

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Turn-About Ranch
280 North 300 East
P.O. Box 345
Escalante, Utah 84726-0345**

April 11, 2011



**Utah State Office of Education
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P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Turn-About Ranch
280 North 300 East
P.O. Box 345
Escalante, Utah 84726-0345**

April 11, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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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, April 11, 2011, 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 Turn-About Ranch 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 Academic Director Karen Munson is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Turn-About Ranch 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 Turn-About Ranch.

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State Superintendent
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*Board of Regents Appointments

*** CMAC Representative Appointment

*****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

12/28/2010

TURN-ABOUT RANCH
ASPEN EDUCATION GROUP

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Patty Evans.....Senior Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer
Ruth Moore Senior Vice President, Corporate Compliance
Karen Fitzhugh.....Senior Vice President, Residential Schools and Programs
Thomas Hopkins Vice President and Controller

TURN ABOUT RANCH
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Academics

Munson, Karen..... Academic Director
 Brent Cottam..... Teacher
 Ken Kreider..... Teacher
 Gene King..... Teacher

Administration

Luke Hatch..... Executive Director
 Michelle Lindsay Clinical Director, M.S. LPC
 Lori Beebe..... Administrative Assistant
 RaeAnne Knight..... Financial Manager
 Annette Ormond..... Operations Director
 Jamie Lyman..... Admissions Assistant
 Yancy Whipple Admissions Director

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 Steve Gessig..... Program Supervisor
 Marty Ormond Lodge Program Director
 Wayne Stinson Program Supervisor
 Dave Treanor Program Supervisor

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Residential Counselors
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 Tom Alvey
 Shelly Alvey
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Ransom Owens
 Kim Porter
 Peggy Pratt
 Dannie Pratt
 Dale Richards
 Rex Stone
 Jimmy Woolsey
Therapeutic Team
 Mark Anderson
 Maria Oman
 ReNae Singletary
 Shane Young, Intern

TURN-ABOUT RANCH

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Turn-About Ranch School is to supplement academic success to the already successful ranch life experience.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Classroom structure, clearly defined standards, and positive role models enable students to achieve positive academic performance.
- The educational component of Turn-About Ranch provides a solid academic program where learning is valued and academics are viewed as a necessary part of present day life.
- Classroom time and tutorial interactions provide students with opportunities to develop skills required for academic success.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Use effective communication skills
2. Take responsibility for personal actions
3. Be a lifelong learner

Date of visit: April 11, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Accreditation Consultant, USOE/Northwest, Visiting Team
Chairperson

Joette Hayden, Falcon Ridge Academy

VISITING TEAM REPORT

TURN-ABOUT RANCH

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

The philosophy of Turn-About Ranch can be summarized in six simple words: Real ranch. Real values. Real change.

At Turn-About Ranch, great emphasis is placed on providing authentic experiences through which students can learn and grow. Because it is a real, working cattle ranch, students come to appreciate that what they do isn't "busywork" or punishment—they are completing important tasks that are essential to the continued productive operation of the ranch.

Turn-About Ranch is a Christian-based residential treatment program. The school teaches traditional ethics and morals and reminds troubled teens how important the values of honesty, respect, teamwork, and accountability are to their success. Turn-About Ranch serves boys and girls in grades 8-12 in Escalante, Utah.

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

The school serves a wide range of student needs, from special education to gifted and talented students. Progress was evident toward students achieving all DRSL goals.

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

The school should consider setting benchmarks for Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT) scores so that competent students are not retested. There is a tendency for high-achieving students to score lower on post-testing, which skews the school's averages. It is not a fair representation of what is learned. Data from the Goal Books are a better line of evidence for student progress. Students in need of remedial help show gains on WRAT.

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

Limited student achievement data gave a negative impression that was not indicative of the success of the school. The evidence for the success of the school was greatly enhanced by the visit.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Consider separating data for students who demonstrate competency on pre-test from those students who need remediation.
- Emphasizing student achievement based on DRSL progress.

**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?*

The school is an integral part of a larger, well-organized residential treatment program. There is a sense of purpose that supports student learning.

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

There is ample alignment with the mission, beliefs and DRSLs. The program is about positive change, and success in school is an important experience in the lives of the students.

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

The school uses Goal Books, which show individual students' progress in achieving all DRSLs. There is good data that students are learning.

- 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 is part of a well-coordinated program. The culture of the school is very caring and promotes positive change in the lives 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 Visiting Team observed that Turn-About Ranch demonstrated evidence of coursework alignment with the Utah Core Curriculum. The academic administration, as well as the teachers on campus, have developed a full range of course offerings that are reflective of the requirements and standards based upon each of the core areas. The core teachers observed (Karen Munson and Ken Kreider) were able to verbalize and then demonstrate how they use the core in day-to-day teaching. As the academic model involves a blend of both direct instruction and independent study work, students feel as though they are getting a good balance of educational delivery. Updated syllabus information with evidence of core alignment (such as curriculum mapping) was not provided and did not appear to be in place or evident. This would be very beneficial in providing future evidence of core alignment to accompany classroom observation. As a therapeutic boarding school, Turn-About Ranch has blended academic and non-academic time to provide life skills opportunities and activities for its students.

The Visiting Team also observed that the staff members at Turn-About Ranch work collaboratively together in their treatment team meetings, which include key members of the academic and clinical team. Teachers, therapists, and residential staff members are invited to attend and discuss specific life skills and experiences that each student needs.

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

The Visiting Team observed a curriculum at Turn-About Ranch that engaged most students in inquiry, problem solving and higher-order thinking. Teaching and class time occur in small group settings where students have the opportunity to receive individual attention as well as collaborate together. Problem solving was emphasized, as evidenced by the students describing the steps they take when frustrated with a peer or academic issue. Direct correlation between life skills problem solving/higher-level thinking and academic problem solving was blended together in a system with which students seemed comfortable with and in which they demonstrated skills.

Turn-About Ranch students have had opportunities to participate in community education through the use of field trips to local historic sites and many experiential learning activities in the outdoors.

It was noted that additional teaching opportunities and learning situations could be enhanced by additional planning and completion of these alternate educational

experiences. Understanding the need for student safety, this would be done with collaboration and support by the treatment team.

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

The Visiting Team observed that the teaching staff at Turn-About Ranch would benefit from increased collaboration on development of school DSRLs and are still working to find tools of measurement and data collection to track progress and monitor effectiveness. Current testing does not adequately reflect growth and progress of students, and there is inconsistency in when and how the test is administered. Some students are receiving both incoming and outgoing testing, while others are not. It is recommended that current classroom information be used to collect additional informal data to support the DRSLs of the school, and the addition of rubrics, surveys, and other data collection tools would be helpful in the evaluation of DRSL growth. All areas of the program support the development of social skills, due to the nature of life skills support and therapeutic environment present both in and out of the classroom. The sense of caring and concern for each student's needs was present in the time spent with students and staff. The defined program and curriculum supports the development of contributing citizens but lacks the longitudinal data to give evidence regarding long-term success

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

The Visiting Team observed, to some extent, that the staff of Turn-About Ranch is using assessments to drive instruction. Students are expected to complete incoming formalized testing upon arrival, and to retake it at the end of their stay at Turn-About Ranch. The initial test results are used to help place students in appropriate courses, and to help with levels of instruction for the teachers. It was not clear whether the follow-up testing was viewed as helpful, since conflicting test scores were reported that showed students' skills decreasing instead of increasing.

The staff members at Turn-About Ranch want all students to learn and be successful. There appears to be a feeling of "lack of time" or being "overwhelmed" when it comes to assessment, and it would be helpful for the academic director to provide additional support in this area.

Turn-About Ranch has a good student support program in the use of peers to act as mentors and "buddies" when assigned. Increased use of informal assessments are recommended for use as indicators of student achievement.

Instruction:

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

The school is part of a well coordinated program. The culture of the school is very caring and promotes positive change in the lives of the students.

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

The staff uses a wide range of strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students. The best example of explicitly teaching the DRSLs is the Goal Books in which students keep track of their progress.

- 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 is quite small. There is a continuing need for professional development.

- 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?*

The teachers are very skilled in delivering instruction. They are individually quite strong 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 school has limited Internet access for students because of the need for supervision and filtering. Progress has been made since the last full team visit in providing more technology resources for teachers.

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 observed that the school-wide assessment used is the WISC, and that this is meant to gather baseline data and provide support or change for grade-level work.

Due to the private status of the school, there are no state testing requirements. ACT and SAT prep and testing (at local testing site) are used as needed and as offered. The teachers assess students on a regular basis through informal observation. Additional informal assessment data would be helpful in building goals and profile data. There is an adequate level of mastery expected, and students have the opportunity for re-teaching and extra time as needed to achieve this mastery. The teachers also collaborate and communicate students' specific expectations through their weekly meetings and daily contact.

- 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 Visiting Team observed that Turn-About Ranch has compiled some data obtained from the formalized testing, but has yet to assess that data into useable information to drive achievement or increase effective teaching. Testing results included in the self-study show a conflict and discrepancy in student learning as many scored decreased on the exit testing. It was discussed that issues of motivation, importance and apathy could have contributed to these unexpected scores. Turn-About Ranch students are actively engaged in daily coursework, with weekly and monthly expectations set by the core teacher; self-paced assessments and required to re-learn standards and concepts as necessary to meet the minimum mastery requirements.

The Visiting Team also observed the ability of students to graduate from either their home high school with their diploma or from Turn-About Ranch as appropriate, and it was encouraged to use this graduation data to provide additional information to indicate the extent of school-wide and individual progress.

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

The Visiting Team observed that Turn-About Ranch has a professional staff devoted to the success of the school and the success of each student in meeting the school's academic expectations. The level of caring and dedication was evident in all staff interactions during the visit. Additional data obtained through increased academic counseling and career planning could be beneficial in helping the school to develop a more well rounded profile and overview of who the school serves and its changing needs.

The Academic Director (Karen Munson) offers some academic counseling, and appears to do so with accuracy, care and concern. Additional support for the director in this area would provide increased collaboration and data that could also be used in school-wide assessment and recommendations for improvement.

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

The Visiting Team observed that the teachers at Turn-About Ranch participate in some professional development programs, but that funding and time were limited in this area. The school is highly encouraged to plan continual and ongoing professional development to allow teachers time for collaboration and discussion of school goals. Additional time and planning are recommended to enhance student assessment strategies and to increase opportunities for students to display mastery of content knowledge in the classroom. Currently, student assessment is mainly measured using individual teacher grading and daily classroom observation. Development of course syllabi in conjunction with core standards would help provide a link with student expectations and the mastery required. Some evidence of informal "portfolio" assessment was observed, and it was discussed how to further develop and use this as a tool to monitor student growth.

- 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 believes that the DRSLs identified for Turn-About Ranch's education department need to be revisited and made more measurable, and data needs to be obtained and used to help guide and define the action steps and growth in the school. Initial positive collaboration is present, and all teachers and administrators involved in the school goals are striving for student success. Discussion on the purpose and need for DRSLs was part of the visit, and it was advised that a small number of DRSLs that are identified with strong data collection, tracking, and planning would be helpful in continued growth of the school and its students.

The Visiting Team observed that the school is emerging in its knowledge of how to track and assess DRSLs, and that good discussion is taking place on immediate steps to start this process in identifying scoring tools.

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?*

Quality instruction is fostered by the entire school staff. The climate is purposeful, caring and respectful.

- 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 principal has developed a student weekly academic progress report that is available to parents online. It is a detailed monitoring system that provides for each student. The school staff needs more professional development on collaboration. The teachers are effective in their instruction, but are afforded little time to work together on school improvement plans.

- 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 principal is doing an effective job of leading the school and communicating school needs to the management. The school is making positive gains in terms of students achieving DRSL 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?*

The principal is a part of the teaching staff. There is commitment and participation by other members of the school staff, but the lion's share of the responsibilities for the accreditation visit were discharged by the principal. With a small staff, this is not a matter of not sharing responsibility, but rather of the time involved in preparing the new self-study. The teachers are fully aware of the DRSL process and are measuring student progress.

- 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 built into its program the nurturing and support of each student by a staff member. The environment is one of mutual respect, and the values of an extended family are clearly evident.

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

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?*

The principal attended the USOE training for Collaboration for Student Achievement. The self-study and school improvement plan contained all the required elements. This was the second full team visit with the current model, and there was ample evidence from the Goal Books that all three DRSLs were fully institutionalized.

- 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?*

There is a continuing need for a professional development plan that focuses on the school's goals for improvement. The principal attended state training, but all professional development activities have been centered on individuals. Collaboration training for the staff is recommended.

- 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?*

As will be seen in the recommendations, the action plans need to be reworked. This is not a matter of commitment, but rather of the need for adjustment in the organization of time and resources.

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

The school wants to continually improve. Turn-About Ranch has assembled a competent and professional teaching staff. As a group the school needs to have time allotted for reflecting on strategies that will meet student needs.

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

The Goal Books are an effective measure of student success in achieving DRSL goals.

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

One previous recommendation was to improve and add to curriculum. This has been addressed by allowing students to take courses from BYU Independent Studies on an as-needed basis. The second recommendation was to incorporate technology into the school learning process. Additional computers have been purchased and a computer lab has been set up. However, there is still no science lab space for microscopes. The third recommendation was to improve staff training. Some work has been done, but this area is a continuing recommendation for school improvement.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

Both strong bonds with the community and positive working relationships within the school have been established.

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

The philosophy of Turn-About Ranch is for the students to learn responsibility by participating in the working ranch. School is but a part of the larger treatment plan.

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

The principal is to be commended for her efforts in making the accreditation process inclusive. She has not had many staff members to delegate to. The process was a good one for Turn-About Ranch.

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

The school communicates the accomplishments of its students to parents. As a community partner, Turn-About Ranch is vital to the local Escalante community and is its largest employer. The school enjoys a positive relationship with its neighbors.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Turn-About Ranch for the hands-on leadership approach of Karen Munson. She has developed effective academic progress reports to share with parents.
- The Visiting Team commends Turn-About Ranch for creating a safe, structured and peaceful environment where there is seamless teamwork between the school and residential programs.
- The Visiting Team commends Turn-About Ranch for using student Goal Books. The Goal Books enhance the indicators and show clear evidence of progress on all three DRSLs.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Turn-About Ranch rework its action plans so that the overall goal is student progress on achieving DRSLs. It is further recommended that there be an action plan for implementing each DRSL. If the fourth DRSL “Problem Solver” is added, it should have its own action plan.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Turn-About Ranch develop a professional development plan that includes training and time for teacher collaboration.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Turn-About Ranch collect and report more student learning data for the school profile. Benchmarks can be established for the Wide Range Achievement Test so that competent students are not required to retest. Not all data collection needs to be formal. Teacher assessments and examples of student work could also be included in future school profiles.