

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**American Heritage of South Jordan
11100 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

April 25, 2012



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

**American Heritage of South Jordan
11100 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

April 25, 2012

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 25, 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 American Heritage of South Jordan 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 Steve Yorgason is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at American Heritage of South Jordan 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 American Heritage of South Jordan.

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

*** CMAC Representative Appointment

*****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

AMERICAN HERITAGE OF SOUTH JORDAN SCHOOL

OWNERSHIP

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kristine RobisonChairman
Elsha YorgasonPresident
Lisa HanussakMember
Steve YorgasonMember
Scotti HansenMember
Mary MouritsenMember

AMERICAN HERITAGE OF SOUTH JORDAN SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Elsha Yorgason Director
Steve Yorgason Principal
Scotti Hansen Curriculum Chairman
Lisa Hanussak Accountant

Counseling

Stephanie Grover Counselor

Support Staff

Jackie Alexander
Alesha Mechling
Amea Nielson
Kristine Robison

Courtney Sosa
Katie Smith
Jason Sroka

Linda Sun
Lyndsi Thompson

Faculty

Tara Atkinson
Carol Bailey
Dorothy Bingham
Amber Blair
Jamie Canova
Kaci Cardon
Shalie Christensen
Jessica Combs
Rebecca Cottam

Juli Dempewolf
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Paul Richardson
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Kathy Sroka
Holly Stejskal
Laura Wasden
Patricia Watson

AMERICAN HERITAGE OF SOUTH JORDAN SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

American Heritage of South Jordan exists to graduate classically educated students with great minds and great souls.

BELIEF STATEMENT

We believe educational success promotes a student's self-esteem. Students come to understand that ultimately, becoming educated is a personal responsibility and is a goal worthy of hard work and dedication.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Students will be lifelong seekers of knowledge.
2. Students will serve their fellowmen and be leaders in their communities.

Date of visit: April 25, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

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

Judy Jacques, Director, Island View RTC, Syracuse, Utah

Jonathon Jones, Principal Emeritus, Discovery Academy, Provo, Utah

VISITING TEAM REPORT

AMERICAN HERITAGE OF SOUTH JORDAN SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

American Heritage of South Jordan is a private classic American Christian school that focuses on each individual student. The school opened in 2005 and serves students in grades pre-K through 12. The school currently has 345 students enrolled.

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

All seniors have earned their diplomas, and all have been accepted at universities to continue their education.

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

The school needs to collect and report data on student progress toward school-wide learning goals.

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

The 2012 self-study contained more than the required elements. The school leaders were advised to keep personnel and student information private. The self-study was honest, and reflects what is and is not practiced at the school.

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?*

American Heritage is a private school that is unified around a classical education curriculum. The school's mission statement is a unifying force with which all members of the school community align their instructional and professional practices. While the school did not have belief statements and DRSLs identified as such, similar items could be found in the mission statement. During the course of the visit, the school was able to explicitly identify its DRSLs, and will be implementing them as such and in accordance with the standards of the USOE and NWAC accreditation standards. With regard to collaborative development of these items, it appears that they were created primarily by the school leadership, and the school is encouraged to increase efforts at collaborative development of school mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

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

The mission and belief statements systematically support the DRSLs. They identify the overriding philosophical principles that drive both the implementation and assessment of the DRSLs.

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

American Heritage has not yet identified the indicators and assessment measures and techniques by which to evaluate the DRSLs. However, there were multiple indicators and measures observed by the review team.

- 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 mission and belief statements are an apparent reflection of the manner in which American Heritage operates on all levels. There is no incongruence evident between the mission and belief statements and the day-to-day operations of the school. The DRSLs are evident in the culture of the school among both the students and the staff, although they were not explicitly identified as such.

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 teachers and school administration of Benchmark have a clear understanding of the Utah Core Curriculum, as evidenced by the instruction observed by the Visiting Team. In addition, the school masterfully utilizes the Core Curriculum to promote its philosophical foundation of classical education.

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

American Heritage's curriculum is appropriate for the student population that it serves. The curriculum is appropriately challenging in thinking skills for the majority of its students. In their endeavor to classically educate their students, the teachers regularly fold in and maximize opportunities to promote inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills.

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

Because the school had not identified DRSLs as such, the curriculum focuses more on the mission statement and philosophy of classical education. However, upon review of the mission statement, explicit DRSLs have emerged and, thus, the curriculum is inherently supporting the subsequently identified DRSLs.

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

American Heritage engages its students in a wide variety of assessments to review and ensure student learning. Students participate in the SAT and ACT, the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement, and other standardized testing, as well as curriculum-based assessment that reflects learning in each classroom specifically. Additionally, the school uses Saxon Math as its math curriculum and maximizes the skill tests included with that program to ensure mastery of concepts.

Instruction:

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

A wide variety of instructional strategies and best practices were evident during the on-site review. Students were engaged in class discussions, lectures, projects, independent studying, and group work throughout the day. Teachers have autonomy in the use of instructional strategies to implement the curriculum as they see fit for their students and to meet the expectations of a classical education.

- 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?*

Because the DRSLs were not explicitly identified as such, the teachers were unaware of how they were explicitly teaching the DRSLs. However, because the DRSLs were embedded in the mission statement, which was evidently being followed through curriculum and instruction, the teachers are, in fact, teaching the DRSLs.

- 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?*

American Heritage should be commended for its focus and efforts with professional development. The leadership at American Heritage is committed to ensuring that all teachers have the knowledge and training to fulfill the school's mission. The teachers engage in a robust professional development program prior to the start of each school year, and then throughout each academic term.

- 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?*

All teachers at American Heritage are licensed and endorsed. The teaching staff should be commended for taking on a wide variety of teaching assignments and seeking the appropriate endorsements to do so. Opportunities for professional development are funded by the administration. The self-study reflects a strong commitment to self-reflection and continuous improvement.

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

This is an area of continuous growth for American Heritage, and the primary emphasis of the school improvement plan. The school is currently exploring ways to purchase electronic readers for all students so that they can have access to the most up-to-date information and textbook 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?*

Classroom assessments are clearly tied to the performance-based standards identified by teachers. Students know the expected level of performance and how to meet it. There is a systematic approach to assessing student learning.

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

Instruction and assessment is adequately differentiated for ability levels. Standardized tests with widely accepted norm bases are used to note student progress as well. Teachers differentiate instruction and assessment based on individual needs.

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

American Heritage should increase efforts to use assessments in a strategic and conscientious manner to assess how the students are meeting the DRSLs. Outside of this area, the teachers and administration make good use of the assessment data as indicators of student success and to guide areas of school 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?*

Professional development for teachers at American Heritage is primarily and appropriately focused on implementing the classical education curriculum. In the future, the students will benefit from teacher professional development in the area of assessment.

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

There are no rubrics or other scoring tools yet developed to assess the 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 school leadership promotes quality instruction at all levels. The climate for academic learning is clearly evident throughout the school.

- 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 leadership has guided the overall development of the school from nothing to a well designed, well maintained school. The commitment to assessing each student is commendable.

- 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?

As a private school, American Heritage of South Jordan is solely responsible for its own sustainability. The members of the school leadership team are the stewards of the school. Under their leadership, the resources of the school are dedicated to providing a physically and emotionally safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- 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?*

Members of the leadership team, as well as many faculty and staff members, are parents of students in the school. The board is made up of American Heritage parents. Many hours are spent by parents/stakeholders in the school.

- 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 relatively small class sizes guarantee that each student is known well. There is ample support and assistance for students to meet the high expectations for 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?

The school has developed an ongoing action plan, beginning in 2005. This plan for school improvement has been updated annually, with indications regarding achievement of goals and the addition of new action plans. The plan is reviewed annually by the administration, followed by meetings with teachers, parents, students, and the Parent Association president. The school holds round tables at the end of each year to discuss the successes and challenges of the year in relation to the action plan.

- 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 conducts an intensive in-service to provide all faculty members with professional development for two weeks each year prior to school opening. This two-week training period focuses on curriculum and training for testing, as well as future in-service issues. The teachers meet twice per month for in-service and collaboration. These in-service sessions are devoted to teaching strategies and training, team-building efforts, team meetings and review of the overall values and mission of the school. This, in turn, provides for discussion and assessment of progress in all areas, including the current and revised action 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?*

Each year the action plan is assessed and revised to reflect completion of goals, to add new goals, and to make other revisions in accordance with administrative and faculty input. The 2011-2012 action plan reflects two new goals, five met goals, and the addition of a long range goal focused on technology, specifically the development of a program to build a gymnasium on site for accomplishing the curricular goals related to health, fitness, and recreation.

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

Productive change and continuous improvement procedures and opportunities are built in to the school's established professional development schedule and program. In addition to the administration and faculty, the school has an active, supportive parents' association that is involved in the round table discussions and assessments. Also, parents are represented on the school board. The result is a climate for improvement and change that includes all stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The school uses time in the twice-monthly in-service sessions to promote team building and collaboration among the faculty. Teachers meet daily for a devotional time prior to the beginning of the school day. The parents' association provides daily service within the school in the form of volunteer aides in various capacities. Faculty team meetings are held regularly to discuss age specific topics and educational issues. Teachers, administrators, and parents meet together to discuss and share results of testing and student assessment, curriculum revisions, and the improvement of instructional strategies. The end-of-year culminating round table discussions regarding progress in meeting the goals of the action plans also contribute to community building and positive working relationships within the school.

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

The aforementioned meetings on the part of administration, teachers, and parents are a direct, face-to-face example of collaborative networking. Also, parents are welcome in the classrooms, as well as providing volunteer services within the school. The school provides the means for parents and teachers to e-mail updates, concerns, and information on a regular basis. Parent service hours in the school are required, though many parents serve on a voluntary basis far beyond the twenty-hour requirement.

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

All stakeholders participated in the completion and compilation of information from the NSSE surveys and rubrics that were a part of the self-study. The self-study report relied on feedback from school staff, parents, parents and students to provide the information presented. The information gathered was shared among staff members, passed along to parents and students, resulting in the decisions made to conclude the findings of the self-study.

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

The action plan, as revised annually, is made available to all stakeholders. The school makes wide use of e-mail in communicating with school families. The completed self-study for school improvement was made available for the school board, administration, faculty and staff for their review, as well as for parents.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends American Heritage School for the organization of its curriculum for total school program to help students receive a classical education.
- The Visiting Team commends American Heritage for the positive environment that promotes physical and emotional safety, mutual respect and high expectations for student learning.
- The Visiting Team commends American Heritage for its strong commitment to the use of technology in the classroom.
- The Visiting Team commends American Heritage for the professional development offered to teachers prior to school opening and throughout the school year.
- The Visiting Team commends American Heritage for its thorough testing and assessments of each student.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that American Heritage School collect and report data to support conclusions related to testing and student achievement.
- The Visiting Team recommends that American Heritage School add an action plan for implementing school's goals for student learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that American Heritage School allow all teachers to participate in departmental analysis. This can be done periodically, will require teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their classroom practices, and may serve as a source for identifying training needs for professional development.
- The Visiting Team recommends that American Heritage School include all stakeholders in focus groups to develop future action plans.