The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

West Lake Junior High School

3400 South 3450 West
West Valley City, Utah 84119

April 23-24, 2012

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

West Lake Junior High School

3400 South 3450 West
West Valley City, Utah 84119

April 23-24, 2012

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

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

The evaluation, April 23-24, 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 West Lake 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 Ike Spencer is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at West Lake 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 West Lake Junior High School.

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

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WEST LAKE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Ike A. Spencer ..... Principal
John Anderson ..... Assistant Principal
Emily Grunig ..... Intern Assistant Principal

Counseling

Patricia Shay ..... Counselor
Mario Platero ..... Counselor
Susan Harbertson ..... Counselor
Kami Sage ..... Counselor

Support Staff

Bonnie Smith ..... Principal's Secretary
Cheryl Boynton ..... Financial Secretary
Debra Jensen ..... Lunch Secretary
Georgina Caudel ..... Receptionist/Parent Liaison
Maria C. Guevara ..... Counseling Center Secretary
Diane Phillips ..... Comprehensive Guidance Clerk

Faculty

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John Anderson
Rose Anderson
Tamara Anderson
Zach Anderson
Andrew Anthony
Dan Anthony
Hannah Barber
Jeremy Barlow
Rachel Bartholomew
Janae Berg
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Tiffany Vernon
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Lusila Westin
Cheryl Williams
LuRae Wilson
Janelle Wride

WEST LAKE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission is to Strengthen Character, Treasure Diversity, and Encourage Success for All.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Strengthen character by showing respect, being responsible, and helping others.
- Treasure diversity by developing talents, strengthening our relationships, and understanding and appreciating our differences.
- Encourage success by having high expectations for preparation, hard work, and participation while making and reaching goals.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Effective Communication
   - Developing skills in spoken language.
   - Writing and using a variety of media to communicate effectively.
   - Effectively assessing information in a variety of formats.

2. Life-long Thinking and Reasoning Skills
   - Understanding the connection between schoolwork, college, and career readiness.
   - Comprehending the potential for personal growth and satisfaction through a variety of courses and activities.
   - Demonstrating proficiency in Literacy and Numeracy.
   - Evaluating, interpreting, and organizing information using appropriate information seeking strategies.

3. Responsible Citizenship
   - Being accountable for demonstrating respect, integrity, and personal responsibility.
   - Understanding and applying appropriate behavior in working with teachers and other students.

Date of visit: April 23-24, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Doug Finch, Cascade School, Alpine School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Karen Bedont, Mont Harmon Junior High School, Carbon County School District

Jeanette Bytendorp, Centennial Junior High School, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

WEST LAKE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

West Lake Junior High School is one of fifteen junior high schools in Granite School District. As a Title I school serving 1,150 students in grades seven through nine, West Lake is a true urban school, with socioeconomic issues and concerns that fit an urban school model. A highly diverse population contributes to the rich flavor of the school, combining cultures, languages and traditions from many countries of the world. Students at West Lake speak 32 languages. Currently 61 percent are classified as limited English proficient (LEP). West Lake receives support for program and staff development from a variety of federal and state grants.

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

There have been significant changes in the demographics of the school, with an increase in the number of non-Caucasian students. Amid this change, academic performance has not significantly decreased. Because West Lake failed AYP two years in a row, the school is in year one of School Improvement.

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

The LEP students' language proficiency scores could be further analyzed to identify the different needs of this growing demographic group. Additional curricular competencies, including school and district assessments could be examined.

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

The West Lake Junior High School staff members have worked to develop the self-study profile amid the change in administration; thus, the work appears to be an accurate and candid reflection of the school's current strengths and limitations.

<u>Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:</u>

- What has accounted for the wide variances in student behavior referral data?
- How have innovations such as the implementation of the block schedule influenced teacher instruction and student learning?

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?

To a small extent, the school's mission statement, beliefs and DRSLs were developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community. The mission and belief statements were developed to be more concise by a subcommittee of teachers, with additional teacher input through e-mail. The DRSLs were also teacher developed, with limited input from parents. The DRSLs were shared with students after their development. General collaboration from the school community was severely limited. The newly developed mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs define a clear and compelling purpose and vision for the school.

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

West Lake Junior High's mission statement and beliefs are intended to strengthen character through respect, treasure diversity by developing talents, and encourage success for all by having high expectations. These align and support the school's DRSLs, which are Effective Communication, Life-long Thinking and Reasoning Skills, and Responsible Citizenship.

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

West Lake Junior High has focused on one DRSL this year, with plans to add additional DRSLs each year. The focus this year is to build effective communicators. The school has developed a school-wide writing rubric focused on sentence, length, answer, mechanics, and support (SLAMS) to guide writing instruction across the curriculum. Specific data from this rubric to assess the effectiveness of the DRSLs appears to be in its early stages of development. The school also uses the CRTs to assess progress in writing as part of effective communication.

Another West Lake Junior High's DRSLs is Life-long Thinking and Reasoning Skills. The school provides AVID, honors classes, CTE, binder (organization) instruction, and other career and college readiness programs for students. Although these resources for students are available, the Visiting Team did not see evidence of data collection for DRSL assessment.

The final school DRSL, Responsible Citizenship, is not a focus for implementation at this time. The school will be implementing a school-wide behavior intervention plan (ABC/UBI) in the upcoming school year.

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?*

Because the school chose to rework its mission, beliefs, and DRSLs, stakeholders are beginning to realign to these with the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school. Students were aware of a shift in writing instruction within the school with the use of SLAMS and posters were placed in each classroom. Classroom lesson plans were presented to students about the revised school agenda at the beginning of the year.

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?*

West Lake Junior has implemented common consultation/teaming planning times, where grade level cross-curriculum planning and sharing can occur. One focus has been to share vocabulary for better understanding and projects that cross curricula. Most departments have developed curriculum mapping based on the State Core and continue to work on creating common assessments. West Lake also utilizes Friday meeting times to meet in vertical and horizontal teams. They have implemented strategies throughout all classrooms, with learning objectives and language objectives posted for each class, evidence of both daily objectives and unit objectives. West Lake has made a move to help students organize their work by issuing each of them a notebook and dividers, and each teacher has clear rules and expectations for their use.

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

The West Lake Junior High staff has participated in professional development in many different areas to help engage students, including REACH and SIOP training. This training is continuing for new teachers hired within the last one to two years. This year they also had extensive training in teaching on the block schedule. Many teachers use starters/bell activities to encourage student to use critical thinking in their writing. During classroom observations, it was evident that many students are not being engaged for the whole period. Of note were students with heads down on desks, lack of attention or participation, note writing and drawing, etc.

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

Focus committee reported that last year the mission statement and DRSLs were revised. Lesson plans were created and presented to students during the first week of school. Many classrooms have bulletin boards working around the themes of DRSLs,

but the Visiting Team saw little evidence of specific curriculum that focused on DRSLs.

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

During the intervention period, teachers have held CRT prep classes for seventh and eighth graders who scored a one or two last year. Other intervention efforts were focused on students with Ds and Fs. Enrichment activities are provided for those students with passing grades. Because this is a new effort, staff members felt this was a work in progress and some revamping would be needed in the future. West Lake has been working to identify the needs of students, and create smaller classes to better meet these needs.

Instruction:

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

Professional development has been focused on instructional strategies to help utilize the block schedule effectively. The Visiting Team did see some evidence of breaking periods down into segments, but traditional teaching practices are still the most commonly used. Most of the observations were of teacher-centered instruction, rather than student participation and engagement. The school also reported working on developing best practices that support student engagement, yet some classrooms still had significant numbers of students not actively participating in the learning activities.

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?*

Lesson plans were created for the beginning of school to create an awareness of the revised school-wide DRSLs. Posters of mission statements and DRSLs were evident in the majority of classrooms. Bulletin boards displayed activities and student involvement in lessons on accepting diversity and self-awareness. The Visiting Team could not find specific references to the mission statement or DRSLs in teacher instruction.

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?*

There is a plan in place for common prep times for teams to discuss curricular and student learning concerns. The Friday schedule allows for professional development and collaborative meetings. Teachers reported that these opportunities could be better utilized for developing improved instructional practices. Professional development has been available, but many felt that too many different programs, strategies and

demands are being instituted without time to develop proficiency and sustained implementation.

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?*

All teachers are highly qualified in their teaching assignments, and many also have endorsements in ESL and SIOP. Most departments have identified areas of strength and recommendations for growth, with as emphasis on cross-curricular collaboration and incorporating more technology in the classroom.

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

Classrooms have been fitted with projectors, document cameras and sound systems for teacher use and presentations. The Visiting Team saw multiple technology applications used within the classroom setting for instruction. There was, however, little use of technology by students outside of testing and computer classes. Teachers reported that computer access is severely limited due to testing and special programs. Several teachers also expressed the need for training on the use of existing technology within classroom instruction.

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?*

To a limited extent, the staff at West Lake Junior High has developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards. The school as a whole is implementing the use of learning and language objective for each lesson. Some departments have incorporated pre- and post-assessments, classroom benchmarks, and/or common assessments. Collaboration time for the development of these assessments is a concern of the staff. Team meetings and departmental meetings are being held, but developing these products has not been a recent emphasis.

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

West Lake Junior High has a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations. The school uses CRTs, Acuity, YPP, SRI, UALPA and subject benchmarks to assess academic progress. In addition, Utah Writes and My Access are used to assess writing progress, while Success Maker is used as a pullout program for additional math assessment.

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

The school's work in School Improvement requires that the school consistently examine data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations. The accreditation self-study process's requirement for data analysis has therefore been of secondary concern to West Lake Junior High.

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?*

Teachers at West Lake consistently stated that the professional development program has been well organized and especially focused on student engagement. Many strategies have been taught, trained, or presented, but the time allowed for in-depth development has not been consistently provided.

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

The school is emerging in an organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess one identified DRSL. The SLAMS rubric has been agreed upon for writing. Additional school-wide scoring tools to specifically assess the identified DRSLs are recommended.

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?*

Staff members reported that they have been trained in providing clear learning and language objectives for each lesson. Many teachers are implementing this practice in their daily instruction. A desire to support student learning is also evident in the restructuring of the school day to implement the block schedule and an intervention period. However, the school is just beginning to fully utilize this intervention time, as it is perceived by many as being simply homework completion or recess time.

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 current administration is paying particular attention to student performance data to guide school improvement. School improvement consultants perform appraisals multiple times each year to advise the school in leadership decision-making.

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?*

Policies and operational procedures, as well as the allocation of resources support, the school's mission and beliefs. The Student Support Team (SST) works with the administration to develop policies and goals. Some perception data indicated that teacher collaboration and preparation time are poorly utilized.

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 current administration is emerging in the process of developing a trusting relationship regarding meaningful roles in the decision-making process. A concerted effort is being made to bring the community into the school through the Family Center and parent volunteers. Service projects are also a part of the connection with the community, though as yet these are mainly driven by the principal. The focus group identified improved collaboration in school decision-making as an area for growth. There appeared to be limited involvement by parent and students on the focus group teams.

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 school's counselors try to meet with students once per quarter to track social and academic needs. Grade-level teams meet frequently and target students to reach out to in order to provide extra assistance. A formal, school-wide system, such as consultation or advisory, does not exist. The Visiting Team found, however, that nearly every student questioned could identify a teacher he/she could approach if he/she were having challenges at home or school.

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 done a very responsible job of developing a comprehensive school improvement plan that has been regularly reviewed and revised, even amid the changing administration and external mandates of School Improvement. The work is well aligned with the other leadership and improvement efforts the school has been engaged in for the past five years.

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 has evolved in recent years from individualized professional development to school-wide targeted learning. The school district's initiatives to develop greater cultural sensitivity and relevance in instruction have guided recent professional growth. Programs such as REACH (Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage) and SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) have been the most recent areas of professional growth. Dr. Ed Javius provides Saturday workshops on engagement strategies and the adolescent brain.

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 revised school-wide action plans directly address the critical areas for follow-up. The targets, however, are very ambitious, as they are dictated by the School Improvement standards necessary for the school to make AYP. The Visiting Team is concerned that, while staff buy-in appears to be at a critical mass, the level of staff exhaustion and the resulting low morale of teachers are having a negative impact on the school climate.

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

Again, a supportive environment exists, but implementation of numerous interventions and the high-stakes climate of the school may prove to be too exhausting for substantial or sustained school change and continuous improvement.

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

The school has made significant improvement on using student data to be results oriented. Until the preparation for this visit began two years ago, little effort was made to implement and embed any of the DRSLs into the school's culture. Currently, the work with writing (SLAM) is being implemented school-wide. Academic achievement appears to have remained stable amid the growing instability of a significantly changed demographic, and this could be interpreted as growth.

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

Professional development has certainly been an emphasis for the staff at West Lake Junior High, even to the point of saturation. The staff would love more time to implement a few things more deeply into their practice, rather than continually learning about new innovations. The work on DRSLs was not an emphasis until the school began preparation for the Visiting Team visit, at which time the school-wide learning targets were redone with an emphasis on improving student writing (SLAMS).

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

West Lake Junior has worked to train its staff in similar strategies, including REACH, SIOP, Cornell Notes and the SLAM writing rubric, to build a working relationship and commonality between subject areas. The school has implemented team consultation times into schedule to help teachers plan cross-curricular activities and assignments. Language arts and social studies classes working on the same historical novel and science charting for a math concept are examples of cross-curricular projects.

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

West Lake Junior has reached out to business partners in the community to help provide rewards for excellence and improvement in student education. Community networks have provided resources for community engagement in the Family Center and in community service projects. West Lake Junior High has partnered with businesses such as Comcast in doing community service and raising money for school projects. These activities help students to see the connection between education and the community.

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

Elements of the accreditation self-study were shared with community and leaders, but there was very limited participation in creation of the self-study by parents and other stakeholders.

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

Information for parents and the community is sent out by use of phone trees and newsletters in both English and Spanish. West Lake Junior holds parent meetings, literacy night, and culture night, and the school works through the Family Outreach Center. The family center works with the school counseling center, trackers and secretaries to help contact families when needed, teach parents to use the grading system, and help them become involved in school activities as volunteers. The Community Council is working on bringing in more translators during PTC for a variety of different languages. West Lake also uses a translation program with its web site, so that parents and community can receive updated information in some of the languages present in the school.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends West Lake Junior High for active participation in change and school reform to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse learners who attend West Lake Junior High. Structural adjustments to the school day have been implemented to provide additional collaboration and consultation opportunities for teachers, as well as learning and directed learning interventions for students.

- The Visiting Team commends the significant investment that has been made to in professional development to improve practice. Common instructional practices (SIOP standards) for making explicit the content and language standards and student learning objectives are evident in most classrooms. A common writing rubric (SLAMS) is used to help all students develop effective communication (writing) skills.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school embrace the opportunity to meet the needs of the students and families of the West Lake Junior High community through further implementation of best practices in instruction and student intervention. The school should focus resources on strategically developing engaging classroom practices that are student-learning-centered (as opposed to teacher-centered), including the greater utilization of technology. West Lake should more fully develop a systematic Response to Intervention program grounded in respectful, nurturing, and caring relationships between students and staff.

- The Visiting Team recommends that West Lake Junior High utilize data at the school, teacher, student, and concept levels to prioritize professional development work. This effective use of student performance data (formative and summative) can direct the

implementation of programs and student learning interventions, including the refinement and implementation of the school-wide learning outcomes (DRSLs) over time.