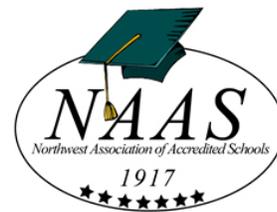


**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind  
742 Harrison Blvd  
Ogden, Utah 84404**

**May 10-11, 2010**



**Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
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**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind  
742 Harrison Blvd  
Ogden, Utah 84404**

**May 10-11, 2010**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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## **FOREWORD**

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

The evaluation, May 10-11, 2010, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind 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 Superintendent Steven W. Noyce is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind 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 Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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7/22/2009

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Trena Roueche .....	USD North Region Director

# **UTAH SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Utah School for the Deaf and the Blind leads the way in providing a caring, responsive, innovative approach to meet the education needs of our low incidence population.

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- Students learn in different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning and growth.
- Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.
- A student's self-esteem is enhanced by positive relationships and mutual respect with staff, students and their families.
- Curriculum and instructional practices should incorporate a variety of learning activities.
- Students learn best when they have appropriate opportunities for success in school, home and community.

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

Every USDB student will use multiple avenues for communication.

- Students will use various strategies for effective communication (read, write, speak, sign, body language, augmentative communication).
- Students will respond to communication from others.
- Students will engage in academic and social interactions with others using communications skills.

Every USDB student will access the Utah Core Curriculum.

- Students will participate in age appropriate class groups.
- Students will engage in Expanded Core Curriculum activities.
- Students will explore grade level concepts.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of elements of the Utah Core Curriculum.

Date of Visit: May 11-12, 2010

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Steven K. Hirase, District Office, Murray School District, Visiting Team  
Chairperson

Kelli Kercher, Horizon Elementary School, Murray School District

Georgia Loutensock, Utah State Office of Education

Rob Stillwell, Accreditation Consultant, Utah State Office of Education

## **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

### **UTAH SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND**

#### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) began in 1884 with the formation of the School for the Deaf. The school was created with a message from Governor Eli Murray to the Territorial Legislature. Services were started with one deaf student on the Old Deseret Campus, now the University of Utah.

The School for the Blind was established in 1896, as Utah gained statehood. At the same time, 57 acres of land was dedicated at the old Territorial Reform School, where the schools would eventually be built. In the beginning the two schools had separate campuses, both located in Ogden. the School for the Deaf was located on 24<sup>th</sup> Street and the School for the Blind was on Harrison Boulevard. Both institutions were residential settings and were self-sufficient, providing both educational and life skills training for students.

In the beginning, students arrived at school in the fall of the new school year and did not return home until the end of that school year. Students were eligible to attend the schools if they were at least eight years old and had documented deafness or blindness. Historical accounts of the school confirm that this was a very lonely time for many students. Even though the school staff worked hard to create a homelike atmosphere, students felt strongly the loss of their home and family experiences.

After a time, it became clear that the students and families of this state prefer not to receive services in a residential setting. During the years of special education reform in the 1970s, USDB services changed to reflect new national attitudes. With the passage of Public Law 94-142, opportunities for educational services closer to home became a reality for many families. The USDB residential program became smaller and smaller as services were offered in a greater variety of locations throughout the state.

Today, residential services are provided for only 28 students during the school week, with each student returning to his/her home on weekends and holidays. As a result of this declining enrollment in the residential program, USDB is reconfiguring services beginning in the 2010-11 school year to meet the needs of students who require intensive vocational and life skills instruction in order to live independently.

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

The Visiting Team, through its analysis of the school's profile, observations, and interviews with staff, students, and patrons, found the following things:

- A high level of commitment to students among staff members
- Focus as faculty on individual student achievement based on students' unique needs
- Provision of deaf and blind students within the state of Utah with a full continuum of services, through a service model including early intervention programs, center-based programs, magnet schools, and an outreach program
- Provision of a wide variety of support, resources, and services to deaf, blind, and deaf/blind students, their parents and school districts that educate these students, including access to the Utah State Instructional Materials Access Center, service to convert text to Braille for blind students, diagnostic and prescriptive evaluations, and interventions for students with sensory disabilities
- Accurate portrayal of school as reported in the school profile

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

The Visiting Team recommends that the school consider providing disaggregated data related to the school's demographic data. These data could be disaggregated by age, grade, program, location, type of disability, etc.

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

The Visiting Team is confident that the school's self-study developed for the school accreditation accurately reflects its current strengths and limitations.

**Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Conduct analysis of disaggregated data collected on student achievement based on state assessments.
- Conduct analysis of disaggregated data collected on individual student progress on school DRSLs, as defined by the students' individual education plans (IEPs).
- On a regular basis, collect surveys administered to students, parent, and staff members that provide the USDB administration with data that reflect success of efforts made in behalf of the students served by the schools.

## CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (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 USDB vision, mission, and DRSLs were developed through a process of gathering input and feedback from all divisions. As USDB is a statewide agency, the discussion was uniquely tailored to meet the needs of various departments. The vision, mission, and DRSLs were presented to the USDB administrative staff for approval, and then to the USDB Advisory Council in spring 2008. The Visiting Team believes that the school developed its mission, beliefs and DRSLs based on the unique nature of the school and the students it serves, and that the school clearly articulated the needs indicated by all stakeholder groups.

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

There is clear alignment among the school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs. These reflect the school learning community's commitment to meeting the individual needs of every student who is provided with services through USDB.

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

The Visiting Team found little evidence to indicate the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs. Due to the school's change of superintendents during the accreditation process, some steps were completed prior to the accreditation teams visit. The Visiting Team believes that the development of assessments to determine student progress is a logical next step in USDB's school improvement efforts. Due to the unique nature of the school and its student population, assessment of student progress on DRSLs should be based on the unique needs of the student and addressed in the students' IEPs.

- 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?*

The Visiting Team found evidence that the school's mission and beliefs guide the development of procedures, policies and decisions. The Visiting Team is

confident that as the school's DRSLs are institutionalized, they will also guide the school's decisions, policies and procedures.

### **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?*

USDB's school-wide academic expectation is that each student will access the Utah State Office of Education's Core Curriculum. Teachers receive training in differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, and content area instruction to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve this expectation. The way the individual student accesses the Core Curriculum is determined by the IEP team in accordance with state and federal rules and regulations.

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

The school's curriculum and instructional strategies and practices engage all students based on their unique learning needs as determined by the IEP team.

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

The school is in the infancy stage of the development of a curriculum that focuses on the DRSLs. The Visiting Team is confident that as the school moves forward with its school improvement efforts, this will be accomplished.

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

The staff continually assesses progress on individual student IEP goals to drive curricular and instructional decisions to ensure all students reach intended learning outcomes as defined by their IEPs.

### **Instruction:**

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

The Visiting Team found significant evidence of teachers' use of a variety of instructional strategies based on the unique learning needs of students due to their individual disabilities.

- b) *To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?*

The staff at USDB has developed and utilized a wide range of research-based instructional strategies that explicitly teach the skills necessary for the school's DRSLs, as defined by the students' IEP team. As these instructional strategies, including individual accommodations and modifications in the curriculum, are used to address a student's goals, they are implemented as appropriate in each of the student's classes.

- 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 significant evidence that the school's professional development program, especially as it has been designed and implemented for new staff members, is guided by the unique instructional needs of students with sensory impairments, and provides the individual teacher with specific instructional strategies that meet the learning needs of their students. USDB also provides learning opportunities for parents to learn instructional strategies that support the learning needs of their children.

- 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?*

Due to the unique needs of deaf, blind, and deaf/blind students, members of the instructional staff (including teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, etc.) are extremely knowledgeable about the current research on effective instructional practices for the student populations that they serve. The Visiting Team found substantial evidence that these individuals incorporate the instructional practices in their classrooms on a daily basis.

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

The Visiting Team observed a wide variety of technology being used in the classroom to enhance and meet the learning needs of sensory-impaired students with respect to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The use of traditional classroom technology such as computer-assisted instruction, document cameras,

digital projectors, etc. was observed in many classrooms. In addition, the Visiting Team observed the use of a variety of augmentative technology used with individual students, based on their specific disabilities and unique learning needs. This technology was also made available for use by school districts and parents to evaluate their effectiveness with specific students.

**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?*

Due to the unique nature of the school, school-wide assessments other than those prescribed by the state are not appropriate. Classroom teachers assess student progress on IEP goals. These goals are performance-based standards and objectives that clearly articulate expectations for student achievement.

- 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 who attend USDB programs are assessed in a fair and equitable manner based on their individual learning needs. The IEP team, during the student's annual review, determines the way in which students will access school-wide and individual assessments, including appropriate modifications and accommodations.

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

The Visiting Team found significant evidence of the professional staff's use of data to guide individual student program decision-making. However, due to the nature of the school, the Visiting Team found little evidence of data collection outside of state-mandated assessments to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations.

- 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 found evidence that indicates that USDB, through professional development as well as other opportunities, provides its professional staff with the means to collaborate in developing and/or utilizing a broad range of student assessment strategies designed to meet the needs of sensory-impaired students.

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

USDB is just beginning the process of determining how DRSL will be assessed on a school-wide basis.

### **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 superintendent of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind has changed three times over the past five school years. Despite the changes in top-level administration for USDB, the school continues to provide/promote quality instruction. This is largely due to the commitment of the associate superintendents and program/school directors. The Visiting Team observed a high level of commitment to students and their education programs on the part of the administrators who were interviewed as part of the accreditation process. This commitment has contributed to a positive climate that supports teaching and learning by the staff and students of USDB.

- 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 leadership bases programming decisions on scientifically based research and best practices with respect to educational practices for students with sensory disabilities.

- c) *To what extent does the 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?*

USDB's school administration provides outstanding leadership through effective management of the organization's resources. As USDB is a separate state entity, its leadership is often involved in securing state resources at the legislative level. Through the years, USDB's administration has been very effective in lobbying the state legislature for the resources necessary to provide appropriate educational opportunities for students with sensory disabilities. In addition, the administration

is also responsible for securing available federal funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

- 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?*

USDB employs a collaborative process that utilizes input from all stakeholder groups in the decision-making process. USDB has an advisory council that is highly involved in significant decisions that affect the operation of USDB's programs. The members of the committee represent a broad range of individuals who are committed to the education of students with sensory disabilities.

- 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?*

Due to the nature of USDB, the Visiting Team observed a high level of commitment to individual student learning needs. Each student has a minimum of one adult staff member who knows the student intimately. In the majority of cases, the Visiting Team found multiple adults who interacted with and knew the student, including his/her unique needs, extremely well. The school has used the IEP process to make these student-to-staff member connections.

### **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?*

USDB, through the accreditation process, has developed a comprehensive school improvement plan that relates directly to the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs and is specifically designed to improve services to students with sensory impairments. The Visiting Team is confident that the school will systematically implement the school improvement plan, and that the plan will undergo a process of continued review and revision.

- b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Although it is not explicitly stated in the improvement plan, a high level of professional development will need to be provided to show positive results, as related to student achievement, as the plan is implemented. The Visiting Team is confident, based on USDB's past practices, that appropriate professional development will be provided to ensure successful implementation of the improvement plan.

- 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 believes that one of the shortcomings of USDB's improvement plan is the lack of specific time lines and identification of individuals responsible for the implementation of specific components of the plan. As time lines are set and individuals assigned to be responsible for implementation of specific tasks, the level of commitment to the action plan will increase.

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

USDB has been very successful in creating conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement. Innovations in the education of children with sensory disabilities occur on a regular basis. The members of the professional staff stay abreast of practices that have a positive impact on the

education of their children and provide the necessary resources to support positive change and improvement.

## CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind is a unique organization, with staff and students in various locations and configurations. However the school has managed to establish positive and productive working relationships among teachers, support staff members, and the administration. The school has created and sustains learning environments for students that nurture a sense of caring and belonging.

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

The school engages and involves parents and families as partners in the learning process. Due to the school's unique student population and the various programs and physical arrangements, wide networks are limited. The school works with local schools and school districts to develop and support collegial working relationships and provide a safe, secure environment for students.

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

The school has made a sincere effort to engage all stakeholders in the self-study process. Changes in the administration and staff have limited the process to some degree. The school conducted community and department meetings, surveys of parents, departments and the community as part of the self-study process.

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

Data from surveys, meetings, etc. are used to identify needs as well as successes within the USDB community. The school communicates to stakeholders through its newsletter, *Sights and Sounds*, as well as through parent meetings and local news outlets. Individual schools or programs communicate with their students and parents often and directly regarding specific student activities and school improvement issues.

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

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the members of the school staff for their level of commitment to the students of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Staff members are willing to invest a significant amount of time to implement changes that have a direct impact on student achievement and individual student needs. Staff members are keenly aware of the current research on educational practices related to individuals with sensory impairments, and often initiate change to improve student learning. This has often resulted in the implementation of a variety of innovative programs and methods for meeting the needs of their students.
  
- The Visiting Team commends the school administration on its leadership and the direction it has given the school. Providing a school with direction and making the changes necessary to increase student achievement are difficult tasks at best. The multiple changes of USDB's superintendent over recent years have complicated school improvement efforts; however, continuity has been maintained by the leadership, and the school is moving ahead in a positive direction with student achievement being the focus for changes. The Visiting Team commends the leadership for providing a positive climate and culture that are supportive of collaboration and school change.
  
- The Visiting Team commends USDB for its focus on student learning, and for addressing the needs of students with sensory impairments. The teachers and administration have analyzed student mastery of the curriculum down to the individual student level, and have implemented specific goals and objectives to meet students' unique learning needs. The Visiting Team also recognizes USDB's efforts to intervene at an early age for these children, as evidenced by their focus on programs for children ages 0-3 and training for the staff members serving them.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school and staff continue their efforts in the development and implementation of tools to measure progress on the school's DRSLs. These should be stated in specific terms, including clear indicators that are observable and measurable. The school should investigate means of reporting progress on both a school-wide level and an individual student level related to the indicators for each DRSL.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school provide greater detail in its school improvement plan. The plan should include specific action steps, the individuals responsible for completing each action step, how the action will be evaluated, and a timeline for when the action step will be completed.