



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Lincoln High School

LINCOLN

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

November 21, 2003



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Lincoln High School from November 17 to November 21, 2003.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Lincoln High School?

How well does the teaching at Lincoln High School affect learning?

How well does Lincoln High School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Lincoln High School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at www.Catalpa.org.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 184 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing 235 complete and partial classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and many teachers were observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 31 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report
- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit
- Set in the present, and
- Contains the judgment of the team

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Lincoln High School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Lincoln School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Town of Lincoln, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Lincoln High School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Lincoln High School, which opened in 1964, is located in northeastern Rhode Island in the Town of Lincoln. This comprehensive high school serves students in grades nine through 12. The school population at Lincoln has increased steadily during the past decade. To meet the demands of this growth, the high school, middle school, and several of the town's elementary schools were expanded in 1997. This added ten classrooms/labs and a second cafeteria to the high school. It is expected that, in the coming years, the high school will expand into the existing middle school building. In the interim, ten temporary classrooms were built this past summer to ease overcrowding at the high school. A small percentage of Lincoln students attend the Davies Vocational facility, which is located in Lincoln.

A principal, two assistant principals, a director of guidance, 77 full- and part-time teachers, four guidance counselors, eight special educators, one psychologist, one social worker, one student assistance counselor, one nurse teacher, two librarians, one secretary, six clerks, seven custodians, two groundskeepers and 10 cafeteria workers serve the students at this school

Of the 1,062 students enrolled in the high school, 999 (94%) are white, 22 (2%) are Hispanic, 19 (2%) are Asian Pacific Islander, 18 (1.7%) are Black, and two (0.18%) are American Indian/Alaskan Native. One hundred and forty eight students (14%) receive special services, and 67 students (6%) receive free and reduced-price lunch.

Many students take part in various co-curricular activities. Among these are an extensive athletics program, school band and the Future Business Leaders of America.

In spring 2003, Lincoln High School was among six high schools in Rhode Island that was commended for the improvements its students had made in their performance on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination. Students, who graduate from Lincoln, consistently seek post secondary education. Approximately 80% of the students enroll in two-year and four-year colleges.

The school has experienced significant staff turnover in the past four years, primarily due to retirements. Approximately 28 staff members have joined the high school within the last two years, and some staff members have had to shift their assignments to fill voids created by the retirements. Although the school principal has served the school for the past seven years, there have been four assistant principals and several interim assistants during this time. At present, a long-term substitute is filling the position of an assistant principal, who is serving in the armed services in Iraq. A second assistant principal was hired last month.

As an original member of the Skills Commission, the school offers its students the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). Extensive rewriting of the curricula has made it standards based. The professional evaluation system is a standards-based instrument that has been in use since 2001. The school district recently enrolled in the Institute for Learning (IFL) program. The district goal is to improve coordination of these initiatives within the district.

In fall 2003, the federal 'No Child Left Behind' legislation required schools throughout the United States to show progress in student achievement on the state assessments for all student subgroups. Schools received a classification based on the level of progress for these students. Lincoln High School is categorized as a *School in Need of Improvement, Making Insufficient Progress* on the math and English Language Arts achievement indicators for the students who receive special education services.

3. PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Lincoln High School sits on a hilltop overlooking a picturesque landscape and well-groomed playing fields. With the Middle School located on the north side, its sprawling structure belies the crowded halls and classrooms within. In the corridors, students and teachers greet one another with friendly hellos and smiling faces. The rapport and informal personalization that often exist between teachers and students is laudable.

And yet, one senses uneasiness among the school community, as it carries out its daily work. The expectations that teachers have for learning and behavior vary across levels, classes and groups of students. Students do not receive consistent messages about what is appropriate, equitable and acceptable.

Many teachers are doing the best they can against a backdrop of uncertainty within the school and the district. Parents are eager to help change the culture of the school, but they do not know how to proceed. Students want to have an active voice in their school, but they feel their input is not sought or welcomed.

There are tensions among the adults within the school. Some teachers feel resentment toward one another. Also, teachers express confusion about the kind of direction and support they can expect from leadership. While the school and district have invested time and resources to implement several outstanding initiatives, a critical mass of teachers committed to standards-based practices and an 'all kids' agenda has yet to materialize.

A clear vision and mission for the school is not in place. Because the superintendent resigned during the visit, it is uncertain that the district has the leadership required to establish such a mission.¹ The Town of Lincoln does not adequately understand what its students require or how best to support them as they strive to become successful learners.

¹ **Note from Chair.** After this visit was complete, the Superintendent announced that he had decided not to resign.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Noticeable inconsistencies exist in the quality and quantity of student writing. Students write across the disciplines and tracks but with varying degrees of proficiency. When students at Lincoln High School use rubrics, standards, and checklists, they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in their writing. Students understand that, when they follow a writing process, they write well. Some students solve problems and write clearly and concisely about their thinking process. Some students use core questions to focus and guide their writing. Additionally, they examine primary and secondary sources to take critical stances, which results in authentic assessments that are apparent in their persuasive essays, presentations, debates, and cooperative group projects. While students occasionally apply higher order thinking skills through substantive writing, passive learning through note-taking and completing worksheets prevails. Far too many students are disengaged from their learning and do not practice the skills necessary for good writers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Students read in various settings throughout the school day. They read to meet the standard of reading 25 books a year. Some read actively to analyze and interpret the text. They make text-to-text, text-to-life and text-to-self connections. Lively discussions result when students make these connections and activate their prior knowledge. They visualize the action of the story for ease of comprehension. However, students do not practice the skill of reading, nor do they actively engage in reading in all of their classes. Also, students rarely read selections based on their own interests. In some classes, students successfully read challenging pieces, while in others, they read with frustration or not at all. Less than half the students met the standard in Reading, Basic Understanding and Reading, Analysis and Interpretation on the 2003 New Standards Reference Examination. Not enough students are developing the strategies of effective readers. *(following students, observing classes, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing classroom textbooks, 2003 SALT Survey report, talking with students and teachers)*

The patterns of student learning in math at Lincoln High School are complex. Not enough students learn math skills, math concepts, or problem solving strategies by doing authentic work. In many instances, students attempt to learn math concepts and skills by taking notes, doing repetitive drills, or completing homework assignments and worksheets. Conversely, students learn problem-solving strategies when using applied learning activities across the curriculum. Examples of these include diagnostic testing and evaluation of machines, solving the Certificate of Initial Mastery common tasks, using manipulatives to prove theorems, making mathematical measurement conversions, and peer review of completed work—to name a few. However, overall, too few students apply the higher order thinking skills that are necessary to achieve numeric literacy. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, discussing student work with teachers)*

Students, who choose to take an active role in their education, are engaged and seek rigor. Unfortunately, a number of students do not maximize their learning because of their off-task and disruptive behavior. Too frequently, students arrive late, sleep during class, come unprepared, do not participate, use foul language and are generally disengaged. Students report that they have no voice in the school community and that they have no role in school decision-making. A significant number of students have become accustomed to passivity and do not take responsibility for their learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, meeting with parents, school administrator)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Some students are passive learners, who are generally disengaged.

Student learning mirrors the lack of voice and empowerment students feel within the school community.

There are wide discrepancies in how well students learn.

Students recognize expectations vary depending on the level of their classes and the teachers they have.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Math teachers at Lincoln High School have access to a written curriculum that contains content and performance standards, as well as benchmarks and recommended instructional and assessment strategies. However, the way teachers teach math and use this curriculum is uneven. Some students are challenged in their math classes to solve complex problems involving intricate strategies, while others primarily practice rudimentary computation through repetitive drills. Students are clearly engaged when the instruction involves real-life applications, manipulatives, and a variety of methodologies. However, too frequently, the observed instruction is teacher-oriented and involves students in completing exercises and reviews from the textbook. The teaching of problem solving does occur across the curriculum, but it is often dependent on the student's track or teacher. Teachers may give students rich opportunities to problem-solve, such as in the solving Certificate of Initial Mastery common tasks, but this is not happening consistently for all students. Teachers also report that they seldom meet to share student work or their classroom assessment results to improve their instruction strategies to better meet the needs of their students. These factors limit student learning in mathematical conceptual understanding and problem solving. *(observing classes, following students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary)*

While school-wide initiatives such as the Certificate of Initial Mastery program, the use of common-task core questions, and the practical application of learned concepts are evident, they are not fully accepted and adopted by all teachers across the curriculum. Teachers incorporate a wide range of instruction methods and expectations at Lincoln High School. These include teacher-led instruction, collaborative grouping, peer review, and the application of technology on a limited basis. In those classes where teachers focus on standards-based instruction, which include the use of rubrics and authentic assessment opportunities, students demonstrate creativity in various learning modalities and produce high quality artifacts. Unfortunately, not all teachers engage students in these activities. The prevalence of teacher-directed instruction in many classrooms is accompanied by the development of passive, disengaged learners, who complete assignments but do not practice higher order thinking skills. Expectations vary from classroom to classroom and among tracks, often significantly. Students are cognizant of this range and often produce work that mirrors their teachers' expectations. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing various curricular guides)*

Course One instruction strategies that emphasize literacy skill development are continually introduced to the faculty. The school reports that most teachers have completed training in this instruction. However, these strategies are not practiced consistently. Too many teachers resort to conventional methodology, conveying content rather than focusing on the actual literacy needs of their students. While efforts have been made to target ninth grade struggling readers and writers in order to increase their literacy skills, too many other students continue to struggle. Teachers implement these literacy strategies across the curriculum on an inconsistent basis. State scores in reading and writing declined in the most recent testing. Those teachers, who model standards-based practices and demand high expectations for reading and writing, help their students develop greater capacity to produce quality work. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Generally, good rapport exists between teachers and students. Students acknowledge that there are dedicated teachers, who stay after school for them, who write letters of recommendation for them, and who attend their co-curricular activities and sporting events. Often teachers stay connected with their former students. In many cases, these are the same teachers who strive for academic excellence for their students. Students seek out certain teachers for additional support and advice, resulting in personalization and success with students, including some who are at risk. At this time, these personalization successes are informal in nature. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff)*

Lincoln High School teachers have access to standards coaches, a design coach, a mentoring program, and knowledgeable department chairs to help them improve their instruction. However, not enough teachers are encouraged to access these services on a regular and sustained basis, and they are not required to do so. Also, small groups of teachers actively pursue professional growth opportunities in their areas of interest. But too often these areas are unrelated to school-wide initiatives or the requirements of the Regents High School Reform mandates. The use of curriculum development and assessment data to focus professional training does not occur. The teacher evaluation tool is very comprehensive and reflective and requires teachers to identify their professional development activities to improve teaching and learning. However, tenured teachers are evaluated only once every three years and it is inconsistently implemented for other teachers, due to the time constraints of the evaluators. Although the mentoring program offers beginning teachers support, teachers report that the training is not always relevant to their students' needs, and the opportunities to practice are limited. It is evident that some teachers do not participate in ongoing professional development training in the area of best practice instructional strategies. This helps to explain the wide range of teaching practices that occur here. *(observing classes, talking with teachers and school and district administrators, review of professional development activities)*

Commendations for Lincoln High School

Good rapport between teachers and students

Dedicated teachers who go above and beyond the academic day

Those innovative teachers who embrace new methodologies

Teachers who have high expectations for all students

Recommendations for Lincoln High School

Create and implement a formal program that allows personalization for all students.

Ensure that all staff use standards-based instruction and assessment practices for all students.

Change instruction practices from teacher-centered to student-centered, and actively engage all students in their learning.

Hold all students to the same high expectations for learning.

Expand the use of literacy and numeracy strategies to all content areas to meet the needs of all students.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

Recognized twice, in the 1970's and in 1980's, by the United States Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon Secondary School, Lincoln High School is a different school in 2003 for many reasons. Enrollment has increased significantly, especially during the last four years. Deficit school budgets in the recent past have affected facility maintenance, technology upgrades, instructional material purchases and planned building expansions. A system of academic segregation, the tracking of students—beginning in grade seven—creates an education caste system at the high school. Students are labeled and expectations for certain students become defined. A limited commitment to formalized teacher training has left many talented faculty members unprepared for the educational challenges of today. The many changes in district level personnel during the last seven years contribute to a lack of a focused vision and direction for the school district. Finally, the entire school community's mistrust in their elected municipal boards fosters a negative effect on education at Lincoln High School. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, reviewing district and school policies and practices, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with district administrators, reviewing The Providence Journal articles published during the week of the visit [November 18 and 19, 2003], NEASC Report, Lincoln High School, March, 1998, reviewing the Lincoln School Department 2003-2004 Budget, reviewing the Lincoln School Department 2002 Technology Plan)*

The design of Lincoln High School does not allow for the full participation of all students, especially those who have physical disabilities. The physical plant limits programs, is difficult to maintain, and contributes to accessibility concerns. Lincoln High School is a building that has been added onto several times to accommodate a growing student population; however, these expansions have been a patchwork at best. Lincoln High School has not kept pace with the technological age. A need exists for additional technology labs, greater access to electronic information and the availability of personnel, who could maintain an up-to-date technology program. Lincoln High School has not kept pace with adequate science facilities. There are a limited number of equipped laboratories, and those that exist have not been upgraded. Other areas that require improvement and expansion include the gymnasium and physical education facilities, industrial arts, visual and performing arts, teacher workspace, hallway and stairwell access, internal and external phone systems, lighting and ventilation, and the general small size of classrooms. Clearly, Lincoln High School is a building that cannot accommodate its school community, and it may be jeopardizing the safety of both students and staff. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, teachers, school and district administrators, talking with school improvement team, students, parents, teachers, school and district administrators, reviewing district strategic plan)*

Teacher leaders at Lincoln High School consistently model practices that promote increased student learning. Unfortunately, many of these leaders do not feel recognized or supported in moving the school forward. Other teachers have remained detached from the initiatives underway. As a result, a critical mass of teachers is not working collaboratively to implement the many reform initiatives fully. The principal is an affable and compassionate man, who delegates much responsibility to his staff. However, many staff members report inadequate communication and follow-through in regard to their concern about management and instruction. Teachers report that, oftentimes, he is not explicit in defining and articulating his vision. This results in faculty confusion and, thus, a lack of ownership in larger school-wide issues. This is clearly illustrated by the lack of consistent expectations of academic and student behavior that exists among the staff. The administration has yet to lead the staff, as a cohesive body, in enforcing rules outlined in the student handbook and by setting an appropriate tone. The very high turnover rate of the school's assistant principals is also a problem. Students report that they do not know their principal and assistant principals nor do they see them regularly in their classrooms. This apparent disconnect among all stakeholders is continuing to foster student disregard for authority and civility. *(observing the school outside the classroom, talking with teachers, parents and students and district administrators, meeting with school improvement team, students, and district administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, observing classes)*

As described in the previous conclusion, the current school climate of Lincoln High School is one of instability that does not foster student learning. Undoubtedly, a high turnover of assistant principals has contributed to this state of flux. Still, many teachers and students truly care and support one another and participate in many activities together. Students demonstrate pride in their school, as evidenced by the lack of graffiti and vandalism. Teachers, parents, and students agree that not enough emphasis is placed on day-to-day discipline and management within the school. Furthermore, the discipline that is administered varies depending on who is enforcing the code of conduct. Consequently, students perceive that disciplinary actions are inequitable. Students and some parents express that their voices are neither encouraged nor appreciated. Similarly, teachers do not feel recognized for their hard work and dedication. Finally, students and faculty agree that overcrowded hallways and stairwells, distances between classrooms, scheduling constraints and the layout of the classrooms—all—contribute to various discipline issues. *(observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, parents, observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff)*

Excellent initiatives are underway at Lincoln High School. They have the potential to drive needed, widespread reform. Some of these include a mentoring program for non-tenured teachers, a ninth grade literacy ramp-up program, service learning opportunities, CIM, the Capstone course, an inclusion model, a layered curriculum, and interdisciplinary course offerings such as Humanities. However, these initiatives are implemented in isolated pockets throughout the school. Only a small percentage of faculty, staff, and students are benefiting from these reforms. With no clearly stated and implemented school-wide vision for the school, teachers, who are involved in innovative programs, are often left frustrated and isolated. Vehicles for change that could foster reform are in place. However, these mechanisms are underutilized and therefore do not effectively promote change. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team and students, talking with teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Commendations for Lincoln High School

Teacher leaders who strive to move the school forward

Many worthwhile reform initiatives underway

Teachers and students who really care and support each other

Recommendations for Lincoln High School

Establish a cohesive school team, where the principal, faculty, parents, and students develop and share a common vision and work collaboratively to fulfill it.

Use standards coaches more effectively to improve teaching and learning on a regular and sustained basis.

Implement the standards-based teacher evaluation plan. Follow through on the evaluation process as stated in the plan.

Ensure daily supervision of instruction.

Improve communication, trust and civility for all stakeholders in the school community.

Include more parents in meaningful dialogue about their children's education.

Develop and implement consistent academic and behavioral expectations for all students at all levels. Change your grouping practices to foster greater heterogeneity and equity.

Empower students to have a significant voice in school decision-making, as well as in their education.

Create and implement a school schedule that meets the needs of all students.

Recommendations for Lincoln School District

Create a shared vision for public education for the Town of Lincoln.

Commit adequate political and financial resources to fulfill that vision.

Create incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel.

Strongly advocate for the expansion and renovation of the high school.

Require that all teachers be involved in focused professional development opportunities as outlined in the district's strategic plan.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Lincoln High School truly does care about improvement of student learning and achievement and is committed to bringing that about. All stakeholders—students, teachers, parents and administrators alike—indicate that, while some wonderful and positive things are happening here, change is necessary.

Although Lincoln High School is vested in several powerful high school reform initiatives, it is disconnected from an “all kids” approach. It is now time for everyone in the school to join together and decide how to implement these initiatives systemically so that all students benefit. Teachers, while trained in Course One, primarily continue to use teacher-centered techniques that encourage passive learning. Other teachers, who have applied student-centered teaching strategies, teach to all of their students. This dichotomy creates the perception of a student body and a faculty of “haves and have nots.” Expectations for academic rigor and behavior must be consistent for everyone.

Leadership must become explicit in how the faculty is expected to proceed. A clear vision and mission will require communication, consistency and follow through by the administration, the teachers, as well as by the students. The Community of Lincoln, as a whole, must take pride in its high school so that the school can achieve its goal of excellence. Without the support from the community of Lincoln, its high school will not be able to provide the quality education every one of its students requires. All must work together as one, so that Lincoln High School can return to the place of excellence it once held. You have the knowledge, will and skill to succeed. Good luck to you in your renewed and focused efforts.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Lincoln High School

November 21, 2003

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
December 17, 2003

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Lincoln High School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Lincoln High School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 14 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - Lincoln School Department Consolidated Resource Plan, 2003-2004*
 - Lincoln High School Professional Development Activities, binder*
 - Lincoln High School Improvement Plan, October, 2003*
 - Lincoln Public Schools Strategic Plan*
 - Lincoln School Department 2003-2004 Budget, presented January 13, 2003*
 - Lincoln School Department Technology Plan, September 2002*
 - “The Big Picture”, Systemic Standard-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Prepared for Lincoln Public Schools, January 2003*
 - Lincoln Public Schools Math and English Language Arts Curricula Guides, November 2003*
 - Departmental curriculum guides*

Departmental binders of collected student work
SALT Visit Team Binders Lincoln Middle School SALT Team Report, April 12, 2001
Lincoln School Department Certified Staff Evaluation Manual, September 2001
Lincoln High School Report Card
Lincoln High School Program of Studies, Grades 9-12
Lincoln High School Plugged In for Juniors and Seniors Only
The Lion's Roar, Student Newspaper, October 2003
Lions Savings Treasury Handbook
RI Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) Design and Standards, May 1996
RI Skills Commission Certificate of Initial Mastery Student Manual, Version 5, Fall 2003
Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Lincoln Teachers' Association and the School Committee of the Town of Lincoln, RI, September 1, 2003-August 31, 2006
LTA Views, the News, Lincoln Teachers' Association, December 2003
2002 and 2003 SALT Survey reports
The Providence Journal, November 18-19, 2003
classroom textbooks
classroom assessments
2003 Information Works!
2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries
2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
NEASC Report, Lincoln High School, March 1998

State Assessment Results for Lincoln High School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

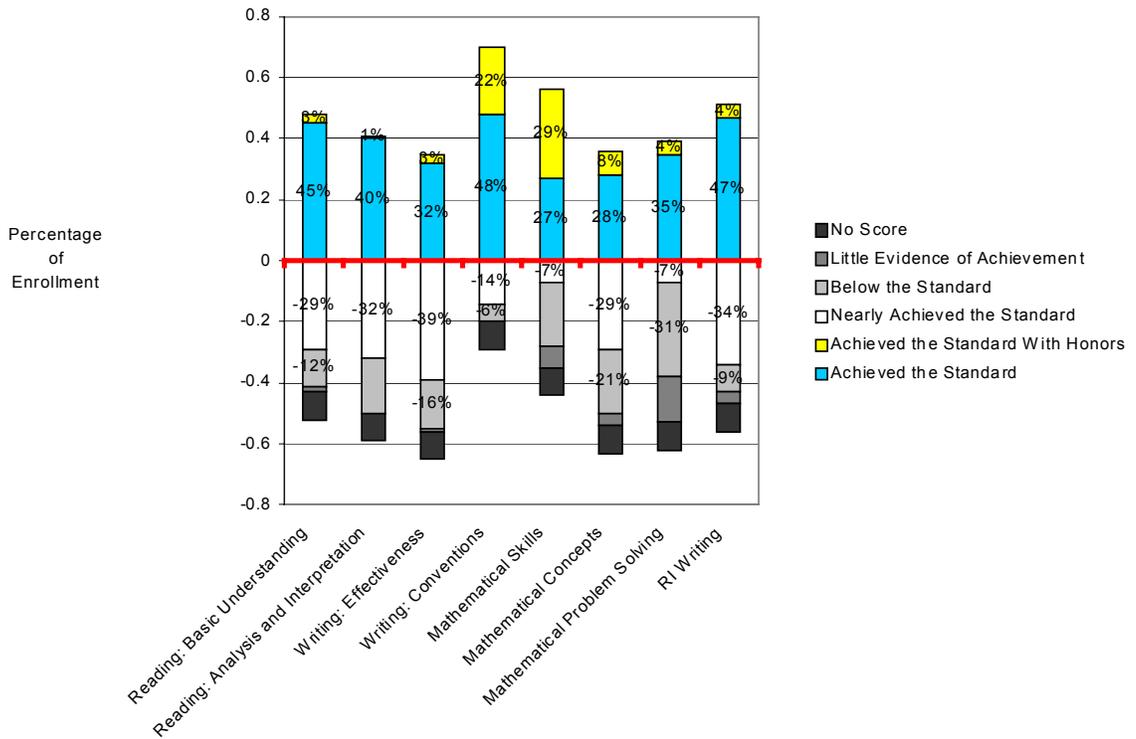
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

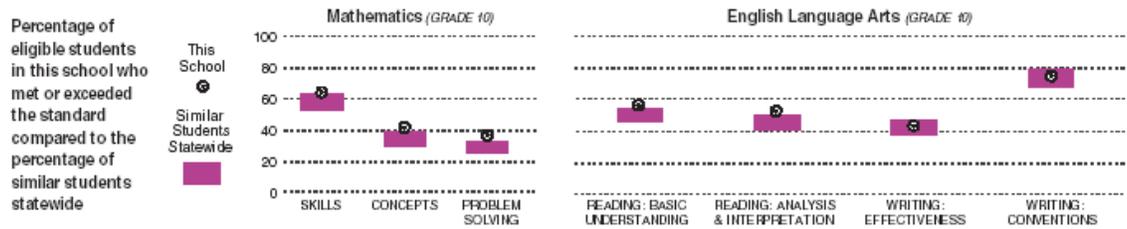
Table 1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments



RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS WITHIN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

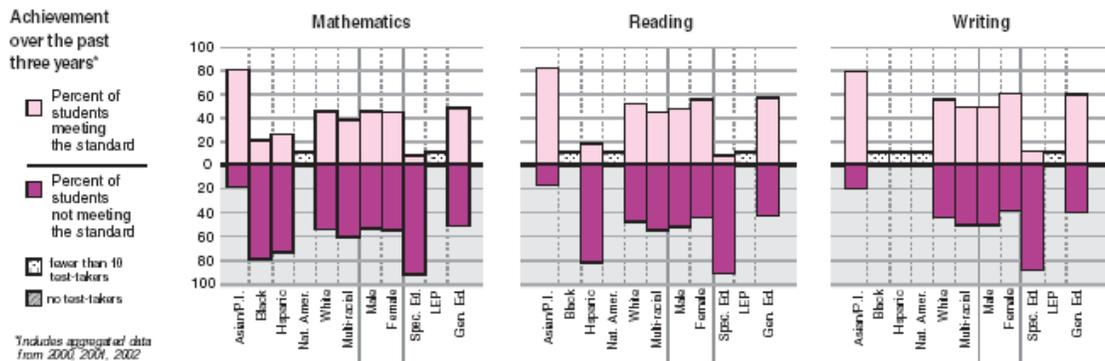
Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

Table 3. 2001-2002 Student Results across Subgroups



RESULTS OVER TIME

Now that the state assessment program has been functioning for five years, it is possible to show results over meaningful periods of time. This display shows changes in the percentage of students at or above standard and the percentage of students in the lowest performance categories. This corresponds to the targets the Department of Education asked schools to set four years ago and is the basis for the department categorizing schools as improving or non-improving.

The Lincoln High School has been categorized as a moderately performing and improving school on the basis of its assessment results from 1998 to 2002.

Information Works! data for Lincoln High School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

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