

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**West Ridge Academy  
5500 West Bagley Park Road  
West Jordan, Utah 84088**

**March 15, 2011**



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

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**West Ridge Academy  
5500 West Bagley Road  
West Jordan, Utah 84088**

**March 15, 2011**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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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 15, 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 West Ridge 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 Paul Keene is also commended.

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

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

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\*Board of Regents Appointments

\*\*CMAC Representative Appointment

\*\*\*\*Charter School Representative Appointment

\*\*UCAT Representative

\*\*\*\*USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

12/28/2010

**WEST RIDGE ACADEMY**  
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Louise Jorgensen.....	Member
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**WEST RIDGE ACADEMY**

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James H. McMaster ..... Director of Events & Promotions  
Jared S. Hamner ..... Director of Mid-West Operations  
John Stohlton ..... Director of Fundraising  
Paul Keene ..... Director of Academics  
Amy Whittaker..... LCSW, Clinical Director  
Daniel E. Griffiths, CPA..... Chief Financial Officer  
Paul D. Watson ..... CIO/Director, Business Development  
Guy Hardcastle..... Director, Business Development/Admissions

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Ludmil Manov, M.D. .... Psychiatrist  
Eric K. Allred..... Staff  
Lori Bagley ..... Staff  
Jacob Gibson..... Staff  
Rachel Lyons ..... Staff  
Jeff Murdock..... Staff  
John M. Ogden..... Staff  
Frank M. Rees..... Staff

**Admissions Staff**

Jared S. Hamner ..... Director of Midwest Operations  
Lynn Smith..... Admissions Specialist

**Academics Staff**

Paul Keene ..... Principal  
Mike Moffet ..... Vice Principal  
Natalie Keefer ..... Registrar  
Julie Lund..... Executive Assistant, Girls Basketball Coach  
Russ Kruse ..... Systems Administrator  
Wendy Ballard ..... Parent Liaison, Coach  
Mark Gardner..... Math, Basketball Coach

Sandra Hirschi.....Teacher  
Jay Honey.....Teacher  
Jamie Keefer ..... Athletic Director, School Staff  
Stacey Leak.....Teacher  
Lisa Moeller ..... English Teacher  
Stephen Porter.....Teacher  
Christopher Woods ..... Music Instructor

**Recreation Therapy**

John Webb .....Therapeutic Recreation Director  
Eli (Stephen) Kerr ..... Recreation Therapist

# **WEST RIDGE ACADEMY SCHOOL**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of West Ridge Academy, in collaboration with parents and community, is to prepare all students to become productive, contributing members of society by providing high quality instruction and curriculum in a caring, safe environment.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- Education enhances the quality of life and is essential for a strong and free democracy.
- An effective educational system is responsive to a changing society.
- The community, educators, parents and students are partners in education.
- All people have dignity, worth, value and must be treated with respect.
- All students are entitled to an appropriate education that addresses individual needs and fosters self worth.
- An environment suited to the age and development of students is essential to the instruction and decision making process.
- The best interest of students will guide educational decisions.
- All students can learn.
- In teaching and learning, the process, content and results are all important.
- A comprehensive and ongoing evaluation process is essential.
- All students are capable of demonstrating responsibility and accountability.
- Learning extends beyond the classroom and is a life-long process.

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

1. Character Development
2. Growth and Progress
3. Effective Communication

Date of visit: March 15, 2011

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

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

Judith Jacques, Island View RTC

Pat Murdoch, Oak Grove School

## **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

### **WEST RIDGE ACADEMY**

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

West Ridge Academy is a K-12 accredited residential school for boys and girls on a 77-acre parcel of land in West Jordan, Utah near the Oquirrh Mountains. West Ridge has two separate sets of facilities, one for young men and one for young women. Each campus has modern, clean, comfortable cottages, school facilities, administration, treatment offices, commercial kitchens, cafeterias, athletic facilities and more. The population consists mainly of students at risk of not graduating due to academic deficits who are also dealing with therapeutic and clinical issues.

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

The economic climate has had an effect on the number of students enrolled at the school over the last several years. The number of students has declined and, due to teacher layoffs, Aventa, an accredited online learning program, has been institutionalized into the program. The students do not like the computer program and would like to have teachers in the classroom for all subjects. The reason for implementing the software (i.e., as a supplemental teaching model due to economic reasons) was not fully explained to the students.

Principal Paul Keene was called up to serve in the military for a year during the accreditation process, and the process suffered somewhat while he was gone. The principal finished the process when he returned, doing most of the work himself since some staff had changed and the project was not continued during his time out of the country.

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

The accreditation process and profile were all completed, but parts of the projects/compilations were not included in the book. Due to the aforementioned interruptions in the process, some unit descriptions, results of studies and compilation data was not included in the book, but all the data was completed and the principal had everything.

According to the National School Self-Study format, the data in the book should be summary information, with the entire compilation ready at hand.

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

The staff members of West Ridge Academy did an excellent job of describing who they are and what they do. In-depth studies, informational records and designed curricula have been completed, and these do a good job of serving the student population. Using Aventa software to supplement the school's diminished staff is a creative, yet allowable, short-term fix.

Collaboration between teachers is an area of growth and has been affected by the economy.

Using the DRSL books consistently with the students is an excellent way to institutionalize these on a consistent basis. Again, collaboration between teacher and students daily/weekly with the DRSL books is part of working together on a team project.

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

- Include information on the frequency with which teacher will use DRSL books to assess student progress.
- Include information on the effectiveness of the Aventa curriculum and its use with students.

## **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?*

There is a shared vision for the school that is rooted in the mission statement, belief statements and DRSLs. The school is concerned with the personal development of its students as well as academic gains.

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

It is clearly evident that the school's mission and beliefs are aligned to support the DRSLs.

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

The school has developed rubrics for each of its three DRSLs. There is a rubric for each indicator for each DRSL.

- 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?*

A caring and safe environment is provided for students at West Ridge Academy to facilitate student learning.

### **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?*

Several DRSL indicators are closely aligned with Utah Life Skills.

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

Critical thinking is an indicator under the Growth and Progress DRSL, which is taught to all students.

- 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 curriculum does focus on the DRSLs. The teaching staff is quite small, so departments tend to consist of only one member. However, teachers do collaborate regarding the progress of students through the program.

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

The pieces are in place for school-wide assessments using the DRSL rubrics. The teachers need to reach consensus on the frequency with which the DRSL assessments will be applied.

### **Instruction:**

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

The teachers are very accommodating toward different learning styles and adjust their strategies to meet the needs of their 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 DRSL rubrics are fully developed for each indicator for each DRSL.

- 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?*

There is room to improve in developing a long-term professional development plan. The school has experienced a decrease in student population, which has had an impact on the budget for professional development time.

- 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 well prepared and knowledgeable in their subject areas. Where areas of the curriculum are understaffed, the school supplements with distance learning from an accredited software provider.

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

There are new computers in the library. The teachers use up-to-date software for grading and making progress notes on students.

### **Assessment:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Classroom and school-wide assessments are in place. Expectations for student achievement are clear.

- 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 DRSL rubrics are used. Their school-wide use can be strengthened by having the teachers agree on how often the students will be assessed on DRSL progress.

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

There are good examples of this. Adjustments are made to the number and type of online courses offered. A math teacher was added because of need for face-to-face instruction.

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

There is room to improve in developing a long-range professional development plan.

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

The organizational agreement hinges on the teachers using the DRSL rubrics in a timely and consistent manner.

### **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?*

Communication between West Ridge staff members is very open, and the staff meets regularly to discuss student issues. All staff members are trained in the policy and procedures of the school. The student/parent handbooks include practices outlined by the staff and expectations of the student and parent. The students definitely like and respect the teaching staff, as outlined in their complaints about the computer software. They want teachers in the classroom, working individually with them.

While Mr. Keene was away, the staff continued to operate on the principles and guidelines he had set up. This speaks well of a committed, talented staff.

- 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?*

Based on the communication of the staff in regular meetings, new students are tested in academic areas, and progress is based on achievements in the classroom. CRT

testing, MAP testing and other academic end-of-quarter testing is consistent throughout the program. Students enter with multiple clinical and academic tests, and additional testing is administered on an individual student basis.

- 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?*

Use of the computer software to supplement teachers in the classroom was an effective way to handle fewer teachers and still provide an effective learning environment. Having the DRSLs available in booklet form for constant student reminders and “buy in” is an excellent way to align goals and study improvements.

- 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?*

Letting the students honestly, and without restrictions, tell how they felt regarding the computer software was very empowering to the students. It allowed them to feel safe complaining about a subject without fear of repercussions. The students, overall, are pleased with the teaching and administration staff. They feel they are listened to and have a say in their education plan.

- 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 student/teacher ratio is 15:1, so each student receives individual attention from the teacher. Between the teaching and admin staff, every student is well known, and student progress is monitored with weekly evaluation meetings. The home room teacher signs off on the DRSL booklet often and discusses students’ achievements.

### **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?*

West Ridge 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. A wider variety of faculty members should have greater responsibility in the development and implementation of the school's plan, so that it is neither the work and vision nor the responsibility of one person. Delegating responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the improvement plan will also allow for a more systematic review and revision of the process on an ongoing basis.

- 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?*

Currently, West Ridge has only identified one School Improvement Goal—focusing on MAPS testing—which will be helpful in basing future improvement goal decisions in student achievement data. However, through a more thorough departmental analysis, West Ridge and its faculty will be able to identify additional school improvement goals that will provide greater alignment with a more robust professional development 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?*

As previously stated, West Ridge should conduct a more thorough departmental analysis in order to identify a more well-rounded set of improvement goals. There is a sufficient amount of commitment to the action plan as it is currently written.

- 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 both by the Residential Program and the School itself. The school-wide efforts are directed by Paul Keene, whose dedication to the process is commendable. The faculty members work collaboratively on improvement efforts and seek out opportunities to do so.

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

West Ridge Academy has achieved many of its goals from the initially developed action plan. These include the implementation of MAPS testing in an effort to collect and utilize empirical data to identify strengths and weaknesses of the students and building a cooperative interaction among school, parents, and other entities. Both of these items have seen considerable gains and, in the spirit of continuous improvement, the school continues to seek ways to make further improvements in these areas.

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

The school has achieved many results since the last full visit, including improvement of communication with parents through PowerSchool, technological improvements through the development of a student computer lab, implementation of a school-wide testing program (MAPS), implementation of Lotus Notes to better assess the type of student being served, the development of parent retreats and seminars, and implementation of a Student Advisor Program. The school administrators should continue to seek ways to delegate greater responsibility to a variety of faculty members to develop and carry out the school improvement plan.

## **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 West Ridge. Through the integration of its residential program, the school has been 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?*

West Ridge students take part in a variety of community service activities that actively engage the community around them in a positive way. The students take part in all aspects of planning and implementing these activities, which is an integrated learning experience. West Ridge Academy should be commended for these efforts.

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

All stakeholders had some level of participation in the self-study process. Parents participated in surveys, students participated in focus groups, and faculty members participated in departmental analysis and focus groups. West Ridge should consider other strategies to achieve a greater level of participation in the process for future self-studies.

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

Currently, the documentation and reporting of results falls on the shoulders of the school administrator, Paul Keene. Results of improvement efforts are shared through staff and other meetings.

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

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends West Ridge Academy for the strategic implementation of online courses to supplement course offerings, and for using data to make adjustments.
- The Visiting team commends West Ridge Academy for institutionalizing all three of its DRSLs with student DRSL books.
- The Visiting Team commends West ridge Academy for its caring staff members, who work for student success.
- The Visiting Team commends West Ridge Academy for maintaining a low student-to-teacher ratio, which increases student success.
- The Visiting Team commends West Ridge Academy for the clean and safe environment provided for its students.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that West Ridge Academy analyze data collected to look for trends and make decisions on adjustments to the academic program.

- The Visiting Team recommends that West Ridge Academy require its teachers to consistently use the DRSL rubrics. The pieces are in place for a school-wide assessment on DRSL progress, but won't be fully implemented until the teachers reach a collaborative decision about the frequency of its use.
- The Visiting Team recommends that West Ridge Academy write action plans that list timelines and persons responsible in a collaborative effort.
- The Visiting Team recommends that West Ridge Academy develop an action plan for implementing the school-wide DRSL assessments and for professional development.