

**SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**FOR**

**DEVELOPING VIRTUE SECONDARY  
SCHOOL**

**2001 Talmage Road**

**Ukiah, CA 95482**

**April 22-April 25, 2007**

**Visiting Committee Members**

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## Chapter I: Student/Community Profile

Developing Virtue Secondary School (DVS) was established twenty-five years ago in 1981 by the Buddhist Triptaka Master Hsuan Hua. The school is located within the grounds of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB), a 488-acre Buddhist monastery and international community in the rural outskirts of Ukiah.

Developing Virtue Secondary School educates boys and girls separately, creating an environment conducive to academic and personal growth. The boys' division is housed in a two-story building, and the girls' division is housed in two two-story buildings. Each division has its own library and computer lab, and shares a science lab and a visual and performing arts complex that includes an art studio and an art gallery/music practice room. Each division has its own outdoor basketball court and athletic field. The schools share in the use of the main ceremonial hall, community kitchen and dining hall (although boys and girls dine separately), and Daoyuan Lecture Hall. The campus also houses a monastery, a convent, Dharma Realm Buddhist University, a university library, a vegetarian restaurant, an organic farm, a senior center, a bookstore, and residences for families and boarding students. With landscaping originally designed by Luther Burbank, the scenic campus abounds with myriad varieties of trees and native plants and includes a pine forest, a creek, and a wetland, making it home to a diverse population of birds and wildlife. Peacocks abound. Surrounded by mountains and farmland, the clean air and landscape of Mendocino County provide an ideal environment for fellowship and study.

The enrollment of the secondary school in the fall of 2006 was 34 girls and 33 boys for a total of 67 students. The student enrollment has increased from 43 to 67 students over the past three years. The dormitory facilities currently limit the capacity of the school's enrollment. Approximately 66% of the boys and 80% of the girls board at the school and live in the community of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

The demographics of the student body are:

**Fall 2006 Students by Gender/Ethnicity**

	Boys		Girls	
Asian/Asian-American	88%	29	71%	25
European-American	9%	3	23%	8
Latino	3%	1	3%	1

The students at DVS are overwhelmingly Asian/Asian American. The fall 2006 students come from nine different countries so in that sense there is diversity in the student body. In the greater CTTB community, there is an even greater diversity of people brought together by their underlying Buddhist beliefs.

As of January 2007, 21 of the 67 students are English Language Learners. 50% are boys and 50% are girls, all placing in the school's second and third level classes. To date in school year 2006-2007, seven students have been mainstreamed and have exited to regular or Transition English classes.

This year there are eleven girls receiving Title 1 services in English and three in mathematics. There are nine boys receiving Title 1 services in English and two in math. These numbers have been fairly consistent since 2004.

There are a large number of extra-curricular activities for so small a school. In addition to attending an average of six academic classes (English, math, history, science, Chinese, Buddhist studies/World Religion) students participate in an average of four co-curricular activities.

All of the DVS students take Mandarin Chinese. Most graduates of the school speak, read and write Mandarin Chinese, and gain an appreciation of Chinese traditions, culture, and literature through their study of the language. Even though DVS is a small school, a measure of the strength of the Chinese department is that most years it has one or two teams winning the right to compete nationally in the Chinese culture competition. Selected students participate in Chinese contests in which they have placed well in local, regional and national contests.

Year	Chinese Contests	Chinese Culture	Lions Club Speech
2006-2007	1 <sup>st</sup> Extemporaneous Speech	Held in May	1 <sup>st</sup> Local

Year	Chinese Contests	Chinese Culture	Lions Club Speech
	1 <sup>st</sup> Translation 1 <sup>st</sup> Essay		
2005-2006	2 <sup>nd</sup> Calligraphy 2 <sup>nd</sup> Writing 3 <sup>rd</sup> Writing 3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaking	4 <sup>th</sup> Regional 5 <sup>th</sup> National	1 <sup>st</sup> Local
2004-2005	1 <sup>st</sup> Translation 1 <sup>st</sup> Calligraphy 3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaking	2 <sup>nd</sup> Regional 4 <sup>th</sup> Regional	1 <sup>st</sup> Local
2003-2004	1 <sup>st</sup> Writing 3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaking	1 <sup>st</sup> Regional 2 <sup>nd</sup> Regional 3 <sup>rd</sup> National 4 <sup>th</sup> National	1 <sup>st</sup> Local 1 <sup>st</sup> Regional

Students also participate in athletics, performing arts, visual arts, leadership and student government. There are eleven student clubs for girls and ten for boys.

Standardized testing has been conducted yearly using the Iowa Test of Educational Development which has yielded somewhat inconclusive data from the small number of students. The past four years of the tests do, however, show students have improved in math, but stay relatively constant in their reading scores. The staff uses the test primarily to assess individual student strengths and areas that need improvement. The school plans to begin using the ACT for all freshmen, sophomores and juniors. They will use the tests to determine which students need tutoring and to help students make college plans.

Remarkably, 100% of the DVS students take the PSAT and SAT exams. The students score higher than the national average for college-bound seniors on the math portion of the SAT, but for the previous past two years scored lower on the verbal, perhaps due to the high number of non-native English speakers testing. Nonetheless, the 2006 SAT verbal scores are higher than the national average. For the one year of data on the writing test, the DVS students scored 518, compared to the national average of 497.

**SAT Score Averages**

	National Verbal	DVS Verbal	DVS Std Dev	National Math	DVS Math	DVS Std Dev	National Writing	DVS Writing	DVS Std

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									Dev
2006	503	518	127	518	614	70	497	518	157
2005	508	479	156	520	551	111	n/a	n/a	n/a
2004	508	503	121	518	581	68	n/a	n/a	n/a

There are 42 faculty members that consist of monastic and lay members of Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, as well as teachers and professionals from eight countries, who create a stimulating learning environment through a blend of Western and Eastern teaching philosophies and methods. 62% of the faculty are Asian, and 36% are European or European-American. The average teaching experience of the faculty is 13.5 years with an average of seven years of service at Developing Virtue School. 33% of the faculty have taught at Developing Virtue for 10 or more years. 43% hold master's degrees and 10% hold doctoral degrees. 76% of the faculty are volunteer teachers, who receive free room and board, medical insurance, free tuition for their school-age children, professional development (through regular in-service training, teacher workshops, continuing education through Dharma Realm Buddhist University's Buddhist Education program or other university courses), and possibly a small stipend. Since most teachers live on campus, interaction between teachers and students does not stop in the classroom. Teachers work as coaches, sponsors for clubs and advisors to students, and frequently interact with students at meals and community events.

Per student expenditures have increased from \$2,421 in 2002/2003 to \$3,093 with some fluctuation due to an increase in staff and accreditation costs. The tuition has also increased during that time from \$1,500 to \$2,500. The school offers the following student services, many of which are provided by volunteers with little or no funding associated with them: daily hot vegetarian lunch service, issuance of student visas for international students, health clinic, health and psychological counseling referral services, career and college counseling, personal counseling, academic tutoring, transportation for school activities and boarding students (e.g. when students need to attend courses at Mendocino College or take SAT/ACT tests).

The enrollment has increased from 43 students to 67 students. This increase in population is accompanied by increased per student expenditures. Except for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006, roughly half of the budget of the school is from donations.

The school has an active PTO. Parents generate significant support for the school in terms of volunteer hours, donations, sponsoring gatherings and fieldtrips, driving students to athletic events, etc. They publish a parent newsletter and help with school facility maintenance on monthly work days.

Given that such a high percentage of the students are boarders, student attendance is predictably high, although the self-study indicates that there has been an improvement in the boys' attendance from 95% in 2002/2003 to 99% in 2006/2007.

Overall, the school has high expectations for student conduct and teaches students to live a healthy and mindful lifestyle. Character development is identified as the main focus of the school and comprises three of the four ESLRs. The school and staff have high expectations for students academically as well. Students at DVS all learn Chinese as a second language, while the ELD students focus on the acquisition of English.

100% of the 80 DVS graduates are either attending or have attended a four year or community college.

## **Chapter II: Progress Report**

### **Summary of Progress on the Recommendations Made in 2004**

Developing Virtue Secondary School organized faculty, staff, and administrators into five committees to work on the initial visit report recommendations and involved the Board of Education and the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Board of Directors.

- 1. The Board and DRBA explore ways to provide improved science lab facilities and materials and to upgrade the school's ability to better utilize technology in support of DVS purposes.**

Since 2004 DVS has brought on new volunteers and staff to address technology and science needs. In addition, DVS has made significant progress expanding its science lab and technology facilities with numerous equipment additions, teaching enhancements, the laying of cable conduit and the purchase of optical cable for Ethernet and Internet connection throughout the campus and coordination of all computer resources and the purchase of classroom digital projectors and other technical enhancements for learning and improving the preparation of students for the modern world.

- 2. DVS give further consideration to means by which the important balance between structure and personal freedoms can be achieved to best promote student social, emotional and spiritual growth.**

DVS has expanded co-curricular activities and student-parent-faculty communication and involvement to include such activities as joint student-faculty-parent field trips to San Francisco, art and science centers, local outings and camping/sleep-over expeditions to Marin Headlands. The Associated Student Body (ASB) has expanded its programs and involvements in both the boys' and girls' divisions, with the creation of a boys' division Newsletter and an SAT/ACT Club, Leadership Council, and leadership development programs.

**3. DVS staff develop a plan to more effectively address the needs of English Language Learners.**

From 2004 through 2007, DVS has planned and implemented a more comprehensive ELD program, in conformance with California State ELD Standards. The school has added new staff who have, in turn, brought new materials and methodologies to the program as well.

**4. School administration and teaching staff collaborate in upgrading both the English and Chinese libraries, including the provision of an adequate system for tracking and inventorying collections.**

The Chinese and English libraries have increased their volunteer base and made significant upgrades, including cataloging and tracking, and increasing new materials to the collections.

**5. The DVS Board and Administration find ways to enhance the present facilities utilized for physical education and the variety of extracurricular programs that have become an integral part of DVS curriculum.**

Major improvements have been made in facilities for co-curricular programs, including expanding the art gallery space into a multi-functional rehearsal and performance space as well as gallery exhibition. Co-curricular piano lessons/classes for both the boys' and girls' divisions are offered in the art gallery facility. The girls' drama and Chinese dance classes now have use of a multipurpose meditation hall/rehearsal room in the high school and indoors gym room in the girls' dorm has been made available for a variety of athletic and co-curricular activities including dance and drama. A girls' soccer field has been newly seeded and installed with irrigation. A *Facilities Master Plan* for the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is in development. It provides for soccer fields, running tracks, and a gymnasium for physical education. This recommendation has been completed, with

the exception of PE facilities. PE and all future facilities are covered by the *Facilities Master Plan*.

**Discuss how the school through its action plan has accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning.**

The school has made good progress increasing student access to computers. Students are able to apply up to date technology in science classrooms and teachers are incorporating technology into assignments.

Student participation in student government has given students more of a voice in the school. The girls' division had a student council, but the boys' Associated Student Council (ASC) was begun after the initial visit. There is also an Associated Student Body (ASB). The students have been given the opportunity to provide more input and have accepted the responsibility that accompanies this freedom. New clubs have been added and students have organized several major retreats.

The ELD program has been created and implemented. Students are now systematically assessed and placed in ELD 1, 2 or 3 levels, which correspond to "beginning, intermediate and advanced" respectively, on CA state ELD standards. Curriculum has been developed and ELD teachers have been trained. Students are placed in sheltered content area classes as well as receiving targeted English instruction.

Students now have access to more than 500 new books in their libraries. Organizing and acquiring books for the libraries has allowed teachers to create assignments that use the library resources.

Students now have an orchestra rehearsal and performance space and an art gallery space. Drama and Chinese dance students have a multipurpose room and yoga has been added to the curriculum.

### **Chapter III: Self-Study Process**

- **The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement.**

It is clear that the entire staff was deeply involved in the self-study, and, indeed, that the very process of the self-study initiated change within the school. It is not apparent that the students were closely involved in the process; the leadership

reports that students conferred with their counselors or core teachers, but rarely, if ever, attended significant meetings. Parents are involved in the life of the school, many times, through volunteer efforts and it is clear that these parents and the PTO organization were engaged in the self-study process. In many ways DVS is in a unique position, since some parents are not in the country, and, logically, it is doubtful they were involved. The self-study mentions that individuals were trained to be participants in the self-study, worked effectively in group meetings, including parent meetings, and collaborated on the final report.

- **The clarification of the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results**

The administration and faculty worked in committees to review the ESLR's of the school. Members of the committees drew from Master Hsuan Hua's writings of education and schools. Parents, students and faculty were interviewed and asked their ideas and expectations about learning and studying at the school. Six different versions were written and then approved by the DRBA Board of Education in December of 2003.

- **The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria**

While the school expertly incorporates its ESLRs into its curriculum and daily life, and has high academic expectations, there is not a large amount of evidence that indicates that the specific WASC criteria, as opposed to standards and other external guidelines, were thoroughly examined as part of this process. One indicator of this is the fact that the school's self-study contained very few key issues indicated for improvement.

The self-study did reflect the school's program. Each teacher also compiled course outcomes, methodologies and a wide range of student work which did an excellent job of illustrating how the sample assignments and ESLRs interrelated.

- **The development of a schoolwide action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs**

Multiple Action Plans were developed as a result of the self-study, but were directed at different audiences and were not incorporated, initially, in a cohesive self-study Action Plan.

The school is working to integrate these various plans and to address their self-identified needs in a reworked Action Plan.

- **The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan**

This, too, is a significant facet of the school's reworking of their original Action Plan. The committee feels sure that the school leadership has the will, vision, and capacity to implement their upcoming plan, following the process outlined for the original Action Plan.

## **Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program**

### **CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

#### **A1 School Purpose Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**has the school established a clear statement of purpose that reflect the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?**

Developing Virtue School has developed a clear statement of purpose that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the school. The founder, Venerable Master Hua, started the school to promote ethical education. The school's mission statement was deemed "extremely well articulated" in the WASC initial visit report.

*"Our Buddhist school, in partnership with parents, works to instill and develop in our students the core virtues of kindness, filial piety, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship. We provide an environment for our students to achieve their full academic potential and become outstanding citizens, who contribute to making our world a better place."*

The school's mission statement is in alignment with the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association's (DRBA) Articles of Incorporation.

Parents enroll their students in the school because of the philosophy and emphasis on character development and academic excellence. The staff of the school chooses to work at the school because of the school's purpose and mission.

**is the purpose defined further by adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student?**

DVS further defines its mission statement with its ESLRs:

Students are expected..

1. To manifest the eight core virtues (of Buddhism)
2. To gain an appreciation of their own spiritual wisdom
3. To explore and develop their academic potential and talents in the humanities, sciences or arts
4. To express a global awareness and appreciate various cultures and religions.

The ESLRs are well articulated to the students, parents, faculty, staff and administrators. The mission statement and the ESLRs are prominently displayed and published on the web-site, Parent-Student and Faculty Handbook and the school brochure. The ESLRs are further articulated in the curriculum and instruction of the school.

## **A2. Governance Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the governing authority adopt policies which are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school?**

The DRBA Board of Director created the DRBA Board of Education to oversee operation of the school and provide an Education Advisory to assist the Board.

One of the duties of the DRBA Board of Education is to "adopt policies which are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results for the school." The members of the DRBA Board of Education embody the values in the school purpose and ESLRs and participate in their development and regular review.

The policies and procedures for the school and the DRBA Board of Education are clearly documented in the Faculty Handbook and Parent-Student Handbook, and support the school purpose and ESLRs. Being a small but growing school, the school develops new policies on an as-needed basis, receiving input from school leadership and faculty.

**does the governing authority delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?**

The Faculty Handbook empowers the professional staff to carry out the policies developed by the Board of Education. The principal's job description includes a duty to implement goals and policies created by the DRBA Board. Finally, the teaching staff is charged

with designing and implementing a curriculum that enables the students to achieve the ESLRs.

**does the governing authority monitor results?**

The DVS presents an Annual Report to the DRBA Board of Education and keeps the board apprised of the school's progress at monthly meetings.

**A3. School Leadership Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school leadership make decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?**

The principals and administrators of the school work with teachers to design classroom assignments and assessments that integrate the ESLRs, as evidenced by class portfolios. The leadership of the school reviews the school's action plans semiannually and updates the plans annually. The Character Education Council was established by the school leadership. A Character Education Action Plan (CEAP) was created and is used to guide the teaching staff in teaching the ESLRs. The learning environment beyond the classroom is designed by the school leadership to assist students in achieving the ESLRs, as evidenced by the community service and community celebrations presented by the school.

**does the school leadership empower the staff?**

Teachers were participants in the writing of the Schoolwide Action Plan, Professional Development Plan, Technology Plan and Character Education Action Plan. They met on a monthly basis to share best practices and student issues. They participate in peer observations to share best practices. Teachers are empowered to teach students their curriculum following the UC "a-g" approved courses of study and the ESLRs.

**does the school leadership encourage commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning?**

Teachers spend time in faculty meetings discussing student performance and techniques to help them learn. Many teachers tutor students after class or supervise evening study halls.

**A4. Staff Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**are the school leadership and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?**

The principals of the boys' and girls' divisions of Developing Virtue Secondary School both have graduate degrees and have been teaching and administering for many years.

40% of the teaching staff has masters degrees and 10% has doctorates. Those teaching out of their major or minor areas have many years of professional experience in the areas they teach.

**are the school leadership and staff committed to the school's purpose?**

Three quarters of the teachers are volunteers who live and practice in the community, embodying ethical and spiritual values in their daily actions and way of life. Others, who receive a minimal salary and live in the greater community, support the mission and values of the school. They teach here not because they can make a good living, but because they feel they can truly make a difference in students' lives, and thus influence the world positively.

**does the school leadership and staff engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning?**

The staff is engaged in varying degrees of ongoing professional development. The entire staff regularly attends in-services scheduled on teacher work days. The school regularly updates the Professional Development Plan, providing training, workshops, and classes to help teachers improve their ability to teach all four aspects of the ESLRs: character, spirituality, academics, and global awareness. Professional development may also focus on teaching basic academic and study skills needed for college, critical thinking skills and the development of creativity. The Buddhist Education program of Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) offers courses every semester based on the needs of the teachers.

**A5. School Environment Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose?**

One of the main reasons that students and parents choose Developing Virtue Secondary School is that it offers a unique high school experience found nowhere else in this country and possibly the world, namely a school that is free from violence, gangs, drugs, sexual promiscuity, and other unwholesome

distractions such as TV, advertising, computer games, and media entertainment. Its wholesome environment is due in part to the fact that DVS is located in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, a Buddhist monastic community, in which people from many countries, cultures, and walks of life model simple living, vegetarianism, compassion, and high ethical standards. The atmosphere is like that of a large family or a small community, with most teachers living on campus together with boarding students. Being situated inside the monastic grounds, the school is secluded from the city of Ukiah with its traffic (the speed limit on campus is 15 mph), and its noise. Although parts of the campus are open to the public, the administration office keeps track of visitors.

Student surveys and interviews reveal that personal wellness is stressed in the school and community. Staff is trained in First Aid/CPR and fire and earthquake drills are conducted periodically. The school has an upgraded fire alarm system. The school requires that students meet California state medical requirements and students must produce proof of insurance before registering. Consent-for-emergency-treatment forms are required.

**is the school environment characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?**

The World Religion course is a graduation requirement and promotes acceptance of others regardless of background, race, religion or physical appearance. The school's Ten Year Plan includes exchanges with international schools. The Parent-Student Handbooks and ASC minutes indicate that students are trusted to follow rules and to plan the annual Honoring Elders' Day and Cherishing Youth Day Celebrations.

Students wear uniforms and teachers dress neatly and modestly. There is a Faculty Code of Ethics that addresses expectations for teachers and confidentiality.

There are high expectations for students and students are supported by teachers well beyond the school hours.

**A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected schoolwide learning results?**

There are annual assessments using Iowa Tests and 100% of students take the PSATs and SATs. Classroom assessments occur weekly and measure ESLRs because they are integrated into the curriculum. Report cards are issued four times a year and there

are interim progress reports for students who are not working up to their potential. Twice a year there are parent-student-teacher conferences, which may include dormitory supervisors or resident aides if parents live out of the USA.

**does the school leadership and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?**

Progress is reported to parents, students, dormitory supervisors and members of the larger community who are involved with students of DVS. Within the school itself, because of its small size, communication is constant but informal.

**A7. School Improvement Process Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school leadership facilitate school improvement which is driven by plans of action that will enhance quality learning for all students?**

Developing Virtue Secondary School leadership maintains positive control over school improvements through assignment of responsibilities, regular status reports, semiannual reviews of progress, resource or schedule corrections based on plan deviations, and annual reports of progress to the governing body.

**does the school leadership have school community support and involvement?**

The DVS leadership involves all stakeholders in school improvement. Newsletters, ASB clubs, PTO's have projects for school improvement. The semiannual review process involves stakeholders. Throughout the self-study process, the various stakeholder groups were involved and gave input and feedback.

**does the school leadership effectively guide the work of the school?**

School leadership provides the appropriate framework and guidance for the accomplishment of school objectives. For a small school, preparation of a Self-Study for WASC represents a major effort. The school leadership effectively guided the work being accomplished by all stakeholders and submitted the Self-Study six weeks before the visit.

**does the school leadership provide for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan?**

Principals of the separate divisions report that they reviewed progress on the WASC initial visit recommendations monthly. In-depth reviews are held at the completion of a milestone, for example the completion of an assessment of what students learn. School leadership also reviews school progress semiannually with the Board of Education.

**Areas of Strength for Organization for Student Learning Category** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- **The school embodies and communicates its mission clearly and consistently and represents its values through well-defined goals in its ESLRs.**
- The school's governance structure - the Board of Education and the Advisory Board - takes full responsibility for, is committed to, and involved in support of the mission and in providing resources for the ESLRs.
- The school's leadership serves everyone in the school as exemplary educators, focusing their energies and talents on supporting teaching and learning.
- The teachers are treated as professionals in their teaching areas and empowered through the community's deeply shared values to work closely and supportively with their students, serving as role models and willing to work intensively with students in and out of the classroom.
- All levels of school operation have contributed to creating a safe, healthy learning environment.
- Students are nurtured and supported, given opportunities for leadership in a context of mutual respect and kindness.
- The high behavior standards that constitute the framework for character education apply to everyone in the community and create a culture fully consistent with the school's ESLRs.

**Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- The work already started to integrate the ESLR's into the curriculum should be invigorated by focused professional development and opportunities for staff to meet within and across disciplines.
- **The profile data that the school has started to collect should be pursued more deeply and more consistently and**

**given the regular attention and analysis that will prove critical to the school's intentional development and its ability to inform and attract prospective students.**

- As the school continues its reliance on volunteers, the governors and leaders should give close consideration to mentoring and supporting them and bringing into the school qualified, more fully compensated faculty to meet the school's growth and development.
- The school's governance and leadership should make commitment to professional development a high priority, including the effective incorporation and training of part-time, full-time and volunteer staff members.
- The school's administration should establish a formal procedure and schedule for collaborative meetings to address the school's Action Plans, improvement processes, and ongoing issues as they arise.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

1. WASC Initial visit report
2. DRBA Mission Statement and Articles of Incorporation
3. Faculty Handbook
4. Website
5. Parent-Student Handbook
6. Annual Reports
7. Board of Education, faculty and department meeting minutes
8. Interviews
9. Peer Observation Forms
10. Professional Development and Ten Year Plans
11. SCCP survey
12. Financial records

## **CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

### **B1. What Students Learn Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school provide a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected**

**schoolwide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?**

The school provides challenging, coherent and relevant instruction for its students, demonstrating a sensitive awareness of the special needs of its student body. The classroom activities grow out of the principles delineated in the school's mission statement and the ESLRs are addressed through virtually all classroom activities. The unique nature of the school, including a variety of daily practices, results in the consistent incorporation of the spiritual and moral teachings embodied in the ESLRs into the life of students and teachers alike.

Course offerings are necessarily limited, given the small size of the school, but the academic program is rigorous and thorough. As needed, individual students attend classes at Mendocino Community College. The school also has access to Stanford's EPGY program for gifted students. Most of the courses offered at DVS are aligned with and approved by the University of California system and comply as well with California State content standards and guidelines.

The school self-study responds to this section by focusing on the achievement of the school ESLRs, as it correctly should. In that regard, DVS indeed achieves remarkable success in attaining the first ESLR. Observation, student testimony, and teacher input indeed establish that the students manifest "the core virtues of kindness, filial piety, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, citizenship, integrity and humility." Classes begin and end with a formal acknowledgement of the teacher. Students, while lively and appropriate, nonetheless demonstrate an unusual degree of civility and courtesy toward all, peers and adults alike. The core values are incorporated into classroom assignments, including extensive discussion and composition topics. Even current events are discussed in the light of the core values. As the school's self-study report points out, the very structure of the day itself reflects these values, beginning with the pledge to the flag and then the chanting of the Six Guiding Principles of the original founder of the school in which students promise not to "fight, be greedy, to seek, to be selfish, to pursue self-benefit or to lie." The meditation periods and the High Meal Offering Ceremony at lunch also incorporate values into the daily routine for the students. Community service is also part of the student's regular routine and clubs exist to allow additional chances to perform good works in the community. The school community organizes and coordinates Honoring Elders and Cherishing Youth Celebrations, with the student leaders taking a lead in the preparations and acting as masters of ceremonies.

Another aspect of this first ESLR is the development of a

"confident, well-rounded person who interacts harmoniously with others and takes responsibility for their own actions." Since classes are so small and, especially for boarding students, the learning community so cohesive, students are remarkably responsible. As one of the female students remarked, "Here it is cool to be efficient and responsible." Class sizes range from two to a high of sixteen and, as a result, any lack of performance on the part of students is immediately noticeable. The faculty meets weekly to discuss issues in regard to classes and individual students and, when such problems arise, they are addressed immediately by the most appropriate person. These comments on the exemplary learning community established at DVS also underscore the school's achievement of the second ESLR which focuses on student attainment of their own "inherent wisdom through meditation and other spiritual practices and teachings."

The third ESLR requires that each student "has explored and developed their individual academic potential and talents in the humanities, sciences or arts." School standardized test scores are above average and student work generally is impressive, thorough and thoughtful. However, nearly one third of the students are English language learners making it necessary that all staff become broadly trained in differentiated instruction and appropriate language acquisition strategies. On average, though, the school offers a diverse and unique curriculum that has resulted in 100% of college attendance on the part of their students in recent years. In fact, 77 of 80 graduates in the last seven years have either completed a 4 year degree or are still attending college.

The final ESLR, that each graduate "expresses a multinational awareness and understanding; and shows appreciation for a variety of cultures and religions" is well demonstrated through curricular offerings, the nature of the student body itself, and the surrounding multinational community in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

## **B2. How Students Learn Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the professional staff use research-based knowledge about teaching and learning?**

DVS is using a significant amount of research in their staff development and in their plans for the future, especially their teaching training plan and the character education plan. Teachers are required to complete a minimum of twenty in-service hours a year, and workshops are available on site to do so. Teachers are also encouraged to complete course work in their fields, to obtain credentials, and to develop expertise in all

relevant ways. The school is incorporating Backwards Design Theories and models into their curriculum planning. The WASC preparation itself focused this work in a particularly meaningful and universal way.

**does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results?**

The professional staff at DVS is well qualified, although somewhat anomalous in comparison with a standard high school bevy of teachers. Nonetheless, the school has carefully embarked on a series of research-based activities and in-services to monitor and align their goals and methodologies, both in regard to academic subjects and to the character education issues incorporated into the ESLRs. Teachers teach in thematic units, utilizing a great deal of class discussion. Critical reading is specifically taught and multiple assessments are utilized. Classes are small and teacher-student discussion and interaction is therefore especially valuable. The staff meets regularly to discuss methods, assessment, strategies, and individual student needs.

Teachers use a wide variety of strategies and modalities within their classroom. The use of advanced technology is increasing and is being used creatively. Small classes facilitate individual discussions and small group learning. Students enjoy a wide range of assessment methodologies and appreciate the variety presented to them.

**B3. How Assessment Is Used Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**is teacher and student use of assessment frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process?**

Students receive constant feedback, often personally and immediately. They feel remarkably secure in terms of assessment, evidencing far less stress about grades than may be seen as the norm in a college preparatory program. Teachers state goals clearly and, as a result, the resulting assessment is seamlessly woven into the curriculum. Teachers meet to share best practices and resources are allocated to support new and ongoing student needs. The school is committed, in their Action Plan, to developing school-wide rubrics, especially between the two divisions, and to develop a comprehensive school wide model to increase collegial evaluation of assessments.

**are the assessment results the basis for measurement of each student's progress toward the expected schoolwide learning results?**

Student work is assessed virtually daily and the school maintains a higher emphasis on homework and homework correction than would be possible in a school with larger classes. The school stresses its use of both formative and summative assessments. Where appropriate, rubrics are utilized and classroom assignments, such as writing topics, are individualized to provide the maximum degree of relevance to the individual student's life. Assessment as a whole focuses equally and appropriately on the student's improvement in skills and development in areas of critical thinking.

**are the assessment results the basis for regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction?**

Teachers meet to discuss the results of their evaluative instruments and resources are allocated as a need is determined. Frequent teacher meetings also assess the ESLRs and the process of individual students toward attaining the goals incorporated into them. In all cases, a myriad of strategies exist to help students who fall short of the schools' expectations in any area.

**are the assessment results the basis for the allocation of resources?**

The staff meets regularly to examine a variety of assessments and to formulate requests that may affect the allocation of resources. Where needed, additional staff and resources have been added to meet shifting student needs.

**Areas of Strength for Curriculum and Instruction Category that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

- The staff uses current educational research to inform their daily practices and assessment methodologies. Character Education, in particular, has a research support element underlying their program.

- The ESLRs are incorporated frequently in the lesson planning and daily work. Teacher prepared binders gave support that the ESLRs form the basis for classroom assignments.
- **Student confidence and the lack of stress they feel about grades is an outstanding characteristic of the school and indicative of the level of support, clarity and professionalism the students recognize in their instructors.**
- Small teacher-student ratio enables increased individualized attention or specialized learning plan development when necessary.
- The instructional staff has worked to develop a comprehensive learning environment that focuses on the nurturing of a "whole child".

**Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- The school staff needs to further develop articulation of curriculum across grade levels and among subject areas. Teachers in many disciplines need to develop scope and sequence paradigms and align them to assessment tools.
- **Assessment tools need to be developed coordinating grading policies, practices and methodologies in order to make decisions about curriculum and professional development consistent between the boys' and the girls' divisions.**
- Student achievement appears to be quite high, but the faculty and staff need to carefully collect and analyze data to further define develop curriculum to clearly achieve the ESLR goals.
- There is a demonstrable need to increase technological access and expertise for students and faculty alike.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

1. Class portfolios and student work
2. Character Education Action Plan
3. Classroom Observations
4. Course syllabi and catalogues
5. Staff and student interviews

## **C. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH**

### **C1. Student Connectedness Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**are students connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community that meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results?**

The close, caring community that characterizes the schools and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas provides excellent student support. The student bodies are remarkably cohesive and supportive and the teachers, staff, and administration are extremely close to the students as well. Students with problems or concerns have a wide array of supportive relationships from which they can gather appropriate and helpful input and guidance.

Students also interact with the outside world in a variety of meaningful ways. Community service, Berkeley Model United Nations, and annual local festival participations allow the students to move outside their small high school world. Students also engage in many clubs and activities, including various Chinese cultural activities.

Support for individual students is provided as necessary. Title I funds are used to provide academic support for students performing below grade level in English and mathematics. The ELD program provides an exemplary program of support and tutoring. In both the boys' and girls' divisions of the school, staff members serving as college and career advisors confer with students and parents through the entire process of selecting and applying to colleges and considering careers beyond school.

### **C2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students?**

Parents are required to complete twenty hours of school service a year, but this requirement seems almost superfluous in that parents who seek out this unique learning community are generally inclined to become involved in the school and its activities. In any case, parents volunteer in a number of roles within the

classroom and in school activities, ranging from teaching and tutoring to providing transportation on field trips.

**Areas of Strength for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- The school faculty and staff focus on meeting each student's academic and non-academic, needs, providing a strong network of support.
- Many co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities exist to allow students to explore individual interests and connect with their community as a whole.
- **The faculty and staff are to be commended for providing many volunteer hours of service to supervise events that extend student learning and enhance student life. The special opportunities for exploring Chinese culture and arts are an obvious enhancement for students.**
- The strong Parent Teacher Organization, the parents who are on staff and part of the community at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and the many volunteers are also a commendable asset for the school, as are the staff members who serve as parent figures for the boarding students.
- The celebrations unique to the school, such as the Honoring Elders and Cherishing Youth events, reach out meaningfully to the community to build support for the school and model good citizenship for the students.
- The thorough and creative ELD program is a strong asset for the large percentage of students who require such services.

**Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- Given the clearly identified needs of ELD students, especially those transitioned into regular classrooms, more professional development needs to be offered to all staff to provide instructional methodologies for second language learners.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following :**

1. Student records
2. Minutes from student clubs, faculty and PTO meetings
3. Interviews with staff, parents, and students
4. Event programs
5. Individual Education Plans
6. Yearbooks

## **D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **D1. Resources Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**are the resources available to the school sufficient to sustain the school program and effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?**

The school relies almost entirely on the commitment of the Board of Directors of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (DRBA). Since the secondary school recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that commitment appears to be strong and well tested. All of the school's core resources are available to it through this commitment: chiefly its volunteers, many of whom are monastics; its materials; and its facilities (DRBA "provides all of the facilities that the school uses at no charge"). The scale of all the DRBA operations is quite large compared to that of the school, and the former is comfortable with and committed to underwriting the latter.

The resources are carefully and thoughtfully targeted to support the school's educational purposes. There is a modesty and a humility about the school perfectly in keeping with its guiding principles, and the emphasis everywhere is on functionality, along with conscientious attention to safety. The staff feels adequately supported in instructional resources, particularly since the improvements made since the first WASC visit. The school leadership pays close attention to resource allocations and improvements and has conscientiously reflected the growing and changing needs of the school.

**D2. Resource Planning Criterion**

**To what extent...**

**do the governing authority and the school execute responsible resource planning for the future?**

The school has undertaken an ambitious assortment of plans (an all-school Ten-Year Plan, a Professional Development Plan, a Technology Plan, a Character Education Action Plan, and a DRBA-wide Facilities Master Plan with elements relevant to the school. The school - including the administration, the Board of Education, and the DRBA Board of Directors - outlines a clear and purposeful management process for keeping these plans in view and in action and is committed to semiannual reviews.

**Areas of Strength for Resource Management and Development Category** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- The school's creation, maintenance, and continued commitment to a model of highly efficient resource management that relies on the generous service of volunteers and the involvement of parents in a spirit of service that keeps tuitions low.
- The school's commitment to a *Ten-Year Plan* that helps it to plan for future program expansion and increased self-sufficiency from its mother organization, Dharma Realm Buddhist Association.
- The thoughtful, effective, and education-focused development of the technology infrastructure that has brought much improved efficiency to the school's operation and many more opportunities to teachers and students

**Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Category** that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- **The school should integrate its several plans for growth and improvement so that it can move from a year-to-year process of accommodating change to a multi-year management of development.**
- The school should continue to explore and implement ways of effectively retaining volunteers, especially its core teachers.

- The school should continue to make progress on the areas needing the greatest improvement, namely science facilities and laboratory infrastructure and library resources.

**Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

1. Ten Year, Professional Development and Technology Plans
2. Budgets
3. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication

**Part B: Synthesis of strengths and key issues from all categories into schoolwide strengths and Schoolwide critical areas for follow-up**

**General Comments:**

The stakeholders are commended for the reflection evident in the preparation of the Focus on Learning self-study document. All stakeholders assisted the Visiting Committee in the collection and clarification of data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of the school.

**Schoolwide Areas of Strength**

1. The school embodies and communicates its mission clearly and consistently and represents its values through well-defined goals in its ESLRs.
2. Student confidence and the lack of stress they feel about grades is an outstanding characteristic of the school and indicative of the level of support, clarity and professionalism the students recognize in their instructors.
3. The faculty and staff are to be commended for providing many volunteer hours of service to supervise events that extend student learning and enhance student life. The special opportunities for exploring Chinese culture and arts are an obvious enhancement for students.
4. The school's creation, maintenance, and continued commitment to a model of highly efficient resource management that relies on the generous service of volunteers and the involvement of parents in a spirit of service that keeps tuitions low.

**Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up**

**The Visiting Committee concurs with the school's identified areas that are outlined in the schoolwide action plan. These are synthesized below:**

1. The leadership and instructional staff work collaboratively to comprehensively integrate ESLRs into the curriculum and to design assessments of the ESLRs.
2. The leadership and instructional staff develop common and standardized assessments to increase collegial evaluation in order to make decisions about curriculum and professional development consistent between the boys' and the girls' divisions of the school.
3. The board, leadership and staff continue to make progress on providing resources to the areas needing the greatest improvement, namely science facilities and laboratory infrastructure and library materials.

**In addition, the Visiting Committee has identified areas that need to be strengthened:**

4. The leadership and instructional staff collect more comprehensive profile data, analyze it regularly and communicate the results so that concrete data on students and their performance is available to all stakeholders.
5. The school leadership in collaboration with staff and other stakeholders integrate the various plans into one comprehensive schoolwide Action Plan which also addresses the additional areas of follow-up recommended by the Visiting Committee.
6. The leadership and instructional staff establish and employ a systematic use of student performance assessment strategies that will measure the effects of the school's programs and services, guide staff development, modify instruction, and therefore result in improved student achievement of the academic standards and ESLRs.

## **Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement**

### **A. Description of Plan**

The schoolwide Action Plan included in the self-study report covers four areas identified by the school as growth areas. Three of the growth areas arise directly from recommendations made by the WASC Initial Visiting Committee in 2004. These growth areas

represent efforts that will be ongoing for some years. Growth areas represented in the self-study schoolwide Action Plan include:

- ❖ Science facilities and infrastructure.
- ❖ Balance between structure and individual freedom.
- ❖ Library
- ❖ Curriculum

The Action Plan references as well to the following plans:

- ❖ IG/DVS Ten-Year Plan
- ❖ Professional Development Plan
- ❖ Technology Plan
- ❖ Character Education Action Plan
- ❖ Facilities Master Plan

These represent the totality of plans influencing school future developments. The school plans to allocate resources to implement and monitor accomplishments. Together, these provide a comprehensive picture of the school's future.

The self-study schoolwide Action Plan addresses the following for each area:

### **Science**

For this science goal, the objective is to continue improving both the facility and the laboratory infrastructure. Students can now connect, via the Internet, with virtual and real instruments - such as an atomic force microscope that lets one explore individual atoms - and perform experiments in a virtual reality. However, students need individual access to the Internet providing them with a technology component to the improvements of the science facilities. Most of the laboratory experiments now are either virtual experiments or experiments where automated sensors interface directly to data processing capabilities for data collection and analysis. The science department needs to buy additional science equipment, train staff and integrate the new technology into the science curriculum.

### **Balance Between Structure and Personal Freedom**

This growth area goal is a continuation of the recommendation left by the WASC Initial Visiting Committee. The Self-Study indicates that the efforts made so far have been successful and staff plans to continue the progress into the future. The Action Plan covers primarily the student government and how the school responds to student areas of concern. The School as a Caring

Community Profile will continue to be used as the assessment tool. Assessments will be done yearly. The school's Character Development Plan implementation will be part of this goal.

### **Library**

The libraries are a continuing growth area from the initial visit report. All the books are inventoried and under checkout control. However, the school feels that the faculty and students will be better served by having access to more research materials and books.

### **Curriculum**

The Self-Study Action Plan for this goal identified four areas for follow-up:

- To leverage teacher expertise by increasing the use of technology in the classrooms.
- Common assessments between the two divisions.
- Standardized rubrics per department to monitor students' progress over time.
- Comprehensive school wide model to increase collegial evaluation of assessments.

### **Comment on the following school improvement issues:**

- adequacy of the schoolwide action plan in addressing the *critical areas for follow-up*:

The Visiting Committee found that the school, in their self-study, referenced five separate plans not included in the Action Plan. The Visiting Committee did not see these separate plans until the visit. The Action Plan in the self-study did not coherently and accurately indicate the amount of planning that had been done. Ultimately, the Visiting Committee asked that the school rewrite the Action Plan to incorporate, organize, prioritize, and integrate the five not-included plans and their original Action Plan. Because this was the first self-study report that the school had undertaken, school leaders did not realize a comprehensive plan was required. While we recognized that the thorough self-analysis required by the WASC process had taken place, it had not been accomplished within the context of the WASC Action Plan format. As a result, the Visiting Committee has added to the critical areas of follow-up a recommendation that the school leadership rework the Action Plan to incorporate all areas of improvement. When they do so, the critical areas for follow-up will be addressed.

The Visiting Committee is confident that once all the various plans are brought together, student learning will be enhanced. The reworked Action Plan will incorporate all the areas of the original Action Plan as well as the unincorporated plans and the Visiting Committees additions to the critical areas of follow-up. During the visit, the leadership team worked with members of the Visiting Committee on ideas of how the reworked Action Plan will be reorganized and enhanced. The proposed Action Plan is feasible given the continued commitment of the DRBA, the motivation of the leadership team to address the WASC criteria and the standard that the staff has for completing tasks to the highest standard.

**Existing factors that support school improvement**

Factors that support school improvement are a committed Board, school leadership, staff, parents and all other constituents. The five different plans, separate from the more narrowly-focused Action Plan in the self study, reflect the major areas needed for school improvement.

**Impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections**

Continued growth will present a challenge for the school leadership to balance the numbers of monastic, volunteer and lay staff. The school leadership is also aware of a need to increase organizational structures and to recruit more core academic leadership.

**Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of schoolwide action plan**

All stakeholders of the school have taken up the WASC process itself in a thoughtful and reflective way. The process has already led to change and effective planning. The Visiting Committee leaves confident that they will, with fuller understanding of their obligations and requirements, carry them through. The reporting mechanisms and relationships for reporting and monitoring process are already in place, many as a result of the WASC self-study.