

# **Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Summary Report**

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS  
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**FOR**

**DEVELOPING VIRTUE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**2001 Talmage Road**

**Ukiah, CA 95482**

**April 1-3, 2019**

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## **Visiting Committee Members**

Janine Harrington, Chair

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## SUMMARY

Developing Virtue Secondary School is located in the Ukiah valley and is situated on the grounds of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, a large Buddhist training monastery and international community. The school educates boys and girls separately to create an environment conducive to academic and personal growth. Each division has its own classrooms, sports facilities, library, computer lab, and visual and performing arts rooms. The schools share in the use of the main ceremonial hall, community kitchen, and dining hall. Also located on the campus are a monastery, a convent, the Dharma Realm Buddhist University and library, a vegetarian restaurant, an organic farm, and a senior center.

Student enrollment has been affected due to the COVID pandemic. In 2020-2021 there were 60 students attending, and in 2021-22 the number dropped to 47. Families outside of Ukiah were concerned about the health and safety of their students and opted to have their children attend schools closer to home. During the 2020-2021 school year many of DVSS's classes were offered online due to the COVID pandemic. Many overseas students decided to remain in their home countries and attend school online. Only the girls' dormitory was open with a reduced capacity. During the 2021-2022 school year classes are now offered in-person. Attendance has remained stable for the past few years. The Education Board has made COVID 19 vaccinations required for teachers, staff, and students 12 years and above.

The school's parent organization, Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (DRBA), is committed to ensuring an adequate financial base for the operation and stability of DVSS. The school's facilities are provided by DRBA, and the Board of Directors approves the budget each year.

The school has adopted Common Core Standards for math and reading. 90% of students take at least one AP class, and the data shows that for the past five years 80-90% of DVSS students scored a 3 or above on AP tests.

Sophomores take the regular PSAT, 8th and 9th grade students take the newly established PSAT 8/9 test, all students take the PSAT during their junior year, and nearly all seniors take the SAT at least once before they graduate. All students take the PSAT/NMSQT in their freshmen, sophomore, and junior years. DVSS students have scored over the 80th percentile in both math and English for the past three years. Students for the past five years have an average SAT score that is 300 points above the national average. DVSS has a 100% college bound student body, and all graduating students for the past ten years have been accepted into UC, CSU, and private colleges and universities.

There were several significant changes that occurred since the last self-study. Most significantly the staff implemented hybrid learning in 2019 and learned how to use many technology tools to support student learning. SEL activities were prioritized for all students during this time and were continued as students came back to the campus for in-person learning.

The school board approved a grant that allows teachers to obtain their teaching credential and the board continues to provide incremental remuneration and benefits to teachers. DVSS also received the EANS I grant. 50% of the proceeds were spent on HEPA filters and technology. The additional 50% will be spent on teacher development.

DVSS has added additional AP and UC approved courses in mathematics, Chinese, government, world history, art history, and computer science. The mathematics department developed a textbook adoption process and adopted the Envision math series. English and mathematics teachers are piloting a benchmark process focusing on aligning writing and math skills to Common Core Standards.

The school building has been remodeled with paint, new flooring, and restroom upgrades. Non-touch water filters are now available, and HVAC upgrades are in place.

DVSS has reviewed school progress each January and May since 2019. Progress on the action plans are discussed, and modifications are made at this time. The mid-cycle report was written by the leadership team and was reviewed by teachers, staff, and student council members at in-service meetings. Parents and Education Board members also reviewed the draft and provided input. A final draft was given to stakeholders for feedback and approval.

## **Action Plans**

Action Plan One is focused on recruiting, mentoring, and assessing volunteer and salaried teacher/staff. The administration and staff will collaboratively develop a comprehensive plan for teacher evaluation of the whole teacher; improve the teacher volunteer program; and provide support for long-term volunteers and salaried teachers.

Action Plan Two will provide teachers with professional development. The administration will organize training in project-based learning and gauge the effectiveness of teacher and staff professional development.

Action Plan Three continued to align student services, activities, and opportunities to support student achievement with the ESLRs. Staff will review CCSS and AP curriculum articulations; form curricular work groups for schoolwide systematic ESLR assessments; and promote, monitor, and improve student wellness.

Action Plan Four improves procedures to collect, analyze, and communicate student and alumni interviews/focus group data; review science laboratory and identify needs; and review technology infrastructure and identify needs.

Action Plan Five engages all stakeholders in the review the Character Education (CE) framework; develop character education curriculum and co-curricular assessment; and start the process of assessing the work that has been done in implementing the curriculum and the early stages of creating a comprehensive Character Education framework.

DVSS has made consistent progress on their action plans during the past several years. There were several critical areas for follow-up that have been addressed.

1. Teachers should use standards to assess learning and for daily, monthly, and yearly planning in order to assess student learning.

The teachers submit a syllabus with course pacing yearly. Departments set benchmarks twice each year.

2. The leadership team and teachers should continue to write and implement a teacher evaluation tool.

The staff voted to adopt the Danielson teacher evaluation model in 2021-2022, and the staff received in-service training to familiarize them with the outcomes. There will be a two year evaluation cycle which began in Fall 2021. Mentor teachers will be assigned to provide feedback and support the reflective process and goal setting for evaluated teachers.

3. The teachers need to formally align the standards to the ESLRs in order to monitor student academic achievement.

Each semester teachers submit ESLR work to their department. At the end of the year the departments submit an overview of this work to the administration. Each year the school will hold an ESLR Museum for teachers, students, and parents. The museum will feature student work in a variety of creative mediums which align to the ESLRs.

4. Teachers should continue to implement a variety of teaching strategies in their classrooms to promote academic growth.

The school provides inservice opportunities for teachers which focus on topics such as differentiated instruction, the Danielson Teaching Framework, formative assessments, technology tools and their uses, and social emotional learning. The staff also continue to take professional development courses which support the refinement of teaching strategies. Teachers have adapted to remote learning, hybrid learning, and working with smaller than usual class sizes through COVID-19 requirements. In addition, the school board reaffirmed a program that enables teachers to obtain a teaching credential through a school grant.

5. The Eight Core Values should be intentionally embedded in the formal curriculum by the teachers so that students in the 21st century become good citizens.

This is a continual focus for staff and students as they integrate the Eight Core Values into school curriculum and extra-curricular activities. These values will also be a part of the school's SEL focus now and in the future.

6. The leadership team should evaluate an online grading program to ensure students and parents have access to grades throughout the year.

The school adopted Gradelink, which allows students and families to access grades online. The expanded functions of this SIS are still being explored.

7. The leadership team, along with the security officer, should continue to evaluate safety and security practices.

The school has developed an Emergency Plan, holds fire and earthquake drills each semester, and has introduced a lockdown procedure for student safety.

8. The leadership team should evaluate a streamlined system for communication from the school and consistency in that messaging.

Improving communication is an on-going process, and the staff relies on Gradelink and the school's website to provide communication to families and students.

9. The leadership team should consider consistency in implementation of programming between girls and boys sections in regard to student support services.

The school leadership team meets regularly to share resources and consider consistency between the girls and boys sections of the school. The student council leaders are encouraged to be a part of the planning process, and student suggestions and requests for curriculum and extra-curricular activities are valued and taken into consideration.

### **Schoolwide Strengths**

1. DVSS has developed a cohesive and inclusive community focused on the Eight Core Virtues of the school. The school is supported by paid and volunteer staff, alumni, and members of the Buddhist community.
2. The parent organization, Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, is committed to ensuring an adequate financial base for the operation and stability of DVSS.
3. DVSS provides a wide variety of student services (i.e. daily hot vegetarian lunch; health clinic, counseling, academic tutoring, transportation for school activities), many of which are staffed by volunteers and do not require additional funding.
4. Students have opportunities to develop leadership skills by being involved in the Associated Student Council. The students feel they have a voice in school decision making.

5. The teachers and staff were supported with mental health and wellness practices during remote learning.
6. All students are college bound and are prepared for further education after high school graduation through rigorous course offerings.

### **Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement**

1. Students will continue to grow in their learning, inside and outside the classroom, and to be life-long learners through 2-3 school-wide challenges per year. Success will be seen by the end of the school year with 80% student participation in at least one challenge.
2. Students will continue to apply their learning to solve real world issues and challenges through their enrollment in fieldwork and internships in Mendocino County and/or beyond. Additional advisory support will be provided by DVSS teachers and alumni. Success will be seen with at least 80% of seniors actively enrolled in at least 10 hours of a real-life emulating experience during the school year and/or their junior to senior year summer break.
3. Students will continue to develop intrinsic motivation and curiosity through their engagement in the DVSS spiritual and social emotional curriculums. Success will be shown by the end of each academic year through student work produced by at least 80% of the student body, reflecting on their life-long journey. Work can be displayed via multiple mediums.

### **Additional Areas for Growth**

1. The administration should develop and provide continued support systems with counseling and wellness for students in post-COVID environments.
2. The administration and staff should develop opportunities and experiences for vertical interaction with all age levels to strengthen bonding among the students. These experiences should include field trips, field work, sports programs, community events, etc.
3. The administration should look for additional opportunities to market the school to local and international students in order to increase student enrollment.