The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Mont Harmon Junior High School

60 West 400 North
Price, Utah 84501

September 29-30, 2010

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

Mont Harmon Junior High School

60 West 400 North
Price, Utah 84501

September 29-30, 2010

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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FOREWORD

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

The evaluation, September 29-30, 2010, 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 Mont Harmon Junior 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 Bruce Bean is also commended.

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

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

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MONT HARMON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Bruce Bean ..... Principal
Carol Wells ..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Karee Hunt ..... Counselor
James Dart ..... Counselor

Support Staff

Jessica Rowley-Adams ..... Head Secretary
Ann Valdez ..... Attendance Secretary
Lori Rowley ..... Counseling Secretary/ISS

Faculty

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Ina Smith
LeRae Stuart
Colleen Wilson

MONT HARMON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mont Harmon Junior High faculty and partners will empower students to be highly successful individuals within a safe culture of mutual respect, personal responsibility, accountability and trust.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Mont Harmon Junior High is committed to personal growth and academic success for our students.

- Effective communication between staff, parents, and students is essential.
- That respect for self, other, and property enhances learning.
- Accountability and integrity are important in life.
- Achievement will be expected, rewarded and celebrated.
- Consistent school policy creates individual responsibility.
- All students can learn, but by different means and at different rates, therefore, various teaching strategies will be used.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Students will demonstrate personal and social responsibility for their behavior; follow established rules within the school and in classes by following the policies of attendance, preparedness, quality of work, dress code, and showing concern and empathy for others.

2. Communication skills are essential to successful performance in the workplace, society, and interpersonal relationships. Mont Harmon Junior High will challenge students to learn and use techniques to communicate clearly.

Date of visit: September 29-30, 2010

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Gwen Callahan, Emery School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Laurie Anderson, Stansbury High School, Tooele School District

Michele Kersey, Roy High School, Weber School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

MONT HARMON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Mont Harmon Junior High School is the largest (545 students) of two junior high schools in Carbon School District. Located in Price, Utah, it has a staff of 26 teachers and two administrators. The school serves a community population that is directly affected by the ups and downs of the coal mining industry.

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

Mont Harmon Junior High has been led by five principals in the last seven years. This situation has made it difficult for the faculty to maintain continuity of progress toward goals. The current principal is in his second year and has made dramatic improvements. Analysis of the data reveals incremental improvement in student performance on the State Core assessments, most impressively in the language arts area. Although not presented in the school's profile, new surveys indicate that stakeholders acknowledge and welcome the changes made by the new administration.

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

Future considerations will include refining the DRSLs, making action plans specific and measurable, and continuing the school's efforts toward community involvement. Improved communication with all stakeholders is critical to future improvement efforts. New and broader surveys of stakeholders will help the administration focus on areas needing attention.

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

The Visiting Team recognized throughout the visit that the school's self-study did not accurately reflect its current strengths and limitations. Surveys described opinions based on spring 2008 findings. A new administration took over in July 2009, and much evidence exists that many things have changed and improved.

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

- The Visiting Team encourages the administration to conduct new stakeholder surveys in order to obtain up-to-date feedback to assist in planning for the future.

- The Visiting Team recognizes the need for more parental and community involvement, and encourages the administration to expand communication to all stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS 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 was apparent that the faculty and administration had input in the preparation of the mission statement, beliefs and the DRSLs. However, community participation was limited in these areas. Focus groups are in their infancy, and will require a broad communication effort to outside stakeholders in order to include their input. The parent group interviewed seemed uninformed about the process and the areas in which they could share their concerns.

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

The DRSLs are not specifically focused or measurable, and are disconnected from the mission and beliefs. The school has sufficient data available to allow it to improve the specificity and measurability of the DRSLs.

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

Being able to measure progress toward the DRSLs will be an integral part of the school improvement process. At this time, the school has no clear evaluation of the DRSLs. This is one of the areas currently being planned by the new administration. The Visiting Team feels secure in the knowledge that this administration has the skills necessary to accomplish this goal.

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?*

Use of the mission, beliefs and DRSLs to guide the policies and procedures in the decisions of the school is in its beginning stages. The Visiting Team recognizes that having five administrators in seven years has not been conducive to this process, but also feels very positive about the steps and progress made by the new administration.

Curriculum:

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

The Visiting Team observed classes being conducted according to the Utah Core Curriculum, as well as staff members collaborating across the curriculum to enhance student learning. For example, when students write research reports for the science fair, they utilize skills they learn in their language arts classes. They also use skills from their art classes to complete presentation boards. Reading and writing strategies are used throughout the school. Teachers have been trained in the Six Traits of Writing and use a variety of reading strategies with their students.

Life skills such as working with others, collaboration, effective communication, and use of complex thinking skills were seen by the Visiting Team across the departments. Teachers incorporate these and other skills into their curriculum using teaching tools such as student presentations, research papers, and group projects.

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

The Language Arts Department is participating in a district-wide vertical teaming effort that will help achieve continuity of the curriculum throughout grades six to twelve. The Science Department's curriculum focuses on intended learning outcomes that include inquiry and problem solving. Along with this, students are given the opportunity to participate in school science fairs, which involve problem solving skills.

c) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?*

The school's DRSLs are effective communication skills, integrity, respect, and responsibility. Staff members are currently working to make these DRSLs more focused as they incorporate them into their teaching. The staff has implemented a school-wide late work policy in their efforts to support their DRSLs.

Posters and mirrors with character education messages are posted throughout the school. This offers students a constant reminder of the DRSLs.

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

Staff members look at their CRT scores yearly to address areas of strength and weaknesses. They incorporate what they find into their teaching strategies.

Instruction:

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

The Visiting Team observed many different instructional strategies, including group presentations, vocabulary drills, Smart Board use, and questioning strategies. In the classrooms visited, students were actively engaged in the learning process.

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 Visiting Team observed teachers using strategies that utilize life skills. Teachers understand the importance of effective communication skills. Students are given assignments that require them to present in front of the class concepts that reinforce what they learn. Teachers understand that assigning students projects that must be completed at home and returned to school this promotes the school's DRSL of responsibility.

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?*

With district support, the school offers professional development as needed. Programs like vertical teaming are being used within the school and district. The administration supports professional development programs that are curriculum driven, and allows teachers to attend them.

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?*

Staff members at Mont Harmon are certified or highly qualified in their content areas. The school district provides them with professional development for specific content areas.

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 teachers using technology with their students. Smart Boards and projectors are used in every classroom. Students use programmable calculators in math. Computer labs are available for students to conduct research on the Internet and work on projects.

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?*

Teachers use CRT scores to target specific core standards as they create their unit tests. Departments use pre- and post-tests as new units are started. Students with low scores on any state standard are given opportunities to work with the teacher or others until they can pass the test with proficiency. Although the staff members do not currently have common assessments, they are working toward this goal.

The staff expects students to meet proficiency in all content areas when they core test.

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 several different assessment tools being used, including in-class presentations, reports using material from the Internet, and projects assigned to meet specific curriculum standards. Teachers generate unit and term tests specific to their department.

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 noted that the staff puts a great deal of focus on Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) results. The staff understands the importance of having common assessments throughout the school that will help students achieve proficiency on the CRTs. When low scores are present, departments try to identify why the scores are low and then take proactive steps to improve them.

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 teachers and staff use faculty meetings to collaborate and work on PLC processes that are taken back to the classroom. The school has implemented a "C" period to ensure that students have an opportunity to work on missing assignments or discuss concepts as needed.

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

There is an awareness of the assessment rubrics for the school DRSLs. However, the Visiting Team did not notice any evidence that this school-wide scoring tool was in use.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHWEST SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

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

The Visiting Team found that the school leadership promotes quality instruction. Vertical teaming, PLCs, and professional development have been implemented to enhance teacher instruction and student learning and achievement. The Visiting Team encourages the leadership of Mont Harmon to designate time for staff members to engage in PLCs as a venue to discuss data and teaching strategies, to increase student learning and achievement. The leadership and teachers have an open dialogue regarding programming and ways to improve student achievement.

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 leadership of Mont Harmon employs effective decision making that is data-driven and research based. Student test results (CRTs), are being used as a vehicle to improve student learning and achievement. The Visiting Team found that the leadership of Mont Harmon supports the district initiative of vertical teaming, which has substantially increased test results in language arts, targeting areas that needed improvement as indicated by past CRTs. The leadership of Mont Harmon continues to use data in all core subjects to drive effective curriculum instruction and increase student CRT scores in all core subjects. The Visiting Team found there are concerns among staff members about having adequate time to analyze data and target areas of concern in each core disciple. The Visiting Team encourages continued development of PLCs within the school setting as a forum for school leadership, and recommends that staff members research and develop means of providing continuity, quality instruction, and improved learning for ***all*** students.

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 found that the leadership has taken a positive step in the direction of improving the safety of the school environment. Safety was an issue identified in the ISQ survey, but it appears to have been addressed. The students feel they are considerably safer at school this year than in past years, and indicated that they feel the teachers genuinely care about them and want to provide a safe learning

environment. The leadership appears to have addressed the needs of the school, and the students and have taken appropriate action to meet identified needs. The leadership team incorporated programs such as "Our Town" and "Reality Town" to assist students with coping skills within the school community. Classrooms are well equipped with audiovisual technology and other high-tech equipment, as well as programs. Teachers indicate that they have adequate supplies and textbooks. Money for conferences and some professional development has been reduced due to statewide budget cuts.

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?*

The Visiting Team found that the leadership empowers the school community to commit, participate, collaborate and share the responsibility for student learning through shared decision making. PLCs are the decision-making organization where all stakeholders meet and recommend decisions pertaining to student learning. Staff members have "bought into" the process because of commitment by the leadership and collaborative gains within the school community. Most decision-making efforts are collaborative and encompass all stakeholders at Mont Harmon.

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?*

The Visiting Team found that the programs being implemented to ensure each student's success in achieving the goals of the school are worthwhile and productive. Current CRT scores represent a positive step in the direction of improving student learning. Research-based methods are being used specifically throughout the Language Arts and Math Departments. Carbon School District has offered staff development on Reading Strategies and Oral Communication. Personal monitoring of student progress is addressed during Academic Advisory and Achievement periods. Each teacher mentors a select group of students throughout the year. The data speaks to the fact that these advisory periods have made a positive difference in student achievement. Channel 1 time is used once a week to teach character education lessons and convey academic expectations to students.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using* Collaborating for Student Achievement, *the Utah*

accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?

The action plan has been developed and implemented based on the desired results for student learning. (The team noted that some student outcomes are generalized, and the school may need to provide a clearer understanding of student outcomes.)
The action plan addresses all the DRSLs and is comprehensive, reviewed by all stakeholders, and subject to ongoing revision.

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?*

Mont Harmon staff members are receiving ongoing training and professional development in a variety of methods. They are currently involved in ongoing collaboration efforts through the organization of professional learning communities (PLCs). Staff members have attended workshops related to the PLC philosophy, and departments are addressing learning objectives and instructional strategies. There is evidence of vertical teaming and alignment of the curriculum. Some departmental implementation of common assessments has provided immediate feedback of universal expectations in core subjects. Common assessments should be implemented in each core subject to ensure student learning of core concepts. Data collected from common assessments provides vital information provide information about what students are learning in the classroom. Classroom instruction can also be driven by collected data to improve student learning and achievement.

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 current action plan is being systematically and adequately addressed school-wide. All areas related to the school’s DRSLs are included in the improvement plan. Each department has developed SMART goals and a pyramid of interventions relevant to behavior and academic performance. The staff and administration exhibit a strong commitment to the action plan, as evidenced by ongoing collaboration, articulation, and a willingness to implement and support new programs.

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

The stakeholders of Mont Harmon have a great sense of school pride and spirit. Changes initiated by the administration are welcomed by the stakeholders. School spirit, student pride, and an increase in student morale have increased unity among students, staff and community members. All stakeholders exhibit a desire to support these changes for continuous improvement to increase student learning and achievement.

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

The action plan was revisited and reformatted since the previous visit. The school administration has continued parts of the previous action plan into the current school year. However, data from the ISQ, indicated that there were items of concern that needed to be addressed. The leadership team has been instrumental in implementing PLCs and SMART Goals. Data training by staff members has redirected the direction of the school action plan. The leadership team and staff members are working collaboratively and collectively to ensure that the needs of students are being addressed.

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

Focus groups were organized to address the seven indicators of school growth. Each group addressed the essential questions, discussing their application to current school practices. The staff revisited the recommendations of the previous Visiting Team. DRSLs were revisited and reformatted to provide a better understanding of intended outcomes for student learning. The current school-wide action plan targets two DRSLs that address the needs of school-wide community. Celebration of student and staff achievement is ongoing through daily school announcements, newsletters, newspaper articles, Channel 1 TV, and other displays throughout the school.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team recognizes the improvement of positive and productive relationships that exist among students, teachers and staff. The new administration is working diligently to create and sustain a learning environment that allows all stakeholders to feel they are cared about and accepted. There is every reason to feel optimistic that these efforts will continue.

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

In the past year there have been many efforts made by the school administration to foster a more collaborative relationship with community stakeholders. Parents have become more appreciative of these efforts and are starting to become more involved in the process.

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

At this time, the self-study process at this time involves only a few parents. The administration understands the importance of increasing this involvement, and has taken steps to expand communication to all stakeholders.

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

Data analysis has been a focus for Carbon School District for the past two years. All administrators have been trained in the Harvard Datawise Model and are actively using these skills to focus improvement efforts. Teachers have access to a great deal of data and are becoming more skilled in its analysis. Parents are forming groups to assist in the self-study process and all involved feel positive about the future of this effort.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the leadership of Mont Harmon Junior High School for being fully committed to continuous improvement.

- The Visiting Team commends the students and staff of Mont Harmon Junior High. It is evident that the students and staff find Mont Harmon to be a warm and inviting environment. Students feel they are recognized for their scholastic and extracurricular achievements.

- The Visiting Team commends the school for exhibiting evidence that the students at Mont Harmon are receiving high-quality instruction, as evidenced by CRT data. Students and parents recognize the extra effort put forth by teachers and the administration.

- The Visiting Team commends the improvement in school spirit, school pride and student morale noted by students and parents. Parents and community members welcome these changes, and are committed to continued school improvement.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that, although the school improvement process is in the beginning stages, the DRSLs be refined, especially with regard to specificity and integration into the curriculum.

- The Visiting Team recommends that more stakeholders be involved in the process. Students and parents will enhance each committee as they are looking at avenues for improvement.

- The Visiting Team recommends that each action plan be refined to be more specific and measurable.

- The Visiting Team recommends that, although communication has improved among the faculty and staff, communication be extended externally to all stakeholders to improve community outreach.