

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Skyline High School
3251 East 3760 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-3799**

April 21-22, 2009



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

**Skyline High School
3251 East 3760 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-3799**

April 21-22, 2009

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 21-22, 2009, 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 Skyline 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 Kathy Clark is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Skyline High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

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

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
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SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

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Chris Rydalch..... Assistant Principal
Danny Stirland Assistant Principal

Counseling

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Paula Martin..... Counselor
Diane Nelson..... Counselor
Jami Hutchins..... Counselor
Carole Palmer..... Counselor

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Lott, Syd
Lundgren, Philip
Maasberg, Tina
Marlowe, Steve

Merrill, Doug
Moore, Dave
Moyle, Wayne
Norris, Troy
O'Driscoll, Julia
Olsen, Christy
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Pereira, Joe

Porter, Tom
Reid, Brodie
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Smith, Dennis
Spjute, Alicia
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Thackeray, Jill
Thomas, Chris

Thompson, Justin
Tolley, Jody Lynn
Trimmer, Shaunda
Whiting, Charlie
Wood, Colleen
Yang, Wenqi
Young, Donna

SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Skyline High School promotes a community, which values character, personal responsibility, intellectual curiosity and academic integrity in order to achieve a high level of student learning.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe:

- In promoting and recognizing the worth of each individual,
- In promoting individual accountability and responsibility,
- In making individual student learning and academic success our priority
- In teaching life skills that prepare students for their future
- In offering a variety of opportunities of every student
- In establishing a cooperative partnership between education and our community,
- In developing responsible citizens who contribute to society in a positive manner, and,
- In providing a safe and healthy environment.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Communication – written and verbal skills
2. Responsibility and Respect – ethical behavior and personal integrity
3. Problem solving – the ability to think analytically and creatively

Date of visit: April 21-22, 2009

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Roy Hoyt, Hurricane Middle School, Washington School District, Visiting
Team Chairperson

Anita Booher, Park City High School, Park City School District

Sharon Gurley, Lehi High School, Alpine School District

Kristin Packer, Lehi High School, Alpine School District

Dana Reilly, Park City High School, Park City School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Skyline High School was opened in 1962 and was noted, at the time, for its unique architecture. The campus was considered one of the most modern and strikingly creative educational structures in the country. Since those days, a swimming pool, auxiliary gym, a state-of-the-art fitness center, auto shop, and multimedia lab have been added.

In 1962, 1,300 students learned from 66 staff members. Over the years, Skyline's enrollment reached over 3,000 students. With the aging of the surrounding neighborhoods and the decline in the number of students in the Skyline catchment area in the late 1980s, Granite and Jordan School Districts entered into a busing agreement that served both districts for over a decade. In accordance with this agreement, Jordan allowed students in overpopulated schools in its northeastern quadrant to attend certain Granite schools. Skyline High School benefited from this agreement. By the late 1980s student population had again decreased to about 1,300 students, but with the busing of Jordan students, Skyline High School maintained about 1,800-2,000 students through the 1990s. In the late 1990s, Jordan District could comfortably house its students, and the busing agreement ended. This has caused another population decline at Skyline High School. The current enrollment is 1,399 students.

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

As the surrounding community within Skyline's school boundary has aged, Skyline High School has experienced a corresponding decline in enrollment over the past five years. Although Skyline is predominantly comprised of upper-middle-class Caucasian students, the school is seeing a steady increase in both racial and economic diversity as the demographics of the community change.

Skyline's graduation rate from year to year is relatively high and fairly stable. Less than 10 students per year transfer or fail to graduate from Skyline in their senior year. Based on the results of most standardized test scores, Skyline students perform well above the district, state, and national averages on a consistent basis. Over 90 percent of overall students at Skyline have scored proficient on the core CRT for Language Arts. In math, economically disadvantaged students have actually outperformed the student body as a whole at Skyline High School in three of the past five years. By the time Skyline students reach their senior year, virtually all have passed the UBSCT and receive a full diploma upon graduation.

Skyline is at or near the top of Utah public schools in the number of National Merit finalists each year. The vast majority of Skyline students take the ACT

exam each year, with the average scores being above the state and national average. The pass rate for AP exams is 80 percent, and the pass rate for IB exams is 65 percent.

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

The school made a sincere effort to include a comprehensive profile, but could still provide deeper or more comprehensive data that would reveal who is learning and who is not. More data was provided by the principal upon request of the team. More detailed data that could include ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status would be helpful in identifying these groups of students.

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

The self-study showed evidence of success in academic areas of the school such as AP, IB, UBSCT, and CRTs. It also included data that showed the success of the After School Achievement Program (ASAP), students who were double blocked in Math and Language Arts, and mandatory UBSCT classes.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

Further disaggregation of data in the following areas could be included:

- AP scores by tests, including passing rates by gender
- CRT and UBSCT results by gender, ethnicity, and SES
- Number of students utilizing credit recovery and specific paths to gain credit (i.e., Credit Recovery, BYU Independent Study, EHS).

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

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

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

The Visiting Team commends the school for a compelling mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs that have been reviewed by representatives from stakeholders.

The school has displayed the mission statement and DRSLs in prominent areas of the school.

Some parents, students, and teachers seemed to be unfamiliar with or unaware of the mission statement and beliefs. The Visiting Team encourages Skyline High School to consider approaches to more fully communicate these to all stakeholders.

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

The school's mission statement and beliefs align directly to support the school's DRSLs. It was evident to the Visiting Team that the DRSLs were more familiar to the stakeholders than the mission and belief statements.

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

Rubrics have been developed to assess the school's DRSLs. The Visiting Team recommends that the school now identify assessment tools for collecting data that will provide current information as to the implementation and effectiveness of the school's DRSLs.

- 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?*

Since the last visit, the school has made progress in using the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs to guide procedures and policies of the school. Most notable is the institutionalization of the communication DRSL, where resources have been committed to training and programs that support writing across the curriculum. Test scores have shown evidence of improved student writing.

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 found the staff collaborating through their professional learning communities (PLCs), both departmentally and some across the curriculum. Co-teaching and UBSCT review classes have been extremely beneficial to struggling and special needs students. Departments collaborate to ensure they are aligning with the State Core and are making adjustments according to results on CRT and CTE results.

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

The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for its efforts to engage all students. The diverse learning needs of students are addressed through collaboration between general education and the Special Education Department, as well as through the AP and IB classes and concurrent enrollment. All students are encouraged to achieve their highest potential by participating in academic challenging programs.

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

The Visiting Team found the staff for to be working in a collaborative manner concerning school DRSLs. The communication DRSL has been institutionalized utilizing the Six Traits of Writing model. Some teachers have found it challenging to follow this rubric exactly, and would benefit from more training to assist them in using the rubric to meet their individual needs. The staff would benefit from spending more time in collaboration to fully develop a unified curriculum for the remaining DRSLs.

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

The Visiting Team found the staff using a variety of assessments to drive the curriculum. All departments used data from various assessments to determine areas of need within their curricula. Assessments are directly linked to specific instructional uses that promote students' achievement and continuous improvement of their learning.

Instruction:

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

The Visiting Team observed a wide variety of instructional strategies at use in Skyline High School, including teacher lectures incorporating technology, literary discussions, group work, and immersion activities in foreign languages. REACH and SIOP approaches were evident in many classes to increase student engagement and participation.

- 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?*

Writing across the curriculum appears to have been institutionalized at Skyline High School. However, it is perceived by the Visiting Team that enthusiasm for and the incorporation of this may be waning. If the school decides to continue to pursue teaching this DRSL in every classroom, it may want to consider allowing departments and teachers more latitude in how they do this.

- 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?*

The school leadership provides professional development support through numerous training opportunities. To meet their instructional goals, the staff of Skyline High School has been trained in the Six Traits of Writing, REACH, and other programs. The formation of PLCs has afforded time and opportunities for collegial collaboration and the development of some common assessments. The allocation of one late-start day per week in the Granite District next year will provide even more opportunities.

- d) *To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?*

The Visiting Team observed teachers who are highly proficient in their content areas and reflective about what they do and how they do it.

- 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 recent addition of LCD projectors and sound systems in classrooms should result in greater integration of technology in instruction. The Visiting Team observed the effective use of this technology at use in many classrooms.

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?*

Skyline High School has embraced the collaborative professional learning communities model, which provides more time for teachers to collaborate in departments to work on various assessments. In creating these assessments, Skyline has focused on State Core Curriculum, AP Board expectations, and IB

requirements. Because of Skyline High School's academic achievement, the school has unique assessment needs that are continuing to be addressed.

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

Clearly Skyline High School has addressed the needs of the academic high achievers as well as at-risk students. Skyline has a variety of academic courses and remediation opportunities available to all students. The Visiting Team recommends that departments and individual teachers continue to develop formative assessments to evaluate student progress throughout the learning process.

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

Since the last visit, Skyline High School has made a concerted effort to be data driven. Data for the school has been compiled and is discussed and studied by the entire faculty at the beginning of the school year. The administration used this information to make decisions for staffing, scheduling, and the use of School Trust Land and Quality Teaching monies. The principal meets with each department individually, discusses information and then helps set goals.

- 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?*

During the current school year Skyline High School has been working on departmental common assessments in order to align their curricula. The plan for next year is to provide more collaboration time in order to facilitate additional collaboration opportunities and create grading rubrics.

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

Skyline has focused on the DRSL involving "writing across the curriculum" and has institutionalized, but needs to continue to address, individual curriculum concerns. The other two DRSLs need to be addressed. A recommendation would be to use the existing rubrics and develop a baseline of information that can be used to proceed.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

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

Skyline High School's administration has been actively engaged in the learning community. Programs have been developed in order to meet the individual needs of students. High expectations are fostered by both staff and administration, and thus instilled into the students.

- 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?*

At Skyline High School, the education leadership has used data and stakeholder surveys to drive the school's educational agenda. Decisions and programs have been developed and created based on the information provided by the data gathered. Professional learning communities have been created and the importance of collaboration time been established.

- 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?*

Skyline High School's administrative team has placed its resources into programs that have been identified as concerns by the stakeholders. The ASAP program was established to address the needs of at-risk students. Also, the attendance policy (tardy tickets) was developed to address the concern of citizenship credit. Both programs directly relate to credit and graduation requirements.

- 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?*

At Skyline, all stakeholders are involved and encouraged to participate in the learning community. Skyline's administration has involved School Community Council and parent groups in the decisions made at the school. Also, the student council has had an active voice in policies established at Skyline.

- 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 need for a mentor program has been a concern for Skyline High School. Currently, there is tutoring available (and mandatory for some students) for students after school. Next year the administration is considering a mentoring/home room program during the school day to address academic and citizenship issues. The staff at Skyline is oriented toward student success and provides opportunities for individual students.

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 NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process, which is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?*

Skyline High School has fully developed and implemented a school improvement plan. It appears that the school has reviewed and continues to review and revise this plan.

- 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 administrators at Skyline High School have received repeated praise for the support they provide their faculty in the area of their professional improvement.

Teachers have been trained and are experienced in the use of the Six Traits rubric for integrating writing across the curriculum. Professional learning communities have been developed and begun working over the past year, providing teachers time, support and encouragement for collaboration and the development of more effective tools of assessment. The institutionalization of peer or professional learning communities has been met with mixed reactions from teachers, however. Many have welcome the time within the school day to continue or expand collaboration efforts. Others feel that there is only so much collaboration and standardization of assessments that can be done within their departments. Some worry that the weekly late-start/collaboration days proposed for the 2009-10 school year will be overkill and affect valuable instructional time.

- 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 Visiting Team observed that the administrators, faculty, parents and students are committed to continual improvement in all areas. They are justifiably proud of their academic results, as well as state and national rankings, and are ever cognizant of any threats to that reputation. The school's self-study report stated that teachers would like to be more involved in strategizing to address needs for continued improvement.

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

The Visiting Team commends the administration of Skyline High School for its support of teachers, parents and students. Visiting Team members heard repeatedly from teachers, parents and students that the administrators were not only accessible but also very supportive of student and faculty efforts to improve.

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

The Visiting Team has seen significant progress in the implementation, refinement and discussion of the original action plan. The school is committed to continuous improvement. Further comments have addressed this progress in the report of the Visiting Team.

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

The school has made progress in expanding the use of student data. Data is compiled and retained by the principal and is utilized to make decisions on staffing, scheduling, budgeting, and the use of School Trust Land monies. This

data is made available to departments, administration, community council, and professional learning community teams.

The school has created support programs to middle and low-achieving students. The After School Achievement Program (ASAP), math double blocking, availability of AP and IB classes, and credit recovery are some of programs that were created to support these students.

The school has used Late Start in-service to develop rubrics to measure student growth on their three DRSLs. Members of the school administration communicated to the Visiting Team that future discussions and planning by stakeholders will revolve around the use of these rubrics to assess student growth.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team observed a highly positive and productive working relationship among students, teachers, staff, and administrators at Skyline High School. There are multiple examples of stakeholders working together to continually improve the school as a learning community. Dedication to creating and maintaining a learning environment that nurtures students of all levels is evident in classes and in the school as a whole. Specifically, many students who were randomly questioned felt a strong sense of safety and belonging. Skyline High School currently has professional learning community (PLC) groups in place that encourage collaboration among teachers to improve the cohesiveness of the community. As gathered from the teachers, future plans for the school include more time allotted for the PLC groups.

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

Skyline High School engages parents and families as partners in the learning process. However, parents felt that more communication through the school website would be helpful, specifically in the area of individual teacher web pages. There is strong evidence of productive links with the higher academic community beyond high school, but only limited collegial working relationships have been maintained among the feeder schools for Skyline High School. The counseling center strives to forge links with higher institutions as well as with professional communities. Skyline High School generally has a positive community image.

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

The Visiting Team observed a high level of stakeholder involvement in the accreditation process. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators were involved in every focus group. Teachers reported that parents and students offered valuable input into these meetings as well. All stakeholders seem to be actively engaged in creating and maintaining the highest levels of excellence to ensure continued success for the student of Skyline High School.

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

CRT and USBCT test results are used to track school improvement. These results are sent home to students and parents and are made available to teachers and administrators. Administrators review CRT results with every teacher involved in the testing process and help teachers make goals for future improvement. The Skyline High School newsletter provides ongoing communication to parents about school improvement and goals. The results from this accreditation process will be printed in the newsletter along with information for parents who are interested in viewing the School Self-Study Report. As per the administration, the report will be available in the main office for all stakeholders to view. Skyline High School is also actively involved with the Community Council and PTA where regular reports of school improvement are communicated.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for its wide range of academic programs. All students are encouraged to stretch their academic abilities to take on more rigorous coursework. The faculty empowers and encourages students to go above and beyond their self-perceptions.
- The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for providing such programs as the ASAP, Credit Recovery, double blocking, Effective Writing, UBSCT class and other math help classes.
- The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for its strong sense of community and inclusiveness of minorities, special needs, and out-of-area students. Students feel safe and accepted in an environment of caring and respect.

- The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for its high graduation rate, UBSCT and AP pass rates.
- The Visiting Team commends Skyline High School for the strong leadership provided by its administration. Parents, teachers, and students feel strongly that the administration supports a rigorous academic program and a safe and orderly environment, and are accessible when needed.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school make information more assessable to parents through a more effective utilization of technology. Specifically, more robust content for the school's website and the addition of individual teacher web pages might be one avenue.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school focus on the DRSL of Responsibility and Respect over the next couple of years. The design of a survey that would provide a snapshot of current performance and future progress could be considered.
- The Visiting Team lauds the efforts toward institutionalizing writing across the curriculum. However, this program should be revisited and adjusted so that it works for all disciplines. Perhaps more flexibility could be allowed so that individual teachers and departments can imbed it into their curriculum in the manner they see fit.