

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Stillwater Academy
11175 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

September 20, 2012



**Utah State Office of Education
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Stillwater Academy
11175 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095

September 20, 2012

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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, September 20, 2012, 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 Stillwater Academy 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 Kori Mayeski is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Stillwater Academy 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 Stillwater Academy.

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*Board of Regents Appointments

*** CMAC Representative Appointment

*****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

STILLWATER ACADEMY

OWNERSHIP

Lee Caldwell, Executive Director.....Owner of Record

DIRECTORS

Scott Jones Program Director
Mark Hinkley, Ph.D.....Clinical Director

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Kori Mayeski Principal
Brandon Drown..... Director of Academics/Special Education

Faculty

Travis Dahl
Rodayne Esmay
Kelli Hansen

Caitlyn Hardman
Deborah Lewis
Betsy Miller

Adrienne Noakes
Kathy Hansen

STILLWATER ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

Stillwater Academy is committed to preparing adolescents to be successful contributors to society. By providing a safe classroom environment that supports the attainment of social and academic skills, our students can become motivated learners and life-long problem-solvers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Stillwater academy provides a family-centered model, involving parents in the treatment process and recognizing the need to have parents concurrently grow in parenting skills to create a healthier home environment.
- An unparalleled equine therapy program, introducing students to unique treatment experiences that facilitate powerful growth and change.
- A unique transition program, featuring a research and evidence-based aftercare program.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. A Motivated Learner demonstrates active self-regulation, enthusiasm and mentorship in the constant pursuit of empowerment through learning.
2. A Problem-solver demonstrates reflective, wise and purposeful decision making based on a variety of good data.

Date of visit: September 20, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Accreditation Consultant, Northwest Accreditation Commission,
Team Chair

Jonathan Jones, Educator,

Judith Jacques, Program Director, Island View RTC

VISITING TEAM REPORT

STILLWATER ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Stillwater Academy is a private school created to provide educational services for residents of Turn-About RTC. Most students reside in small groups in several houses. Some students reside at home and use Turn-About and Stillwater for day treatment. At the time of the visit, there were 29 students enrolled in junior and senior high school courses

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

There is no evidence offered for the period 2005-2011. With a new consulting principal in place since August 2011, the profile has been updated. The behaviors of the students currently enrolled reflect a change in clientele over the past few years. Teachers have been trained to be more receptive of students with emotional disturbances and issues that are more internalized.

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

The school spent one of the past seven years collecting data to assess student progress on school-wide goals. It is expected that the school will be able to collect data on more students and to show progress over time.

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

The 2012 self-study clearly shows the strengths and weakness of academic program. The school chose to use the AdvancEd self-assessment rubric, which helped identify required actions to be implemented for future school improvement.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- See recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NORTHWEST) 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?*

Stillwater Academy's mission statement, beliefs and DRSLs were developed collaboratively in preparation for the school's self-study. Due to several administrative changes since the last team visit, the current academic leadership undertook a complete, collaborative review of all aspects, resulting in a rewriting of the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs. The school community worked to develop the statements in concert with the Executive Director, the Clinical Director, and the Program Director so as to match the statements with the students and their needs.

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

Due to the entire process of rewriting the school's mission and belief statements, these now directly align with the stated DRSLs. The DRSLs are a summation of four basic skills involved in achieving the DRSLs, and further development of six indicators correlated to the levels that have been developed to show progression through both the academic and therapeutic program of the academy.

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

The faculty of Stillwater Academy first created four skill areas that support the two DRSLs for each student to become a problem solver and a motivated learner. The developmental skill areas are planning and organization, responsibility, motivation, and problem solving. These skill areas are achieved based on a rubric that measures six indicators that are aligned with the Stillwater Academy therapeutic program. The school then uses this rubric to gather data based on all students' progress. The results of the data gathered are reflected in the school's self-study report.

- 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?*

The school's culture is governed by the implementation of the mission, beliefs, achievement of the goals, as stated. Interview of teachers and students indicated an overall sense of "buy-in" and understanding by all constituents. The data gathered based on the teachers' assessments of all students since February 2012 indicate progress toward achievement by a majority of the students.

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 school staff, under the current academic leadership, collaboratively reviews curriculum and strategies in relation to the needs of the students. Further, the basis for the courses included in the curriculum is the Utah Core Curriculum, with the inclusion of Utah Life Skills. The school has adopted the Common Core mathematics curriculum and put it into practice.

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

The classes at Stillwater Academy are intentionally kept small in order to facilitate focused attention on each student. This involves a great deal of individualization and personalized instruction. All aspects of the DRSLs and the associated skill areas are emphasized in dealing with all students, with individual attention based on specific needs as determined by the therapeutic staff and the classroom teachers.

- 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 faculty meets weekly to collaborate regarding student successes and special needs. Further, the teachers work collaboratively with the clinical and residential staff in relation to being informed and working appropriately to meet student needs. As previously stated, the curriculum and teaching strategies have been developed to support the DRSLs and their achievement by all students.

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

The school administers the WISC battery to all entering students and, when deemed necessary, the Woodcock-Johnson, thus providing a benchmark with which to develop an individual education plan for each student. Further, the school's special education teacher analyzes incoming IEPs in order to determine the accommodations that will need to be met in meeting individual needs so that each student has full opportunity and support to meet the intended learning outcomes.

Instruction:

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

Teachers work to apply strategies that are appropriate to meet the needs of individual students, including direct teaching, oral and written classroom assignments, homework, and audio and visual assignments. Students are encouraged to participate in classroom instruction through questioning, oral response and discussion, as well as in their written work. The small classes and individual attention lend themselves to a positive climate and culture in the classroom that, in turn, encourage learning.

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

The teachers and school administration regularly monitor curriculum and instruction so as to make necessary adjustments or revisions that will align with the stated goals for achievement. Thus, there is collaboration regarding successful strategies, as well as recognition of the need to further develop a layered curriculum so as to meet the varied needs of the students. Also, there is the recognized need for further development of cross-curricular instruction (e.g., writing). These issues are a part of the weekly faculty and staff meetings.

- 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?*

The school's professional development currently includes weekly special education trainings from the school's special education teacher and special education trainings from the local school district. Also, the weekly meetings include input from the school's clinical staff regarding specific disorders of students and how to work with them. The school also takes advantage of opportunities provided by the Utah State Office of Education and other residential treatment centers, as well as local private and public schools. All professional development is focused on Stillwater Academy's students and their learning needs in accordance with the stated mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

- 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?*

All teachers currently employed by Stillwater Academy are licensed and endorsed by the Utah State Office of Education in their respective subject areas. Some teachers may teach one subject outside their endorsements; however, this is due primarily to the small size of the school and staff. A chief goal of the school's professional

development program is to have the faculty continually reviewing effective instructional approaches in order to meet the needs of Stillwater Academy students.

- 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 school is currently reviewing means of better incorporating technology into the school program. Limitations are typical because of the nature of the students and the need to closely monitor computer use due to therapeutic needs. However, the school is currently researching ways of increasing the use of technology in the classroom (computers/projectors) as well as individual student use. The school has an adequate computer lab and is researching means of appropriate controls over Internet access.

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?*

Students are administered the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) to assist in determining class and course placement, and as deemed necessary for assessing overall achievement growth. The primary assessments are the individual class assignments, quizzes, and tests, and the resulting grades. Students take the ACT as appropriate, and the scores are used in the collection of data. The determination of other comprehensive, standardized testing that is appropriate for the school has not yet been made.

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

The school's stated skills and indicators in relation to its DRSLs primarily are measured by achievement in the course requirements. The process of developing a system of consistent measurement has been initiated as a result of the self-study process within the last year.

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

The professional staff uses the available data from sources currently in place, including academic achievement in the students' courses. Further development of assessment instruments is recognized as a need in order to provide for the development of viable systems.

- 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 regular weekly faculty meetings include the opportunity for teachers to collaborate in the development of appropriate and applicable assessment strategies. As previously indicated, the professional development “schedule” is designed to collaboratively analyze needs and strategies to meet the needs of the students.

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

The development of a school-wide scoring tool to assess identified DRSLs has not yet been implemented. At present, a variety of internal assessments are used to monitor student achievement, including the varied learning activities.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHWEST 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 current leadership has worked with teachers to develop a positive and supportive environment. The students told the Visiting Team that they very much appreciate the caring, and personalized instruction given them by teachers.

- 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 school leadership is aware of areas where improvement is needed in training teachers to analyze student performance data, and the school is making plans to provide professional development where needed.

- 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 school has successfully created a safe, efficient and effective learning environment. The ownership team needs to support the school with the resources necessary to implement improvement plans.

- 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?*

There is positive buy-in among the faculty members that they share the responsibility for student learning.

- 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?*

Students at Stillwater Academy are well known to multiple staff members. The students are involved in individual and group therapy. The Education Director meets regularly with members of the therapeutic staff. The plan is formalized and fully functioning.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NWAC Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to Northwest, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST 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?*

Within the last year, Stillwater Academy has made commendable efforts toward developing and implementing a comprehensive school improvement plan. It is clear that *Collaborating for Student Achievement* provided the underlying philosophical and procedural guidance for the school's efforts. Furthermore, the new AdvancED

standards were used to facilitate the upcoming accreditation transition. It is evident that all varieties of faculty members were included in the process, with the greatest responsibility for the development and implementation of the plan falling to the consulting principal and academic director. This organizational structure is very effective for Stillwater Academy.

- 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?*

Stillwater Academy has ongoing professional development to address the emotional needs of its changing student population. Beyond that, the teachers are able to access the professional development trainings offered by Jordan School District. These are chosen strategically to help promote the items listed on the school improvement plan.

- 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?*

The faculty at Stillwater Academy is invested in the implementation and continued follow through of the school improvement plan under the leadership of the principal and academic director.

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

There is a system-wide spirit of and commitment to productive change and continuous improvement by the faculty members. The school-wide efforts are directed by Kori Meyeski and Brandon Drown, whose dedication to the process is commendable. The faculty members work collaboratively on improvement efforts and seek out opportunities to do so. They feel included and empowered by the process and the current school leadership.

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

There was no evidence that the recommendations made during the last full visit were acted upon or even considered. This is the direct responsibility of the owners of both the school and residential program, as there have been multiple school leadership changes since the last full visit.

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

As stated above there was no evidence that the recommendations made during the last full visit were acted upon or even considered. The new consulting principal

accomplished more toward raising awareness of the recommendations in the past 13 months than can be accounted for in the previous six years.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

Community building is an area of excellence for Stillwater Academy. Through the integration of its residential program, the school is able to develop a sense of community among the students and staff that supports productive and positive change among its student population.

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

Stillwater Academy has ongoing professional development to address the emotional needs of its changing student population. Beyond that, the teachers are able to access the professional development trainings offered by Jordan School District. These are chosen strategically to help promote the items listed on the school improvement plan.

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

The faculty at Stillwater Academy is invested in the implementation and continued follow through of the school improvement plan under the leadership of the principal and academic director.

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

There is a system-wide spirit of and commitment to productive change and continuous improvement by the faculty members. The school-wide efforts are directed by an administration that is dedicated to the process. The faculty work collaboratively on improvement efforts and seek out opportunities to do so. They have felt included and empowered by the process and the current school leadership.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Stillwater Academy for providing professional development for training and collaboration with teachers and therapists about how to work with new student profile.
- The Visiting Team commends Stillwater Academy for the educational leadership of Brandon Drown and Kori Mayeski.
- The Visiting Team commends Stillwater Academy teachers for their investment in the program and engagement with students.
- The Visiting Team commends Stillwater Academy for stepping forward and using new advanced standards and indicators for self-assessment.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Stillwater Academy establish and maintain a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Stillwater Academy develop the technology infrastructure to meet the teaching and learning needs of the school.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Stillwater Academy train teachers in the evaluation, interpretation and use of data.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Stillwater Academy put systems in place to allow for continued and consistent follow-through on the current self-study report, school action plans, and Visiting Team recommendations, regardless of leadership personnel changes.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Stillwater Academy maximize opportunities for greater integration between academic and therapeutic programming.