

Independence High School 636 North Independence Ave. Provo, Utah 84601

April 10, 2008





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

Independence High School 636 North Independence Ave. Provo, UT 84601

April 10, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase 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. It is a three-phased 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 10, 2008, 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 Independence 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 Sarah Lloyd is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Independence High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about 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 even more 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 Independence High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Sarah Lloyd	Principal
Boyd McAffee	Assistant Principal
•	_
$\underline{\mathbf{C}}$	<u>ounseling</u>

Vaisti Davis	Hand Councelon
Kristi Davis	Head Counselor
Jenn Moxon	
Christopher Miller	Social Worker

Support Staff

Barry Brown	Rozan Holbrook	Jennifer Perlmutter
Sharri Brown	Nancy McGriff	Pete Perides
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Michele Freeman	Shauna Morrison	Kenji Strange
Peggy Groo	Cassi Palmer	Fred Woolley

Faculty

Jamie Barrett	Janette Grimshaw	Sharee Lewis
Jose Cataarino-Vieira	Matthew Hiatt	Alyssa Ronquillo
Shule Corona	Jackie Hinckley	David Starling
Marci Crawford	Haylie Hunsaker	Ashlie Stitt
Jim Donnells	Ben Hunter	Chet Whatcott
Eric Green	David Kent	Mark Williams
Rochelle Griffen	Alice Koehne	

INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

"Creating People Who Are READY."

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Independence High School believes students perform at their highest levels...

- 1. when the environment is safe and positive;
- 2. when they are taught by highly skilled teachers;
- 3. when the curricula is relevant and engaging;
- 4. when experiential and cooperative learning strategies are used;
- 5. when they strive for goals comparable to their peers at other schools;
- 6. when citizenship, social, and academic improvement is a daily focus; and
- 7. when the faculty and staff recognize and reward their achievements.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

- 1. Communicate: To listen, read, write, and speak effectively.
- 2. Compute: To think, reason, analyze, and figure, powerfully.
- 3. Connect: To acknowledge, support, participate, and lead, respectfully.

Date of Visit: April 10, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ted P. Lovato, Accreditation Consultant, Utah State Office of Education, Visiting Team Chairperson

Ronald Crossman, Principal, Vista Private School, Magna

Joe Kelly, Principal, Landmark High School, Nebo School District

Judy Nixon, Principal, Canyon Heights High School, Davis School District

Karl Wells, Principal, Slate Canyon School, YIC Director, Provo School District (Guest Observer)

VISITING TEAM REPORT

INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Independence High School opened its doors to 60 students as Provo School District's alternative high school in 1979. It was originally named Provo Vocational High School. Through the years, it has grown and developed into what is now called Independence High School. The original principal, Greg Hudnall, summarized, "Independence was designed to be different. The school was for at-risk kids who got lost in the system." In January 1993 Independence was moved to a new \$4 million building at its present location on North Independence Avenue. It was at this time that the school changed its name.

Independence High School receives students from the entire geographical area which comprises Provo School District. Students may only attend Independence High on a referral basis. Total enrollment grew from 471 in 2001-02 to a high of 609 in 2003-04. These numbers begin to drop again in 2004-05, and have leveled off to approximately 470 students per year in grades 9-12. The ethnicity of students is predominately Caucasian and Hispanic, at 56 percent and 34 percent respectively. The Hispanic population has doubled since 1998-99. Approximately 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, which is a strong indicator of the low socioeconomic standing of the student body.

- a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?
 - The self-study revealed the school performed an in-depth analysis of its own mission/beliefs and desired results. The results presented were highly effective. The school profile, curriculum development, assessment systems, and instructional design presented a sufficient analysis of the school's profile to support the idea of its being effective. The building of community support leadership, school leadership, and continuous improvement are emerging and require outside monitoring to support the school's improvement.
- *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*
 - Establishment of community support will always be a challenge for an alternative school system. However, the profile and visit strongly support the need for support in relation to parents and the community.
 - The school leadership provides a strong vision, but the administration needs to invest time and effort to encouraging teacher buy-in. It appears to the Visiting

Team that not all people are "on the same page." The shortage of faculty members hampers potential improvement, which will be a constant focus.

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

Independence High School's accreditation team made a notable effort to complete an honest and sincere study. Both the school visit and accreditation book reflect strengths and weaknesses.

Students and faculty members were shirts to reflect and/or respond to the mission statement, which were represented throughout the school.

Anecdotal data from consensus groups revealed concerns that need to be addressed to achieve future goals.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The Visiting Team felt a pervasive attitude among the staff, and especially the school leadership, that Independence High School is being used as a punishment for the students who are referred to it, instead of seeing the school as offering many positive opportunities for at-risk youth. Further inquiry into changing this negative image needs to be made, and efforts put forth to remedy the situation.
- The school leadership and staff must look at ways to be unified on achieving the notable vision for the school. The principal needs to find ways to allow teachers to have ownership of the vision without being told how to think and complete necessary assignments.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) 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?

It took an entire year for Independence High School to develop its mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs, with a great amount of team work expended. Accreditation leaders asked focus group members to think in terms of "vision" and

to make individual presentations as to what they personally felt represented the "vision" or mission of Independence HS. The goal, as described in the self-study document, was to create an "image" that was generic enough to represent all students, genders, races, socioeconomic levels, parents, community members, staff, etc. What evolved, after many meetings and brainstorming, was a very simple and straightforward statement: "Creating People Who Are Ready."

The student leadership group, the Lions' Council, were involved in creating hat and t-shirt designs that promoted the mission, but there is little evidence that they were involved in the actual development of the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs. The accreditation teacher-leaders did a fine job of marketing the overall effort, and there seems to be a level of excitement and buy-in from the school community. The administration needs to continually applaud the efforts of the accreditation leaders.

The Superintendent of Schools and the Assistant Superintendent met with the entire staff to give input and express approval of the overall efforts. It seems to the Visiting Team that very few, if any parents were involved in this important and key work.

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

The Visiting Team felt that the mission and beliefs do align to support the school's DRSLs. Independence High School serves a diverse at-risk population, and the established belief statements and mission are commendable. At first glance, the mission statement seemed to not communicate sufficient or vital information about the overall direction of the school, but upon further scrutiny it is obvious that the accreditation team put much thought into its creation. In the end, the mission statement "Creating People Who Are Ready" is easy to remember and simple to communicate.

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

The school staff plans to use a wide variety of measures in assessing the success of the DRSLs, including Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), UBSCT results, UPASS, CRT, the Provo Writing Assessment (PWA), Direct Writing Assessment (DWA), Power School Daily Attendance Records, UPASS Attendance Results, etc.

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 Visiting Team believes the school does an outstanding job of promoting the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs, but there needs to be more ownership of the overall vision by the staff. The principal must allow the staff to design and drive viable programs that enhance student achievement and leadership. A greater degree of trust is needed in order for the faculty and staff to achieve total buy-in of the vision. When this happens, the vision will evolve into 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 staff meets weekly to discuss instructional and curricular issues. Teachers at the school follow the Utah Core Curriculum. The school's DRSLs incorporate the Utah Life Skills guidelines. These guidelines are also used in several classes and activities at Independence High School.

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

The curriculum is designed to accommodate all types of learners. Many courses use direct, hands-on learning through experiments and activities that promote instruction through experience. Several instructional activities were observed that demonstrated higher-order thinking skills. Several courses were experientially based, such as the Principals of Technology course and the Junior ROTC courses. At-risk youth present a challenge to any educator, but many of the teachers believe the students want to learn or they wouldn't be enrolled at the school.

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 school staff meets on a weekly basis to discuss the total school program. The DRSLs are posted around the school, and the school seems to have a common goal in delivering these DRSLs. Staff members were knowledgeable about the DRSLs and discussed how they were using them in their content courses.

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

Assessment data is provided to all instructional staff members at the school. Individual student data is used to individualize instruction for students. Various types of assessments are used, such as CRTs, achievement tests, writing assessments, and reading assessments. Teachers expressed a need for more in-

service training on ways to interpret and explicate data that would lead to better instruction for improved student academic achievement.

Instruction:

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

Several different instructional methods were observed by the Visiting Team. A great many experiential and hands-on activities were observed. The staff at Independence High School all agreed that these alternative students did not tolerate traditional, lecture-based approaches to learning. Many of the teachers expressed a fondness for and devotion to teaching alternative education students.

b) To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?

The DRSLs are displayed in several different places in the school. The DRSLs are also integrated in the school language and culture. Teachers are still working on implementing the DRSLs completely at the classroom level. The Visiting Team observed that the instructional staff was committed to implementing the DRSLs into the overall curriculum. Teachers meet weekly to facilitate this process.

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 professional development program at Independence High is very effective. Teachers have the opportunity to attend several workshops and conferences on a year-round basis. In addition, the staff engages in professional development weekly in staff collaboration meetings, and in training with the school's administration. The staff attends professional development in both content and delivery system areas.

There is a need for the school leadership to give teachers independence in creating ways to better the school through establishment of effective instructional strategies that can be viewed retrospectively and based on best practices.

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 school's administration reported that the teachers at Independence High School are all fully certified in their current subject areas. Teachers also attend several trainings year-round to keep current with new content and best practices. The staff at Independence High is very innovative in its instructional practices and striving to become better educators. Staff members take pride in working with alternative education students, and feel they have an impact on their lives.

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

Technology was visible throughout the school. Computers and computer labs were available to students. Students in one class all had laptop computers at their desks, and were working on them. The principal reports that the school has an overall technology plan. Teachers receive ongoing training on the use of technology and how to use it in the classroom. State CRTs will be given online this year.

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?

Independence High's staff has developed a school-wide assessment in writing. They give the students a "writing prompt" once monthly, then have the students correct it the next month. This process gives the students feedback on their writing and allows them opportunities to make corrections. Independence High's staff is also starting a school-wide math assessment this year to re-teach eight or nine critical topics. Computing is a key part of the school's 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?

In January 2008, a data specialist was hired and trained by the school district in an attempt to aid the school's teachers and administration in using school-wide, state, and district assessments. This data specialist will clearly articulate student achievement to teachers and administration. Teachers feel this is a positive step, but would still like more professional development on the review and comprehension of data in order to improve instruction and student achievement.

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

Independence High's staff has been frustrated in using data to assess the success of the school. They have viewed assessments as cumbersome and overwhelming.

They feel that students are also so overwhelmed that they are not doing their best on the assessments. A key element in raising the teachers' confidence was the trained data specialist hired by the school district. Teachers now seem better informed and excited about the data results.

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 a notable schedule in place for professional development and collaboration on a weekly basis. It has an early-out schedule each week for training and collaboration. The school also gets five Provo District-sponsored days a year for additional training.

As mentioned earlier, teachers desire more in-service training to better decipher and interpret test data so they can explicate the issues that will improve instructional strategies.

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

Independence High's staff has recently implemented a rubric called "Connect Responsibly." This rubric allows teachers to quickly score each student in class on a four-point scale based on the behavior and attitude they exhibited during the class period. It identifies patterns of behavior so that appropriate interventions can be implemented. It also allows accurate and helpful feedback to parents, teachers, administration, caseworkers, probation officers, and the courts.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS 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?

Teachers meet weekly for staff development related to school-wide literacy, department meetings, and staff development. There is a zero-tolerance policy in place with regard to safe school concerns. This policy is noteworthy throughout the entire school. However, teachers and students expressed concerns over disruptive student behavior in the classroom and power struggles among staff members that affect the academic learning process. The leadership responded with in-school suspension and a tardy policy that limits late students entering the classroom. Leaders have institutionalized viable measures to provide an academic

learning environment. Their vision is strong in scope, but there seem to be issues with the implementation of strategies necessary for the vision to come to fruition.

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?

Throughout the school visit, the leadership demonstrated that such decision-making is a process that requires additional support. The accreditation book also provides limited data and lacks summaries regarding academic direction. In addition, comments are included as to why the data are not effective; resolutions to the problem are not outlined. This area of concern must be addressed to continue improvement. Teachers reflect the lack of collaboration regarding assessments and working together identifying needs of improvement. There is too much academic data and too little data measuring behavior and attendance. The degree of trust among the administration, teachers, and staff must continue to improve.

c) To what extent does the 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 management of operations that promote a safe and efficient school is excellent. The leadership of the school has defined student enrollment placement, self-contained or within the school, based on past and current behaviors.

The school supports a self-contained classroom and in-school suspension programs for students whose behavior is inappropriate for the classroom. Students and teachers are well aware of the parameters in the classroom.

The indicators of the School Quality Survey (ISQ) reveal that the faculty lacks instructional materials and extracurricular opportunities. The need for more open dialogue between administration and faculty is evident. This lack of communication may result in problems affecting school improvement.

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?

Collaboration and shared responsibility appear to be emerging areas that will require focus throughout the next phase of the school improvement process. The School Community Council now includes the parents of the student leaders, which should increase parent participation in the future. Staff and students believe that the leadership of the school needs to be more easily accessible regarding

concerns expressed, as noted by the indicators of the School Quality Survey. The focus groups expressed the desire to participate in decision making and collaborate in problem solving. Teachers want to be trusted and have less micromanagement in evidence.

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?

Based on the School Improvement Survey, the stakeholders of the school believe that school leaders (staff members) are positive and effective. Advisory teachers are the same throughout a student's tenure at Independence. The advisory teacher completes home visits at the beginning of every school year. Students within the advisory class are required to work together to motivate one another, and to be responsible for each other rather than have the teacher be the sole advisory. The role of the advisory teacher or teacher leader is to call home, notify parents, and call students to come to school. Throughout the one-day visit, students verbalized to the Visiting Team that they were fully aware of the negative connotations related to going to Independence High; however, if it were not for Independence, they would not be enrolled in school. The Visiting Team believes, from direct observation, that Independence is a positive influence on these atrisk children.

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 NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

<u>Culture of Continual Improvement:</u>

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 Independence staff has committed to making meetings productive and meaningful. The school has recently implemented the Connect Responsibly rubric. This rubric allows teachers to quickly score each student in class on a four-point scale based on the behavior and attitude they exhibited during the class period. It identifies patterns of behavior so appropriate interventions can be implemented. It also allows accurate and helpful feedback to parents, teachers, administration, caseworkers, probation officers, and the courts.

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?

Independence has several teacher support items in place, including peer coaching, New Teacher Academy, Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP), and conferences in content areas of instruction. The New Teacher Academy has been particularly successful. All new teachers receive training and coaching on intervention strategies, school behavior models, curriculum development, student demographics, and school culture.

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 new/revised school-wide action plan is positive. Teachers are excited, as they are directly involved in the planning as well as the implementation stages. The new data specialist has sparked added buy-in of staff and administration as data results are shared quickly and clearly. Teachers expressed a desire for more data in-service.

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

The positive outlook and desire for student achievement are commendable. Independence was very critical in its self-study; however, the school is helping students in academic and social achievement every day. Students feel safe, appreciated, and challenged. Independence is to be highly congratulated for valuing students as individuals. The community, feeder high schools and middle schools, the district administration, and the board of education need to join hands with Independence High School to improve its image.

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

There was a commitment to focus on academics during the day and be selective on what extracurricular activities were beneficial to student growth and to promote "connectedness." Several activities have been eliminated, so that academics have become top priority. The English Department, for example, after studying best practices, decided to place students in grade-level English classes rather than placing them according to ability level. Four of the six teachers hold ESL endorsements and have formed a partnership with Brigham Young University whereby the university provides several in-service trainings each month through its BEEDE program. In addition, teachers have received training in other areas like Secondary Chance Literacy, which trains teachers on how to incorporate reading instruction into their respective courses.

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

After the 2001-2002 accreditation visit, Independence High staff explored the Urban Learning Center (ULC) model of school reform, which is used broadly in areas like East Los Angeles and the Watts neighborhood. Even though the ULC model did not come to fruition, there is evidence of ULC reform efforts at the school. Among these is the Parent Center, which is designed to improve parent-teacher communication and relationships. This is a positive attribute, since parents of alternative education schools tend to stay away from those schools for a variety of reasons.

Other programs to increase student success at Independence include the Love and Logic philosophy of behavior management; Managing Aggressive Students Successfully (MASS); and developing Challenge Day, which promotes positive values and connectedness in students at the school. In addition, there has been a change with the advisory class, which is now known as Leadership Class, where students must work together to motivate one another and be responsible for each other, rather than having the adult authority figures be the sole person(s) responsible for motivating students to be responsible for personal growth.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The self-study document revealed that "the third period Leadership Teachers are committed to home visits each Fall to begin or review the Student Education Occupation Plans (SEOP)." Each teacher is assigned another member of the school staff as a partner, and they are asked to make home visits to each of their assigned leadership students. During the home visit, teachers review the latest test

scores with students and parents, discuss graduation progress and status, answer questions, discuss concerns, and set goals for the upcoming school year. The Visiting Team felt the home visit program was going the extra mile in fostering student success and involving parents, but overall the school needs to continue to develop a school-wide focus on community building.

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

The school staff, with support from the district administration, district secondary principals, and the board of education, must work collaboratively to change the negative image of the school. It cannot continue to be known as "the punishment school," a phrase heard several times by members of the Visiting Team. The staff needs to be applauded not only for the home visits, but also for programs like the Postcard Parties, where positive student information is shared with parents. The school must continue efforts to become more involved in the community and feel less isolated.

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

The staff has discussed many ways in which students' successes can be celebrated. Among those are the Leadership Class; favorable media coverage; web-based communication; constructive relationships with the juvenile courts, Detention Center, probation officers, etc.; having a designated school public affairs person; and continuing public service projects such as the Christmas Bags project. Perhaps, with these ideas and continued efforts, Independence High School will gain the positive spotlight it so deserves.

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

Results of overall school improvement and the many good things the school is doing, which lead to affirmation of the hard work students and teachers are involved with, are not being communicated as effectively as is possible. The school needs to promote the positives and to do everything in its power to change the negative image of the school. The Visiting Team, after spending one day at Independence, believes that the school is of tremendous value for the at-risk high school population of Provo School District.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for a well done self-study document that was informative, well planned, honest, and sincere.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School's faculty, administration, and staff for caring and supportive efforts in their approach to educating students.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School's principal for having a strong and viable vision for the school, which will eventually lead to greater student success.
- The Visiting Team commends the Independence High School student body for exhibiting a sense of ownership and pride in their school.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for the current environment where students feel safe, welcome, and successful.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for its attempts to accommodate the individual learning needs of students.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for the school-wide program that supports reading and writing across the curriculum.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for establishing and working toward a 60 percent graduation rate by 2010.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for a variety of student programs designed to build student self-esteem, notably the Lions Council, which promotes student leadership and responsibility. In addition, Independence High School is commended for the many valuable school-wide student incentives that produce a high degree of student motivation.
- The Visiting Team commends Independence High School for maintaining a clean, highly functional, and welcoming school plant.

Recommendations:

• The Visiting Team recommends that Provo School District and Independence High School collaborate to develop strategies for marketing a more positive

image of the school with feeder schools and the community as a whole. The Visiting Team feels that this is a good school with an undeserved poor reputation.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Provo School District work with Independence High School to establish long-term staffing goals (for both teaching and support staff) to meet the growing academic needs of the student population. There is a need for more academic offerings, off-campus opportunities, evening programs, and a minimal extracurricular program.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration allow the faculty, to a greater and more meaningful degree, to design and drive unique programs that improve student achievement, responsibility, and leadership.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Independence High School investigate and implement ways to improve and increase parental involvement at the school.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Independence High School find more meaningful ways to track valuable and useful data to increase student achievement and to foster improved teacher instructional strategies and methods.