety in 2007. The boundaries of the school have been stable for a number of years, with two-thirds of the school's families owning their homes and one-third renting.

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

The Visiting Team found the school profile to be valuable when looking at Riverview Junior High School's progress since the first visit. There were valuable disaggregated data, articulated analyses, pertinent departmental and focus group information, and important personnel facts.

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

It is suggested by the Visiting Team that a brief history of the school be included in the school profile. Additionally, there should be more specific wording in the action plan to prevent it from being too general. The timeline and action steps should be more specific and extend for the next four to six years, giving the community more direction for the next few years. The accreditation team recognizes that the action plan is a living document and should be reviewed yearly as to plausibility and relevance to current school data, with changes made necessary.

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

The Visiting Team found that Riverview Junior High School's profile was accurate in portraying the school's strengths and limitations. The profile was honest and refreshing as it reported disaggregated data and analyses of its school community.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The Visiting Team recommends the Riverview Junior High School create a more in-depth action plan with steps that clarify the specific process for the next four to six years.

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?*

It is the finding of the Visiting Team that the school's stakeholders have worked collaboratively to identify the needs of the school community and define a vision for the school. According to the focus group representatives, the mission of the school has been edited periodically, resulting in the current focus on writing and character education.

The mission and beliefs are well institutionalized in the school community and are very student-centered, with an emphasis on nurturing and supporting the students and their learning. The school implemented a "kid-friendly" version of the school's mission in order to facilitate its implementation. Further, it was the observation of the Visiting Team that the adults at this school are equally involved in the school's mission. It is recommended that the wording of the mission statement be altered to reflect the involvement of the entire school community in this shared vision.

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

Riverview Junior High has established a mission statement and belief statements that reflect the school culture. As a result, the school's commitment to creating a developmentally responsive middle school that nurtures each student's progress physically, emotionally, and intellectually is not only in place, but flourishing. Approaching the DRSLs through Riverview's "kid-friendly" version has created a positive climate for students and teachers who are now moving together toward a better shared vision of the DRSLs Communication, Thinking and Reasoning Skills, and Personal and Social Responsibility. For the students, this translates into, "If I can read, write, and do math, I can do almost anything," and "I will treat

others the way I want to be treated. I will be respectful, honest, responsible, and tolerant.” The students, parents, and teachers are committed to addressing a commonly perceived challenge involving verbal bullying. Truly, the mission and belief statements of the school promote an environment that includes support, opportunity, inclusion, and ongoing assessment.

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

Riverview Junior High School was observed using a variety of data sources in assessing the progress of the DRSLs. Indicators being used include the Six Traits of Writing Rubric, various writing assessments, and the results of the CRT assessment, which are disaggregated and studied within departments and teams in order to drive instruction. The results of the students’ writing assessments are also online for accessibility. Climate surveys give varied perspectives, and data is kept through the office on discipline and tardy issues. Students are also tracked through the Counselor’s Center for referral to the Success classes or individual help.

- 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?*

It was the finding of the Visiting Team that the culture of the school readily reflects the school’s mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. The mission statement is posted throughout the building, and stakeholder groups indicated their knowledge and support of the school’s vision. Faculty members indicated the DRSLs have been kept at the forefront during the collaboration time of the various groups (departments, teams, and focus groups), resulting in pedagogy and programs that support the DRSLs and mission of the 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?*

Through observation, the Visiting Team found that the Riverview Junior High School teachers had clearly established their devotion to excellence in their classrooms. Students were engaged in a variety of learning strategies linked to the State Core. While the students were not very familiar with the term “DRSL,” they sparkled when they recited one of their Kid Friendly versions—“If I can read, write, and do math, I can do almost anything.” Their exuberance for the phrase is reflected in their commitment to their school and the teachers who are making significant differences in their lives. The chairperson for the Curriculum

Development focus group explained how the accreditation process provides the school with better direction and focus in adhering to State Core standards, as each teacher prepares students for the standardized tests each year. While there have been some teachers who take longer to accept the benefits of moving toward school curriculum goals, most of the Riverview educators can see that charting their collective course according to agreed-upon goals benefits their students and helps them be more effective and accountable as teachers. The focus on Utah's Life Skills is evident in Riverview's Reality Town, Harmony for Humanity, Student Government, Character Education, and many other collaborative programs and accomplishments.

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

The Visiting Team found through classroom observation that teachers are collaborating using research-based best practices. This collaboration has spurred the development of curriculum, which engages all students in a variety of learning activities that encourage student inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking skills.

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

Individual teachers and focus group participants felt the teaching and the development of the curriculum is more focused because the school has made its DRSLs "kid friendly." While teachers must continue to relate their curricula to the over-arching principles of their chosen DRSLs, the school has adopted the DRSLs as a foundation for curriculum and begun its implementation in positive and progressive ways.

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

Each teacher is committed to assessing student learning as it relates to the State Core, and then measuring student progress through a variety of evaluation tools. Teachers are aware that specific students are not meeting benchmarks on core standards, and use collaboration time to support these students. Additionally, students are encouraged to seek help from individual staff members if they are struggling with specific academic concerns. Some students indicated to the Visiting Team they would like more help in understanding math concepts; there are still some areas which need to be addressed by Riverview's departments to ensure learning outcomes are attainable for all students. There is also an awareness that the school's Hispanic population is growing. It is advised that liaison work be considered to accompany strategies that are in place for traditional students. Riverview has a large population of ESL students, necessitating more ESL-endorsed teachers to meet individual student needs.

Instruction:

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

It is apparent to the Visiting Team that the Riverview staff is well versed in a variety of instructional strategies. Teachers openly discuss the need to reach every learner, and have taken steps to include a broad range of pedagogical strategies designed to embrace the learning styles of all students.

The Visiting Team observed lab activities, self-paced learning modules, hands-on activities, role playing, cooperative learning groups, independent student exploration, direct instruction, skill acquisition, performance tasks, open-ended inquiry, teacher and student interviews, group assignments, classroom discussion, and the use of technology. These activities were well structured and purposeful.

Students at Riverview Junior High receive diverse instruction strategies from experienced and dedicated teachers. The Visiting Team observed hands-on instruction in creating maps in social studies, and a timely review of persuasive writing vocabulary to enhance student performance for the upcoming ninth grade Direct Writing Assessment. In U.S. History, a PowerPoint presentation allowed students to see the information as well as write answers on a prepared worksheet. Teachers voiced appreciation for the technology now in place. They feel their principal has been especially instrumental in securing LCD projectors and having them mounted for teachers' use. The theater students performed a short script with different voice interpretations during paired presentations. The students were delightfully relaxed, and their animated presentations reflected their comfort in their class and response to instruction. Honors English students interpreted Dickens' *Great Expectations* with poetry, a video presentation, and an original song sung by the star of the school's musical production. The creative atmosphere was engaging and entertaining. This speaks volumes about instruction that brings students to an appreciation for words and literacy. While the Visiting Team recognizes the challenge of designing instructional plans that reach all students, it is recommended that teachers continue to increase their own abilities to actively engage all learners.

- 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?*

Classroom observations by the Visiting Team and student response demonstrate that the staff is committed to incorporating Communication, Thinking and Reasoning, and Personal and Social Responsibility as the desired results for student learning.

The staff has worked extensively to integrate the desired results for student learning across the curriculum. The DRSLs are part of and woven into every component of the instruction and curriculum aspects of the school. The staff has collaborated in a process that has led to institutionalizing the DRSLs, which includes both explicitly teaching and assessing the DRSLs in every classroom.

The Visiting Team commends the staff members for their systematic approach to writing as part of the Communicating DRSL. It is apparent that writing is important in each classroom. Staff members regularly utilize writing assignments to enhance the learning experience for their students.

Each classroom has a poster with the DRSL concerning citizenship. It is suggested that all rooms have the Communication and Thinking and Reasoning DRSLs clearly displayed. While the staff is committed to developing strategies for teaching the DRSLs, the posters encourage students to understand the importance of bridging what they learn in classrooms to life lessons after they leave Riverview. The “kid-friendly” versions are posted throughout the school, and students know and use these versions. The direction of the staff is positive, and with more time to focus on instruction strategies, greater incorporation of the DRSLs will be a natural and evolutionary process.

- 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?*

Riverview Junior High’s professional development targets identified instructional needs. The school administration, in its commitment to enhance the instructional practices of teachers, provides various professional development opportunities to staff members throughout the year. Staff members meet on a regular basis for team meetings, department meetings, and district meetings aimed at specific and targeted professional development and collaboration.

The Visiting Team found that a high percentage of the Riverview Junior High School teachers are pleased with the school’s professional development program. While some teachers may still be reluctant to participate in all facets of diversifying teaching strategies to support student learning, the vast majority of teachers feel that professional development is more focused, relevant, and positive than it has ever been before. The tremendous professional ethic among the Riverview staff is evidenced in their willingness to participate in school, district, and state-sponsored classes and conferences that help them meet the needs of their student population. Focus group members were particularly pleased with the whole school’s willingness to share the responsibility of helping Riverview students succeed.

- 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?*

Classroom observations demonstrated that teachers were knowledgeable in their content areas and proficient in their instructional approach. In discussions with teachers, the Visiting Team found that most teachers were reflective on their own practice. Most teachers demonstrated the desire to identify areas of improvement in their own teaching practice and a willingness to make necessary changes.

The average number of years of teaching among Riverview educators is 21. The teachers range from first-year educators to those with over 30 years' experience. Two department chairpersons reported their gratitude for a process that allows them and their departments to engage in "best practices." The staff is encouraged to think outside of the box with regard to effective teaching and diverse strategies. Several teachers indicated that even though they had been at Riverview for a number of years, each remained committed to doing the best possible jobs for his/her students, always looking for new ideas.

Overall, quality instruction is occurring at Riverview Junior High School. Teachers collaborate and share ideas in an effort to become more proficient in their content areas.

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

The Visiting Team observed the installation of LCD projectors in most rooms. In addition, teachers have access to a variety of technology tools to assist them in the classroom. A new computer lab is accessible to students in the media center. Furthermore, current software, such as the MyAccess writing program, is utilized throughout the school to enhance the teachers' instructional effectiveness as well as student engagement.

There are efficient technology experts who facilitate the needs of teachers on a regular basis. A well-defined plan is in process that can be measured and assessed to ensure that technology continues to improve learning for Riverview students.

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?*

The Visiting Team found that formal and informal assessments are used to gauge the progress of learning in classrooms. Teachers adjust assignments and

classroom work to enrich learning. Areas of need are addressed based on assessments and classroom performance. There are multiple options for accelerated learning as well as remediation of student learning.

The Visiting Team observed an excellent example of shared responsibility for student learning. When measurement issues were identified as an area of need in the math CRT scores, other teachers (CTE) identified and implemented ways in which they could reinforce measurement concepts in their classrooms. This is reflective of the supportive environment for teacher collaboration for student learning in evidence throughout the school.

It was noted by the Visiting Team that faculty members are consistent in their use of the Riverview Junior High School Writing Rubric in evaluating student writing, and that students are expected to write in all content areas.

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

At least four times a year, the teachers receive assessment information about student achievement from the administration. Staff members make use of CRT data and multiple other assessments. Using all that data during team and departmental meetings, teachers identify student strengths and weaknesses to create plans to assist the student in their learning. Appropriate interventions are then implemented for students. The variety of assessments used, coupled with the number of team members involved with evaluation of student learning, broadens the scope of learning evaluation.

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

The scope of data use at Riverview Junior High School is commendable. As stated above, teachers are competent in their articulation of student achievement using data as the basis, regardless of content area. Decisions about instruction are informed by data from multiple sources. Departmental use of common assessments is noted.

Some teachers are very successful in formative assessments and frequently gather information about student learning, then use that information to adjust instruction.

- 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?*

Teachers use their time in collaboration for the benefit of student learning. CRT data and other building-wide assessments are used to evaluate student learning. The use of available data to inform practice is commendable. The Visiting Team

recognizes the tremendous work of the Riverview Junior High School staff in creating and using multiple evaluative strategies to inform practice and student learning. Use of collaboration time in achieving instructional goals is invaluable.

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

The Visiting Team commends the staff of Riverview Junior High for teaching and evaluating writing as part of the Communication and Thinking and Reasoning DRSLs. Again, the variety of assessments used and the depth of implementation help assure students gain the skills and knowledge desired.

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?*

The Visiting Team found that the school leadership team, including the principal and assistant principals, promotes quality instruction by giving teachers and staff members numerous opportunities for a variety of professional development opportunities, such as monthly meetings in which teachers learn and share effective instructional strategies as well as conferences that address content areas, curriculum strategies, and meaningful assessment. Collaboration and interdisciplinary groups meet often.

- 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?*

Riverview Junior High School employs decision making that is data-driven, research-based and collaborative to monitor progress of student achievement and instructional effectiveness. Individual teachers and departments use common evaluations and coordinate curriculum among some departments. The administration regularly forwards data to teachers, who consistently use it to keep abreast of student progress.

- 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?*

The leadership environment at Riverview Junior High School is safe, efficient, and effective. The school community agrees that the principal and other school leaders promote, support, and sustain staff development, school organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources. There is a strong sense of belonging and support by the school leadership.

- 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?*

The administration of Riverview Junior High School has worked tirelessly to establish a culture that empowers the entire school community. Not only are the teachers and staff supported, but students and parents are supported and happy with the direction in which the leadership is going. The school staff demonstrates commitment, participation, and shared responsibility for student learning in a variety of roles in the decision-making process.

- 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?*

During Riverview Junior High School's Advisory period, each student has the opportunity to review grades, student progress, and extended support needed for academic and DRSL skills growth. The counseling staff has developed a number of programs that support and sustain student achievement through one-on-one contact.

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?*

One of many impressive attributes of Riverview Junior High School is the school's total commitment to a comprehensive school improvement plan that addresses school-wide literacy through reading and writing. This strong development comes through the Communications DRSL. Subjects that are naturally underpinned with writing strategies have been joined by others that would seem to have little to do with writing—choir and P.E., instance, which now

include journaling and expressive written responses. Although literacy is usually attached only to English instruction, Riverview's literacy has attained an impressive new level in a comprehensive and positive program geared toward raising an appreciation among students for pleasure reading, as well as researching topics for specific class requirements.

This continual improvement is profoundly enhanced by Riverview's exceptional media specialist. Book circulation statistics tallied over the past years show a 33 percent increase in the number of books checked out, which is in direct correlation with Riverview's school improvement process. Students are welcomed and celebrated in the hub of Riverview Junior High School, the library. Student programs showcase individual students for their reading proficiency, as well as personal reading enjoyment and writing, inspired by the librarian whose enterprising learning activities have enhanced student interest in reading and writing.

The entire staff is not only positive about student achievement, but better focused as a faculty on nurturing intrinsic rewards for students. MyAccess is a computerized writing program that has been measured and documented. The program scores student papers on the Six Traits of Writing. Statistics from Riverview's data collection indicate that Ideas and Content, Organization, and Conventions need to be strengthened, so teachers are adapting writing instruction to address specific traits. (Not surprising for this dynamic student body, Voice and Style was identified as the overall strongest writing trait.) In addition, the STAR reading test is administered to all students through their English classes. Individual teachers have access to their students' scores and take subsequent measures to help students improve reading comprehension.

- 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?*

Focus group participants indicated that Riverview Junior High School's weekly concentration on department, team, or school issues that relate to the action plan goals has been effective. The faculty has expressed appreciation for the administration's keeping meetings focused, on task, and relevant. The extra weekly meeting each month provides additional time to discuss issues of concern. Professional development has become a continuing process for teachers in departments, in grade level teams, and among the entire faculty. Dialogue is more productive because everyone understands the parameters of pertinent discussion. All eyes are turned to Riverview's school goals, and that has effectively streamlined professional development.

- 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 Riverview Junior High School's credit, the stakeholders have taken the accreditation process very seriously. They have built into their action plan those student learning outcomes that will best serve student needs, and are moving in directions that will build on the strong foundation the school has established. The positive attitude of this school is evident in the custodial staff's meticulous care of the building, in the secretarial staff's welcoming and friendly demeanor, in the carefully prepared lunches, supportive PTA and encouraging parents, dynamic and caring teachers, and superb administration.

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

Riverview Junior High School is a community school. Some educators have spent their entire careers here; others have been enticed to teach here because of the school's reputation for being a supportive educational climate. Students are engaged and appreciative of their outstanding teachers and the opportunity they have to be part of this student population. The conditions are perfect for ongoing discussions and implementation of best practices.

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

The Visiting Team has observed that the original action plan has been addressed, and that it continues to evolve with the needs of the school.

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

The Visiting Team found that Riverview Junior High School has sufficiently addressed the need to identify those who are not learning and are not connected to the school. The staff uses pertinent data on a regular basis to help students who are not making appropriate academic progress. Most teachers have made significant progress toward instructional proficiency. This process continues as new teachers come to Riverview.

Riverview Junior High School has developed a rich culture of enrichment classes and opportunities for high-achieving students. There are many areas within the school that focus on encouraging students to reach higher academic levels. Not only have the high-achieving students gained new levels, but all students are encouraged to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

The Visiting Team found that the action plan is a little vague still as to steps and timelines. It is recommended that the action plan continue to be revisited and supported through more in-depth wording that will drive school improvement through the next four to six years.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team observed many programs in place that foster community building within the school (Readers Club, writing and literacy contests, student recognitions, service projects, Family Literacy Night, Success classes, character education, etc.). Students said that they felt comfortable in seeking out caring adults, whether administrators, teachers, or counselors. Faculty members feel supported by the administration and peers, and parents appreciate the open-door policy of both teachers and administration. The students are very well versed on the school's academic mission—a catchphrase that almost every student was able to repeat. There is another “kid-friendly” phrase in the character education goals of the school that was posted in classrooms, but students do not seem as familiar with this.

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

The Visiting Team observed many collaborative networks in place within the school and district. Faculty members have collaborative time on Wednesday afternoons. Departments, teams, and the whole faculty meet on a rotating basis. Faculty members indicated that while there is a regular rotation schedule, the days can be flexible based on need. Faculty members also spoke of collaborating with Hillcrest Junior High, finding common ground in the focus of both schools' DRSLs, and accessing the ample opportunities for collaboration and staff development offered through the district.

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

It is the finding of the Visiting Team that collaborative time has been used extensively for self-study. Data from several sources is reviewed on a continual basis by departments and teams and more recently the focus groups, in order to sufficiently identify and address areas of strength and weakness. Information gleaned is used to drive instruction and implement programs which support students socially and academically.

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

Communication with stakeholders is ongoing through newsletters, notes, the internet, and other common sources. Information in the school profile indicated that there are certain populations which are not as involved in the school

community. While there are practices and instruments currently in place, it is the recommendation of the Visiting Team that more of an effort be made to reach out to the Hispanic community in particular and any other subgroups that may feel intimidated or nervous about getting involved in the school community. The Community Building focus group noted this need for improvement and suggested further investigation into this matter, as well as possible implementation of an e-mail database and moving or installing a marquee that would be seen from the more highly-traveled road in front of the school.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, teachers and staff for creating a positive, responsive, trusting culture at Riverview Junior High School and an exceptional feeling of support and loyalty which permeates the whole community. Principal Shauna Ballou and Assistant Principal Jim Bouwman calmly guide the school with quiet and shared leadership, creating an institution of continuous improvement. This leadership is evidenced by happy teachers and students. When teachers and students are happy, they take risks, reach out, and learn. The unique culture and climate structure at Riverview Junior is its major strength.
- The Visiting Team commends the teachers for their diversity of instructional strategies. This range of teaching is possible because the administration shows trust and gives ample room for educators to learn, practice, and grows with professional development and collaborative opportunities. Members of the faculty have extensive academic abilities. Continue to share and learn from one another while gleaning from other resources, incorporating the very best for the sake of your students.
- The Visiting Team commends administration, faculty, and staff for their tremendous commitment to student achievement. This commitment is manifested through concern for student welfare, learning, life outside of the classroom, and teacher collaboration and data analysis. Subsequently, teachers take this knowledge to the next level by acting upon the information gained. Hence, the students know they are cared for and are aware of their teachers' devotion to the profession and to Riverview Junior's positive learning climate. All this results in higher achievement growth, both teacher and student.
- The Visiting Team commends Riverview Junior High School community for their involvement in school activities, both academic and extracurricular. Parents are an

integral part of children's education. Riverview parents are encouraged to continue their participation, supporting student and teacher achievement.

- The Visiting Team commends the students of Riverview Junior High School for their respect, care, and support of each other. It is evident they care for and help each other through these challenging middle years. The parents, teachers, staff, and administration are commended for their continued teaching of positive life skills, which encourages mutual student support.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends the entire Riverview Junior High community continue building upon their excellent desired results for student learning by further institutionalizing an additional DRSL. It is commended that students create "kid-friendly" versions of the DRSLs. Continue to incorporate these skills into the classroom instruction across all curricula.
- The Visiting Team recommends that professional development continue to be a focus. Although teachers have diverse instructional strategies, there is more research-based information readily available. Stretch yourselves in learning and using more effective instructional practices; it will enhance student and adult achievement. Include data collaboration and action steps in this category.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the Riverview Junior High School administration and teachers identify and clarify the "Timeline," "Resources Needed" and "Evidence of Success" for Action Plan, Goal #2: Improved instruction and assessment to raise proficiency levels for all students, including at-risk students and identified sub-groups. Through investigation, data collection, and list compilation of instructional and assessment needs, teachers and administration can work collaboratively to define professional development sessions which will take place within given time periods. With yearly reviews, these sessions should extend through the next three to four years, with a commitment to an ongoing evaluation process. Under the "Evidence of Success" column, there should be specific items listed that are defined and measurable.