# The Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

## Uinta Academy 3746 South 4800 West P.O. Box 387 Wellsville, Utah 84339

March 1, 2012





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

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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, March 1, 2012, 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 Uinta Academy 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 Academic Director Dr. Valarie Giacalone is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Uinta Academy 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 Uinta Academy.

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

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\*Board of Regents Appointments \*\*\* CMAC Representative Appointment \*\*\*\*\*Charter School Representative Appointment

\*\*UCAT Representative \*\*\*\*USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

### **UINTA ACADEMY**

### ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

### **School Administration**

Becky Simpson		Owner/Executive DirectorOwner/Executive DirectorAcademic Director	
Counseling			
Mike Bulloch		Psychiatrist Clinical Director Therapist Therapist Therapist Therapist Therapist Therapist Therapist Therapist	
<u>Faculty</u>			
Susan Biddulph Jentry Bronchinsky Brooke Heiner	Johnita Morton Brad Noble Matt Wright – tutor	Mike Wright - tutor	

### VISITING TEAM REPORT

### **UINTA ACADEMY**

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Uinta Academy is to support the therapeutic goals of the students by providing individualized instruction and curriculum that helps students increase their skills and develop confidence in academics in order to increase their opportunities in life.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

Uinta Academy School believes:

- That each student has distinct physical, emotional, and intellectual needs, as well as unique gifts and strengths to share with others.
- That success is best achieved if students begin at whatever skill level they are and build a solid foundation.
- The school is an extension of the milieu and therapy and is an opportunity to practice target skills and boundaries.
- That teachers are resources who are responsible for guiding, clarifying, and teaching skills, but that students are ultimately responsible for their own success.
- That collaboration and communication among teachers, parents, therapists, staff, and students is essential to student success.
- That academic success strengthens self-esteem and that students can experience success in different ways according to their own abilities and goals.

### DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

- 1. Accountability
- 2. Respect

Date of visit: March 1, 2012

### MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stillwell, Accreditation Consultant, USOE/NWAC, Visiting Team Chairperson

Janice Combe, Accreditation Consultant, USOE/NWAC

Matt Webb, Principal, Dale Young Community High School, Box Elder School District

### **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

### **UINTA ACADEMY SCHOOL**

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

Uinta Academy is a residential treatment center for adolescent females with emotional problems. It was founded in Lewiston, Utah in 2003 by Jeff and Becky Simpson. In 2005, the program expanded to include the two new campuses in Wellsville, Utah. The Lewiston campus became the Transition campus for clients who have reached higher levels in the program.

The three main campuses serve approximately 50 clients between the ages of 12 and 18. In 2010, Uinta Academy opened a program for clients who are older than eighteen but who are still transitioning back into society.

- a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?
  - The school accommodates a wide range of learner needs. The emphasis is therapy but the school does show success with its students.
- b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?
  - The school should implement school wide assessments for reporting student progress on Desired Results for Student Learning.
- c) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
  - The 2012 Self-study was thorough and complete. It showed strengths in individualizing for each student and revealed some limitations in course offering due to small number of teachers.

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

- Find ways to offer more courses, including all required for graduation
- Report data on student achievement with regards to progress on DRSLs.

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

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

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

The Visiting Team found Uinta Academy's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLS to be a collaborative product which serves their population well. Their vision statement is an excellent reflection of their philosophy of students learning, taking responsibility, and being accountable. Their DRSLs are also a direct reflection of their mission, vision, and beliefs. It was apparent to the VT that staff and students were supportive of their mission. Their educational practices also reflected their commitment to their vision.

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

The DRSLs are a direct reflection of Uinta Academy's mission statement, vision, and beliefs. The curriculum and teaching practices are supportive of the DRSLs. The mission of Uinta is to teach accountability and responsibility. This is also the practice of the school and its staff. The Visiting Team saw the students learning responsibility and accountability in small steps within the classroom.

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

Uinta Academy has a very structured school system which helps them measure their indicators. They will be using their classroom assessments which will include observation, documentation of student work, formative and summative assessment, and behavior outcomes. They also have a DRSL rubric which will be completed by the staff monthly. These indicators should help the staff and administration assess their progress.

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 of their mission, vision, beliefs, and DRSLs in all classrooms. Their mission, vision, and belief statements seemed to strongly influence the policies and procedures in the classroom. The students were aware of the expectations of accountability and responsibility. It was apparent that

many of these students needed and appreciated the structure and expectations. One of their beliefs is that each student is unique and learns in their own way. It was very evident that Uinta Academy did their best to accommodate each student's learning style, as well as, their strengths or struggles.

### **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 teachers do align their lessons with the Utah Core Curriculum. Their syllabi follow the Core and the teachers are aware of upcoming changes and are planning for them.

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

By the nature of the therapeutic program all students are engaged in thinking and problem solving. These activities are supported by the school for each and every girl.

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 staff relies on each other for help. There are new teachers that have had to be brought up to speed on the goals and operation of the school in a real on the job training environment. Their orientation has been facilitated by good collaboration and team work.

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

It is an Independent Study model. All girls succeed but at their own pace.

### **Instruction:**

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

The teachers use a wide variety of strategies to help all students. The range of learner needs in any one classroom is great. Teachers give individual help. The model they are using can be described as independent study in a group setting. Several levels of Math or Language Arts are being taught to individual girls.

Direct instruction is reserved for mini-lessons and is not the main mode of delivery.

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 indicators for Accountability and Respect are explicitly taught throughout the school.

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 assists teachers with subject-area workshops, additional certifications, and advanced degrees.

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 teachers are highly competent in their subject areas. They strive to improve their skills at individualizing instruction.

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

Teachers employ technology in the classrooms. Individual internet access is restricted due to the nature of the student's behavioral issues. Controlled internet access is permitted when necessary for research and instructional purposes. The Visiting Team found evidence of their mission, vision, beliefs, and DRSLs in all classrooms. Their mission, vision, and belief statements seemed to strongly influence the policies and procedures in the classroom. The students were aware of the expectations of accountability and responsibility. It was apparent that many of these students needed and appreciated the structure and expectations. One of their beliefs is that each student is unique and learns in their own way. It was very evident that Uinta Academy did their best to accommodate each student's learning style, as well as, their strengths or struggles.

### **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?

- As identified by their focus groups, there is no formal school-wide plan with concrete steps for assessment of student progress. See recommendations below.
- 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 school has in place an effective means of tracking grades and sharing progress with parents.
- c) To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?
  - Teachers use frequent classroom assessment to adjust the curriculum and accommodate the various learning style of the girls.
- 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 school has concentrated on training new teachers in accreditation process. A new Departmental Analysis was conducted this year. In the future professional development should focus on assessment.
- e) To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?
  - The school developed an Action Plan to address institutionalizing the Accountability DRSL.

#### **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?
  - Quality instruction is promoted by the Educational Director by example. The atmosphere is calm and directed to working on school assignments while working through emotional issues with treatment team. The Educational Director works one on one with the girls through their first school course which is related to Equine care.

- 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 Education Director has trained her teachers to work together in collaborating for student success. They understand that improvement is a process. They are collaborating with one another to bring about the best school program they can imagine for their students
- 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?
  - The school climate at Uinta supports student learning, both of their school goals and their treatment issues. They have designed a delivery system that is a good fit for the physical environment and the relatively small school staff based on enrollment.
- 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 whole staff is committed to helping the girls achieve success and become more independent. Each staff member shares the responsibility to offer the best possible care for the students.
- e) To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?
  - At Uinta Academy each girls has individual and group counseling on a weekly basis. The Education Director participates weekly treatment team meetings. The initial course the girls take before they fully enter the school program is a one on one introduction to caring for a horse. The girls are well known by multiple staff members.

### **School Services:**

This standard is dealt with in the school's Northwest Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding Student Support Services, Guidance Services, Health Services, Library Information Services, Special Education Services, and Family and Community Services.

### **Facilities and Finances:**

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

### CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

### **Culture of Continual Improvement:**

- a) To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?
  - The school has used the resources of USOE to understand and implement the accreditation process. The school held off the date of their Full Team Visit to better train new staff to the process.
- 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 school had an influx of new teachers this year and did a commendable job of training and orienting new staff to the existing school program. Some school staff are continuing their own advanced degree paths.
- 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 current action plans are geared to getting ready for the self-study and Full Team Visit. The next school year should include plans to develop school wide assessment for measuring student progress in achieving DRSLs.
- d) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?
  - The school has undergone almost continuous change for the better. The growth of the program has not been without pain. There is a firm commitment to build and grow a strong program to support the mission of the school.

### **CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

- a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?
  - There is ample evidence of collaboration between staff. They work together and support the work of the school for the success of the students.
- b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?
  - The school is in good communication with the therapy side of the program. There is good teamwork evident.
- c) To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
  - The self-study was complete and well designed. Teachers participated in aligning curriculum to State Core and Departmental Analysis. Parents and students participated in surveys.
- d) How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?
  - The process and results of the school improvement plan has been shared with the owners, the therapy staff, parents, students and the community.

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

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends Uinta Academy for its efforts in building and sustaining a well stocked variety of educational materials in their library.
- The Visiting Team commends Uinta Academy for its staff's ability to accommodate a wide range of student academic needs.
- The Visiting Team commends Uinta Academy for its thorough and complete selfstudy.

• The Visiting Team commends Uinta Academy for the positive, non-coercive environment which promotes student self-confidence. It is noted that this is the result of a well designed program and a very caring and patient staff.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends Uinta Academy links courses taught to teacher endorsements.
- The Visiting Team recommends Uinta Academy implement school-wide assessments for reporting student progress on Desired Results for Student Learning.