

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Gateway Academy
11706 South 700 East
Draper, Utah 84020**

May 26, 2011



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Gateway Academy
11706 South 700 East
Draper, Utah 84020**

May 26, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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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, May 26, 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 Gateway Academy, a private 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 Head of School Kyle Anderson is also commended.

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

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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

GATEWAY ACADEMY
(A Private School)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Melissa Hickman, LCSW Admissions Director, Owner

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Kyle Anderson, MSHead of School

Faculty

Thomas Clayton, MS
Shane Colby, MS

Adam Kuntz, M. Ed.
Katy Ives, BS

Sean Markey, BS

GATEWAY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

Gateway Academy creates learning experiences inside and outside the classroom to enhance each student's academic and therapeutic success. We provide an encouraging and challenging academic environment where students develop into effective communicators who think critically and become independent, enthusiastic, life-long learners.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- All students can learn and deserve to learn.
- A student's self-concept impacts learning.
- A student that feels valued will eagerly want to learn and will feel self-confident in doing so.
- A student will thrive in a supportive environment that emphasizes s students strengths while challenging him to improve his weaknesses and work to his full potential.
- All students can learn to effectively communicate their thoughts orally or in writing.
- Students are capable of using creative and critical thinking strategies to solve problems.
- Students are taught to understand and exemplify the evolution of learning: from knowing to understanding to applying to analyzing to evaluating and finally to creating.
- A student can become an independent learner by demonstrating accountability for his education.
- Through exposure to a variety of teaching methods, each student can identify his optimal learning style and learn to be successful in other learning environments.
- Learning can be enhanced through kinesthetic activity.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Effective Communicator
2. Critical Thinker
3. Independent Life-Long Learner

Date of visit: May 26, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

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

Jennifer Capellen, Academic Director, Island View RTC, Syracuse, UT

Paul Keene, Academic Director, West Ridge Academy, West Jordan, UT

VISITING TEAM REPORT

GATEWAY ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Gateway Academy is a residential treatment program for teenage boys. The program has a capacity of 36 total students in grades 8-12 on two campuses, one in Salt Lake City and the other in Draper. Gateway provides an intimate learning environment with small class sizes, individual attention, and added supports that aid the school's unique clientele. The students come from all over the nation; however, the school finds that a majority of its population comes from the east and west coasts of the nation. Students tend to be referred by educational consultants and have high verbal IQs but much lower performance IQs, as well as a very low processing speed in relation to their IQs.

Gateway's academic program is carefully integrated with each student's therapeutic program. The school offers courses based on the Utah State Office of Education Core Curriculum, and students are prepared for collegiate studies.

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

The analysis found that student IQ rose over the past three school years. The school also found that 87 percent of its students were identified with some type of learning disorder; a majority of these students fell into the Autism-Asperger's-NLD spectrum. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of the students were diagnosed with ADHD. In response to those findings, a special education teacher was hired to implement a study skills class, and the school also implemented a SPARKS program that uses movement to help the brain process and retain information more efficiently.

The school also found that, during the 2010-2011 school year, 75 percent of the 45 students who left successfully completed their program. (This includes both graduation and transitioning.) This high mark of success appears also to be reflected in the school's satisfaction survey, with 95.7 percent of parents responding "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement, "The education offered to students is of high quality."

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

Other modifications that may be provided in the future include a wider range of student data. At this time, students enter Gateway with extensive IQ testing; however, testing on basic academic skills is not performed upon admission. Such testing may be useful in terms of showing growth over the stay of individual students.

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

The staff and administration of Gateway appear to have developed great insight about their strengths and limitations as an academic program, and appear to be adjusting to the needs of their constantly changing student population. Their self-improvement process is evident through the implementation of the SPARKS model, the hiring of the special education teacher to address learning differences in their student population, and their commitment to enhancing the learning environment at their Draper campus.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- As mentioned above, testing that provides more data about student academic achievement may be helpful in the future. At this point, the only testing that is done prior to entering Gateway is psychological assessments, including IQ data. A basic test of academic skills may help to assess student performance and show student growth at Gateway.

**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?*

Preparing the educational agenda was a collaborative effort between faculty, students and leaders of clinical, residential, admissions and outdoor education departments. The mission, beliefs and desired results for student learning are reviewed during the fall semester of each school year.

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

The mission statement and belief statements are fully aligned to support the school's DRSLs. DRSL goals are embedded in the mission statement.

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

Rubrics have been developed and refined to measure student progress on achieving DRSL goals. The indicators are included in each rubric.

- d) *To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?*

The school has high expectations for student academic success. The organization of the integrated programs increases student participation and engagement in the learning of students.

Curriculum:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The staff is knowledgeable of the Utah Core Curriculum and Utah Life Skills enhancements. Course standards are completely in line with the scope and sequence prescribed by the USOE.

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

The school has a specific DRSL, Critical Thinker, that engages all students in problem-solving and critical thinking.

- 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 strong agreement among the staff that the school's curriculum focuses on the DRSLs. There is a high degree of collaboration, so that all teachers are aware of the expectations for student learning.

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

The small school staff did a collaborative departmental analysis together. Several examples of assessments were listed as evidence of strategies used to make progress on DRSLs.

Instruction:

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

Gateway teachers are adept at using a wide range of strategies to enhance student learning. One notable example, as mentioned in commendations, is the SPARKS method. During each class period, time is taken at different intervals to have the students engaged in a physical activity that raises their heart rate. By researching best

practices, the school found this strategy that appears to have a positive effect on students' attention span and learning.

- 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?*

By identifying the indicators for each DRSL through development of rubrics, the teachers can be very specific about the skills taught in support of DRSL progress.

- c) *To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?*

The school leadership dedicates a portion of annual professional development for revisiting the accreditation process and for examining best practices. The staff is very willing to try new things or adjust the timing of certain ideas.

- 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 observed teachers were very knowledgeable of their core standards, and their lessons were well prepared.

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

Although some safeguards regarding Internet use are in place, the level and condition of technology in the classrooms was up to date, and technology is in almost constant use.

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 school has created rubrics to score student progress on DRSLs. These are used school-wide. There is still work to be done to figure out the timing of the DRSL assessments, but it is reasonable to expect that these procedures will be worked out during the next school year.

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

As mentioned, there are DRSL rubrics, but there are also teacher-made assessments that clearly track the progress of students as they work through course curriculum.

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

The school uses data to assess student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods.

- 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 a great amount of teamwork evident in the operation of the school. The integration between the school and the clinical program is commendable.

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

The DRSL rubrics are in place and have been used. Procedures are continuously being improved. The faculty is in agreement as to the appropriateness of 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?*

Communication between the staff, teachers and owners is very open, and everyone is at ease discussing both student and school issues. The company policy and procedures manuals for the school are well understood and adhered to by all school staff members. Teachers do an excellent job of configuring activities to meet the diverse learning styles of the students. The students are very aware of the expectations that have been set for them in the classroom, and respond well to prompts to remind them of good behavior. The teachers and students have an excellent working relationship built on trust and respect.

- 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 Visiting Team recognizes that efforts are continually being made to test the students during their time at Gateway Academy. The school uses testing results to place students in the classes where the highest level of academic success can be attained. Staff members continually track student outcomes to ensure that student

levels of achievement continue to grow, making adjustments as needed to improve the education program.

- 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?*

Gateway Academy continues to gain new staff members that improve the breadth of education and classes that can be taught in striving to increase the school's level of educational excellence. The school's education program allows students to use online courses while the school monitors computers to keep students safe.

- 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?*

Allowing students to voice their concerns about their education in a safe environment, such as focus groups and classrooms has continued to assist the teachers at Gateway Academy buy into the school program. Students feel that their needs are being heard and listened to, empowering students to educational excellence. Students, staff members, and the administration have a fine working relationship that enhances learning at 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 student-to-teacher ratio is kept at 12:1, so students receive the one-on-one time that is needed from the teacher. Due to student ratios, all students are known by staff members and administrators on a personal level.

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 produced a very thorough and useful working document in their 2011 self-study. The academic director uses the accreditation process continually to drive school improvement.

- 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?*

Several examples of professional development were listed in the self-study. The educational agenda is revisited annually. The school is not afraid to try a means of implementation and decide later that it is not working satisfactorily. This is an excellent example of using data to drive decision making.

- 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?*

The Visiting Team has recommended that Gateway develop an additional action plan to work out the steps needed to fully implement the DRSL rubrics. Through trial and error, the staff will work out the frequency and duration of applying the rubrics as assessments of student learning.

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

As noted above, the school's staff members are willing to try new ideas and continuously evaluate their effectiveness, understanding that they will not know how an idea works until after they have tried to implement it. This work is done in a trusting environment, where there is an honest effort made to find out how to do things better.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

There is teamwork evident among the staff. The working relationships appear to be positive and focused on student success.

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

There is a high degree of communication between the school and treatment staffs. The goals the students are working on are supported by the school and the treatment team.

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

The academic director led the self-study process and modeled collaboration and delegation in preparing for the self-study.

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

Results are shared with staff members throughout the organization, as well as with parents of students involved in the program.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Gateway Academy for the high quality of its teaching staff. Gateway teachers are meeting the needs of a wide range of student.
- The Visiting Team commends Gateway Academy for the thoroughness of its self-study. The participation of parents in focus groups is especially impressive.
- The Visiting Team commends Gateway Academy for the high degree of integration evident between the school and therapeutic programs.
- The Visiting Team commends Gateway Academy for implementing SPARKS to accommodate their students' learning styles.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Gateway Academy develop an additional action plan to implement its DRSL rubrics.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Gateway Academy find ways to expand the curriculum to offer more elective courses.