# The Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

## Summit Academy 1285 East 13200 South Draper, Utah 84020

March 14-15, 2012





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

## Summit Academy 1285 East 13200 South Draper, Utah 84020

March 14-15, 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, March 14-15, 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 Summit 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 Director Steve Crandall is also commended.

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

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

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Tammy Harter	Assistant Director/Assessment Director
Bob Zenter	Elementary Principal
MeriJo McComb	Junior High Principal
Alysha Hathaway	Facilities Manager
Kari Hull	
Lisa McFaden	Administrative Assistant/Board Secretary

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Dr. Kathy Bitner	Junior High Counselor

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### **SUMMIT ACADEMY**

### MISSION STATEMENT

Summit Academy's mission is to provide a rigorous educational environment based on the principles of high academic achievement and specialized instruction for the benefit of all students.

#### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- Summit is a student-centered learning community based on the principles of safety and respect.
- Summit teachers are innovative, committed and motivated to provide quality professional instruction.
- Parental involvement is important to the personal success of each student.
- Summit's curriculum builds from year to year and specializes in core knowledge acquisition and application.

### **DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)**

#### 1. Academic:

Students will develop strategies to promote life-long learning, problem solving, and critical thinking skills preparing them to be college and career ready and have successful futures.

### 2. **Behavioral/Citizenship:**

Students will practice individual responsibility and engage in activities in a safe environment to promote awareness that their decisions affect themselves, others, and their environment.

Date of visit: March 14-15, 2012

### MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. John Goldhardt, Dixie State College/Washington County School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Aimee Hall, School, Good Foundations Academy

DeLaina Tonks, Open High School of Utah

Janese Vance, Mountainville Academy

Melissa Wood, Good Foundations Academy

### VISITING TEAM REPORT

### **SUMMIT ACADEMY**

### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Summit Academy is a Utah charter school organized under the Utah Strategic Planning Act for Educational Excellence (UCA 53A Chapter 1a). Most of the students at the school come from Draper and Sandy. The former Jordan School District authorized the school's original charter on July 15, 2003. It was then re-chartered in 2005 with the State Charter Board as its authorizer.

Summit Academy's founders wanted to provide a quality education to elementary-age students emphasizing academic fundamentals, dynamic student-teacher interaction, and the discovery of each student's unique talents and interests.

- a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?
  - A large majority of the students are proficient in all tested CRT areas. In fact, in comparing the school's scores with the state average, the school's scores are 12-15% higher.
- *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?* 
  - More data is needed with regard to student proficiency rates for students considered economically disadvantaged and those with IEPs. In addition, the school needs to complete the focus group analysis of the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) areas.
- c) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
  - The self-study is accurate and honest. It does reflect the actual strengths and limitations of the school.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Include student success rates for those considered economically disadvantaged and those with IEPs.
- Include focus group analyses and reports.

## CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION (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?

Between May 2009 and March 2011, all staff members were involved in describing and defining six DRSLs. After that, the collaborative focus was on reducing the number of DRSLs to the current two. The staff looked at the DRSLs and determined which were most important for the school and its mission. Then the staff met on several occasions to come up with the DRSLs that fit with the school's mission and vision. All staff members met and were involved in describing and defining DRSLs. Student achievement was the focus of the meetings, and that is what drove the decisions made. It did not appear that parents or community members were aware of the DRSLs or played a part in their development.

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

The school's mission is about high academic achievement and specialized instruction, and both of their DRSLs tie in. The academic DRSL completely aligns with the mission and targets the values the school is trying to incorporate. The behavioral DRSL allows the academic vision to be realized by helping to create the environment that best allows learning to occur.

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

Grade-level teams meet to look at data and evaluate changes they need to make to meet the academic DRSLs. The entire faculty meets monthly and talks about improvements and success in meeting their academic DRSLs. A variety of assessments are given throughout the year to measure academic growth.

The school's UBI team, which consists of team leaders from each grade and the administration, meets twice a month to go over data and talk about the behavior DRSL. Scoreboards for elementary and junior high serve as indicators of the behavioral assessments. Students are awarded tickets for responsible and appropriate behavior, and then these tickets are added to the scoreboards. A fun activity is awarded once 10 tickets in a row are reached. This system also was used to reduce tardiness, and a significant change came about because of this.

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?

According to several staff members, the school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs drive most decisions that are made regarding procedures, polices, and decisions of the school. The school has a positive climate that reflects good behavior on the part of the students. The students enjoy the school and the individualized learning that they feel they are getting here. Many parents, teachers, and staff indicated the same feelings. The staff seems extremely respectful, collaborative, and supportive of the school's mission.

### **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?

Summit Academy spends a great deal of time ensuring curricular collaboration. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens dovetail nicely with Utah Life Skills, and each month one of the habits is the theme for the students. During the 15-minute advisory period, teachers review the seven habits, teaching life skills and study skills simultaneously. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through the use of planners provided by the school. Study skills and life skills are incorporated into the planners and tracking of assignments. Every stakeholder seems to be involved in this process.

Overall, the majority of the teachers have the learning objectives or standards written on the board for the day.

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

The majority of the classrooms appeared to show students engaging in inquiry, problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills and time on task.

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 majority of the curriculum was selected over the past few years via an intensive collaborative process. The departments had large amounts of input in the selection of textbooks and supplemental materials. There is also a great deal of flexibility in adjusting to student needs as necessary. For example, Saxon Math was not netting desired results above sixth grade, so the team met and selected additional materials that better met student needs. The theme for 2011-2012 has been to focus on the DRSLs and not rely solely on textbooks. Teachers are encouraged to supplement materials to fit student needs and support the DRSLs.

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

The school utilizes the YPP weekly progress reports and the NWEA MAP three times a year.

Each grade level has additional assessments that measure student progress, ongoing growth and proficiency of core skills. Trainings are held to ensure that all stakeholders, including students, parents, support staff, counselors and administrators, have access to the data and understand how to interpret it and fill gaps in understanding.

### **Instruction:**

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

Summit Academy teachers use various instructional strategies to keep their students engaged in learning. Some strategies observed were costumes by teachers to learn science classifications, whole-class journal writing for the exploration of the West and what pioneers faced, games such as Jeopardy for review, and violin playing to demonstrate what life was like in Lewis and Clark's time. The Visiting Team found that most of the students were engaged.

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 DRSLs are evident in the teachings of Summit Academy instructors. Summit Academy has developed strategies to implementing them in various ways. UBI is a behavioral program that is an integral part of Summit Academy, and it is a reflection of the DRSL regarding Behavior and Citizenship. Teachers were consistently teaching the Academic DRSL using problem solving and critical thinking. Summit Academy places its students by ability, which allows instructors to help students address their academic needs based on the Academic DRSL. Summit Academy has counselors who meet with students to help them become college and career ready, and the school provides a college and career day in each class to promote lifelong learning.

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?

Summit Academy's professional development is strongly driven by the instructional needs of the teachers. Saxon Math, the Six Traits of Writing, and differentiated instruction are a few of the recent professional development opportunities provided based on instructional needs. There are many opportunities provided for teachers as a whole, as a grade level, or individually throughout the year to gain instructional strategies to support their students through PD360. New teachers are provided with support through the school's TIPS program, which provides amazing support for new

teachers. Summit Academy also provides a Reading Endorsement Program for teachers.

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?

Teachers at Summit Academy are very knowledgeable and proficient in their content areas. Teachers were consistently using real-life applications and experiences in their instruction. Teachers demonstrated a great wealth of knowledge in the areas that were being taught during observations.

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

Technology seems to be in a majority of the classrooms at Summit Academy. Many teachers use document cameras and projectors for their instruction, and also make technology as a part of the curriculum. Mobile computer labs are available for teachers to use in each building. Teachers are able to use the mobile computer labs for center work to reinforce skills in reading and mathematics on the elementary campus.

### **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 staff uses NWEA assessments in reading, language arts, math and science three times a year. They also use DIBELs assessments, Fountas and Pinnell, Yearly Progress Pro, Utah Write, Guided Reading, Saxon Math assessments, as well as teacher summative assessments. The school's expectation is to see a year and a half of growth for each student.

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

Summit Academy uses the NWEA assessments and looks at the progress and proficiency data across the board of each individual student. The school first looks at the data at an administrative level, then at a team leader level, then with each teacher. If a student is not performing, he/she talks to the teacher, who looks at all aspects of the student to see why he/she is not progressing and what should be done to help the student progress. The school also looks at the teachers. If a teacher needs help with instruction to better help his/her students succeed, the school has highly skilled teachers help teachers who are struggling.

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

Summit Academy uses data from the assessments to place students in the appropriate ability group. The school also uses data to determine when students are ready to move to higher ability groups. For those students performing at a lower level, the school assesses their progress weekly to make sure the instruction is helping them progress.

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?

Summit Academy has one professional development day before school starts for reading the data from the NWEA assessments, and another such day during the school year. There are also many team meetings during the school year where the data from all assessments is evaluated. These team meetings are both at grade level and across grade levels.

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

Summit Academy uses assessments to discover the individual needs of each student so that teachers can differentiate their instruction accordingly. When new teachers come into the school they go through their TIPS training, and much of the training is on gathering utilizing data from assessments and how to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of each student.

### **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 leadership team claims that quality instruction its top priority, and the Visiting Team found ample evidence in all grades to support their claim. Quality instruction is the focus of almost every meeting, and of the vast majority of professional learning experiences.

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 major stakeholders are always involved and informed with regard to vital school decisions. Input is listened to and considered before a final decision is made. There was evidence that the leadership team fully utilizes and bases its decisions on effective data and research.

- c) To what extent does the 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?
  - All funds are fully accounted for. School financial records were provided to the Visiting Team, and there appear to be sound accounting principles in place. In addition, resources are allocated based upon the impact they are expected to have on student learning and success, and their alignment with school goals.
- 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 are many leadership opportunities for staff members and teachers at several different levels. The school executive director is astute at delegating responsibilities to capable individuals and allowing them to complete their tasks without micromanaging them. The culture of the school leadership team facilitates participation and input from teachers, parents, and students.
- 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?
  - The school has made a concerted effort to assure that each student has several adult advocates on his/her behalf. The guidance counselors provide direction, support, and help. Many of the teachers have very positive relationships with their students, and thus the students feel a positive affinity with the adults in the building.

#### **School Services:**

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS 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

### **<u>Culture of Continual Improvement:</u>**

- 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?
  - Summit Academy has identified seven areas of improvement for its comprehensive improvement plan. The plan is thorough and touches on multiple areas of need.
- 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?
  - Summit Academy has an extensive professional development program that includes monthly faculty meetings, monthly K-6 and 7-8 team meetings, and grade level meetings. There is a strong teacher evaluation component that includes two administrative evaluations annually for Level 1 teachers in addition to two Peer Mentor observations. Areas of weakness are identified, and resources such as PD360 are available to assist teachers. Teachers watch the PD360 videos and do a reflection that is reviewed by the administration to ensure quality improvement of instruction.
- 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 action plan addresses seven critical areas of improvement in an in-depth manner. Steps to improve each of the seven items are actionable, measurable and will serve to enhance Summit Academy's already high-level program.
- *d)* To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?
  - The administration seems very open to input and makes a heightened effort to solicit feedback and buy-in from most stakeholders, particularly teachers and parents. Summit Academy is nimble and responsive to input that will help improve the school.

### **CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

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

Summit Academy has many programs in place that foster community building. The school has many positive behavior systems that reward students for different things. These include tickets that go along with their ABC-UBI program, Falcon Pride Awards, Dunkin' with Mr. Z, honor roll breakfasts, and auctions, as well as individual classroom incentives. The junior high students study the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens. The counselors help the students who are having a difficult time through friendship clubs, check-in/check-out, boys group, and anti-bullying classes. They work with Draper Police Department Crisis Task Force to practice safe school procedures, and participate in the D.A.R.E. program. The school also participates in a Verbal Judo program that also helps students learn to build relationships. The elementary principal makes sure that he is visible in the students' daily school life, and builds relationships with the students. The counselors and other staff members do the same.

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

Summit Academy has student council for 7-8 grades whose members get input and ideas from student body and communicate frequently with the students. Students are able to participate in many clubs, such as National Junior High Honor Society, and have opportunities to play sports such as basketball, and soccer. The school has college- and career-ready resources to emphasize importance of college, and uses technology to build the school community for students with websites and grading systems. The students feel that their teachers are available for them in many different ways.

c) To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative selfstudy process on behalf of students?

Parent surveys are given each year, but responses are not visible in the collaborative self-study. When the Visiting Team asked parents whether they knew about the self-study, they had never seen it before. Parent involvement at Summit Academy is tremendous, and any issues are addressed and handled in a manor favorable to all parties involved.

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

The identification of school improvement areas took place with the use of teachers and leaders analyzing student data and some survey data. The school communicates the information to teachers in faculty meetings, in person, in committee meetings, and through the use of electronic communication. Parents are kept informed through newsletters and e-mail. While the school is making attempts and methods to communicate to parents, some parents told the Visiting Team that they do not get informed about such issues.

## CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends Summit Academy for providing students with individualized and specialized instruction to enhance and improve learning.
- The Visiting Team commends Summit Academy for the effective use of the Utah Behavior Initiative (UBI). The Visiting Team was impressed with how respectful and responsible the students were.
- The Visiting Team commends Summit Academy for developing a positive school culture, and for developing and maintaining a physically and emotionally safe environment for students.
- The Visiting Team commends Summit Academy for the obvious collaboration and collegiality among staff members and with parents and students. The Visiting Team was told by parents and students that they feel like they are listened to.
- The Visiting Team commends Summit Academy, its professional teachers and its support staff for their professionalism, and for the use of engaging instructional strategies to enhance and improve student learning.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that Summit Academy complete the focus group analysis and reports (Mission, Beliefs and DRSLs; Curriculum; Instruction; Assessment; Leadership and Organization; Culture of Continuous Improvement; and Community Building) using the NSSE (National Study of School Evaluation) rubrics. The Visiting Team further recommends that parents and students be included with this process.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be revised so that it includes a clear timeline for implementation and who is responsible for each action item.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Summit Academy develop the means to fully involve and engage all stakeholders, especially parents, and that the school continue to develop effective two-way communication between the school and parents.