

La Europa Academy 1135 East Vine Street Murray, UT 84157

June 20, 2007





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

La Europa Academy 1135 East Vine Street Murray, UT 84157

June 20, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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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, June 20, 2007, 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 La Europa Academy 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 Genevieve Hunter, Education Director, is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at La Europa Academy, 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 La Europa Academy.

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

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(Certified Educational, Recreational and Therapeutic Schools)

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LA EUROPA ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

La Europa Academy is committed to using artistic expression as a therapeutic and educational inroad to foster student success. By providing a therapeutic studio along with an encouraging and challenging learning environment, students can be developed into confident communicators who can solve problems and strive to become independent lifelong learners.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- All students can learn and deserve to learn.
- A student's self-concept impacts learning and a student that feels loved will want to learn and will feel self-confident in doing so.
- Students will thrive in a supportive environment that emphasizes a student's strengths while challenging her to improve her weaknesses and work to her full potential.
- All students can learn to effectively communicate their thoughts and feelings artistically, orally, and in writing.
- Students are capable of using both creative and critical thinking strategies to solve problems.
- Students can be taught to understand and exemplify the evolution of learning: from informed learner to teachable learner to motivated learner to dynamic learner to active learner and into independent learner.
- Each student can be an independent learner by demonstrating accountability for her education.
- Through exposure to a variety of teaching methods, each student can identify her optimal learning style and learn to succeed in other learning environments.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

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

Kristopher Cary, Landmark High School, Nebo School District

Pam Scott, McKay-Dee Behavioral Health Institute, Ogden, Utah

VISITING TEAM REPORT

LA EUROPA ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

La Europa Residential Treatment Center, a therapeutic studio and school of fine arts, is situated on a quiet neighborhood street in Murray, Utah. It began operation in February 2005 and serves girls from around the country who are experiencing emotional problems. La Europa is part of a community of treatment centers (C.E.R.T.S.) dedicated to serving individuals in a safe, caring environment. The beautifully aesthetic building, previously used as a premier bed and breakfast and reception center, is nestled in peaceful surroundings including large trees and flower gardens, and is a perfect setting for personal healing. Student-created art pieces are found throughout the center, and add an artistic and personal touch to La Europa.

La Europa Academy, the education component of the treatment facility, offers students a challenging and supportive learning program that accommodates all types of learners, including those served in special education through an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The school provides individual and small-group instruction in required core classes and has an abundance of expressive art options, including theater, dance, music, and various forms of visual arts. Special attention is given to each student, and academic expectations are high.

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

Through the self-study process, La Europa Academy spent many hours gathering information and studying departmental processes for the school profile. It was evident from interviews during the visit that the teachers and staff members in the various departments had participated.

The school profile included information on student demographics, therapeutic graduation rates, average lengths of stay, graduation tendencies, special education trends, and student achievement data.

The profile reveals that students at La Europa Academy are not as ethnically diverse as the typical high school population. They come to Utah from areas around the nation, especially large, coastal population centers. Data concerning therapeutic graduation rates was collected, which prompted further inquiry into patterns comparing students with and without special education needs.

One of the strengths of La Europa Academy is the student academic success rate, which the school attributes to supportive and preventative measures taken to ensure student learning. Achievement data collected included a DRSL review

with recommendations for improvement. Based on the focus groups' recommendations, La Europa concluded that the following themes should be developed into a school-wide action plan:

• School program development

Increase art materials and community opportunities Develop career exploration

Expand library, media, technology, and science resources

• Department collaboration

Align curriculum, behavior, and DRSL expectations Improve cross-curriculum teaching and co-teaching Improve company-wide communication and relationships

• Professional Staff

Offer recruitment and incentives Improve staff retention Add professional development opportunities

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

The information in the school profile was interesting and informative; however, many of the excellent practices that were observed at the school were not included in the self-study. The Visiting Team also noted that additional information about the self-study would be helpful.

More parental feedback should also be sought so that Visiting Teams get a feel for that critical component of the program.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Include more information regarding the self-study process and individual involvement.
- Include information about the excellent teaching and assessment practices of teachers in core subject areas that became evident during the visit.
- Link improvement efforts and action plans to specific survey data.
- Include information regarding the ongoing self-study plans already in place.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

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

The Visiting Team learned through communication with the La Europa staff that the school community was involved in the collaborative self-study to the greatest extent possible. Most of the employees, including teaching and non-teaching staff, were included in the process. However, parental involvement was limited due to the school's enrollment of out-of-state students. Currently, no students from Utah are enrolled.

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

The Visiting Team commends the school on the data collected, which included student demographics and student achievement profiles through a DRSL review. More parental feedback (beyond the surveys) regarding the overall program is needed.

The Visiting Team recommends that the information in the school profile be made to correspond more closely with the Summary of Findings and School Goals. For example, data was collected about special education students and the rate at which they complete the program, but it was not discussed in the summary of findings. Recommendations that teachers complete a citizenship rubric on all students at every parent-teacher conference and within five days of discharge from the program were suggested in the DRSL Review, but not in the summary of findings or in the Action Plan. During the visit, the Visiting Team was presented with several binders of information that may very well have supported the other findings, and that could have been summarized in the school profile.

The Visiting Team commends La Europa for its excellent projected schedule designed to continue the self-study process.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

La Europa Academy's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. A Confident Learner—who knows that she is capable of learning and realizes that she is worthy of a quality education that goes beyond the classroom.

- 2. An Effective Communicator—capable of using oral, written, artistic, mathematical and technological forms of expression to effectively gather, develop and communicate ideas based on a core academic curriculum.
- 3. An Independent Life Long Learner—who actively envisions, establishes and carries out personal goals, continually strives to push the limits of her own knowledge and ability, and perseveres in difficult situations.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - The Visiting Team observed firsthand the implementation of La Europa's mission statement in each classroom. The mission statement allows the school to come up with a shared vision of what it would like each individual to accomplish.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The Visiting Team feels that the beliefs of La Europa Academy support the mission and goals of the school. Because of the unique nature of this school, the highly competent administration is extremely supportive of the staff and the teaching methods used to reach each individual student.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
 - The Visiting Team believes that the school uses its mission statement and beliefs to drive its DRSLs. The DRSLs enhance both the mission statement and beliefs and allow the school to function as a support to the therapeutic element of La Europa Academy.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The Visiting Team observed the use of the Utah Core Curriculum throughout the visit. La Europa Academy uses the Utah Life Skills throughout all of the courses taught; this gives the students a chance to practice good life skills on a daily basis.

The Visiting Team was impressed with the in-depth nature of the curriculum mapping. It was evident that many hours of work went into the document.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The Visiting Team observed collaboration among the teachers; there is a definite theme across areas of the curriculum. This allows the students the opportunity to express themselves through art, writing, oral projects, and technology. All of these teaching techniques help the students achieve the school's desired results for student learning.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The Visiting Team feels this is one of the strengths of La Europa Academy. The teachers used a variety of teaching strategies to assist each student. Many of the students reported feeling safe at this school because of the way the teachers taught the lessons; this allows the students to become confident learners. Art therapy is evident throughout the academy. Students have many opportunities outside school hours to develop proficiency in different areas of the arts.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The Visiting Team observed the variety of students enrolled at La Europa Academy, and how the teachers used a variety of teaching styles: hands-on labs, direct instruction, cross-curricular teaching, modeling, etc. This allows the students an opportunity to communicate any concerns and questions in an appropriate manner to the teachers involved.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The Visiting Team commends the strong leadership of La Europa Academy for allowing teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies that work with at-risk students. The leadership allows the students to get involved in the community through the local recreation center, the library, independent art study, etc. on a weekly basis. This allows the students to practice some of their life skills in a variety of situations.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The Visiting Team feels this is a strength of La Europa Academy. The school uses a wide variety of assessments. Small class sizes allow for continual observation and adjustments on the teachers' part to make sure the students are achieving academic success. La Europa believes that success in the classroom will usually equate with success in therapy.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The Visiting Team feels that La Europa Academy is using best practices with regard to assessment. There is a school-wide rubric on writing and behavior; each student is assessed and expected to meet minimum standards. This rubric is used to assist with parent/teacher conferences held every six to eight weeks, and thus give the students a citizenship grade for the term.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

The Visiting Team believes that La Europa Academy uses a fair assessment because it requires a minimum standard for all students. Also, the leadership team has adopted the Learning Techniques program to assist students and teachers as they integrate this program throughout the school.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The Visiting Team applauds the leadership team of La Europa Academy for allowing teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies while maintaining the core requirements in each subject area. The leadership team was instrumental in guiding the staff through the arduous task of developing a very in-depth curriculum map.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The Visiting Team observed the collaborative nature of the academy firsthand. The decisions for school improvement came from a variety of areas, and each invested person was allowed input throughout the process. The data used by the

leadership team to support the DRSLs, mission statement, and beliefs was exceptional, with a high degree of validity.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The Visiting Team feels that La Europa Academy truly understands the accreditation process. The school is continually looking for new ways to improve its own academic quality. The school should be applauded for its proactive approach to this process and its concern for the educational development of each student.

The school staff will continually monitor all progress modes of the program.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The Visiting Team believes the leadership of La Europa Academy is organized, well managed, and leading the school in the right direction. The physical facility is exemplary and well thought out. Security personnel are many and well trained. The learning environment is top-notch, the students feel safe and secure, and they are becoming lifelong learners through their experiences at La Europa Academy.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The Visiting Team feels that the leadership team of La Europa Academy is using the DRSLs to help guide the direction of the school. The goals are in line with the DRSLs and the students are becoming confident learners, effective communicators, and independent lifelong learners.

The school needs to improve its library by adding more volumes that appeal to this unique student body.

It appears that there is a strong financial base at the school, and that students are from a high socioeconomic background. La Europa Academy reflects this throughout.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The Visiting Team observed the collaborative nature of La Europa Academy; the

staff (teachers, therapists, directors, academic director) meets on a weekly basis to discuss the overall improvement of each student. Each staff member is a stakeholder in the students' academic progress, and this collaborative process allows for feedback from all stakeholders involved with each individual student.

Community Building:

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

The Visiting Team believes that the smallness of the school naturally fosters a community atmosphere. Many of the students reported they felt like members of a family while attending La Europa Academy.

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

The Visiting Team observed outside agencies being utilized by La Europa Academy to enhance student learning. The academy uses a variety of resources to ensure that each student has a positive experience in a wide range of artistic media.

Parents are involved, even though they may reside thousands of miles away. Parental visitation is highly encouraged on a workable basis.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The Visiting Team feels that La Europa Academy is pursuing a professional development opportunity for its teachers by using local school districts to support this goal. Teachers collaborate with other C.E.R.T.S. school personnel (at three other schools) to compare progress and other curriculum development.

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

The Visiting Team feels that the weekly meetings of all stakeholders allow for continuous improvement. Additionally, the leadership continues to foster the gathering of data to support the school's action plan, and helps drive the faculty to make necessary changes to improve the learning environment of the school.

The Visiting Team found that teachers are seeking more opportunities for professional development, even though they applaud the opportunities extended to them to meet other CERTS teachers.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

La Europa Academy is in compliance with all NAAS standards for accreditation. Over the years, the school has worked diligently to maintain the accreditation standards as outlined by the NAAS and the Utah State Office of Education. The school's curriculum is aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum. All professional educators are properly licensed and endorsed for their particular assignments, in accordance with Utah state requirements. The school is financially viable and ethical in its business practices. La Europa Academy has created and maintained a culture of continuous improvement that supports student achievement.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS - ACTION PLAN

- a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?
 - The Visiting Team found the La Europa staff to be highly committed to continuous improvement and positive growth. The comprehensive data collected and reviewed allows La Europa Academy to understand student make-up, demographics, graduation tendencies, and special education trends.
 - The staff is continually assessing where the program is and where they hope it will be. Student goals are closely monitored and are tailored to meet the personal and academic needs of the diverse student population. Challenges are many.
- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?
 - The Visiting Team was impressed with the ongoing assessment of the action plan, both school-wide and system-wide; this helps the school to target areas needing attention, and the commitment to making the program better is evident.
- c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

There is a genuine commitment among the staff to making the school a better environment for key stakeholders; thus, the staff is committed to continually monitoring and improving the action plan.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends La Europa Academy for the school's comprehensive and informative self-study materials, which will be an excellent tool as the school progresses toward the ideal of continual academic growth.
- The Visiting Team commends the educators of La Europa Academy for their creative use of a variety of teaching methods that meet the unique learning needs of each student. This includes hands-on learning activities, class discussions, group problem-solving activities, art therapy, and multimedia lessons.
- The Visiting Team commends La Europa Academy for holding students accountable for their learning, utilizing layered assignments where students can choose the grade they hope for. In addition, the staff is to be commended for providing additional assistance to improve student learning, including daily study skills classes and mandatory peer tutoring.
- The Visiting Team commends La Europa Academy for utilizing the Utah Life Skills Curriculum Guide in its education program.
- The Visiting Team commends the education staff for its excellence in collaborating across the curriculum and sharing instructional techniques, and for the high level of professional interaction within the treatment team. The professional development collaboration with other C.E.R.T.S programs is commendable.
- The Visiting Team commends La Europa Academy for the positive, personal relationship that is maintained between the staff and the diverse student population.
- The Visiting Team commends the C.E.R.T.S. Education Director and the Academy Education Director for providing strong academic leadership and continual support for the instructional staff.
- The Visiting Team commends the leadership/management of La Europa Academy for providing a physical school plant that is comfortable, attractive, and conducive to student learning.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership/management of La Europa Academy provide additional resources in the science area, including a fully functional science laboratory.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership/management of La Europa Academy provide additional library materials, especially nonfiction selections, to meet NAAS standards.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership/management of La Europa Academy expand the technology options of the school.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership/management of La Europa Academy investigate more foreign language options for students, to be taught by licensed personnel.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership/management of La Europa Academy provide more varied professional development resources for teachers.