

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Mueller Park Junior High School  
955 East 1800 South  
Bountiful, Utah 84010**

**November 11-12, 2010**



**Utah State Office of Education  
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**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Mueller Park Junior High School  
955 East 1800 South  
Bountiful, Utah 84010**

**November 11-12, 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, November 11-12, 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 Mueller Park 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 Joyce Jones is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Mueller Park 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 Mueller Park Junior High School.

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.  
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Chris Williams .....	Director, Community Relations

# MUELLER PARK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

### School Administration

Joyce Jones..... Principal  
Brock Jackman..... Assistant Principal

### Counseling

Claire Chilton..... Counselor  
Vicky Bingham..... Counselor

### Support Staff

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Candy Angelos  
Shanna Bills  
Darrel Chamberlain  
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Kevin Poff

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Woody Short  
Clark Sonzini  
Angela Stewart  
Peter Vanderlinden  
Bruce Venable  
Gretchen Widdison  
Mindy Wilson  
Lisa Wisehart  
Cyd Young

## **MUELLER PARK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to teach, learn, and live with intelligence, integrity, and sensitivity in our community.

### **BELIEF STATEMENT**

We learn for life! Everyone will be safe! We're all on the same team, and everyone gets to play! Aim high; excellence is for everyone! Respect, and be respected!

### **DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)**

1. Effective Communication
2. Lifelong Learning
3. Complex Thinker
4. Responsible Citizenship
5. Interpersonal Skills

Date of visit: November 11-12, 2010

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Dr. Nancy L. Jadallah, Eisenhower Junior. High School, Granite School District,  
Visiting Team Chairperson

Dan Barney, South Ogden Junior High School, Weber School District

Shannon Buchanan, Science Specialist, Utah State Office of Education

## VISITING TEAM REPORT

### MUELLER PARK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

#### CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Mueller Park is located in an affluent area of Davis County, and students tend to come from a higher-than-average socioeconomic background. Parents typically have one or more advanced degrees, are generally supportive of high standards, and expect quality from the students and teachers at the school. The school's demographics are changing, in part due to recent boundary changes, and over the next two years the population will continue to become more diverse as the new boundary students are transitioned into Mueller Park.

Mueller Park Junior High School, one of fifteen Davis County junior high schools, is located in Bountiful, Utah. Mueller Park is experiencing a period of declining enrollment due to an aging population. However, with the new boundary changes, the enrollment is expected to increase by approximately 150 additional students over the next two years.

Grades 7-9 are housed at Mueller Park, with approximately 630 students enrolled this year. There is increasing socioeconomic and ethnic diversity in the student population due to the boundary change and the feeder system. Mueller Park is one of the three smallest junior highs in the district. There is a small but growing ESL population, and the school serves an average percentage of special education population.

The parents of Mueller Park Junior High School are very active in the school's PTO, in the School Community Council, and in the everyday operation of the school. Parents are supportive of school activities, volunteer when needed, and attend school functions, including student-led conferences, on a regular basis.

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

The school's population is changing and becoming ever more diverse. The data indicates a higher number of ELL students and students served in special education, as well as an increase in the number of students requiring free and reduced-price lunch.

The data indicates a few significant findings. There has been a significant jump in the number of referrals for discipline. The administration feels that this is due to a couple of factors. One is that the students are being held more accountable for their behaviors, and another is higher fidelity in the data entry for behavioral referral and discipline. Additionally, there was a noticeable spike in the number of truancy referrals. The number of in-school suspensions has also increased.

Additionally, there has been a huge increase in the number of parents attending parent conferences. This was due in part to a change to student-led conferences, as well as to the school having made them a requirement. The percentage of parents attending the student led conference (SLC) has jumped from 38 percent to almost 90 percent. This is highly significant.

The student REACH program, an academic remediation program, has seen a huge increase over the last two years. Prior to 2009, the students had to pay for this program. In 2009, the school quit charging so the remediation was thereafter free and the numbers soared from approximately 70 students served to almost 275. What a jump!

Another significant finding is the number of students who are on the honor roll. Students who earn a 3.5-4.0 grade point average earn the right to be placed on the honor roll. During the first terms of the past five years, 60 percent of the students typically made the honor roll. This is impressive! During the remaining terms students average about 46 percent on the honor roll.

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

The school should continue to disaggregate data to ensure that all subgroups' needs are being addressed. It would be interesting to see the impact that positive behavioral supports, such as the new recognition programs, are having on students.

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

The staff and community members believe that the self-study accurately reflects not only the school's strengths but also areas needing improvement. Each department, with input from students and community members, addressed its respective strengths, limitations and areas to improve upon. The focus groups then discussed the school's overall strengths and limitations, identifying certain areas upon which they would like to improve.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Monitor data on students' behavior and academic performance for all students, but particularly on the new boundary students. It would be wise to watch any new trends and or student needs that arise.
- Monitor the behavioral data to see if it levels off. There has been a huge jump in the number of referrals for discipline. This may have been due to improved fidelity of the data as well as a new tracking system.

- Track the “recognition and rewards” program, and monitor the results or effect these positive behavioral supports have on student behavior and performance.

## **CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION (NORTHWEST) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

### **Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):**

- a) *To what degree were the school’s mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?*

The Visiting Team conducted interviews with students, staff members, and parents. All stakeholders explicitly stated their appreciation to the school and its staff and administration for inviting them to be a part of the accreditation process. It was clear that the entire school population was invited, and a representative sample of stakeholders participated in the accreditation process. The PTO and the SCC made calls to parents to solicit their input and participation in the process. The teaching staff has been very actively engaged in the process for over two years. The self-study was the major focus of the professional development days (early-out Fridays) this past year. Students were an integral part of the process and felt that their input was valued by the staff and administration.

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

The Visiting Team found that, to a great extent, the school’s mission and beliefs align to support the school’s DRSLs. The school’s DRSLs include interpersonal relations, effective communication, responsible citizenship, life-long learning, and complex thinking. The mission statement accurately illustrates and exemplifies the traits and behaviors that are embedded in the desired results for student behavior. Not only are these appropriate learning outcomes that relate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills, but they are applicable to both curricular and extracurricular activities. These DRSLs are embedded and are understood systemically. When they hear the phrase from the school’s mission statement, “We’re all on the same team,” students immediately respond, “...and everyone gets to play.” It was awesome to see that kids understand that message and believe it.

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

The Effective Communicator DRSL has been fully developed, defined, and institutionalized since the last accreditation visit. The staff has developed four

common rubrics that are used as teacher assessments as well as self-assessments by the students. Each department has aligned its content-specific lessons to each of the DRSLs, and it is encouraging to find that the students use the language of the DRSLs freely. The teachers explicitly teach the DRSLs, and students respond naturally, which indicates that there is systemic learning.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs guide the school's procedures, policies, and decisions, and it is very evident that they are an inherent part of the school's culture.

### **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?*

To a great extent, the staff worked collaboratively in departments to develop common curriculum maps based on the Utah Core Curriculum, as well as school standards of student success. Davis School District is committed to providing teachers with professional development that allows teaching staff to implement common learning activities for all students. The Visiting Team noted that the accreditation process built a community of collaboration not only within departments, but also within grade level teams as a school-wide effort was made to focus the school environment toward embracing the middle school climate.

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

To a moderate extent, the Visiting Team observed students engaged in curriculum-based activities that included inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. The teaching staff has done a good job of diversifying lessons and instruction in order to address the needs of all students. The Visiting Team recommends that the administration continue to support the teaching staff in training on how to differentiate curriculum so that all students are continually engaged, especially in light of the changing demographics of the student population.

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team observed teachers referring to the DRSLs during class instruction time, as well as displaying the DRSLs within their classroom. The lessons observed were based in content curriculum; however, teachers made a

concerted effort to show natural connections between the lesson objectives and the DRSLs. The Visiting Team also observed both the advisory period and the peer support period, which focused primarily on directing student learning to effective communication, interpersonal skills, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning.

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

The teaching staff worked collaboratively to develop a set of common assessment rubrics for the communication DRSL. The development of these rubrics has allowed cross-curricular conversations regarding the use of assessment as a reflection piece for instruction. The staff is currently discussing the creation of common assessments in the core areas that will assist teachers in progress monitoring student achievement and assessing the effectiveness of instruction.

### **Instruction:**

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team observed several different instructional strategies in use during the school day. Direct instruction, student-led discussion, inquiry-based labs, role play, self-guided study, and student presentations are some of the specific strategies that were observed. The Visiting Team recommends the continued use of multiple instructional strategies, especially in those classes where student diversity is increasing, in order to enhance all student learning.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the school staff not only explicitly teaches the DRSLs but has also integrated the DRSLs into the teaching of the Core Curriculum by focusing on the performance tasks associated with the DRSLs. The Visiting Team observed teachers using the ideas embodied by the DRSLs into the way that they approach the planning and the delivery of the core content. Students are engaged in activities that are relevant to the core, but that also stress the importance of effective communication, interpersonal skills, complex thinking, lifelong learning, and responsible citizenship.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the professional development is designed to address the needs of the teaching staff through the use of teacher surveys and teacher designed workshops. The Visiting Team is especially impressed with the model of staff members training

other staff members. The school has a professional development committee, the JSSC, which serves to assess the professional development needs, to solicit opportunities for professional development, and to provide expertise from within the district and the school for addressed areas of need.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the Visiting Team observed quality teaching instruction that was based on current research, as well as data collected at the local level. The teachers were aware of the need to keep current with pedagogical, content, and technological advances within the field. The Visiting Team recommends that staff development time be devoted to teacher reflection and collaboration and use the designated professional development time to benefit from both in house talent as well as outside resources.

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team observed the use of technology in several classrooms. Some examples were seen in the use of “clicker” technology being integrated into core content area and student MP3 player use encouraged as a method of delivering presentations, as well as online instructional materials to include the use of overhead LCD projectors, enhanced audio systems, DVDs, and specialized software. The Visiting Team recommends the continuation of training on the use of technology in order to enhance student learning.

### **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?*

To a moderate extent, the staff has developed teacher-created classroom assessments with performance standards that are clearly articulated and aligned to the State Core. Additionally, the school has developed three communication rubrics (writing, oral presentations, and listening skills), and these assessments are fully institutionalized. Staff members indicated that they are hoping to design common assessments such that they can give benchmark assessments and monitor student performance. They also indicated that they would like the district to implement common assessments that align to the Davis District DESK standards.

- 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 that, to a great extent, the school has implemented a school-wide system of monitoring both school-wide and individual progress. The teachers progress monitor their advisory students' academic progress through the advisory periods. Additionally, the advisories are looped so that students have the same mentor teacher for their entire stay at Mueller Park Junior High School. School-wide, administrators collect and analyze student achievement to monitor overall progress.

- 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, to a large extent, the professional staff uses data on an ongoing basis to assess the success of the individuals and the school in their quest for academic success. This is obvious from the data collected and included in the accreditation report. The data was also disaggregated in such a way that particular subgroups in need of additional assistance would be noted. What the teachers and administration noted was a need to have common assessments in content areas as well as benchmark assessments in the core academic areas that are aligned to the Davis District' DESK standards.

- 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?*

To some degree, the school's professional development program allows teachers the opportunity to collaborate in the development of student assessment strategies. There is a staff development committee that designs the professional development opportunities for teachers for the year. Each Friday the teachers have collaborative time, as well as Wednesday after-contract time. On Wednesdays, teachers are given technology strategies that can be used for instruction and/or assessment in their classrooms or for improving the efficiency of their teaching and/or record keeping. Teachers have created rubrics to measure the Effective Communication DRSL. Some teachers are beginning the process of creating common assessments within their content areas. Many of the teachers spoke of their intent and practice of using various assessments such as question/answer, clicker systems, oral presentations, product-based learning, performance-based projects, tests, quizzes, informal and formal formative and summative assessments, etc.

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team observed that there was organizational agreement on the use of the school created school-wide rubric to assess the Effective Communication DRSL. Teachers acknowledged their use of the rubric, and students verified that in fact the rubrics were used across the curriculum.

### 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?*

There has been a change in the leadership since the last accreditation visit, and with the new leadership, there is a renewed vision and positive fostering of an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning. Teachers expressed their appreciation for and support of the administration. The leadership provides weekly and monthly training and professional development that is designed to support teachers in their quest for excellence in teaching and learning. There is time embedded in the teachers' contract on Fridays for professional development, as well as training sessions on Wednesday afternoons after school hours. Additionally, the leadership has funded other opportunities locally, state-level or nationally that support best teaching practices. Teachers have been allowed and supported by the leadership to attend the National Schools to Watch and the Breaking Ranks in the Middle (BRIM). Attendance at these organizations support the teachers in their goals of implementing middle school philosophy and teaming at Mueller Park Junior High School.

- 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 new leadership came on board after the ISQ surveys were given. To a large extent, the Visiting Team noted that the current leadership read and analyzed the data that was collected in the ISQ in addition to reviewing student achievement on CRTs, Iowa scores, reading assessment, and writing scores on the 6+1 Writing Traits as well as reviewing overall school-wide GPA and CPA data. The leadership has replaced a couple of staff members after continued lack of student performance in a couple of areas. With the new staff, scores have jumped considerably, which indicates improved instructional effectiveness. Staff members also commented on the improvement in student performance in those particular areas that has been evident after the addition of new staff.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the leadership provides skillful stewardship by managing the facility and the organization well, by efficient daily school operations, and according

to both the staff and the School Community Council, allocates resources to the school meaningfully and as needed to provide a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment that aligns with the school goals and DRSLs. The last accreditation team suggested that the school allocate needed resources to purchase and upgrade its technology to enhance student learning. This was an obvious improvement and was noted with enthusiasm by the School Community Council, the appreciative teachers and the eager students. They were all thrilled at the technological improvements that have been made, which add to the instructional effectiveness for teacher and student performance.

- 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?*

This was one of the most obvious trends that the Visiting Team noted during the visit. The Visiting Team found that, to a great extent, the school leadership empowers the entire school community—parents, SCC, PTO, students and teachers—to encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process. This was evident in the assignments given to the student officers, to department heads, to the SCC and PTO, to parents who take on huge responsibilities as they volunteer for activities and projects within the school, to the parents who took on the “Box Tops for Education” program to be able to purchase a banner for the school, to the team effort to create a musical, and to the many other decision-making roles that are allocated to various stakeholders in the greater community. Young teachers took on roles as leaders of their focus groups as well as senior members of the staff. Younger teachers with expertise in the area of technology took it upon themselves to improve the skills of the older, less technological staff members. The teachers who were vested in implementing middle school philosophy took on the challenge of creating teaming in the school as well as revamping the advisory program so that it was more meaningful and accepted by all staff members.

- 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?*

To a large extent, the school has taken steps to “recreate” the advisory program. The current advisory program loops the students so that every student has the same “adult mentor” for his/her entire tenure at Mueller Park Junior High School. The teachers have also changed the dynamic of the advisory, creating character education units for teachers (alleviating an additional preparation), allowing for silent sustained reading and for progress monitoring of student performance every Thursday during advisory time. Advisory teachers then counsel with students who are missing assignments, lack understanding, and/or are not performing up to their potential. Students now have an adult with whom they have fostered a relationship, who can offer personal as well as academic assistance in areas of need or just provide a safe place to be.

## 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 Visiting Team found clear evidence that the leadership of Mueller Park Junior High School supports and establishes ways to foster academics by the programs that are created and maintained. Teachers feel comfortable creating their own lessons based on the State Core Curriculum. The leadership shows support by allowing creativity while expecting excellence and effort. The staff also offers a variety of assessments to monitor student achievement and therefore adjust instruction.

- 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 observed that Mueller Park Junior High has well-organized and ongoing professional development with the goal of common assessments in departments and cross-curricular instruction. The staff members know where they are and where they want to be, and have a definite plan on how to get there. The Visiting Team has noted many instances of collaborative planning. It is commendable that the staff recognizes strengths within its own faculty and uses a great deal of in-house training. The staff and administration also show a definitive desire to research various avenues that would support their plan for student achievement. The students at Mueller Park Junior High also recognize this dedication by their administration and staff on their behalf.

- 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?*

To a great extent, the school-wide action plan addresses the needs of the school community and is structured to support the needs of the school and the students. The action plan is data driven and provides a strong foundation for continued work in the future. The Visiting Team has observed a high level of commitment by the staff of Mueller Park Junior High to the school action plan. There is also evidence—found through teacher interviews, focus group and department discussions, and student and parent discussions—showing that the administration and staff are committed to the school-wide success of the action plan.

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team found that Mueller Park Junior High School has created conditions through its collaborative effort that support productive change and continuous improvement. The staff members are willing to take an honest look at themselves and their practices, and evaluate whether or not they are achieving their goals—and if not, what they can do to get to where they want to be. This willingness to constantly reflect on their practices and needs is highly commendable.

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

To a remarkable extent, the Visiting Team noted that Mueller Park Junior High has made significant progress in addressing the recommendations posed by the previous Visiting Team. The faculty and administration have worked to examine student learning by using a variety of data sources, and departmental teams are more productive using the same formative assessments. Early-release days are used effectively and dedicated to teaming and professional development by the various teams and departments.

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

Mueller Park Junior High has taken the recommendation of addressing issues of technology. The school shows evidence of physical implementation of technology and many teachers are taking advantage of the teaching opportunities created through the use of technology. The faculty contains experienced technology users, and the school has a monthly technology training that is facilitated by faculty members.

Mueller Park Junior High has studied middle school reform and has implemented several of the recommendations found in the book *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle-Level Reform*, including teaming, advisories, and collaboration. The administration desires to offer common planning periods for teacher teams; however, the low enrollment does not allow for common consultations at this time.

Additionally, as recommended, the staff has shown a concerted effort to streamline homework, making sure it is relevant and necessary rather than mere busywork.

## CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

To a great extent, the Visiting Team was impressed by the sense of community that exists among the school's staff, parents, and students. Mueller Park Junior High School is dedicated to promoting positive and productive relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. The staff shows great sensitivity to the developmental needs of the students, and is committed to helping students academically. For example, the school offers a tutoring program for students who need extra time, programs for diverse needs, honors classes, athletics, student leadership programs, and music activities that support the school mission and DRSLs by providing opportunity for students to celebrate their talent, community service, and self-direction.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its collaborative efforts within departments and with other schools. Also, the Visiting Team commends the school on the pursuit of a peer tutoring program to build relationships within the school. The Visiting Team saw evidence of community being fostered by Mueller Park Junior High School students, staff, parents, and administration. The school creates and sustains a learning environment that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team noted that both parents and students desire to build a greater sense of belonging by promoting student involvement. It was also observed that the school is willing to address the concerns of all the stakeholders and build positive relationships to enhance school improvement.

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

To a great extent, Mueller Park Junior High School is working constantly to improve communication with the community. The staff reaches out to parents and families to engage them as partners in the learning process through a variety of programs: monthly School Community Council meetings, monthly performances, community service projects, fundraisers, a new musical program that involves the community in a big way, and parent-teacher conferences. The Counseling Department does a fabulous job of getting a 95-percent-plus rate of parent participation at SEOPs and 90-percent-plus attendance at the new student-led conferences.

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

To a great extent, there is evidence that the school engages parents and families as partners in the learning process. Communication between the students' homes and the school is regular, two-way, and meaningful. Efforts should be made to reach out more

to the feeder elementary schools and area high schools; this is an ongoing process that is done at different levels throughout the school and should continue. The Visiting Team commends the school for including all stakeholders in decision making and in this continuous process of improvement. Parents, students, and community members were actively included in the focus groups and gave valuable input regarding school/community relations and student achievement and performance.

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

The School Community Council and an active PTO work closely with the administration and staff on school issues. Staff and parents hold celebratory meetings and gatherings frequently celebrating student successes and achievements. On a monthly basis, the counselors track student progress and have individual meetings with students to assess, encourage, and congratulate students at Mueller Park Junior High. Tests and surveys, as well as teacher the grading system are an additional way student/school improvement is identified. Because of the “close-knit” feeling of the small student population at Mueller Park Junior High, the communication exists on a variety of levels. The PTO monthly newsletter is certainly a valuable asset to the communication process. The Encore grading system is the software used for grades, and the teachers access and upload grades to MY DSD, which is located on the district website where students and parents may log in and view progress and grades. All teachers have a school-based personal web page and update upcoming assignments, activities and other class information on a regular basis. Administrators, counselors, and parents are using these services to track student performance continually.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the willingness of all staff members to continue to improve their instructional effectiveness.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for creating common grading scales, disclosures of school-wide policies, and writing rubrics.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on the number of ESL-endorsed teachers serving as a resource as Mueller Park Junior becomes a more diverse community.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for its allocation of resources toward the purchase of and improvement of technology that supports student learning.

- The Visiting Team commends the school for fostering a positive, supportive climate at Mueller Park Junior.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for instituting the Effective Communication DRSL fully and for assisting students with the systemic understanding of this DRSL.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for the systemic buy-in and understanding of the school's belief statements, especially the phrase "We're all on the same team and everyone gets to play."
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its continued and high level of performance on the CRTs, the high percentage of students on the honor roll, the increasing number of students receiving remediation, and the increasing number of parents attending the student-led conferences.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on the familial attitude that transfers to students and their willingness to collaborate and support colleagues.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for providing programs to support struggling students, such as REACH, after-school busing for remediation students, advisories, Lunch Bunch, Local Case Management, and Paw for Praise, to name a few.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for aligning the departmental curriculum and learning strategies with the DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team commends those departments that use student data to improve their instructional effectiveness.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff on its impressive list of personal accomplishments and achievements.
- Finally, the Visiting Team commends the staff on the positive, supportive relationship among the administration, staff, parents, students, and the community which has so amazingly created truly shared belief statements and a shared mission for the school.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to build cross-curricular assignments and projects to increase the relevance of core content areas and to decrease the amount of homework.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership continue to provide professional development time for staff to plan with grade level and departmental teams.

- The Visiting Team recommends that as the student population and diversity increase, the staff work on maintaining the “small-school feel” through the continuation of student incentive programs and through staff development focused on multiple intelligences and the diversified instructional strategies that address those learning styles.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to find ways to address the gap in the achievement and the special needs of the ELL and the students with disabilities.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff create common assessments in the content areas so that progress monitoring of student achievement and instructional effectiveness can be reviewed and improved.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff encourage vertical articulation within the school and with the feeder schools.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff begin explicitly teaching the other DRSLs and work toward institutionalizing them.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff use benchmark assessments that will show student progress toward the DESK standards.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff focus on student writing skills across the curriculum.
- The Visiting Team recommends that volunteers and/or peer tutors be recruited for classes that require personalized instruction during hands-on activities. In addition to student leaders, the team recommends that non-elected peer-leaders could also be used as new-student liaisons and school service activities to include peer-tutors in the classrooms.
- The Visiting Team recommends the daily use of content and language objectives so that students clearly understand the behavioral and academic expectations of the daily lessons.