The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Green River High School

400 North 455 West
P.O. Box 450
Green River, Utah 84525

May 8, 2012

Utah State Office of Education
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P.O. Box 144200
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Green River High School

400 North 455 West
P.O. Box 450
Green River, Utah 84525

May 8, 2012

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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 8, 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 Green River 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 Nolan Johnson is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Green River 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 Green River High School.

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*** CMAC Representative Appointment
****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment
*****Charter School Representative Appointment

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GREEN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Nolan Johnson ..... Principal
Patrick Brady ..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Ryan Hepworth ..... Counselor
Kathy Brady ..... Counselor

Support Staff

Sheri Vetere ..... Secretary
Richey Hansen ..... Head Custodian
Don Meadows ..... Night Custodian
Danna Engleman ..... Special Ed Assistant

Faculty

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Lea Church
Kenneth Crowson
Kerry Goldman
Craig Gowans
Rob Maughan
Dale Roundy
Burke Simmons

GREEN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Green River High School to actively engage students in the production of meaningful high quality work thereby providing them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to become self-directed lifelong learners and productive useful citizens.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Students need to not only demonstrate their understanding of essential knowledge and skills, but also need to be actively involved in solving problems and producing quality work.
- Students need to apply their learning in meaningful contexts.
- Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.
- All students can learn.
- The commitment to continuous improvement is imperative if our school is going to enable students to become confident, self-directed, lifelong learners and productive useful citizens.
- A student's self-esteem is enhanced by positive relationships and mutual respect among and between students and staff.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Lifelong Learning & Responsible Citizenship

Students will become responsible adults and have a desire for lifelong learning

- Students will be instructed on the use of Utah Futures and participate in Reality Town. Students will also take the Explore test in 8th grade, Plan test in 10th grade, ACT test, and ASVAB test to help them plan and prepare for future educational pursuits.
- Online courses will be further integrated into the curriculum.
- Lunch time detention will use packets which teach students about the consequences of inappropriate behavior and educate them regarding better alternatives and choices.
- During the SEOP/CCR conference, all students and parents will be given up-to-date information regarding concurrent enrollment, online courses, scholarships, and Federal Student Aid opportunities.

Students will be able to use research and reference materials.

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the use of research and reference materials by using computers to find, decipher, organize and present information in a research assignment. This will be completed at least once a semester in Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies classes.

Complex Thinking

Students will use critical thinking skills.

- Using the appropriate Critical Thinking Skills Rubric, which employs Bloom's Taxonomy, teachers will instruct students regarding critical thinking skills as they relate to their curriculum and then will evaluate and discuss with students their critical thinking skills on at least one assignment. Sample rubrics are available from a wide variety of sources on the Internet.

Effective Communication

Students will express themselves correctly through writing and verbal expression.

- Teachers will emphasize communication skills by having students give oral reports that require them to think for themselves and express opinions constructively. This will be completed at least once a semester in Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.
- Students will complete a writing assignment using myaccess.org at the beginning and ending of each school year to evaluate their writing needs and progress. My Access will be used as an instructional tool in teaching writing in the Language Arts department.

Collaboration

Students will work cooperatively with others.

- Teachers will have students work together in collaborating groups with a variety of students on a regular basis.
- Students will have opportunities to participate in extracurricular and school wide activities that use and promote cooperation a minimum of once per term.

Date of visit: May 8, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. John Goldhardt, Dixie State College of Utah/Washington County School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Paula Evans, Tintic High School, Tintic School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

GREEN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Green River High is a small high school located in the eastern part of the state serving students in grades seven through twelve. The school's student population has grown in the past few years from a low of 103 students to 124 students at the beginning of the current school year, due primarily to the poor economy. The largest increase has been in the minority population, which has grown from 14 percent to 35 percent. The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch has increased from 48 percent to 60 percent. The economy of the area is centered in the service industry and agriculture. Students at Green River High participate in a variety of activities and clubs. This participation helps students become involved and motivates students to excel academically.

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

The number of students from poverty and the number of English language learners has grown significantly since the last Visiting Team visited. In addition, the profile data indicates that the number of students with the rank of "proficient" in science has decreased the last two years.

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

The greatest modification would be to be more open with this data with major stakeholders in the school, such as the faculty, staff, and parents. In addition, there was little or no student input in the profile.

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

The profile is detailed and openly shows the school's strengths and growth needs.

<u>Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:</u>

- Complete the focus group analysis in each of the areas of Organizational Effectiveness.

- Get more student perception data. The students are the primary reason schools are built, but we rarely ask them how to improve schools.

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?*

The Visiting Team found limited evidence that Green River High School has revised and collaborated on the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs. The previous Visiting Team recommended that the school reexamine its mission statement, beliefs and DRSLs. Green River High School first prioritized its DRSLs and examined their measurability and importance to school success. The school reduced the number of DRSLs, and then each teacher evaluated how the DRSLs could be applied in his/her courses. The Visiting Team believes that Green River High School needs to internalize the mission and DRSLs and make them a part of daily school life.

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

The DRSLs, as listed, could be the means by which the mission statement and beliefs are accomplished. The indicators appear to be actions that are going to be taken rather than what the results are going to be for the school. Although the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs are posted in every classroom, they didn't seem to be a driving force within the school. In order to succeed in this endeavor, in the future the teachers, staff and students need to have a better understanding of what is to be accomplished in every department.

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

Currently there are no apparent measures in place at Green River High School to assess 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?*

Green River High School's mission, beliefs and DRSLs do not appear to guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school. They are not evident in the culture 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 Visiting Team found that the teachers at Green River High School are knowledgeable regarding the Utah State Core Curriculum. Teachers engage students in the process of learning the objectives from the State Core. The Visiting Team found no evidence of collaboration between educators and departments within the school. Teachers use the core within their classes, but do not collaborate between subjects.

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

The Visiting Team found limited evidence of the curriculum engaging students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. There is ongoing training within the school to help teachers utilize Bloom's Taxonomy of thinking skills. The Visiting Team would recommend that more teachers challenge students with higher-order thinking skills and provide problem-solving activities.

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 Visiting Team found limited evidence that the teaching staff supports the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs. Green River High School's staff has no collaboration time, and so the development of a curriculum centered on the DRSLs has not yet happened. Each teacher seems to be teaching in his or her own classroom and overwhelmed with teaching to the core.

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

One procedure that Green River High School has in place to ensure that all students can reach the intended learning outcomes is to spend time evaluating CRT data. From that, the school determines who needs remediation, mostly in the area of math, and these students are provided with additional instruction through A+, math labs, and EHS. All of these programs are monitored by a certified teacher who evaluates students' learning and progress.

Instruction:

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

The Visiting Team found limited evidence in this area. Most teachers use lectures and worksheets in the instructional process. However, a few staff members utilized research-based strategies, such as cooperative learning, generating and testing hypotheses, argumentation, etc.

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?*

Some teachers have strategies in place with regard to explicitly teaching the DRSLs and/or integrating the DRSLs with the content. Almost all classrooms have a copy of the DRSLs posted, and most teachers know what they are and are familiar with them. The Visiting Team would recommend that this be a greater focus in the future.

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?*

Most professional learning experiences are based upon resources available and what the state or district provides. Many of these opportunities are excellent and have helped enhance teaching skills, but there needs to be a more concerted focus on professional learning that aligns completely with needs of the school and is aligned with the mission, vision, DRSLs, and action plan.

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 Visiting Team found that most teachers are highly qualified in their content area (as defined by USOE/NCLB). There was limited evidence of teachers staying abreast of the current research or reflective practices.

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 does a wonderful job of using the technology resources available to it. As with most schools, there is a need for more and better technology.

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 Visiting Team found evidence that Green River High School uses the CRT data to address individual student needs. Time is spent in faculty meetings evaluating the CRT data and then providing Response to Intervention for individual students who need help, especially in the area of math. Students are pulled from non-core classes

and provided with time and instruction in the areas they struggle with. Once those areas are mastered, then students return to their regularly scheduled classes.

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

Green River High School uses CRT scores, along with A+ and EHS reports, to monitor the progress of individual students. The school also has several assessments that are provided through the Counseling Department. Green River High School disaggregates its data in many different ways and then uses this to determine who is learning and who isn't mastering the material. The staff would like to have more time to remediate students who haven't mastered the subjects; however, with a limited number of staff members, what they would like to have happen often does not happen.

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

Green River High School disaggregates CRT data and evaluates it to help with interventions in the core subjects. CRTs appear to be the data that is assessed and evaluated by the staff. Green River High School does assess data based on entire classes. For example, if an entire class scored low on an objective on the CRT, the teacher evaluates his/her instruction to determine how much time was spent and whether the students had mastered the objectives within the class. The teacher will then modify the curriculum in order to improve student performance in the next year.

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 Visiting Team found no evidence of collaboration between staff members in order to develop a wide range of student assessment strategies. Green River High School is participating in PD 360, which is an online professional development program. It does not require teachers to collaborate, nor does it provide them with time to collaborate.

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

The Visiting Team did not find any evidence that there was a school-wide scoring tool 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 principal now works full time at Green River, and does not have to juggle being the principal of two schools (he previously was assigned to be the principal of the elementary school as well as the high school). Having more time at the school has helped him in promoting 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 Visiting Team found that the leadership's decisions are based upon the needs of teaching and learning, and that the school invites and incorporates input from the major stakeholders.

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 school's resources are in order, and the management operations of the school are effective.

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?*

One of the greatest hallmarks of the current school administration has been in the area of getting more parents to participate at the school, and getting more parents to meet with teachers and counselors with regard to student learning, engagement, and planning for the future.

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?*

With additional counselor support, this is now more possible. Due to the small population at Green River High School, every student knows every teacher and every teacher knows every student. The teaching staff has taken a greater role in advocating for students and providing support and interventions to help each student succeed.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NWAC 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 a plan of action for improvement that is based upon a sound school profile with meaningful data. The improvement plan will be strengthened once the focus group analyses are completed correctly.

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?*

There is some evidence in this area. The Visiting Team suggests that the school develop a more comprehensive plan for professional learning and growth that is aligned with the comprehensive improvement 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?*

The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the current plan is designed for implementation, follow-up, and accountability.

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

The culture of the school is supportive of productive change. With the turnover in staff the school has experienced in the last few years, the focus has been on developing more cohesiveness, but the Visiting Team is optimistic that continuous improvement will occur.

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

The Visiting Team found evidence that most of the elements from the last action plan have been either fully or partially implemented.

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

The most significant improvement and progress since the last Visiting Team's visit is in regard to parental involvement. During the last visit, parental involvement was almost non-existent. However, during this visit, the Visiting Team found that more parents are participating at the school, sharing feedback, and meeting with teachers and counselors.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The school has made significant progress in developing relationships with the community.

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

With nearly 100 percent of parents participating in an SEOP, and a significant increase in the number of parents attending parent-teacher conferences, there have been more collaborative networks established with a greater focus on student achievement.

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

There is still a need to have more parents fully participate in the self-study process (see the recommendations section below).

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

The school communicates this information through the local newspaper, SEOPs, parent-teacher conferences, and verbally.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Green River High School for having school pride, and for the high number of students involved with co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

- The Visiting Team commends the teaching staff of Green River High for its work ethic in putting forth the needed time and commitment to support students.

- The Visiting Team commends the school leadership—namely the principal—for focusing on the principle of doing what is right rather than what is popular.

- The Visiting Team commends Green River High for developing a personalized approach to teaching and working with students.

- The Visiting Team commends Green River High School for enhancing and increasing parental involvement and engagement. The Visiting Team further commends the school for getting more parents to meet with teachers.

- The Visiting Team commends Green River High for embracing and welcoming its increasingly diverse student body.

- The Visiting Team commends the staff of Green River High School for its RTI work, and for reaching out to students who need academic interventions to prevent failure and to remediate deficient credit.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Green River High fully complete the analysis for organizational effectiveness (mission, vision, and DRSLs; curriculum; instruction; assessment; community building; culture of continuous improvement; leadership) and that the school include faculty, staff, students, and parents in this analysis.

- With the school's increasing English language learner (ELL) enrollment, the Visiting Team recommends that Green River High, in partnership with Emery County School District and/or the Utah State Office of Education, develop the means to get core

academic teachers (English, science, social studies, and math) and educators with ESL endorsements.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Green River High School develop the means to establish a common culture and common practices among the faculty with regard to true rigor, more use of research-based instructional strategies, student engagement, and differentiation for academic achievers and gifted and talented learners.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Green River High focus on improving student behavior and citizenship through school-wide character education (e.g., Community of Caring, based at the University of Utah School of Education). The Visiting Team further recommends that all staff members refocus on effective classroom management principles, and that the school develop common procedures and policies in all content areas and by all staff members in such areas as writing standards, heading of papers, entering and exiting classrooms, language, etc. (see *Tools for Teachers, 2nd ed.* by Dr. Fred Jones, and *The First Days of School* by Dr. Harry K. Wong).