

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Valley High School
325 West 11000 South
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

May 2, 2012



**Utah State Office of Education
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P.O. Box 144200
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**Valley High School
325 West 11000 South
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

May 2, 2012

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Utah State Board of Education.....	iv
Jordan School District Board of Education and District Administration.....	1
Valley High School Administration and Staff	2
Valley High School Mission Statement, Belief Statements, and DRSLs	3
Members of the Visiting Team	4
Visiting Team Report.....	5
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	5
Chapter 2: Northwest Accreditation Commission (Northwest)	
Teaching and Learning Standards.....	5
Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs).....	5
Curriculum	6
Instruction	7
Assessment.....	7
Chapter 3: Northwest Support Standards.....	8
Leadership and Organization	8
School Services.....	9
Facilities and Finances	10
Chapter 4: Northwest School Improvement Standard	10
Chapter 5: Community Building.....	11
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	13

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, May 2, 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 Valley 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 Donald Link is also commended.

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

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

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*****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

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VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
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VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Valley High School is to empower individual students as agents of their learning and success.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Academic success is possible for all students.
- Certain students need an alternative to traditional schools in order to be successful the shared vision and mission of the school is on student success.
- All students need to feel that they are valued, respected, and safe.
- The curriculum should connect to real-life application of knowledge and skills that help students link their education to their future.
- The faculty and staff must maintain a commitment to improvement.
- A collaborative effort is the best way to improve student performance.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Thinking and Reasoning
2. Employability
3. Communication
4. Character and Social Responsibility

Date of visit: May 2, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Northwest Accreditation Commission and USOE Accreditation
Consultant, Visiting Team Chair

Scott Carson, Assistant Principal, Landmark High School, Nebo School District

Sharon Kemp, CTE Director, Two Rivers High School, Weber School District

Matt Webb, Principal Dale Young Community High School, Box Elder School
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VISITING TEAM REPORT

VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Valley High School is the alternative high school for the Jordan and Canyons School Districts. It is located in South Jordan in the Jordan School District, and is staffed by the Jordan School District. The school accepts 11th and 12th graders. For the purposes of accreditation, it includes Jordan's Long-term Home and Hospital Program and its Teen Parent Program.

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

Standardized testing does not measure DRSL progress. Teacher- and school-based assessments are critical for showing student success.

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

The Visiting Team recommends that Valley High School collect and report data on student progress on learning DRSLs.

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

The 2012 self-study gives many examples of the ways teachers reach out to students to help them be successful. The school also identified the need to develop school-wide assessments.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

See the recommendations section below.

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 has high academic for students who have not been successful in traditional school settings. There is a shared vision and mission to help students become more responsible for the learning. Numerous supports are in place to accommodate different start and end times for the students and staff.

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

There is strong alignment of mission and beliefs to help students find success in school.

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

The most explicit example of measuring a DRSL indicator is the writing portfolios students develop with assistance from their English teachers. The staff as a whole has yet to reach an agreement as to what, how, and when school-wide DRSL assessments will be implemented.

- 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 is clearly evident in the culture of the school that students need to learn to make more responsible choices academically and socially. There is mutual respect between students and staff, and there is a belief in practice that all students can learn.

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?*

There is clear alignment between the core, the new Common Core and the Utah Life Skills.

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

Thinking and Reasoning is a school-wide DRSL. All students are asked questions that require reflection and application of prior knowledge.

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

There is great teamwork among the staff. They are working together to help students achieve success on DRSLs.

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

Teachers and counselors have developed classroom assessments that measure student progress.

Instruction:

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

There are numerous strategies to help students succeed. The faculty is commended for the accommodations made.

- 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?*

At the classroom level the DRSLs are being explicitly taught. The counselors also have good data on work release and service learning activities.

- 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 professional development plan is responsive to the needs of the teachers. In-service is offered multiple times to accommodate the differing schedules of the staff.

- 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 highly proficient in their content areas. They are willing to change strategies to meet the diverse needs of their 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 technology used in the school is up to date in classrooms and available to students in a lab setting.

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 classroom assessments are ahead of the school-wide assessments. The best example of a school-wide assessment is the writing portfolios, where all students but not all teachers have a common assessment.

- 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 is highly engaged in sharing progress with students. Multiple times during the year, students are apprised of their graduation status by counselors.

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

The teachers know very well where their students are in terms of meeting expectations.

- 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 seemed poised to take the next step in agreeing how school-wide assessments will be implemented.

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

There is agreement that the capacity to decide exists within the staff. In the near future the faculty must meet to reach the agreements as to the school-wide assessments.

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?*

Teachers and counselors at Valley High School said they felt empowered to do what is necessary to help their students be successful. Students stated that teachers expected them to use prior learning to complete assignments successfully. The school leadership team has established an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning.

- 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?*

Teachers and counselors engage in data-driven decision making. The collection and analysis of data is used help them improve learning and solve problems, as reflected in the dramatic GPA increase for the school's 11th grade students.

- 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 Visiting Team observed a school in which departments, programs, and individual teachers felt empowered by the school leadership to make decisions that support the student learning environment. The climate in the building was one of cooperation and vision among all stakeholders. The building, by design, supports an inviting, safe learning environment. All stakeholders at the school voiced praise for the district and the administration as they described the technology and other tools available for support learning.

- 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?*

It was obvious that every stakeholder felt enabled to share in the overall education of the Valley High School student body. The entire building radiated a climate that said, "This is where students come to learn and be successful."

- 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?*

Valley High School's extended teaching schedule, 9:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., appeared to place the main responsibility for this formal student contact with the Counseling Department. Counselors maintain office hours on a rotating schedule that allows them to meet with each student a minimum of once per term. They stated that they usually met with their students two or three times in a term. Valley has an on-site school psychologist that also maintains a full student-contact load. Teachers appeared to work closely with students in their classrooms to support the school-wide expectations for student learning.

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?*

Valley High School has created a school improvement plan based on the Northwest school improvement model. The departmental analyses are thorough and honest. There is evidence that the school made efforts to involve parents along with teachers and support staff on the focus groups that led to the development of school action plans. The action plans are comprehensive and supported by the action plans.

- 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?*

Valley High School has a professional development plan that is tailored to fit within a challenging daily schedule. Staff members and administrators collaborate to identify common school goals. The staff meets every day between 12:00 and 12:30 p.m. During this time staff members discuss progress toward goals as well as necessary support and additional resources. Teachers also work together to find times to meet on smaller departmental teams in order to collaborate around common curriculum issues. The school has had a particular emphasis this year on how to best integrate technology to support school goals and initiatives. Teachers are enthusiastic about this training and support.

- 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?*

There exists a supportive culture at Valley High that encourages teachers to seek out new and better ways to affect students in and outside of the classroom. Teachers indicated that they feel free and empowered to try new things and to group together to

facilitate positive change as a school. The administration allows teacher-initiated change to take root and develop before becoming involved beyond supporting. This helps to maintain ownership and commitment to positive change in the school.

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

District mandates are causing the school to adopt a more structured teacher collaboration model built around the professional learning community model. Teachers seemed supportive, even though Valley High's unique schedule makes this a real challenge.

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

Literacy improvement has continued to be the focus at Valley High. Direct instruction on reading skills is included by all teachers within the curriculum.

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

All the major recommendations of 2006 Visiting Team have been addressed, most explicitly the construction and opening of the new school building.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The school takes a great amount of pride in its service learning program. Students, teachers and staff members are donating their time to attend and help with the service learning project on Fridays, when students are not required to be in school and teachers are not required to work.

The school has found that the service learning program provides a way for students who attend during the morning session and students who attend the afternoon session, as well as teachers who work at different times of the school day, to collaborate with each other to accomplish a common goal that falls in within the service learning program.

The school has also begun, supported and fostered a PTSA that takes advantage of community and parent involvement in the workings of the school.

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

The school has set up a common time in the master schedule when all staff members can collaborate with each other on the DRSLs and the formative assessments that drive student growth. During this time, staff members are able to meet and talk about teaching strategies that may be implemented and discuss different students and their needs.

The school seems to take great pride in the employability part of the school focus. All staff members design parts of their lessons to include an employability element. Staff members are using the information garnered from the career lab, UtahFutures, and the scholarship lab to push students in the areas of employability that they need.

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

The self-study, while meeting all of the required state recommendations as set forth by Northwest (such as school data, mission statements and focus groups), does not include much about formative assessments, positive teacher-student relationship building, and program and curriculum development. This information shows what teachers and staff members do to gauge student growth using the DRSLs as a blueprint, and is invaluable in understanding students' growth and even the deficiencies that students and the school as a whole may be experiencing.

School-wide formative assessments are not noted in the self-study, but they are being done at Valley High School and have proven to be a very important part of the school. As a side note, teachers, administrators, and counselors work very hard to build relationships with students, and they truly know where students are both academically and personally.

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

The school makes use of awards for student of the month, where students are given positive attention for success that they may have experienced at Valley High School. The service learning program is also used to recognize specific students and overall school improvement. The school uses the service learning program to promote leadership skills and collaboration.

Yearly state assessment data is published in local newspapers and in school district publications. School literary publications are used to showcase writing and language arts growth. And the school newspaper is used to showcase different student and program successes. The school art program is used to promote and celebrate student artwork. The artwork is hung in various prominent locations throughout the school; some artwork is used for the cover pages for the literary magazine and the school newspaper, as well as the yearly school yearbook.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Valley High School for organizing and maintaining a volunteer-driven service learning program that accommodates different student and staff start and end times, and provides students with leadership, peer collaboration and organization skills.
- The Visiting Team commends Valley High School for the quality of the direct instruction provided by teachers to students.
- The Visiting Team commends Valley High School's faculty for its dedication to the success of students. The Visiting Team heard from many students that the Valley teachers are making a positive difference in their lives.
- The Visiting Team commends the Valley High School Language Arts Department for the thoroughness of its departmental analysis. The 12th grade English Writing Portfolio is exemplary.
- The Visiting Team commends the Valley High School faculty members for the high expectations, with supports, that they have for student learning.
- The Visiting Team commends Valley High School for the flexibility of scheduling that personalizes education for its students.
- The Visiting Team commends Valley High School's administrative team for empowering teachers to collaborate on curriculum development. It is clearly evident that decisions are made in the best interest of students.
- The Visiting Team commends the Valley High School faculty and staff for giving of their time above and beyond the terms of their contracts to extend learning opportunities for students.
- The Visiting Team commends the Valley High School faculty for teaching students to use prior knowledge and for integrating skills across disciplines.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Valley High School collect and report data on student progress on achieving DRSLs.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Valley High School develop school-wide assessments for monitoring student progress on DRSLs. This will require collaboration among the whole faculty to reach agreements.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Valley High School increase parental participation in school improvement efforts.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Valley High School increase student and faculty recognition programs.