The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Youth Educational Support School

2500 South State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

April 26, 2012

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

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Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

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UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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

DIVISION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Brenda Hales, Associate Superintendent

Sydnee Dickson, Director
Teaching and Learning

Linda Alder, Coordinator
Teaching and Learning

Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist
Teaching and Learning

Salt Lake City, Utah

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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 26, 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 Youth Educational Support 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 Associate Director Pamela Child is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Youth Educational Support 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 Youth Educational Support School.

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

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
250 East 500 South
P. O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

District 1
Tami W. Pyfer
52 Ballard Way
Logan, UT 84321
Phone: (435) 753-7529

District 2
Keith M. Buswell
1027 West 3800 North
Pleasant View, UT 84414
Phone: (801) 737-0702

District 3
Craig E Coleman
621 South Main St.
Genola, UT 84655
Phone: (801) 754-3655

District 4
David L. Thomas
7875 South 2250 East
South Weber, UT 84405
Phone: (801) 479-7479

District 5
Kim R. Burningham
932 Canyon Crest Drive
Bountiful, UT 84010
Phone: (801) 292-9261

Teresa L. Theurer*
33 Canterbury Lane
Logan, UT 84321-6714
Phone: (435) 753-0470

James V. (Jim) Olsen**
5657 West 10770 North
Highland, UT 84003
Phone: (801) 599-1095

Larry K. Shumway
Chief Executive Officer

District 6
Michael G. Jensen
4139 S Aubrey Lane
West Valley City, UT 84128
Phone: (801) 955-5550

District 7
Leslie B. Castle
2465 St. Mary's Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84108
Phone: (801) 581-9752

District 8
Janet A. Cannon
5256 Holladay Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT 84117
Phone: (801) 272-3516

District 9
Joel Coleman
3740 Bawden Avenue
West Valley City, UT 84120
Phone: (801) 634-6251

District 10
Laurel O. Brown
5311 South Lucky Clover Ln
Murray, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-4221

Wilford Clyde*
1324 East 950 South
Springville, UT 84663
Phone: (801) 802-6900 work

R. Dean Rowley**
526 South 170 West
Springville, UT 84663
Phone: (801) 489-6935

Lorraine Austin
Secretary

District 11
David L. Crandall
13464 Saddle Ridge Drive
Draper, UT 84020
Phone: (801) 232-0795

District 12
Carol A. Murphy
463 West 140 North
Midway, UT 84049
Phone: (435) 729-0941

District 13
C. Mark Openshaw
3329 Piute Drive
Provo, UT 84604
Phone: (801) 377-0790

District 14
Dixie Allen
218 West 5250 North
Vernal, UT 84078
Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 15
Debra G. Roberts
Box 1780
Beaver, UT 84713
Phone: (435) 438-5843

Isaiah "Ike" Spencer***
1029 East 11780 South
Sandy, UT 84094
Phone: (385) 646-5360

Tim Beagley****
3974 South 3550 West
West Valley City, UT 84119
Phone: (801) 969-6454

*Board of Regents Appointments
** UCAT Representative
*** CMAC Representative Appointment
****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment
*****Charter School Representative Appointment

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YOUTH EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SCHOOL
(YESS)

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Program Administration

Pam Child.....Associate Director
Suki Cannon.....Coordinator, Technology Specialist
Jo Elizondo..... Special Education Coordinator
Steve Kaelin.....Coordinator, School-based Classrooms
Mark Marsing.....Coordinator, Staff Development
Gail Maycock..... Special Education Consultant
Myrna Wallengre ..... Special Education Consultant

Support Staff

Margie Archuleta
Laurie Atkins
Helene Byington
Katie Day
John Driscoll
Sharon Hall
Carolee Hansen
Pam Harkey
Sue Jorgensen
Marget Kunz
Cathy Middlemiss
Carol Niebuhr
Doug Radunich
Christy Rasmussen
Tottie Sanchez
Susan Stevens
Blanca Thompson
Kathy Wagner

Faculty

Tom Barry
Jacqueline Bode
Suki Cannon
Joan Creer
Eric Dahle
Sandi Eberhardt
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Sandy Harty
Jim Hawkes
Mike Hazlett
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Steve Hill
Emily Juett
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Mark Marsing
Steve McFarland
Dave Michelson
Dave Nelson
Kathy Nelson
Karen Nieto
Robert Osborne
Lisa Stolk
Marilyn Taylor
Eileen Vestal
Mary Ann Vidrine
Cindy Willis
Kathy Woodbury

YOUTH EDUCATION SUPPORT SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a safe, respectful, nurturing environment where youth, in the custody of the State of Utah, will experience academic success while discovering and developing their social, emotional, and intellectual potential.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We never give up on a student. We understand the student's ultimate future is in his/here hands, but the present is in our hands and we will make this moment count by:

1) Providing a safe, stable, and nurturing school environment.

2) Providing meaningful, challenging curriculum and instruction that is relevant.

3) Meeting every student's individual academic and instructional needs based on his/her interests, abilities, and learning styles.

4) Building positive, respectful, supportive relationships to enable him/her to improve academically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Social and Civic Responsibility

2. Learning to Learn Skills

3. Communication Skills

Date of visit: April 26, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

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

Todd Bird, Youth in Custody Director, Canyons School District

Dennis Liddell, Director, Oakgrove Education Services

VISITING TEAM REPORT

YOUTH EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Granite School District's Youth Educational Support School (YESS) serves Youth-in-Custody students. For the purposes of accreditation, the non-school sites are included. These are Salt Lake Valley Detention Center, Observation and Assessment, Salt Lake Youth Services, Adolescent Residential Treatment and Education Center, and Decker Lake Youth Center. The school-based units are accredited with their hosting schools. They serve approximately 375 full-time students daily and 4,000 students annually.

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

With its smaller class sizes and highly dedicated staff, the school is helping students achieve academic success. Helping students get back on track for graduation is an area of meaningful gains.

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

Teachers need to be allocated professional development time to reach agreements on school-wide assessments. The environments of the various facilities differ, but it would strengthen learning if the teachers would collaborate on the most effective common assessments.

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

The 2012 self-study was complete and showed areas of significant success as well as areas that need improvement.

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?*

Extensive revisiting of the mission and belief statements were conducted after it was decided that the Youth-in-Custody program would undertake a standalone accreditation process.

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

There is strong alignment between the mission and beliefs with DRSLs.

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

The most explicit measure of student success is Progress to Graduation. Through the self-study process, the staff became convinced that standardized testing does not fairly reflect student success in the school program.

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 culture of the school integrates high expectations with never giving up on a student. Continuous progress is valued by students and staff.

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 curriculum is completely aligned to Utah Core and Life Skills.

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

Much reflection is experienced by incarcerated youth. The teachers structure lessons to help students learn to think critically, so that they make better decisions and more fully comprehend the consequences of their decisions.

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

Within sites there is ample collaboration. The program can benefit from increasing the time teachers from different sites can meet together to collaborate.

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

Classroom assessments are strong and effectively track student progress.

Instruction:

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

The YESS faculty members are to be commended for the large variety of strategies they employ to meet the diverse 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?*

Teachers have taken responsibility to ensure that the DRSLs are explicitly taught.

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?*

It was apparent to the Visiting Team that professional development time needs to be allocated system-wide for teachers to reach agreements on common assessments.

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 competent and dedicated to the students and the fulfillment of the mission of the school.

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 were good examples of technology in use. However, the allocation of resources was inconsistent. A plan should be put in place to equitably distribute the technology resources.

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?*

As a result of going through the accreditation process as its own program, YESS teachers realized standardized testing does not convey an accurate measure of success for its students. For the 2012 self-study, the school focused on restoring self-confidence, building relationships, identifying basic skill deficiencies, and tracking progress toward graduation. For both the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, YESS has documented over 20 percent yearly gains in closing the graduation "gap."

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 teachers have clear measures of classroom success. In this setting, the students are often more accountable to the courts than to their parents; however, level gains are taken seriously by the courts, and this proves to be a motivator for students to make every effort to improve.

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

Now that the school is focused on progress to graduation tracking, it is using relevant data in their weekly learning team meetings to review student progress on credits, skills, special needs and behavior.

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?*

At each site the teachers meet weekly. It is the recommendation of the Visiting Team that professional development be offered to answer system-wide questions.

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

The teachers have agreed to agree, but they need a time and a place for the agreements to be made. There is time before the next school year begins for the teachers to meet as a whole group and reach agreements on school-wide assessments for measuring DRSL progress. Even though this was a "first" visit, the Social and Civic Responsibility DRSL is already institutionalized. The teachers appear poised to make the agreements for measuring the Learning to Learn Skills and Communication Skills DRSLs.

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 Granite YESS leadership team is very active in supporting teaching and learning. Regular classroom visits and walkthroughs foster an academic climate. Regular leadership presence at professional development faculty meetings promotes quality instruction.

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 Granite YESS gives TABE tests to entering students, and follows up with additional TABE tests at least two times a year to establish grade-level knowledge and grade-level gains throughout the year. Each student's progress toward graduation is monitored using a PTG tracking percentage. The school's leadership team shares this information with all teachers, and with counselors through SEOP information spreadsheets.

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 Granite YESS has made its DRSLs and mission statement the heart of its school improvement plan. The school's students, teachers, support staff, and stakeholders are all very familiar with the mission, belief, and DRSLs posters posted on the classroom walls and halls of all YESS facilities. These DRSLs drive the leadership and organization's impact on each individual student.

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 Granite YESS collaborates with its stakeholders through quarterly Local Interagency Council meetings. The members of this council represent DCFS, JJS, teachers, principals, mental health providers, business, and community-based alternative programs in sharing the decision-making involving district YIC programs.

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 Granite YESS operates on a very low teacher-to-student ratio. The teachers know each student well, and have SEOP data readily available for reference while mentoring students. The YESS program also has five mentors who meet weekly with YIC students throughout the district schools. Each mentor knows his/her students well and assists them in achieving the school mission and DRSLs.

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 YESS program completed a thorough analysis of the school improvement plan. This was accomplished through time spent by each stakeholder (i.e., Individual Site Coordinator) having a thorough and complete knowledge of the program, the student population being served, and the most expeditious manner in which to meet the needs of the individual students.

The most impressive element is that each program has a very clear standard that is clearly communicated to teachers, staff and students. These standards seem to push students individually to reach their potential in the program, without "watering down" or minimizing behavioral and academic standards in each teacher's classroom. While the rules and expectations may vary slightly from program to program, there seemed to be consensus among the teachers that was consistent and clearly communicated expectations in the individual classrooms as well as the program overall. A strength that works to the YESS program's benefit is the close collaboration that is already taking place in each program among teachers and school staff. While daily and

weekly opportunities are being utilized by each site team to review individual student progress, other opportunities will present themselves to look closely at ways in which the school improvement process can continue. Because of the small size and uniqueness of each site, consistent achievement of different DRSLs can be reviewed often.

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?*

The school provides some opportunities for professional development regarding skill building and the achievement of the school's goals for improvement. Since each site functions individually, this could be an area of concern. However, by having coordinators, office staff members, and others who frequent each site on a regular basis, communication regarding progress of each site's progress and attainment of adequate progress can be documented. If corrective action is necessary, it can be quickly implemented and disseminated through each site coordinator to teachers and staff. This allows everyone (all stakeholders) continual critical feedback on timely basis.

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?*

One of the evident strengths of the program was every teacher's commitment not only to the students, but to each site, and to the YESS program as a whole. Every teacher was forthcoming with information and ideas that would not only improve performance in their individual classrooms, but also increase student achievement as well as overall program achievement. In addition, there seemed to also be thought and consideration given to the application of what was being taught in the classroom to "real-life" situations.

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

The teachers, staff, administration and other support personnel are very passionate and supportive of their students; this will, in turn, lend energy and provide conditions that can continue to support productive change for everyone. This is not only true for students and teachers, but also for the program as a whole. Because of the types of students being served, and their previous school experience, academic standards will always be challenged. However, as the staff members continue to demonstrate their commitment to their students not only in their classroom, but in daily life applications as well, ideal conditions will be created that will allow for continuous improvement.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

There is great teamwork among staff members at each site, and a shared vision program-wide.

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

By the nature of the program, care is taken to protect the identities of the juveniles involved in the YESS programs. One example of extending the learning opportunities was a multimedia classroom where a professional from the video and recording industry was mentoring students in the production and editing of podcasts of their poetry.

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

The teachers were asked the right questions at the right time to take a meaningful look at where the school is and where they see it going. By revisiting the mission and beliefs, a shared vision was reached.

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

Youth in Custody programs have their own line item in the State budget, so they are not competing for resources from within district budgets. The YESS program is receiving a very positive report, with commendations and recommendations from the Visiting Team. The program will have a new director next school year. The superintendent will have the opportunity to share the report with the Granite Board of Education. The teachers in YESS perform work on a daily basis of which the district can be very proud.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends YESS for the high quality of direct instruction delivered by its teachers.

- The Visiting Team commends YESS for creating its culture of continuous improvement.

- The Visiting Team commends YESS for the passion of the staff to fulfill the mission of the school. The teachers have developed multiple strategies to meet the diverse needs of the students.

- The Visiting Team commends YESS for its commitment to providing special education services and for exceeding compliance standards.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that YESS provide professional development time for teachers to reach agreements on integrating DRSL assessments system-wide.

- The Visiting Team recommends that YESS hire a part-time school guidance counselor.