

Sage Canyon Middle School – Building Culture from the Ground Up

In education, it's rare to build something from scratch. Most school administrators inherit a staff, a building, and a culture already in motion. Here in Eagle Mountain, Utah, we've been fortunate to experience the opposite. This August we opened Sage Canyon Middle School—home of the Coyotes—the newest middle school in Alpine School District. Our community needed this school. With Cedar Valley High exceeding 3,000 students and Frontier Middle pushing 1,900, our arrival has eased the strain on families and classrooms.

Thanks to the outstanding team at Westland Construction, we opened on time to 1,550 students—and we were ready. Long before students walked through the doors, we began building our culture. Our first teacher leaders were hired nearly a year in advance. In October, our PLC and instructional coaches helped define our identity and purpose. By February, assistant principals and department leaders joined the work. In March, our full faculty came together for the first time to establish our purpose and shared commitments.

During the summer, we solidified our Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals through three key efforts: two full days of staff collaboration, guiding coalition work with department leads, and four days of summer team planning. During that time, every team identified essential standards, built assessments, and designed units of study aligned to our purpose.

The result? A school truly ready on day one. We are building a culture rooted in teacher leadership, so our work isn't dependent on who sits in the front office. We share a clear purpose: **high levels of learning for all students**. We monitor learning around essential standards and intervene relentlessly when students need support. In three years, our goal is to become a **Model PLC School**—not for the recognition, but because it represents doing what's best for students and preparing them for life.



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