The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Joel P. Jensen Middle School

8105 South 3200 West
West Jordan, Utah 84088

December 3-4, 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

Joel P. Jensen Middle School

8105 South 3200 West
West Jordan, UT 84088

December 3-4, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword ii
Utah State Board of Education iii
Jordan School District Board of Education and District Administration 1
Joel P. Jensen Middle School Administration and Staff 2
Joel P. Jensen Middle School Mission Statement, Belief Statements, and DRSLs 4
Members of the Visiting Team 6
Visiting Team Report 7
Chapter 1: School Profile 7
    Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry 8
Chapter 2: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS)
    Teaching and Learning Standards 8
    Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs) 8
    Curriculum 10
    Instruction 11
    Assessment 13
Chapter 3: NAAS Support Standards 13
    Leadership and Organization 14
Chapter 4: NAAS School Improvement Standard 16
Chapter 5: Community Building 18
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team 19

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, December 3-4, 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 Joel P. Jensen Middle 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 G. Norma Villar is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Joel P. Jensen Middle 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 Joel P. Jensen Middle School.

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JOEL P. JENSEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Sheldon Russell ..... Assistant Principal
Kelly Tauteoli ..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Wendy Bartlett ..... Counselor
Holly Bell ..... Counselor
Jennifer Morrison-Winter ..... Counselor

Support Staff

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Alicia Yost

JOEL P. JENSEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Joel P. Jensen Middle School is to advance each student's academic and personal development.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- All students can learn.
- Everyone within the school community should be valued, respected, and challenged to meet their personal best in a safe and positive environment.
- The diversity of middle school students requires a wide range of teaching and assessment methods.
- Responsibility for student achievement is shared by students, parents, staff, and the community.
- The curriculum should meet the needs of students, adhere to district, state, and national standards, and prepare students for the future.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Support Learning
   - Students demonstrate a high level of literacy using a variety of reading strategies across the content areas.
   - Students learn and utilize the Six Traits of Writing across the curriculum.
   - Students will explore career opportunities by recognizing their own strengths as they relate to career choices.

2. Thinking Skills
   - Students will adapt a variety of critical and creative thinking strategies to solve complex problems.
   - Students understand and implement technology in order to access, analyze and use information.
   - Students will conduct self-evaluations to conclude if issues, tasks, or problems have been solved.

3. Active Collaboration
   - Students will demonstrate using a variety of forms of expression to effectively gather, develop, evaluate and communicate ideas.
   - Students will utilize parents, teachers, peers and community as resources for meeting educational goals and create a community of learners.
   - Students work cooperatively to integrate new information with existing knowledge and experience.

4. Responsible Citizenship
   - Students will show respect for self and others by understanding and accepting the consequences of their own behavior.
   - Students will participate in activities that promote democratic principles of freedom, justice and equality.
   - Students will participate in activities that foster the understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Date of Visit:

December 3-4, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Verneita R. Hunt, Granite School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Vickie Daraban, Scott M. Matheson Junior High School, Granite School District

Machelle Filion, Mueller Junior High School, Davis School District

Joanne Fraser, Scott M. Matheson Junior High School, Granite School District

Susan Sweet, Walhquist Junior High School, Weber School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

JOEL P. JENSEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Joel P. Jensen Middle School opened to students in September 1984. The school was named for a respected, long-time educator and administrator in Jordan School District, and is the only school in the district named after a person. Joel P. Jensen Middle School is situated on the southeastern side of the city of West Jordan. There are three other middle schools in West Jordan.

Joel P. Jensen Middle School serves a diverse population; over the last five years, the community has seen a decline in student population. The school currently serves 844 students with a faculty of 44 licensed teachers, two assistant principals, and one principal.

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

The Visiting Team found the profile contained valuable information under the Focus Groups and Department Analyses sections. There was information about the collaboration teachers have been doing and its positive effect on student achievement. Additionally, a rubric for supporting learning that teachers developed for one of the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) was included. This was one piece of evidence for institutionalizing the school's first DRSL.

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

Joel P. Jensen Middle School should include disaggregated student data pertaining to the school's academic achievement progress or lack of progress. The school's profile lacked data useful for the Visiting Team to ascertain who is and who is not learning. Data should be explicit as to student achievement, showing improvement or regression of formal testing scores/abilities. For the School Profile to serve as a living document, data should be continually updated, which will give teachers, staff, and administration appropriate and useful information as to student progress; thus, the document will become a guide to classroom curriculum and instruction.

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

The Visiting Team found the school's self-study to reflect the school's current strengths and limitations. However, these were not accurately reflected in the school profile. The profile should include more specific data and the analysis of that data to give a broader view of the school. When the Visiting Team came to the school, they

found the teachers, staff, administration, students, and community much more informed than the school profile indicated.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- It is suggested that there be a more in-depth analysis of who is and who is not learning in the profile. There needs to be a broader representation of achievement data.

- It is suggested that the advisory period be expanded to take full advantage of research-based teaching strategies, specifically the one-on-one time helping students analyze their grades, work ethics, and homework support.

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?

During the spring of 2007, the school's leadership team met to revisit and revise the school's existing mission statement, belief statements and DRSLs. The leadership team felt it was important to distill and reduce the contents of these documents to more comprehensible terms. A School Climate Survey given to students, parents and teachers was used as a guide in this process. The modified mission and belief statements, as well as the condensed DRSLs, were ratified by the faculty in May 2007. The mission statement and belief statements are presently aligned and emphasize student growth.

The school should be commended for its decision to focus on the institutionalization of the school's Support Learning DRSL. Specifically, a plan including assessment systems was developed to incorporate instruction in reading and writing strategies school-wide. Within the next six years, a second DRSL should be fully implemented school-wide.

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

The Visiting Team found that the school's mission and belief statements support the school's DRSLs. The school staff may want to consider the use of more compelling

language in both the mission and belief statements that would not only promote the school's vision, but also include expectations for all stakeholders involved.

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

The school staff has implemented a school-wide plan for the improvement of students' reading and writing skills, as addressed in the Support Learning DRSL. The Visiting Team found strong evidence that teachers are utilizing this plan. A rubric including performance indicators has been developed to assess all components of the Support Learning DRSL across the curriculum. The Visiting Team suggests that the performance levels assigned to the Career Exploration portion of the DRSL be re-written so that students can assess their own individual progress in this area. Implementation of this rubric appears to be in the early stages. Teachers and students are currently using the Six Traits model to assess writing samples.

Other assessments used to measure student progress in the areas of reading and writing include standardized test scores, the Scholastic Reading Inventory, the state Direct Writing Assessment, and individual classroom assessments. Data from these sources is available to teachers and students. Additional data from the Support Learning Rubric and Six Traits model should be collected to provide further evidence of progress and also provide an opportunity for self-assessment by students.

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 observed evidence of effects of the mission, beliefs and DRSLs in the culture of the school in many areas. Students and teachers individually display a full knowledge of the school's DRSLs. The staff should be commended for its efforts to develop a rubric to assess the Support Learning DRSL. The staff's efforts to institutionalize this DRSL are manifested in the Six Traits Writing model used in all curricular areas. The collaborative efforts to implement a school-wide program emphasizing reading and writing skills has had a positive affect on the school culture. Many programs and processes exist at the school that emphasize and support the DRSLs, including student reward and incentive programs (including UBI activities), career exploration activities, advisory period, the development of common assessments within some departments, cross-curricular projects in several areas, Science Week and Math Night activities, Reality Town, Job Shadow Day, the school-wide disclosure statement, and student-led parent-teacher conferences.

Curriculum:

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

Teachers work collaboratively to align their curricula to the core. Departments produce curriculum scope and sequence binders as a resource for planning and mentoring new teachers and long-term substitutes. Teachers meet on Mondays to collaborate with departments and align curricula to the State Core. The Visiting Team suggests continued departmental collaboration with guidance from the administration as to the expected outcomes. Eventually, a standard rubric for each DRSL should be used in all classes. While there is some evidence that the concepts of the Utah Life Skills are implemented in the classrooms, teachers need to use the vocabulary associated with this program so all students and teachers share the same understanding.

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

The Visiting Team observed students involved in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. A variety of instruction was given in some classes. For example, vocabulary building, journals, self-starters, and practice of writing skills were used by some teachers. These teaching strategies were apparent in some classes; however, the Visiting Team encourages professional development by staff members to share ideas on student engagement with all faculty members to improve the quality of instruction and develop common practices in all classrooms.

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 the teaching staff supports the DRSLs. A rubric has been created with indicators and expected outcomes to measure the success of the Student Learning DRSL. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff revisit the data for the third indicator, which reads: “Students will explore career opportunities by recognizing their own strengths as they relate to career choices.” The data for this indicator is reported as school-wide data rather than individual data, which makes it difficult to measure individual progress.

The Visiting Team found the teaching staff is in the early stages of using the Student Learning DRSL rubric. The rubric should be used by students as well as staff in order to be an effective tool that can be used to evaluate students’ skills across the curriculum. Both teachers and students must be able to use the rubric to effectively assess student progress.

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

The staff effectively evaluates student learning through formal and informal assessment. For the most part, teachers know which students are learning and which

students are not learning. Based on the evaluation of assessments, some teachers modify and adapt their curriculum to better meet the needs of students.

Some students shared a perception that not all teachers have high expectations of achievement for the students. It is recommended by the Visiting Team that teachers consider the ramifications of this perception and how students can be encouraged to reach their potential. Knowing some teachers have very engaging instructional strategies, students also perceive that a greater variety of learning strategies from all teachers would facilitate better learning.

Instruction:

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

The Visiting Team observed a wide variety of instructional strategies being utilized in several classrooms, including hands-on activities, collaborative projects, peer tutoring, oral presentations, student portfolios, problem-solving activities, etc. Other classroom environments provided minimal evidence of the use of instructional strategies beyond paper/pencil tasks, lecture, etc. More exploration and training in expanding strategies may be useful for those teachers who rely solely on traditional methods of teaching. Buy-in to newer and more effective instructional strategies is sometimes difficult for a few teachers, but as teachers take an honest look at themselves and their classroom practices, they will realize that self-improvement brings gratification through greater student achievement—the reason most teachers got into the profession in the first place.

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?*

Classroom observations by the Visiting Team provided evidence the staff is committed to incorporating the Support Learning DRSL in all content areas. To that end, the staff has developed a school-wide program directed at improving student reading and writing skills, including use of the Six Traits of Writing model.

Throughout the 2007-08 school year, teachers studied specific reading strategies during professional development meetings. Each month, teachers taught that particular strategy to students during the Advisory class. All teachers have received professional development on the use of the Six Traits of Writing model and are currently using it to assess student writing in all curricular areas. Students have been taught to assess their own progress using the Six Traits rubric.

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?*

Professional development has been guided by identified instructional needs at the school in the following ways:

1. Two teams of teachers have been sent to other schools to observe various facets of middle school programs. The school has adopted several changes to the Advisory class and student-led conferences as a result of these visits.
2. Twenty staff members have attended the National Middle School Association Conferences over the past three years. Information gained at the conferences was presented to the remainder of the staff during professional development meetings.
3. Teachers have been trained in the areas of reading in the content area, Six Traits Writing model, classroom management strategies, and cultural diversity, poverty, gang and drug issues.
4. As departments, teachers have taken the responsibility to teach faculty members specific reading strategies to be used in all content areas. Teachers also created two collections of lesson plan ideas for reading across the content areas including the use of the Six Traits model.
5. Departments have collaborated to articulate instruction, write common assessments, develop curriculum maps, and develop lesson plans and supporting materials.

During the past five years, faculty members have read and discussed material from six different books regarding meeting the needs of adolescent learners.

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 teachers were endorsed in their teaching areas. Classroom observations verify that teachers are knowledgeable in their content areas and proficient in their instructional practices. Examples of best practices were observed in various classrooms, while other teachers struggle to use best practices. Teachers demonstrated the desire to identify areas for improvement in their own teaching and a willingness to make changes.

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 Visiting Team observed the use of technology in classrooms throughout the school. Technology has been integrated into curriculum and instruction in many classrooms. Students create PowerPoint presentations and do research online. Some teachers utilize various types of technology to enhance lesson material, broaden the scope of information available to students, and increase student interest.

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 saw evidence of the assessment of student achievement performance on a school-wide basis used by teachers in the classrooms within the areas of reading and writing. The staff should be commended for the use and variety of ways in which this is being accomplished throughout the school, as this is a difficult task. The Visiting Team saw that assessments of the Student Learning DRSL were being reviewed by the staff. It is recommended that the staff continue this valuable evaluation and assessment of students through reading and writing.

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

The Visiting Team observed the staff using multiple assessment tools in evaluating student achievement. Examples include projects, reports, teacher-created tests, quizzes, end-of-chapter tests, and presentations. Several departments have goals and standards that are used to make recommendations and accommodations. It is recommended that more collaboration between departments be scheduled to better facilitate this process.

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

The Visiting Team found that Joel P. Jensen Middle School faculty has data on student achievement from SRI testing and CRT testing. The ability to review grades with students during advisory period is commendable. Theoretically, every student will work personally with the advisory teacher to improve his/her grades. The teachers who do this are highly commended, as research shows that when students work one-on-one with a teacher on a regular basis, student achievement accelerates in a positive direction. Additionally, the administration and counselors meet at scheduled times with departments to review student scores. The staff, as a whole, recognizes the need for this information and its relevance to student improvement. The staff is encouraged to become familiar with and use, during advisory period, the student support and tracking spreadsheets available to them in conjunction with other assessments used in departments and classes.

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 saw some evidence of effective use of Advisory Class time. The collaboration time on the days of Advisory Class is well used to help students with

academic goals, as well as reading and writing, and to help teachers prepare for all their classes. Some of the staff members use the time in an effective way, and are seeking additional ways and time for even more collaboration among departments. All staff members are commended for their endeavors, and are encouraged to continue seeking ways and time to develop and continue along this path.

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

The faculty of Joel P. Jensen Middle School is commended for its school-wide assessment of the reading and writing from the Student Learning DRSL. The Six Traits of Writing Rubric is used to assess the students in writing strategies school wide. The staff uses collaboration throughout departments in gathering assessment data to support this DRSL. The staff is to be commended for its assessment of reading and writing throughout all the departments in the school.

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?*

With a principal and assistant principal who are both new and still learning the culture and traditions of the school, the Visiting Team encourages the administration to preserve the present climate of support by continuing to encourage teachers to attend conferences and maintain the learning environment. Teachers feel support and are empowered to learn and teach.

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 feels that the Joel P. Jensen Middle School employs effective decisions that are research-based and collaborative. The team found that the school is limited in making decisions based on data, and encourages Joel P. Jensen Middle School's staff members to expand their collection of useful data to monitor student achievement and instructional effectiveness. The Visiting Team also feels most of the departments collaborate effectively and should continue doing so, expanding collaboration to all departments. Acknowledging that many of the teachers already do so, the Visiting Team also feels teachers need to expand their research exploration, analyzing collected data, and collaboration to make instruction

meaningful and productive. This collaboration should eventually extend beyond individual departments to the whole school.

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 Visiting Team observed that the school's resources are beneficial in ensuring effective learning that aligns with the school goals, DRSLs and student improvement. There are classrooms with adequate technology resources, a skilled and supportive counseling center, a well-supplied media center, a clean and orderly facility, and a professional administration ready to serve the whole school community. The administrators have skillfully provided a well-rounded schedule of offerings in spite of continual declining enrollment. The cafeteria staff provides nutritious meals for breakfast and lunch. Resources appear to be appropriately allocated to improve the school environment and provide means for departments to meet their goals.

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?*

Teachers and staff members are empowered with responsibilities and are encouraged to participate in many ways, including collaboration. The Visiting Team observed teachers who were actively involved in this process and felt they were making a difference. Students acknowledged to the Visiting Team that the degree to which teachers care about their academic success was an important factor in their positive feelings about being at Joel P. Jensen Middle School.

e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

Joel P. Jensen Middle School has an Advisory period as a means of getting to know and learning to assist students. According to the administration, the purpose of Advisory is to inform students of their grades and teach strategies to help students plan and improve grades. The ratio of students to teachers in an Advisory class provides an opportunity for interpersonal relationships to develop. Advisory can be a factor in helping at-risk students feel connected to the rest of the student body.

The Visiting Team observed that Advisory is not used to its full potential; there are some teachers who meet individually with students about grades and strategies, and some teachers spend this time in other ways. The Visiting Team recommends the exploration of additional positive outcomes of the Advisory period.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS 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 Visiting Team observed a comprehensive effort on the part of all faculty and staff to incorporate the Six Traits of Writing and Reading Strategies. All classes, from P.E. to foreign language to shop and English, provide meaningful reading and writing assignments for students. The Visiting Team was impressed with the level of cross-curricular collaboration evident on research papers and essays. Students research and discuss information in the science or social studies class, and then teachers coordinate the writing piece in the English class. The school is actively engaged in the Support Learning DRSL, which is the focus of school-wide collaboration.

b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The Visiting Team discussed the professional development plan with focus groups, department chairs and administration. All these groups confirmed that ongoing professional development occurs twice a month for the entire faculty. Additional small group instruction at district-sponsored quarterly professional development and attendance at conferences enhances the school's professional development as teachers share the information with their colleagues.

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 substantially supports the school focus on reading and writing. Collaboration and evaluation involve all teachers and support staff. The action plan addresses more effective communication with parents, students and the community. The new Skyward computer program allows all stakeholders access to grades, attendance, school information and e-mail. The faculty and staff have been trained in the new program and are working toward a more effective use of the system. The administration and staff have made commendable progress in creating a safe and caring atmosphere at the school. Adult presence in the halls at passing times creates a sense of security for students. Parents appreciate the presence

of adults outside after school and the availability of the police officer for positive interaction with the students and to handle more serious problems.

The school is making progress in closing the achievement gap. Advisory students review grades weekly with teachers, and collect missing work during this time. The entire school accepts late work to allow students who are underachieving to catch up. Classes and support staff are in place for non-English speaking students.

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

The Visiting Team observed teachers who enthusiastically collaborate to promote a productive learning environment and set goals for improving their own instructional practice and student achievement. As these teachers see success they can share their strategies and enthusiasm with others during professional development.

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

The original action plan was created in the formative years of the new accreditation process; therefore, it was lacking in specific focus based on student achievement data. As the administration and faculty have become more fluent in their use of data and goal implementation, they have created a more relevant action plan. They have incorporated elements of the State Core Curriculum from the previous plan into their new action plan. The new action plan supports the school's DRSLs.

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

The Visiting Team observed that some staff members are unified in a shared vision of collaboration for student success. In the implementation of the Support Learning DRSL, several members of the English, Social Studies, and Science Departments have collaborated on cross curricular assignments. The school is to be commended for the revision of the action plan and its alignment to the DRSLs. The Visiting Team commends the school for its efforts to collect and analyze data, recommends a continued effort to make instruction data driven.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team observed a feeling of community among the faculty and staff. For the most part, departments were supportive and nurturing in their relationships. The PTSA has a strong sense of community as supporters of the school and students. The Community Counsel functions well and has the full support of administration.

While these entities are strong and have a good sense of purpose, the school would benefit by extending their focus of community to unite these groups and make their efforts more cohesive.

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

The Visiting Team found that the school has provided tutoring for students using university student mentors. They also provide peer tutoring with National Honors Society members. Teachers are available before and after school to help students who are struggling. Teachers also use the data collected from standard assessments in evaluating who is learning and who is not. The faculty uses this information to determine additional programs needed to improve academic success.

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

The Visiting Team heard from two parents and two students as part of the focus group meeting. Additional parent and student committee members participated in the self study, but were not present for the site visit. The faculty focus groups met often during the self-study process to determine goals and review their progress toward those goals.

The faculty representatives expressed their desire for ongoing collaboration to facilitate further academic improvement.

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

Parents are encouraged to view student progress on the Skyward computer program. The Assessment Focus Team has compiled the data from standardized testing, the Scholastic Reading Inventory, and departmental testing and assessment. The faculty held a professional development day to review and analyze the data. Parents can access their students' spreadsheets, showing all assessment data, through the counseling center. The school also has a web page to inform the community. The school plans to post the information from the self-study on the web page.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The administration, teachers, staff, and community of Joel P. Jensen Middle School are commended for the tremendous work they have gone through with the self-evaluation accreditation process. Teachers have taken responsibility, and the Visiting Team commends them for their collaborative data analyses, finding areas of strength and weakness, and the creation of future action steps based upon those results.

- Joel P. Jensen Middle School is to be commended for its collaborative work with student data analysis and common assessments—determining who is and who is not learning. It is commendable that teachers give great amounts of time before and after school to help students with work completion and academic achievement. Through modeling dedication and focusing on relationships, teachers and administrators build intrinsic desire for excellence in students.

- The Visiting Team highly commends the teachers for implementing writing across all curricula, in all classes. This is not an easy task; teachers are commended for their determination to help students learn to write in a variety of genres.

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, teachers, staff, and students for creating a really wonderful school. We encourage all stakeholders to focus on the many positive aspects of this school community. The efforts of the combined community show the hard work of teachers and administration in providing many commendable programs for student achievement that need to be celebrated.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the Joel P. Jensen administration and teachers to continue their collaboration for student achievement through professional learning communities. Knowing that time is at a premium, it is recommended that collaboration be continued and expanded to include research-based instructional strategies, disaggregated student data, more common assessments, and discussion focusing on low-achieving students. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience within this school that can be tapped for professional learning community discussions.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Joel P. Jensen Middle School finish institutionalizing its first DRSL, Support Learning, by refining the rubric the school has created, which can be used to obtain data with students as a self-evaluating tool and with teachers to determine student progress. Over the next six years, teachers, staff, and the administration should institutionalize a second DRSL, complete with

an assessment/data collecting system. As the desired results for student learning become a part of every lesson and a focus for the school, student achievement will increase. Institutionalized life skills are the foundation for research-based, highly successful school communities.

- Observing the school from an outside view point, the Visiting Team recommends Joel P. Jensen Middle School capitalize on the great work of the administration, teachers, staff, and students to create a more positive reputation and feeling of school pride for all stakeholders. It is recommended that communication be a priority with students and parents, focusing on the positive programs, activities, and successes happening at Joel P. Jensen Middle School. Organized campaigns by the school's administration, teachers, and students will help all invested parties to identify and accentuate the positive aspects of the school community, resulting in stronger school pride.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Joel P. Jensen Middle School consider extending the advisory period to five days, creating an avenue for a variety of instructional, student, and innovative teacher professional development opportunities. It is recommended that the school keep the seven regular class periods as long as possible, thereby allowing as much time possible for academic subjects while providing for a variety of middle-level philosophies each day in the advisory periods. As teachers and administrators work collaboratively together, great advantages to student achievement can be accomplished through sustained, deliberately planned activities.