

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Dorius Academy
2405 North 400 West
Layton, Utah 84041**

March 30, 2009



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

**Dorius Academy
2405 North 400 West
Layton, Utah 84041**

March 30, 2009

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

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

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

The evaluation, March 30, 2009, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Dorius 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 Principal Jesse Taylor is also commended.

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

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

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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*Board of Regents Appointments

** CMAC Representative Appointment

12/30/2008

DORIUS ACADEMY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dixie Evans.....Owner
James Hombs Member
Pam Scott Member

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Juanita McElroyUtah State Office of Rehabilitation
Mary L. Nay..... Department of Workforce Services
Travis Rawlins Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship
Bond & BondAttorneys at Law

DORIUS ACADEMY

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Dixie Evans..... Education Coordinator
Jesse Taylor.....Principal (Part-time)
James W. HombsPrincipal (Part-time)

Counseling

James W. HombsCounselor (Part-time)

Support Staff

None Listed

Faculty

Stanley Earl
James W. Hombs
Dan Mildon
Ronald Taylor

Note: The Dorius Academy Self-Study document notes several times in subject categories that “the school coordinates with teachers certified in _____.” No names are provided.

DORIUS ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Dorius Academy is to help at-risk individuals achieve success in meeting academic goals.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Each student has a unique learning style that affects educational needs.
- Students need to assume responsibility for their academic progress in order to become self directed learners.
- Students need to develop their thinking and reasoning skills in order to make logical choices.
- A safe and comfortable environment promotes student learning.
- Students should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches.
- All students deserve to be treated with respect, acceptance, trust, and encouragement.
- All people have the right and the responsibility to be educated.
- Every student can learn.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. **Responsible Citizenship:** Students take responsibility for personal actions by demonstrating appropriate behaviors conducive to learning in a school setting.

These behaviors include:

- 1) following directions,
- 2) treating teachers, staff, and peers with respect,
- 3) consistently completing assignments and improving grades,
- 4) demonstrating responsibility for learning,
- 5) seeking assistance when needed by using available resources and
- 6) asking questions for clarification.

2. **Effective Communication:** Students are effective communicators by demonstrating appropriate communication skills with peers and adults in the school setting.

These skills include:

- 1) demonstrating active listening skills,
- 2) consistently interacting with others in a respectful manner and
- 3) communicating assertively.

3. Lifelong Learning: Students use an array of learning strategies, personal skills and time management skills for reintegration to the regular school program, home, and community or, completion of the graduation requirements as set by the State of Utah.

Date of Visit: March 30, 2009

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ted P. Lovato, Accreditation Consultant, Utah State Office of
Education/Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, Chairperson

Dr. Laurie Brussow, Asst. Principal, Valley High School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

DORIUS ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Dorius Academy is a special purpose, nonprofit, private school located in the city of Layton, Utah. Dorius Academy provides tutoring and instruction to at-risk individuals who have struggled to find success in their academic endeavors. The challenges the students encounter result from suspension and dropping out of their home schools, court-ordered compliance, special needs, a need for full-time employment, teen parenthood, non-resident status, placement in residential treatment centers, and economic hardship.

Dorius attempts to structure programs to fit the needs of individual students possessing a wide array of learning styles, with the goal of having them return to their home schools to earn a high school diploma.

Dorius Academy considers itself a “collaborative program” and works with clients from the Division of Workforce Services, Division of Rehabilitation, Division of Child and Family Services, and Crossroads Residential Treatment Center for Boys, as well as private citizens. In addition, Dorius Academy services students who have formal IEPs and who qualify for the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education.

The school is located in an older, bungalow-style home that needs minor remodeling and upgrading, which would make the environment more pleasant and conducive to educational efforts and student learning. The school is located on a busy thoroughfare, across the street from Northridge High School of the Davis School District.

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

The school serves six different types of students coming from six different environments. The self-study shows that in 2008, 41 percent of students actually graduated from the program, 17 percent transferred back to home schools, and 42 percent continued enrollment at Dorius Academy.

The school's self-study also shows the breakdown of how students in each of the six groups being served did with their academic efforts. Furthermore, Dorius found that 56 percent of past students were working, 28 percent were enrolled in post secondary endeavors, and 16 percent could not be found for survey purposes.

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

- The school leadership must use the same procedures and standards as the NAAS and USOE (*Collaborating for Student Achievement*) require of all schools experiencing the accreditation process, thus assuring that the credits and/or diploma a student earns are the result of a quality learning experience. Furthermore, it is required that members of the school leadership team for accreditation attend and benefit from the valuable workshops provided by the USOE to ensure that Utah's school improvement model, *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, is used to facilitate the work of the accreditation school improvement process.
 - Furthermore, more academic growth data of various cohort groups must be in the self-study so the school can utilize the valuable data gleaned to improve planning, instructional design, and curriculum adjustments as needed. Dorius Academy should be able to gauge how students are learning, what they're learning, and the academic growth being made during their tenure at the school. The Visiting Team could find little or no evidence of this occurring.
- c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Dorius Academy leadership mistakenly used the old NAAS/USOE model (11 standards) to conduct their accreditation efforts and school improvement plan; therefore it was difficult for the Visiting Team to determine whether the self-study accurately reflected the school's current strengths and limitations. Perhaps in one year's time, a Visiting Team will be able to better assess this important finding.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Dorius Academy must develop assessment strategies to see how students are mastering the material in order to earn a quarter of high school credit and more. The data should be available in the next self-study and available for scrutiny by a Visiting Team. Dorius Academy must be able to show the amount of material learned in order for a student to earn credit.
- Focus group findings in the key seven areas of focus must be included in the next self-study.
- Departmental analysis must be conducted and the findings published in the next self-study document.
- An in-depth analysis of all teaching personnel used to award high school credit to students must be included in future self-studies. (This was not clearly defined in the self-study.) This includes whether they are full-time, part-time, consultant, or university student, and how much time they actually spend on direct instruction.

It must include all their certification credentials and, list endorsements they are qualified to teach in.

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

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

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

The mission of Dorius Academy is commendable. The mention of at-risk students in the mission statement is to be applauded since it appears to the Visiting Team that that is the targeted population served by Dorius Academy.

The values and beliefs are also commendable, and ask the students to be directly responsible for their own learning and behaviors associated with academic success.

The DRSLs are well stated, but are not finely defined and articulated in the action plan. The DRSLs, as defined in the current self-study, must be more interwoven into the school improvement efforts and action plan. The leadership team must also ask themselves if all DRSLs are measurable.

There was little evidence of a strong collaborative effort by the school community in the development of the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

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

As written in the self-study, school leaders believe that an essential component of the mission of Dorius Academy is to encourage students to take responsibility for their education and performance in the community/school setting and learn appropriate communication and behavioral skills. The beliefs seem to also be congruent over-all, with the third DRSL, that of being a Lifelong Learner.

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

The development of meaningful assessments to measure school progress directly associated with the three DRSLs should be a goal of all educational professionals

at Dorius. A stronger effort is needed. The three DRSLs are commendable and are targeted at the unique population Dorius Academy is currently serving; therefore, valid assessment of the DRSLs is critical to future school improvement.

- 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?*

It was obvious to the Visiting Team that the educators observed truly do care about the students and their success. They also show a great deal of empathy towards these students, who are genuinely at-risk of failure in school and in society in general. As written earlier, the school mission, beliefs and DRSLs are commendable, but it was hard to ascertain how involved **all** educators associated with Dorius Academy were with the development of these three important elements.

Curriculum:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The Visiting Team could not clearly ascertain the amount of staff collaboration to ensure a curriculum based on the standards. Although the lesson they observed was upbeat and engaging, it appeared to be presented by a single teacher—with others (including teachers, aides and administration) looking on but not participating.

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

After watching only one presentation, it is difficult to generalize overall curriculum. The Visiting Team observed a lesson that kept the class absorbed but was limited in scope as far as higher-order thinking skills and application to everyday life.

- 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 collaboration of the staff to support the responsible citizenship component of the DSRLs was evident as far as (1) following directions, (2) treating teachers, staff, and peers with respect and (3) consistently completing assignments.

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

The intended learning outcomes, as demonstrated by various assessments, were reported to be provided on a monthly basis for each student, but the Visiting Team did not see these reports and would like to see the specific content of these assessments to verify that each student has access to this information consistently in order for the students to chart their own progress.

Instruction:

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

The Visiting Team observed one lesson that incorporated class lecture, group work and individual assignments. The self-study did not show the variety of instructional strategies used by the many teachers listed as part-time.

- 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 strategies developed for instruction that build on the explicit DRSL in each classroom were only partially observed in that following directions, treating others with respect, demonstrating active listening skills, interacting in a respectful manner and communicating assertively were evident in the lesson the Visiting Team observed. However, demonstrating responsibility for learning, using an array of learning strategies, and time management for reintegration into a regular school program were not represented in any measurable manner.

- 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 administered pre-testing in the form of the WRAT. The UBSCT was administered to students in order to obtain a Utah diploma. Specific results of these tests would be useful for the Visiting Team to view on their next visit.

- 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 Dorius Academy report lays out in general terms that the in-service for the staff includes “best practices” and collaboration with administration and other service providers, but no specific, observable, measurable assessment strategies were demonstrated.

- 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 saw very little evidence that the Dorius Academy staff has implemented a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

Assessment:

The Visiting Team saw very little evidence of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DSRLs. Dorius Academy leadership, in the next Self-Study and school improvement phase needs to make this issue a high priority.

Because the Dorius Academy staff used the old accreditation model (11 standards) and were not updated on Utah's *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, it is difficult, at best, for the Visiting Team to evaluate the assessment program.

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

See above.

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

See above.

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

See above.

- 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?*

See above.

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

See above.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

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

In the Dorius Academy report in Standard VIII (old model) the administrative monitoring process is outlined. There is mention of “routine collection of information about the important aspects of the educational services provided; Periodic assessment of the collected information...; Opportunities provided to improve the education program...; Setting of daily academic goals recorded by staff; and report findings and conclusions gathered from educational monitoring.” The Visiting Team did not see physical evidence of these administrative tasks.

- 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 met with the administration, teachers, staff and residential treatment center owner to learn about the “decision making” involved with “student achievement and instructional effectiveness.” The collaboration among the different groups was evident. The school improvement plan showed evidence of some data-driven information for decision making for student progress. There was no solid research evident in the plan.

- 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 administration demonstrated a stewardship in assuring an implementation of the DRSLs in the specific areas of Responsible Citizenship and Effective Communication. The Lifelong Learning component could use some additional attention as far as guiding the teachers to further the use of personal time management of the students. The daily regime appears to be quite rigid, which helps the program run smoothly, but the Visiting Team questions whether it provides the needed self-discipline needed for reintegration into the traditional high school and society.

It was evident to the Visiting Team that even though there are two retired ex-administrators on the part-time staff, most key decisions seem to be driven by the current owner. This includes the development of the self-study and school improvement plan.

- 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 had the opportunity to meet with one teacher, staff members and the administration. There is a desired commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility by the three groups, but there is a feeling that the owner, who is very compassionate and caring to the enrolled students, is the key decision maker. More decision making and design of the educational program, for accountability purposes, must be afforded to the two administrators.

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

There is in the school improvement plan report a program description that states the modalities of Dorius Academy included small group and one-on-one instruction. The class the Visiting Team observed did not demonstrate the exact association of the students to the teachers as far as a “formal system” of student-staff relationship.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school’s NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

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

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah*

accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?

Dorius Academy did a nice job completing the School Improvement Plan Report, but did not use the most recent report form. Since the report form is an older version, there is not a specific category *Collaborating for Student Achievement*. The Visiting Team highly encourages that the Dorius Leadership Team attend the valuable training hosted by USOE on an annual basis, in order to become familiar with the current accreditation model used by all schools in Utah.

- 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 individuals in the school worked hard on building skills and working to improve their individual instruction. There was no ongoing professional development plan that was evident in Visiting Team on-site meetings or within the report.

- 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?*

Again, since the most up-to-date report form for the school improvement plan was not used, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the new/revised school-wide action plan effectiveness.

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

When the Visiting Team met with the teachers, administrators and staff, there appeared to be a very earnest effort by all to support change and continuous improvement. All personnel visited with appear to be highly committed and empathetic to their students.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

Considering the kind of facility Dorius Academy is—a school for students both within and outside of Utah, and one in which the students are not at liberty to

move freely outside of the school or living facility—the Community Building component of the survey does not seem to be applicable.

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

Dorius Academy is a collaborative program that functions as the education component of students in area Residential Treatment Center(s), clients with the Division of Workforce Services, Division of Rehabilitation, and the Division of Child and Family Services, and with drop-in private clients.

As mentioned previously, a strong effort to measure the accurate academic achievement of students, in various cohort groups, must be a high priority and used as evidence in the next on-site visit by the USOE/NAAS Visiting Team. In addition, accurate records of students' IEPs must be kept and personnel identified on who services the IEPs.

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

See above.

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

The Visiting Team found very little evidence that this occurs, but it is assumed that, due to the partnerships listed in 5b above, school improvement efforts and student achievement documentation are critical for the continuation of the partnerships.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the Dorius Academy personnel for their efforts on behalf of at-risk students who have had negative experiences with past educational endeavors. The staff shows a genuine care and appreciation for the students and attempts to individualize the program to meet the needs of the individual student.
- The Visiting Team commends Dorius Academy for hiring two competent retired educators to serve as the building principals in the operation of two programs.

Perhaps they could spend more time at the school than they currently do and become more involved with key decisions which could contribute to overall school quality.

- The Visiting Team commends Dorius Academy for the partnerships created with Crossroads RTC, Division of Workforce Services, Division of Rehabilitation, the Division of Child and Family Services and the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship Program in providing individualized educational programs. The Visiting Team encourages all parties involved in the partnerships to strive to provide, and be accountable, for the best education possible for these at-risk students.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Dorius Academy leaders use the same procedures and standards that the USOE and NAAS require of all schools experiencing the accreditation process, thus assuring that the credits and/or diploma a student earns are the result of a quality learning experience. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that members of the school leadership team for accreditation attend and benefit from the valuable workshops provided by the USOE to ensure that Utah's school improvement model, *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, is used to facilitate the work of the accreditation school improvement process.
- The Visiting Team recommends that all educators employed by Dorius Academy endeavor to deliver total content in a course of study recognized in the Utah Core Curriculum and hold students accountable for meeting mastery, in order to receive credit for the course and be applicable towards the high school diploma.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Dorius Academy engage all educators working in all aspects of the educational program to be involved in the development of meaningful assessments to measure school progress directly associated with the three DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school leadership develop focus groups to gauge the overall effectiveness of the program.
- The Visiting Team recommends that, in the next accreditation cycle, meaningful departmental analysis be a significant part of the self-study.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the owner(s) of Dorius Academy improve the physical appearance of the home that currently houses Dorius Academy in order to create a physical environment that is not only pleasing for students and teachers, but lends to the overall learning climate of the school.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Dorius Academy work toward developing a meaningful and viable library collection for student use.