The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Granite Peaks High School

501 East 3900 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84107

May 12, 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

Granite Peaks High School

501 East 3900 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84107

May 12, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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

DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword ii
Utah State Board of Education iii
Granite School District Board of Education and District Administration 1
Granite Peaks High School Administration and Staff 2
Granite Peaks High School Mission Statement, Belief Statements, and DRSLs 3
Members of the Visiting Team 4
Visiting Team Report 5
Chapter 1: School Profile 5
    Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry 6
Chapter 2: Northwest Accreditation Commission (Northwest)
    Teaching and Learning Standards 6
    Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs) 6
    Curriculum 7
    Instruction 8
    Assessment 9
Chapter 3: Northwest Support Standards 10
    Leadership and Organization 10
    School Services 11
    Facilities and Finances 11
Chapter 4: Northwest School Improvement Standard 11
Chapter 5: Community Building 12
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team 13

FOREWORD

The purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase the quality of instruction and student achievement. In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes in a three-step evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 12, 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 Granite Peaks High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Michele Callahan is also commended.

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

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

Meghan Holbrook*
775 North Hilltop Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Phone: (801) 539-0622

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 Ln
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

***Daniel W. Campbell**
4304 Stone Creek Ln
Provo, UT 84604
Phone: (801) 434-3000

Tamara Lowe**
2466 West 650 North
West Point, UT 84015
Phone: (801) 776-0870

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

12/28/2010

GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Gayleen Gandy.....President
Terry Bawden..... Vice President
Connie Anderson .....Member
Connie Burgess .....Member
Julene Jolley.....Member
Dan Lofgren .....Member
Sara Meier.....Member

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Martin Bates..... Superintendent
Mike Fraser .....Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Jim Henderson .....Assistant Superintendent
Dr. David Gourley .....Assistant Superintendent
Linda Mariotti .....Assistant Superintendent
David Garrett .....Assistant Superintendent
Paul Hansen .....Director, High School Services

GRANITE PEAKS HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Michele Callahan ..... Principal

Counseling

Angie Rassmussen ..... Counselor
Sandra Summers ..... Counselor

Support Staff

Laura Atkinson
Sally Breinholt
Dayanne Coombs
Ruth Dallas
Vallee Davis
Brandon Gholston
Mykah Hanson
Samantha Johnson
Ray Kaleel
Sandra Kunkel
Steve Madsen
Chris Morgan
Michael Nelson
Gary Pelzer
Megan Pond
Gwen Richman
Delfino Rodriguez
Alan Stott
Nicholas Wei
Danielle Willardson

Faculty

Mary Alsop
Joy Brown
Greg Coleman
Linda Covington
Ignacio Garcia
Amy Godding
Chelise Gremillion
Shannon Johnson
Thomas Maenner
Dr. Ryan Miller
Ginny Moon
Michael Murray
Janice Spencer-Wise
Haydee Speredon
Chauncey Venuto
Brian Wallace
Mandy Webb

GRANITE PEAKS HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Where education is: relevant, empowering, and individualized in a climate of respect and accountability

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Relevant student learning is the priority of the school.
- A safe and physically comfortable environment promote student learning.
- Building and shaping character is essential to educating the whole student.
- Students learn best when we use a variety of teaching strategies.
- Students are responsible for their own learning, facilitated and supported by teachers, administrators, parents and the community.
- Continuous school improvement is imperative to student success.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Effective Reader
2. Effective Writer
3. Effective Problem Solver

Date of visit*:* May 12, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Utah State Office of Education/Northwest Accreditation Commission, Visiting Team Chairperson

Dr. Al Church, University of Utah

Shane Lance, Ashley Valley Education Center, Uintah

Scott Dowling, Ashley Valley Education Center, Uintah

Gregory Wuthrich, Assistant Principal. Mountain High School, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

GRANITE PEAKS ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Geographically, Granite Peaks High School is located in the southernmost quadrant of South Salt Lake, on 501 East 3900 South. It is currently the only high school in South Salt Lake City; however, it is not a community school. The school is housed inside the Granite Peaks Learning Center, and its relationship with Granite Peaks Lifelong Learning is strong.

Granite Peaks serves the needs of students from eight other high schools in Granite School District. Most of the school's students come to Granite Peaks because they have not found success at their home high school and are looking for an alternative to more traditional educational approaches. Typically, the school serves 350-500 students each term. Students come to Granite Peaks High School extremely short in credits. Oftentimes they have not been enrolled in school for a period of time and have only now decided to recommit themselves to their education.

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

Despite a very high mobility rate of 82.77 percent, two significant findings were (1) data from benchmark testing demonstrates that students are achieving greater proficiency in core subjects, and (2) the average daily attendance for the last two years has been above 94 percent. Also of significance is the recent change in administration, and—new this year (2010-2011)—the addition of a school resource officer.

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

Disaggregate assessment data in greater detail to show what specific skills are being learned, who is learning, who is not learning, and why. What trends may be observed despite the high mobility rate?

Current assessments of student learning include the following: benchmarks, TABE, Edge Reading test, and CRTs. (Note: Given the nature of Granite Peaks High School students, CRTs are not reflective of students' increase in learning.)

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

Educators at Granite Peaks High School described themselves as being "unparalleled" in their commitment to providing a positive learning environment, relating to and fostering positive relationships, and helping students to be academically successful. Surveys from parents and students indicate this to be true, as did a number of interviewed students. This was the trademark of Granite Peaks High School. In addition, the Visiting Team noted a very positive learning atmosphere; a friendly, professional faculty and staff; and engaging instruction in many of the visited classrooms.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Further desegregate benchmark data to identify specific skills being mastered and skills needing additional instruction.

- Verify with data and analysis of who is learning, who is not learning, and what are the trends and student needs.

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?

Despite several adjustments and disruptions in both leadership and district alignment over the last year and a half, the current principal has worked with her faculty to articulate a renewed focus on student achievement with an emphasis on literacy, in particular reading. This emphasis was the result of faculty input and data from entering students that indicated low levels of reading skills. Given the alternative and transient nature of the student population, parental input was sought, but results were minimal. However, it should be noted that the student informants, both those from the student leadership council and the random students with whom members of the team visited, agreed upon the need to focus on these skill sets within the supportive climate and structure of the school. There was common agreement among both staff and students that specific DRSLs had a positive impact on effective communication skills school-wide.

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

In particular, the DRSLs (Effective Reader, Effective Writer, and Effective Problem Solver), described as life skills, align with the relevant and empowering characteristics in the mission statement. Also, belief statements encompass aspects of student achievement on both academic and affective levels. Examples observed included an emphasis on vocabulary development (with word wall strategies employed in each class room and a word-of-the-day activity as a part of the school-wide announcements) and student interest in improving their literacy skills.

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

Gathering and analyzing data was not a coherent activity at this stage in the development and improvement cycle in assessing the school's progress toward measuring the DRSLs. Staff limitations prevented the principal from completing her regular responsibilities as well as using what CRT data was available. It was the Visiting Team's recommendation that both summative and formative assessments for literacy achievement be combined with a request from the district's assessment staff to work closely with the administration to help the staff in accessing and analyzing CRT data. Professional development should also be focused on authentic/formative assessment to provide ongoing measures in monitoring progress toward meeting the DRSLs.

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?*

During the visit, including classroom visits, staff interviews and student conversations, the team observed an awareness of and focus on procedures and policies that were embedded in teaching interactions. In addition, students indicated that extra help is available for students who needed or requested assistance outside of the classroom to become better readers and writers. Both support (individualized) and a culture of improving student learning (classroom and hallway artifacts) were evident throughout the building. It should be noted that in future visits, the specific goal of obtaining a high school diploma, commensurate with the skills as specified in the DRSLs, should be included in mission, beliefs, and DRSL descriptions. The principal was proud of the increasing graduation rates for the school's students in just the two years she has been leading the school—a noteworthy accomplishment that further supports the focus of the school.

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 very knowledgeable of the Utah Life Skills and incorporates them throughout the curriculum. The teachers have aligned courses and assignments with the Utah Core Curriculum.

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

For the Effective Writer DRSL, one indicator asks all students to inquire, gather, organize and evaluate information. For the Effective Problem Solver DRSL, students are asked to set, evaluate and reflect on personal goals. These are two good examples of engaging all students in 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?*

The staff exhibits great teamwork in helping students make progress on DRSLs.

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

The school can improve in the area of using informal classroom assessments. A large percentage of the school's students have had negative experiences, prior to enrolling in Granite Peaks, with standardized tests such as CRTs. In future self-studies, it is hoped that teachers will report on student progress using more informal classroom assessments and share examples of excellent student work.

Instruction:

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

The teachers are highly skilled at using a wide range of strategies to meet the academic needs of their diverse student population.

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 teachers are directly teaching the DRSLs. They need to include informal assessments in their reporting of student 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?*

It is recommended that the school develop a professional development plan that trains the teachers in cross-curricular reading and writing.

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 experts in their respective disciplines. They provide high-quality instruction to their students.

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

The school has effectively used technology in the classrooms and in the Media Center.

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 an action plan to develop school-wide rubrics for the DRSLs.

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

Classroom assessments give a clearer picture of the progress students are making. The students express much satisfaction that they are working more productively and completing more assignments compared to experiences in schools prior to enrolling in Granite Peaks.

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

The U-PASS data in the self-study is skewed by the students' educational histories. The teachers produce data that is more reflective of students' progress based on classroom performance.

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?*

The school has room to improve in developing a professional development plan for teacher training on cross-curricular reading and writing, and on the development of the DRSL rubrics.

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

There is agreement that the rubrics for measuring DRSL progress will help the whole school. The school has worked on the rubrics included in the action plan for school improvement.

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?*

Students at this school are thriving. The administration has successfully created an academic learning climate where teachers are well liked and alternative students are held to, and live up to, high standards. Teachers are well supported and work hard to deliver instruction in a way that reaches these students.

b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?*

Teachers and administration were open to modifying instruction based on assessment results and student achievement. Teachers work as a collaborative group to ensure that everyone involved is working toward improvement and student achievement.

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 administration is committed to using each resource to its full potential. Time is used efficiently, and instruction is streamlined to ensure that each student gets the most out of his/her time at school. The school goals and mission are the backbone of operations, and every student we talked to said that he/she felt safe at school.

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?*

Student commitment and participation are ensured through high attendance standards and serious consequences for falling below expectations. Teachers are also held to high standards, and all seemed very excited to hold their positions and took their responsibilities seriously. The administration seems to involve and listen to teachers when making decisions.

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?*

Most students asked said that they knew who their school counselor was, and in every classroom visited the teachers seemed to know each student well. This school holds its students to high standards, and the students understand what is expected of them.

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?*

Granite Peaks High School has done a great job of using guidelines from state programs to create a comprehensive school improvement plan. The Visiting Team did

suggest a combining of the reading and writing DRSLs. The improvement plan is organized in a way that should make it easy to implement recommended changes.

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?*

Teachers are provided with many opportunities for professional development. Many programs and workshops are offered locally, and leaders also support teachers in attending national programs. Teachers appear to be well aware that changes can be made more effective by continual professional development.

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 school will need to revisit the action plan to implement changes suggested by the Visiting Team—specifically, combining the reading and writing DRSLs. (This should be easy, as they were well planned out separately.) All involved with this school are excited about its future and the plan that is in place for improvement.

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

The Visiting Team was impressed with the climate of change and continual improvement. Administrators and staff members seem to support continual evaluation of the effectiveness of school programs and policies. Changes are made when those involved admit the need for it.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

There is a lot of teamwork evident among the staff members. They have a common goal of helping their students succeed and have a positive experience at the school.

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

Students stay after school to get help with their studies. The students are very aware of the help being offered, and know what they must accomplish to earn enough credits to graduate.

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

The self-study process was school-wide. All teachers participated in some way and are supportive of the DRSLs.

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

The district provides the school with detailed reports on student achievement. Data is used to drive decisions regarding instruction. The school has good means of communication with parents.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Granite Peaks High School for its clean, inviting school climate. Granite Peaks is a safe and positive environment.

- The Visiting Team commends Granite Peaks High School for the quality of its Media Center, and encourages the school to keep allocating sufficient resources to build on the good accomplishments already evident.

- The Visiting Team commends Granite Peaks for the success of its students. Students strongly expressed that the school's caring teachers have made the difference in their school success.

- The Visiting Team commends the whole Granite Peaks staff for its commitment and dedication to providing an inclusive environment for its students.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Granite Peaks integrate the reading and writing DRSLs.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Granite Peaks develop a professional development plan that includes reading and writing across content areas, the Six Traits of Writing, and other appropriate measures that will lead to school-wide assessments.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Granite Peaks solidify its identity as a school that distinguishes itself as a special purpose high school serving nontraditional high school students with a diploma-based curriculum. This may include consideration of a school name change.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Granite Peaks fully staff the Counseling Department and administration to accommodate expected growth in enrollment.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Granite Peaks collect and report aggregate student data to study school trends in progress.