The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School

5850 South 5600 West
Kearns, Utah 84118

February 16-17, 2011

Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School

5850 South 5600 West
Kearns, Utah 84118

February 16-17, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.
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, February 16-17, 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 Thomas Jefferson 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 Rick Anthony is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Thomas Jefferson 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 Thomas Jefferson Junior High School.

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****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment *****Charter School Representative Appointment

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David F. Garrett .....Business Services

JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Rick Anthony ..... Principal
Cathy Thompson ..... Assistant Principal
Joanna Gibb ..... Intern Assistant Principal

Counseling

Ruth O'Hara ..... Counselor
Linda Patrick ..... Counselor
Jamie Jensen ..... Counselor
Melanie Snitker ..... Intern Counselor

Support Staff

Kathie Woodruff ..... Principal's Secretary
Chris Stoker ..... Bookkeeper
Jacki Peercy ..... Counseling Center Secretary
Cathy Bird ..... Hourly Counseling Center Secretary
Diane Backman ..... Resource Aide
Pat Bailey ..... ESL Aide
Debby Conner ..... Behavioral Health Assistant
Kathy Hackett ..... Resource Aide
Wendy Hill ..... Resource Aide
Louann Montague ..... Resource Aide
Pattie Orgill ..... Resource Aide
Chris Radford ..... Media Center Aide
Doug Balfour ..... Head Custodian
Paul Barney ..... Associate Custodian
Rita Lloyd ..... Custodian
Gary Mills ..... Custodian
Dave Lujan ..... Custodian
William Archibald ..... Sweeper
Deborah Hansen ..... Lunchroom Manager
Susan Van Hoose ..... Breakfast Manager
Holly Bahr ..... Lunch worker
Ada Manzanares ..... Lunch worker
Colleen Seamons ..... Lunch worker
Jeffery Van Hoose ..... Lunch Secretary

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Denise Bennett
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Wendy Carnell
Pam Carson
Laurie Christiansen
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Ted Davis
Brad Francis
Todd Francis
Katherine Greenfield
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Jill Petersen
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Peggy Provard
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Chris Putman
Zoe Rosenbeck
Randi Sager
Leah Anne Sharitt
Amy Steed
Bryon Wilson
June Wilson-Wright
Lynn Wixom

THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School is to promote a safe and positive educational environment that is dedicated to students learning and developing citizenship, academic and real life skills

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Commitment

- We believe teachers and students must be committed to quality teaching and learning, so that schools can function as a learning organization and promote opportunities for all to work as a community.
- We believe students need a plan for school success, a good schedule, knowledge and abilities, and an ability to set and work toward goals.

Safety

- Students and staff must promote a positive climate through work and action, creating an environment that is non-threatening, accepting and encouraging.
- We believe a well-ordered classroom, reflecting a consistent discipline plan, creates an environment conducive to learning.

Respect

- We believe students, teachers, and parents and administrators deserve respect, acceptance and encouragement.
- We believe parents and community must teach or instill basic values of respect, good work ethic, and responsibility in their children.

Responsibility

- We believe students need to take responsibility for their educational achievements and that accountability is shared by students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community.
- We believe teachers have the responsibility to present subject matter in a clear, understandable, varied, and motivating way, while making connections between the classroom and the real world.

Excellence in Academic Achievement and Learning

- We believe that attendance and achievement are inseparable.
- We believe that students will learn and use basic numeracy and literacy skills with proficiency.

Community and Equity

- We believe that open and continual communication will increase community involvement in our school because parent and family members are key members of that community.
- We believe cultural diversity enriches the quality of life.

Teacher/Leadership

- We believe good reaching requires commitment to the highest level of instructional skill and practice.

Environment

- We believe students learn best in a clean, safe, pleasant, well-ordered and disciplined environment.

Outcomes

- We believe students will participate in an individual SEOP process, identifying educational and career goals and a plan for continuing education through high school as it pertains to life-long learning.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Citizenship
   - Students will demonstrate the values of commitment, safety, respect and responsibility
   - Students will demonstrate accountability for their actions and inactions
   - Students will demonstrate positive involvement in the community
   - Students will demonstrate good behavioral characteristics of respect for self, family, peers, faculty, and staff

2. Academics
   - Students will demonstrate proficiency with basic literacy and numeracy skills at grade level or better
   - Students will demonstrate a variety of literacy and numeracy strategies to problem solve, apply new knowledge, support inferences, and justify conclusions
   - Students will use technology to asses, analyze and synthesize information to increase student knowledge
   - Students will communicate using a variety of techniques including clarity, purpose, audience awareness, and coherence

3. Real Life Skills
   - Students will develop an individual SEOP(Student Education Occupational Plan) portfolio identifying educational and career goals and plan for continuing education through high school
   - With the assistance of the SEOP process, students will demonstrate knowledge of the relationship between education and employment, emphasizing career planning, workplace responsibility and self-motivation
   - Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethics in the workplace including accountability for attendance, prompt work submission and self-motivation
   - Students will learn to cooperate and collaborate with others by using a variety of techniques including written work, active listening, and oral presentation

Date of visit: February 16-17, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Alan Smith, Bountiful High School, Davis School District, Visiting Team Co-Chairperson

T.J. Barker, Fairfield Junior High, Davis School District, Visiting Team Co-Chairperson

Ron Bailey, Farmington Junior High School, Davis School District

Sydnee Seager, Fairfield Junior High School, School Davis District

Brent Stephens, Farmington Junior High School, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Thomas Jefferson Junior High School is located in Granite School District and serves a suburban community with an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population in Kearns. The school has a challenging turnover rate of about 30 percent annually. The ESL population is 35 percent, and the school has a slightly larger minority than Caucasian population. The Latino students represent 40 percent of the total student population.

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

The Visiting Team discovered that Thomas Jefferson Junior High School has a very culturally diverse population (in comparison with many Wasatch Front schools). In addition, half of the school qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch, and a third of the student body are limited English proficient. Despite these challenges, the school has been able to create a safe and caring climate for learning to take place through tight discipline policies and positive reinforcement in the form of CARe Cards (which promote the positive application of the DRSLs). There has been a significant reduction in the number of discipline incidents in the past six years, particularly in the number of tardies.

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

The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to chart CRT data to help drive direction and instruction at the school. In addition, it is recommended that the school also identify more formative assessments to help measure progress toward annual goals. This would give the school an opportunity to make adjustments throughout the year toward desired results.

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

It is clear from the school’s self-study that the school has identified its strengths and weaknesses. The focus on the citizenship DRSL has resulted in definite improvement since the last visit, and the data also reveals a need for action on the Academic DRSL.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Increase communication with the school's stakeholders and the amount of feedback received on where the school stands, where it is going, and how it is going to get there.

- Include analysis of student achievement data that demonstrates an awareness of student achievement gaps, and articulate in the action plan specific, measurable goals to address those gaps.

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?*

Since the last accreditation visit, Thomas Jefferson Junior High School has revised and aligned its beliefs and mission statement. The faculty, administration, students, and parents have worked collaboratively to devise a mission statement that is streamlined and simplified to give the school its purpose and direction. This has been accomplished by discussing, analyzing, and redefining the previous mission statement and focusing on measurable DRSLs. The shared vision, beliefs, and goals were achieved through meetings and discussions involving stakeholders. The Visiting Team recommends that Thomas Jefferson continue to reach out to the parents and community and bring them into the school improvement process.

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

The Visiting Team found there was a strong alignment of the school's mission and beliefs with the school's DRSLs. The mission has been simplified and clearly supports the institutionalization of each DRSL.

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

Several of the indicators are measurable and support the school mission; however, some of the indicators are not currently measurable (e.g., "Students will demonstrate values, character, understanding of ethics and cooperate with others"). The Visiting Team recognizes that these are valuable goals, but recommends that they be

measured through quantitative or qualitative means, such as a survey. The Visiting Team further recommends that Thomas Jefferson Junior staff members identify specific and measurable academic goals to help promote 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?*

There is evidence that the Citizenship DRSL has been institutionalized throughout the school. The Real Life Skills DRSL also seems to be ingrained throughout the curriculum. However the Visiting Team is concerned that there is little evidence of the academic DRSLs being incorporated, and recommends that Thomas Jefferson continue to develop the academic DRSL.

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?*

Based on departmental analyses, focus group reports, and interviews with teachers, the Visiting Team found that the curriculum and instruction at Thomas Jefferson support the Utah State Core standards. Additionally, the Visiting Team observed that some departments follow Granite District's scope and sequence curriculum, designed to align common teaching standards and objectives. To support cross-curricular collaboration, Thomas Jefferson teachers are involved in school-wide committees (Policy and Procedure, Climate and Community, and Lifelong Learning) to identify and align curriculum departmentally and on grade levels.

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

The Visiting Team witnessed a wide variety of teaching styles being incorporated in the implementation of the curriculum. Students are actively engaged in a variety of activities that encourage the development of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. Teachers use open-ended questions, classroom discussions, peer and group explorations, role plays, creative projects, etc., to engage students and enhance learning. To engage the higher-achieving students, Thomas Jefferson also offers gifted and talented curricula in English, geography, science, and history. It should be noted that, although most rooms observed by the Visiting Team did actively engage students, a few classroom teachers struggled to maintain student attention. The Visiting Team recommends that all teachers implement best teaching practices and utilize engaging student learning activities.

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

A great strength for Thomas Jefferson Junior High is the support of the school's DRSLs, CAR (Citizenship, Academics, and Real Life Skills). Interviews with teachers and classroom observations revealed evidence that all staff members work collaboratively to support various aspects of the DRSLs. Teachers reported that they were actively involved in the development of the DRSLs through collaboration, and have institutionalized them into their curricula. It is recommended that the teachers continue to explicitly incorporate the DRSL language into their curricula.

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

Thomas Jefferson looks at the population of students that are not academically successful and offers curricular support to these students (such as fifth period Friday, Read 180, the ELL program, and individual tutoring). The Visiting Team recommends that Thomas Jefferson Junior continue to identify and address struggling students, providing academic assistance within the school day.

Instruction:

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

There is evidence of a variety of instructional practices being implemented throughout the school. The Visiting Team observed direct instruction, classroom discussion that included open-ended questions, demonstrations, hands-on activities and manipulatives, student presentations, student portfolios, group work, journal writing, peer tutoring, peer collaboration and review, cooperative learning groups, modeling, visual aids, oral presentations, student debates, student projects, technology-aided instruction, and experiments.

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?*

Observations by the Visiting Team and student responses show that the staff is committed to instructional strategies that support the DRSLs. There are signs posted throughout the school and in every classroom that clearly outline the DRSLs and define the indicators. Teachers and students are well aware of the CAR acronym and can express what it means and what it looks like.

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 Visiting Team found the school's professional development activities to be guided by the identified needs of the school. Teachers have been actively involved in many different local and state-provided professional development programs. Teachers and staff members are given opportunities to share knowledge gained during collaboration.

Although it is difficult to incorporate professional development, the Visiting Team commends the faculty and staff of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School for being willing to look at and try new methods and programs obtained through professional development, and recommends that all teachers and departments continue to take advantage of and apply knowledge gained through these 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 was able to observe numerous teachers who were proficient in their content areas. Classroom visits found that teachers were also proficient in their instructional approaches. All but three teachers in the school are endorsed in their content area, and these three teachers are currently on a plan to become highly qualified to teach in their content areas.

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

The Visiting Team did not find an established plan for the integration of technology. With the loss of professional development days, many technology-training days have not occurred. However, Thomas Jefferson Junior High has several technology enhanced classrooms that include a classroom projector and a wireless microphone. Several more classrooms were observed integrating technology into their curricula, and about 20 percent of teachers at Thomas Jefferson have teacher web sites. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson Junior High has a technology committee that oversees technology needs at the school.

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?*

It was apparent to the Visiting Team that, within several departments, the staff is working collaboratively to develop scope and sequence and to align assessments accordingly. Some departments have developed and implemented pre- and post-tests on most units. The Visiting Team also noticed that many classrooms displayed or articulated what was expected of students and what they would be assessed on. The

Visiting Team observed that some departments have common assessments based on the district scope and sequence and the Utah State Core Curriculum. The school is moving toward further intervention and remediation based on the results of the assessments, and there should be evidence of this by the next accreditation.

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 noted that there were many examples of individual progress assessments within teachers' classrooms: tests, quizzes, projects, oral reports, research papers, etc. The Visiting Team did see evidence of assessment rubrics being utilized.

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 determined that, to a large extent, the school is still in the early stages of developing its understanding and utilization of student achievement data. The school understands this to be a weakness, and is making attempts to address this issue.

d) *To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?*

The Visiting Team observed staff members effectively using a variety of assessments in their classroom instruction. Oral assessments, project-based assessments, presentation assessments, and quizzes were all observed. Teachers were clear and explicit in their expectations for student performance. Both state and district testing materials have been implemented in assessing student achievement. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to develop departmental benchmark assessments at meaningful intervals to allow teachers to more frequently assess the effectiveness of teaching strategies and the need for student interventions.

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

The Visiting Team did not observe complete organizational agreement for assessing the DRSLs. The development of an agreed-upon school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSLs is in process. The Visiting Team recommends that these rubrics be developed and professional development provided in order to implement and evaluate each of these rubrics as part of a continued school improvement process.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHWEST SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

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

The Visiting Team found that the leadership team at Thomas Jefferson Junior High has made great efforts to improve the academic learning climate at the school, by both addressing student behavior problems such as tardiness and truancy and rewarding positive behaviors. During the 2004-05 school year, tardies and truancies were among the major behavioral problems in the school. The leadership team has instituted a new attendance policy since the last Visiting Team visit, which has had a dramatic effect on tardies and truancies. These have both decreased by 50 percent or more, and continue to be a minimal discipline factor in the school. Not only are students in class more often and for a longer time, but the general discipline of the school has been enhanced as well.

Positive behavior-reinforcing programs have also had an effect on the learning climate. The CARE card program, which rewards students for positive behavior in the classroom, has allowed teachers to give students immediate positive feedback. Students have bought into the program, and in many cases no longer need the program to behave in positive ways.

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 Visiting Team found that the school leadership used data on discipline issues to a large extent in formulating a school-wide discipline program. Progress is monitored and the data points to program success. Data is also reviewed and used to look at academic achievement. It is recommended that the data available from CRT tests and other testing be used to better implement programs that will reach those students who are not currently proficient in core subject testing.

c) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?*

The Visiting Team found that organizational management and the allocation of funds are directed by the leadership in addressing areas of focus on improving the school climate and enhancing the overall learning environment. Those efforts have been aligned with school goals and the DRSLs.

d) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?*

The Visiting Team, through observation and interviews, found that teachers are heavily involved in the school decision-making process. Teachers have commented that they feel that they are listened to and encouraged to share in determining school direction.

e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

The Visiting Team found that a major effort to establish positive educational relationships between students and teachers has been made through the institution of an advisory period. Advisory classes, by design, are smaller in number and address social issues and character education. Efforts are made to keep students with the same advisory teacher throughout their junior high experience. The Visiting Team recommends that the school examine tracking students academically and possibly instituting a remediation program in the advisory period.

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 leadership, faculty, and community of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School have joined together in the process of creating a workable, student-centered accreditation plan that will not only be useful for securing accreditation, but will also serve as a vision for the coming years. Emphasis in the past has been mostly on the Citizenship DRSL and the Real Life Skills DRSL. The Visiting Team is recommending that the future focus be on the Academic DRSL to enhance student achievement.

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?*

Thomas Jefferson Junior High’s professional development plan is part of the school’s overall Student Achievement Plan. The ongoing Lifelong Learning

Committee sets the agenda for the in-house staff development that takes place during monthly trainings on early-out Fridays. This year, the focus of the committee has been improving citizenship through lessons teachers could use in Advisory classes. Additionally, Trust Lands funds are available for almost any request teachers have to pay for substitutes, as well as costs associated with taking courses or other costs.

The Visiting Team and the school leadership appear to be in agreement that the next area of focus should be academics. The Visiting Team encourages the leadership to focus all professional development on factors that will increase student achievement.

c) *To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

Although minor disagreements among the staff to small parts of the action plan exist, there does appear to be a commitment among the staff to make the school a better place through fully investing themselves into the plan. The revised school action plan appears well suited to maintaining the great strides made in relation to the Citizenship DRSL and making improvements in the Real Life Skills DRSL. The Academic DRSL also contains a concrete timeline as well as well-conceived ideas for assessment; however, it lacks information as to who is responsible for making sure the assessments happen and who will deal with the inevitable "bumps in the road" the school will meet on its journey of improvement. The Visiting Team recommends slight revisions to the action plan stating who is responsible for the assessments and who is responsible for follow up. The PTSA and Community Council also appear to be extremely supportive of the leadership team's endeavors to improve the school.

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

Through the various modes of learning about the school (discussions with administration, classroom observations, interviews with counselors, meetings with the community) the Visiting Team learned that the faculty owns the self-study process of continuous improvement. The leadership's focus on improving discipline throughout the school (as demonstrated by the declining numbers of truancies, tardies, and in-school and out-of-school suspensions) clearly demonstrates a desire to continue to improve. Additionally, the school staff meets in cross-curricular groups monthly.

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

The original action plan has been heavily retooled. The main headings have been transformed into the current list of DRSLs, known as CAR (Citizenship, Academics and Real Life Skills). The "Respect and Safety" heading became the Citizenship

DRSL, “Commitment and Responsibility” became the Real Life Skills DRSL, and “Reading at Grade Level” was expanded into the Academic DRSL. As such, there was very little progress on the original plan as it evolved after a new principal arrived.

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

- Recommendation from 2005: “The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan include a timeline of realistic long- and short-term goals and dates for implementation and completion. The plan ought to be reviewed and revised as needed to reflect the results of continuous data collection and analysis and focus groups. The action plan should also include a professional development component that would address “best practices,” research- and data-driven strategies, curriculum development, etc.”

    - The new action plan has time lines for the goals. Most of the goals would benefit from a specific time to check on completion (the goals on the Academic Action Plan have largely covered this). The Visiting Team recognizes that funding for professional development is not currently easy to come by, but would continue to recommend that including it in the action plan to a greater degree would prove very valuable.

- Recommendation from 2005: “The school needs to engage the whole staff in collaborative inquiry with regard to the school’s DRSLs. This would include working to increase school-wide understanding of the purposes and criteria used in selecting the DRSLs, and posting the DRSLs as expectations in every classroom.”

    - The Visiting Team observed significant growth in this area. The DRSLs have been revisited in the intervening years with nearly complete support of the staff. The DRSLs are posted throughout the school and inside classrooms, and every student and teacher questioned about them was familiar not only with the DRSL acronym, but also with its meaning. The experience was described to the Visiting Team as much more collaborative than the previous accreditation visit, and staff support is near 100%.

- Recommendation from 2005: “The Visiting Team recommends that Jefferson Junior High School continue to develop its self study document by (1) collecting additional data, disaggregating and analyzing student data and (2) aligning the action plans to address the findings resulting from the profile and departmental analysis of how well students are meeting the desired results for student learning.”

    - Thomas Jefferson Junior High is to be commended for its efforts in this regard. The school has expanded data collection efforts, and the data has been thoroughly disaggregated. The school should continue to focus on making better use of the data to assess the needs of the student body, particularly academically.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team feels that Thomas Jefferson Junior High has succeeded to a great extent in developing a successful relationship with the community. Positive working relationships exist among students, teachers, support staff, and community members. Notable successes include:

1. Fifth period Friday is a tutoring program implemented weekly to help improve academics.
2. Teleparent is a web-based phone callout system that allows teachers to share both positive and negative reports with parents concerning their students' progress.
3. ELL parent nights have been established, with some success, to bring parents of ELL students into the school to have explained to them the school standards and expectations, as well as get parent feedback on what they expect of the education system at the school.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to look for ways to involve all communities, particularly those communities that have historically shown less willingness to be engaged in the school community. With 40 percent of the students at Thomas Jefferson Junior claiming a Hispanic ethnic background, more work needs to be done to involve those students and their parents in the school community. The school is acutely aware of this issue and continues to brainstorm ideas to get more involvement.

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

The Visiting Team observed strong and positive support from the community council regarding school programs. The community council members feel they represent a larger constituency in the areas where they live, and gave examples of other parents addressing school issues directly with them. They also see the need for more involvement from the Hispanic community and are working on ways to address that issue.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to cultivate relationships with all local stakeholders to secure a broader base of support for the school learning community. Also, the Visiting Team encourages the fostering of cross-curricular and subject area collaboration by setting aside the time needed for the planning of curriculum units across and within school departments.

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 that Thomas Jefferson Junior High has done an adequate job of involving the school community in the self-study process through its Community Council. The Community Council has credited the administrators for the energy with which they have sought input from the surrounding community.

The Visiting Team noticed a disconnect regarding perceptions of parental involvement between the faculty and staff of Thomas Jefferson Junior High and the parents. The Visiting Team encourages a collaborative effort between the school and community to articulate what an engaged parent is, and then to communicate that expectation to the faculty, staff, and community.

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

Summative data, such as national and state-required tests (Iowa, CRT/end-of-level assessments) are shared with the staff and, to a lesser extent, the community council. The information is available through multiple sources, but those sources are not necessarily communicated to or available to all community members. Formative assessments are shared with parents and through the Teleparent system.

The Visiting Team recommends that testing information and student academics be given a more prominent place on the school website and shared through e-mail, Twitter (or a similar program), and the Teleparent system to the widest extent possible.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Thomas Jefferson Junior High School for authentically implementing the Citizenship DRSL. The acronym CAR (Citizenship, Academic, Responsibility) has become engrained in the entire school, and is a great vehicle for promoting school improvement.

- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, staff, students, parents, and administration for a thoughtful, honest accreditation process. It is evident to the Visiting Team that Thomas Jefferson Junior High has taken this process seriously and has much to show for its efforts.

- The Visiting Team commends the faculty of Thomas Jefferson Junior High for creating a positive and nurturing school climate in which students feel safe and cared

for. The Visiting Team observed the staff's willingness to "go the extra mile" to ensure students are successful.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Thomas Jefferson Junior High continue to seek the best ways to reach out and communicate with all stakeholders in an effort to improve learning for all.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty and staff continue to maintain and promote the implementation of the Citizenship DRSL. In addition, the Visiting Team recommends that Thomas Jefferson Junior High apply that same effort and focus to helping students increase their proficiency in literacy and numeracy, as outlined in the specifics of the Academic DRSL.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Thomas High utilize its cross-curricular committees and departments to implement and evaluate formative assessments to determine who is learning and who is not, specifically in literacy and numeracy. Once identified, it is critical to evaluate the data to determine the effectiveness of these academic interventions in order to refine and improve these services for students. This should be a continual cycle of identifying, implementing and evaluating learning interventions for students.