

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Northridge Learning Center
2405 North Hillfield Road
Layton, Utah 84041**

June 8, 2011



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

**Northridge Learning Center
2405 North Hillfield Road
Layton, Utah 84041**

June 8, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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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, June 8, 2011, 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 Northridge Learning Center 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 Jesse Taylor is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Northridge Learning Center 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 Northridge Learning Center.

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State Superintendent
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*Board of Regents Appointments

*** CMAC Representative Appointment

*****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

12/28/2010

**NORTHRIDGE LEARNING CENTER
(A Private Supplemental School)**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alison D. Bond Owner/Director
Justin C. Bond..... Owner/Director
Dixie Evans..... Owner/Director

ADVISORY BOARD

Jesse J. Taylor Principal
James Hombs Assistant Principal
J.D. Patterson Member
Richard McKay Member
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NORTHRIDGE LEARNING CENTER

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James Hombs Assistant Principal
Dixie Evans..... Education Coordinator

Support Staff

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John Hubenthal
Dalin Stephens

Kyle Thornock
Samuel R. Dohle
FloraGreen

BreAnne Headquist
Lias Homgren

Faculty

Barbara Ann Adams
Stanley Earl

Daniel Mildon
Rae Anne Reed

**NORTHRIDGE LEARNING CENTER
(A Private Supplemental School)**

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement of Northridge learning Center is to help at-risk individuals achieve success in meeting academic goals.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Each student has a unique learning style that affects educational needs.
- Students need to assume responsibility for their academic progress in order to become self-directed learners.
- Students need to develop their thinking and reasoning skills in order to make logical choices.
- A safe and comfortable environment promotes student learning.
- Students should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches.
- All students deserve to be treated with respect, acceptance, trust, and encouragement.
- All people have the right and responsibility to be educated.
- Every student can learn.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Responsible Citizenship
2. Effective Communicator
3. Lifelong Learning

Date of visit: June 8, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Accreditation Consultant, Northwest Accreditation Commission,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Judith Jacques, Program Director, Island View RTC, Syracuse, UT

Rose Romero, Sylvan Learning Center, Layton, UT

VISITING TEAM REPORT

NORTHRIDGE LEARNING CENTER

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Northridge Learning Center is a supplemental school located in Layton, Utah. There are branch locations in Salt Lake City, West Jordan, Brigham City and Logan. The school provides tutoring and teaching to individuals who fall behind in meeting academic goals. The center is open year round. Students are enrolled throughout the year based on individual, unique academic needs.

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

Findings show that many changes have occurred since last accreditation. A data system has been implemented to break down individual areas and, most importantly, keep track of data.

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

Although the new data system is a great stepping stone for Northridge Learning Center, in the future it would be useful to provide academic measures (i.e., test tracking).

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

This self-study is a great reflection of the school's current strengths, and provides hard data to show both strengths and limitations.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Keep records on test percentages and how many times it takes for a student to pass a test. This information is both vital and viable, and to the center's benefit. Providing this information will allow the school to show that the process provided by Northridge Learning Center is working.

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 school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs have been sufficiently developed and revised in a collaborative manner. Since Northridge Learning Center is a supplemental school with several satellite campuses, not all center staff members were involved in the process. However, staff members are expected to know, understand, and operate within the parameters of those items. The mission statement and beliefs define a compelling purpose and vision for the school that is evident in the day-to-day operations of all campuses. However, the Effective Communication DRSL should be reviewed for its applicability to its setting.

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

Northridge Learning Center's mission and beliefs are well aligned to the identified DRSLs, with the exception of the Effective Communication DRSL, which should be reviewed for its applicability to the school's setting.

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

All of the DRSLs have a set of indicators that will eventually allow for their assessment. However, at this time, Northridge Learning Center has done limited concrete assessment or data collection on their DRSLs. This will be one of the school's next steps in the self-review process of accreditation. As the school develops measures for assessment, it will want to look at quantifying and qualifying the indicators for each DRSL a little more thoroughly.

- 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?*

Northridge Learning Center's mission and belief statements are evident throughout the practices and operations of the school. The school has a clear vision of the intended purpose of the center, as is evident from the mission statement. The school's DRSLs are integrated within the program, but not always explicitly so. This will be developed as the school improves its assessment measures for the DRSLs.

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?*

Northridge Learning Center has gone to great lengths to ensure that the curriculum provided for its students correlates to the Utah Core Curriculum. The curriculum provides clearly defined standards, which is particularly beneficial for meeting the center's intended purpose and allowing students a greater sense of empowerment in their own achievement of those standards. Utah Life Skills are also evident in the curriculum provided.

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

The curriculum that Northridge Learning Center provides its students serves its intended population of students. It engages the students in some inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. However, this could be an area for consideration of future improvements.

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

Currently, there is no formal data collection or assessment system of the DRSLs. This will need to be developed by the time of the three-year interim visit, and must be done in a collaborative manner.

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

Currently, there is no formal data collection or assessment system of the DRSLs. This will need to be developed by the time of the three-year interim visit, and must be done in a collaborative manner. Data collected should identify students, courses taken, attendance, test results, credit earned, etc., and be analyzed to ensure that all students are learning. Tutoring is available upon request and based on need if the required score is not achieved.

Instruction:

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

Northridge Learning Center's curriculum is based on the successful completion of student workbooks and exams. Teachers are not providing instruction, and thus do not

offer a variety of instructional strategies. However, the curriculum does appeal to a wide variety of learning styles. In addition, tutoring is available for those students who need it.

- 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?*

Currently, the identified DRSL is not explicitly taught, although it is being addressed through the manner in which the students complete coursework. This is an area for improvement.

- 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?*

Northridge Learning Center's professional development plan has been primarily focused on training on the accreditation process through the Utah State Office of Education. It is evident that the school has participated in the training and put it to great use. The school improvement team consistently meets to guide the direction of the school. Additionally, principals visit, observe the program in operation and during teach/tutor evaluations, and tailor their feedback to offer ideas for alternative presentation of coursework and how engaged the students were with the material provided and/or discussed.

- 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?*

Certified, credentialed, and licensed teachers have developed the entire curriculum provided to the Northridge Learning Center students. Licensed consultant teachers and principals are on staff to oversee the implementation of curriculum. The tutors utilized have an extensive educational background in the subjects tutored.

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

Coursework offered by Northridge Learning Center is offered in a consumable workbook format, allowing the student to complete the coursework anytime, anywhere. Because each Northridge Learning Center office is equipped with computers and Internet access and is under the direct supervision of a teacher/tutor/office staff member, students may be allowed access to the equipment. The computer technology master test is complete on the computer. Additionally, students may soon be able to purchase workbooks through an online store, which will facilitate student enrollment.

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?*

All curricula offered by Northridge Learning Center include a comprehensive assessment plan that is comprised of chapter, unit, and final exams that must be passed at a 70 percent mastery level.

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

All students are assessed within the student workbooks issued. Students are allowed to retake exams on which they have not demonstrated the required 70 percent mastery.

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

Northridge Learning Center has made great improvements in collecting and tracking the achievement data of their students with regard to courses enrolled in and successfully completed. The use of software and a database has not only allowed the school to track student achievement, but also made operations more efficient.

- 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?*

Northridge Learning Center's professional development plan does not currently include any plans for developing a greater range of student assessment strategies. The school should consider including strategies to explicitly assess DRSL achievement in its professional development plan.

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

Northridge Learning Center does not currently have a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL. This will need to be developed in preparation for the three-year interim visit.

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 quality of the curriculum offerings has improved due to the core alignment process now in place.

- 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 school generates sound data on the percentage of credits attempted and earned. The Visiting Team would like to see more student achievement data in the future. There is a difference between credits and achievement. It is recommended that Northridge Learning Center develop instructional remediation for students who do not achieve at the 70 percent mastery level on tests.

- 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 learning environment at the centers is business like, friendly and safe. Most student work takes place off site. The school has made major improvements in the quality of the curriculum packets and, as noted in commendations, the addition of an office manager/registrar has greatly improved communication between Northridge Learning Center and other schools.

- 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?*

A school improvement team is in place and fully functioning. The key to sharing responsibility at Northridge Learning Center is having students take some measure of responsibility for their own learning, because the majority of learning is independent learning and happens at a time and place chosen by the students.

- 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?*

Since Northridge Learning Center is a supplemental school, it does not have even, across-the-board relationship with each student. There is tutoring available at the students' option. Improvements have been made toward sharing information between Northridge Learning Center and neighborhood schools. The DRSL most fully implemented is Responsible Citizenship, which is measured by credits earned. Many students are able to transfer their credits from Northridge Learning Center back to their neighborhood schools, where they often make the difference between graduating and not graduating.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to Northwest, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

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 school sent a team to accreditation training, and followed the NWAC and USOE Standards, using *Collaborating for Student Achievement* as the model for its 2011 self-study. Significant improvements in complying with the standards were evident from reading the self-study, and were validated by the visit.

- 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?*

Considerable professional development was invested in preparing for the 2011 self-study. Since the last self-study, a software system has been developed to better track student records. This took time and resources to implement. While many of the

school's action plans are aimed at growing the business, it is recommended that an action plan be developed to address student learning. This should be the focus of the professional development provided for teaching staff members in future.

- 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 school has a sound format for creating action plans. As previously mentioned, it is recommended that an action plan be added specifically dealing with student learning.

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

The school has demonstrated support for productive change, as listed below.

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

Northridge Learning Center has shown marked improvement in the manner in which student records are kept. The school's working relationship with the majority of districts is productive.

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

Following are the responses to the recommendations made by the Visiting Team in 2006.

1. The quality of the curriculum writing is improved.
2. The school has taken steps to improve communication with local high schools.
3. Subject matter mastery is the goal of student learning.
4. Assessment of mastery is at 70 percent level and final exams have been added.
5. Teachers who are contracted to write the curriculum are endorsed in the areas needed.
6. Rigor and Core alignment have improved.
7. Face-to-face time with teachers is not the nature of this program, but tutoring is available.
8. Curriculum packets are now copyrighted by Northridge Learning Center.
9. Training has been attended to ensure that NWAC standards are being met.
10. Proctored final exams are now required.
11. The English curriculum has been revised to allow for writing a component with assessment.

12. A software system has been developed for keeping track of student records on all courses attempted, completed and to which school districts transcripts were sent.
13. Additional staff members have been hired to administer student records.

In what was otherwise a well-designed self-study, the school's owner chose to use this section to make negative comments that detracted from the effectiveness of the self-study.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The center has had several long-term clients in a tutoring program, and uses a referral method to build working relationships. It is difficult to foster community building, because many of the students are in and out of the school. Regardless, the staff members meet on a weekly basis for a focus group to discuss and build that working relationship.

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

The center has implemented an action plan that involves focus groups including the school administration to improve communication. This collaboration has opened relations with other schools that are now in use and help support student learning.

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

The center has engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process through regular focus group meetings and surveys. A team from the school attended accreditation training.

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

School improvement is identified by a parent, student, and staff survey. Information pertaining to the surveys is added into a data system available for stakeholders.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Northridge Learning Center for the work of Dana Kearl. She has learned the accreditation process and followed the standards of Northwest and the USOE in the development of the 2011 self-study.
- The Visiting Team commends Northridge Learning Center for taking action and making meaningful progress on all the recommendations from the prior team visit.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Northridge Learning Center rework its Effective Communication DRSL. The school should either drop it completely or define measureable outcomes.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Northridge Learning Center develop action plans to implement its DRSLs. The current action plans are directed at growing the business; the action plans should set goals to address student learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Northridge Learning Center expand its data system to report more student learning data. Data should include course-taking patterns, individual student assessment data, credits earned etc.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Northridge Learning Center develop remediation for students who fail to pass the final exams for courses on their first attempt.