



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# **William M. Davies Jr.**

# **Career and Technical High School**

**Lincoln**

## **The SALT Visit Team Report**

October 19, 2001

Final Report



## **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

The findings of this report are those of this SALT visit team. The names and affiliations of the members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs on Conducting a SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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**This report is available at <http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt>**

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# 1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

## Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School from October 15 through October 19, 2001. The following features are at the heart of the report:

- ◆ The team seeks to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school presents a unique picture.
- ◆ The team does not compare this school to any other school.
- ◆ When writing the report, the team chooses deliberately the words that convey its message best to the school, based on careful consideration of what it has learned about the school dynamics.
- ◆ The team makes its judgment explicit.

The major questions the team addresses are:

- ◆ How well do the students learn at this school?
- ◆ How well does this school teach its students?
- ◆ How well does this school support learning and teaching?

The SALT report creates accountability for improvement by directly connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement to the actual work going on in this school at the time of the visit.

The team closely follows the visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit*. The Catalpa endorsement certifies that this team followed the protocol and that this report meets all criteria required for a legitimate SALT visit report.

The visit team is made up primarily of 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.

## Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examines test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school strategic plan for Davies Career and Technical High School is 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 builds its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, the visit allows the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Davies Career and Technical High School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 186 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 151 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 11 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*
  - SALT committee*
  - staff*
  - school administrators*
  - board of trustees*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about their students' work*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*

◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

*school policies and practices*

*teacher evaluation instrument*

*records of professional development activities*

*classroom assessments*

*classroom instructional materials*

*classroom assignments*

*classroom textbooks*

*student portfolios*

*school strategic plan for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School*

*strategic plan sub-committees' documentation*

*1999-2000 SALT Survey report*

*1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 Information Works!*

*1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*

*1999, 2000, and 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*

*2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*

*Davies SALT Team Binder*

*curricula guides*

*contract between William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School Teachers' Association and the Board of Trustees*

*Destiny 2001 Yearbook*

*New England Association of Schools and Colleges 1996 Evaluation Report*

*program of studies*

*course offerings*

The full team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 hours in six separate meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, school administrators, and the board of trustees.

The team must agree that every conclusion in this report:

- ◆ *is important enough to include in the report.*
- ◆ *is supported by the evidence the team has gathered during the visit.*
- ◆ *is set in the present.*
- ◆ *contains the judgment of the team.*

## Using the Report

The team chooses deliberately the words, phrases, and sentences it uses in its conclusions, as well as in the *Portrait* and *Final Advice*. Thus, this report is the team's best attempt to encourage and support the school's continued improvement in strengthening the learning of its students.

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

It is important to note that this report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report does not cover what the school plans to do, or what it has done in the past. This report is not prescriptive.

The value of this report will be determined by its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. By considering the importance to the school of what the team said and why, the school takes its first step in becoming accountable in a way that actually improves learning.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in relation to the conclusions they follow.

After the strategic planning committee considers this report, it should make changes in the school strategic plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with the board of trustees. The purpose of the compact is to ensure that the school and its board of trustees work out an agreement about the best way to improve the school and the best way to target support for the school. A RIDE Field Service Team representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

## 2. PROFILE OF William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

### Background

William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School is one of 10 Career and Technical schools in the State of Rhode Island. It serves students in grades 9-12 for the towns of Pawtucket, Lincoln, Central Falls, Smithfield, and North Providence. The present school first opened its doors to students in 1971. A 100,000 square foot addition was added in 1992.

Davies is a state-funded high school that provides both academic and career-focused studies. A seventeen-member appointed board of trustees governs the William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School. Students are served by a professional staff of four administrators, 87 full and part-time faculty, six teacher assistants, 23 people serving in other support capacities and 10 custodians.

Davies Career and Technical High School has an attendance rate of 90 percent. Of the 751 students attending this school 65 percent are White, 17 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are Black, 1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are American Indian / Alaskan. One hundred twenty-five students (totaling 16.5 percent) receive special education services, 92 students (totaling 12 percent) are Limited English Proficiency, and 51.5 percent of the students applied for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Business-sponsored training centers are a unique aspect of Davies school. These on-site training centers include Dupont, Hunter, CARQUEST, Ford, CarBrite, Ikon Office Solutions, Cisco Systems, Midas, Monarch, and Verizon. These centers are equipped with almost four million dollars of state-of-the-art equipment. Davies students benefit from this ongoing access to equipment and training. Business partners, in turn, save on training costs by “growing their own” future employees. Additionally, national industry organizations recognize and certify the programs at Davies. Such affiliations ensure that Davies students graduate with current transferable skills that are recognized by industries throughout the country.

### State Assessment Results for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

On the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination subtests, approximately one in four of the 10th graders (23%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; approximately one in 12 of the 10th graders (8%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts, and approximately one in 12 of the 10th graders (8%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist for Limited English Proficient, Black, and Hispanic students on mathematics tests. On the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination the 10th grade students at Davies perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the concepts and problem solving subtests; they perform above similar students on the skills subtest.

On the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination Reading subtests, approximately one in four of the 10th graders (23%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic

Understanding; approximately one in eight of the 10th graders (13%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps exist for Black and Hispanic students on the English Language Arts Reading tests. On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination the 10th grade students at Davies perform at the same level as similar students in the state on both reading subtests.

On the 2001 New Standards Reference Examination English Language Arts Writing subtests, approximately one in 33 of the 10th graders (3%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness; two in five of the 10th graders (40%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions. Equity gaps exist for special education and Limited English Proficient students on English Language Arts tests. On the 2000 New Standards Reference Examination the 10th grade students at Davies perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the writing effectiveness subtest; they perform above similar students on the conventions subtest.

On the 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment approximately one in eight of the 11th graders (13%) met or exceeded the standard.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School is available at [www.ridoenet.net](http://www.ridoenet.net).

### 3. PORTRAIT OF William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

The title of the William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School's yearbook is *Destiny*. Trying to give children control of their own destiny is what this school is all about. Upon entering the school one cannot help but be impressed by its clean appearance. Photographs of students and samples of their work grace the display cases in the lobby. The school atmosphere is welcoming, and the faculty, staff, and school administrators cultivate a safe and secure learning environment.

Teachers use instructional methods that address several paradigms of learning. They are working toward mastering the latest techniques in education to more fully challenge and engage their students. However, the strength of the faculty lies in the way it embraces and takes ownership of its culturally diverse student body. Most teachers are friendly and outgoing and many extend themselves beyond the normal school day to ensure their students' success. This commitment fosters positive relationships that meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of many students.

The students are well behaved, respectful of each other and the school staff. They recognize and appreciate how hard the faculty, support staff, and administrators work on their behalf. Students are proud of their school and are focused on their future. Despite these positive attributes, students have little voice in the school; they are not meaningfully involved in ways that would enable them to actively contribute to school-based decisions.

Davies continues to re-examine its mission; it is working to implement a strategic plan initially spearheaded by the board of trustees. Faculty involvement in this process is growing. Nevertheless, this school presently is struggling to develop a commonly shared vision of the "ideal" Davies student, as well as the necessary academic and organizational changes needed to dramatically improve student performance. To date, Davies has not developed an educational program that fully capitalizes on the unique opportunities its facility and combination of academic and career programs could provide.

Davies students are afforded an array of opportunities to participate in a variety of technical areas. The notable industry partnerships and internships strengthen the marketability and technical proficiency of the students. The staff, teachers, and administrators actively work to cultivate and continuously develop these programs. In contrast, less emphasis is placed on core academic subjects, the arts, cultural experiences, and post-secondary education. Some disagreement exists in the school between and among academic and technical programs regarding class size and resource allocation—supplies, materials, and personnel. In essence, the school is struggling to determine the best way to support and develop an academic program commensurate with the technical program it so ably provides.

Accomplishing this will require more dedicated concentration on the learning represented by standards, ongoing changes in assessment practices, additional job-embedded professional development, and shared school-based leadership that cultivates and empowers teachers, parents, and students as leaders. The aforementioned changes are necessary to allow the young men and women who attend Davies to take full advantage of this school's resources in order to become true masters of their own destinies.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ 2001 Information Works!
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *meetings with the SALT committee, students, school administrators, parents, and the board of trustees*
- ◆ *reviewing portfolios*
- ◆ *interviews with teachers about student work*

### Conclusions

Students at William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School are well behaved; they are respectful of each other, adults and the physical plant. The pride students have for their school and their work are readily apparent. Davies students are cognizant of the school's contribution to their social, emotional, and personal well-being; they appreciate their teachers' efforts, as well as the school and its educational programs. The students' pleasant demeanor, maturity, and responsibility are clearly reflected in their daily attire. They show a great desire to succeed at their assigned tasks; they willingly collaborate with their peers and assist them in furthering their learning. The fact that they come from several different communities causes little friction among students, who have melded into one student body. This, in turn, fosters a positive school environment. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, meetings with the students and parents*)

In many classes students write in different forms and genres, but their writing proficiency varies greatly. Many students write in journals, complete lab reports, compose short essays, complete thematic projects, and use graphic organizers. They also write research reports relative to specific career clusters. Few students write effectively, analytically, persuasively, argumentatively, and technically. Most students are more adept at responding to inquiry in an oral fashion than in writing. Student writing often contains simple complete sentences rather than prose that varies in length,

begins in different ways, embodies student voice, and contains a variety of descriptive words that make the text interesting and provide desirable details. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing portfolios, talking with students and teachers, interviews with teachers about student work, 2001 Information Works!*)

While most students can decode text and recall basic facts on a literal level, many have difficulty analyzing, interpreting, and extracting important conceptual details. A majority of students can follow appropriate directions and procedures to complete assignments and projects in technical laboratory settings. Fewer can identify the main theme, support interpretations with explicit reasons, or make clear and reasonable assertions about the text in various content areas. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviews with teachers about student work, 2001 Information Works!*)

Students are actively working to develop the mathematical skills they need to be successful in their desired career cluster. They must frequently apply their knowledge of mathematical skills and concepts in various content areas. When provided with data and mathematical information, many students have difficulty applying the information meaningfully and contextually. Some students have difficulty using, manipulating, and understanding expressions, formulas, and graphing functions. Many students can perform math problems at the basic skill level. Fewer students can effectively analyze and interpret statistical information, make abstract connections, or work with complex two-dimensional and three-dimensional constructs. (*classroom observations, following students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviews with teachers about student work, 2001 Information Works!*)

## Commendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

The pleasant, respectful demeanor of the students

The pride students have for their school

The melding of the diverse student population

## Recommendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

Increase focus on process writing.

Increase student proficiency with reading analysis and interpretation and making clear and reasonable assertions about text in all content areas.

Increase students' mathematical proficiency with concepts, problem solving, making abstract connections, and statistics.

In all subjects, increase the focus on using knowledge meaningfully and contextually.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *interviews with teachers about student work*
- ◆ *meetings with the, SALT committee, students, school administrators, parents, and the board of trustees*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- ◆ *reviewing portfolios*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assignments*

### Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated, engage their students, and work hard to provide them with an academic, technical, and social education within the confines of existing programs and schedules. Most willingly give of their personal time for the benefit of their students. They have pride in their school and take ownership for the overall development and well being of their students. The professional staff makes concerted efforts to teach the employability skills students will need to be successful in life and work. (*meetings with the SALT committee, students, parents, and board of trustees, following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, SALT Survey 1999-2000*)

Improving the reading level of students is a primary focus of this school. Students are independently reading newspapers, magazines, novels, poems, and technical manuals during the school day. The Science Research Associates reading program and a reading lab system are used to raise the basic skills of students. A few teachers are effectively engaging students to pursue the point a writer is trying to make, to establish connections between texts, to acquire and synthesize new knowledge,

and to arrive at credible interpretations supported by textual references. Reading teachers are too often teaching in isolation rather than teaching in concert with classroom teachers. Much of their work is focused on raising student skill-based test scores. Teachers, schoolwide have not collectively embraced the shared responsibility of teaching all children to read for meaning and understanding and to demonstrate their comprehension by using a variety of strategies. Within the content areas, little emphasis is placed on analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and the direct instruction of specific reading strategies. (*interviewing teachers about student work, reviewing portfolios, observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers and staff, meetings with the SALT Committee and students*)

Many teachers have students write for a variety of purposes. Students write lab reports, poetry, literature responses, short essays, and journals. Creating functional documents, writing technically, and communicating mathematically receive less emphasis schoolwide. Students often complete assigned writing without any specific format or audience in mind. A few teachers clearly engage their students in organizing sophisticated writing processes that include comparisons, transitions, cohesion, fluidity, voice, word choice, and parallel structure. Additionally, little school wide emphasis is placed on identifying the main theme, supporting interpretations with explicit reasons, or making clear and reasonable assertions about the text. The writing process—pre-writing, brainstorming, editing, revising, and publishing—is infrequently reinforced. Although writing samples are collected in portfolios, only some teachers use these effectively to diagnose, support, and remediate student writing. (*observing classes, reviewing portfolios, following students, interviewing teachers about student work, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers*)

Teachers use a number of assessments to determine student mastery of skills, concepts, and content. Many teachers do a good job of providing oral feedback that develops their students understanding of skills, content, and concepts. Most of the written feedback students receive recognizes effort or affords encouragement rather than provides diagnostic comments intended to improve specific parts of their work. Industry standards and employability skills are clearly embedded in classrooms and impact the assessments used in many of them. Confusion exists among the faculty regarding the proper role and function of performance criteria, rubrics, and checklists. Many teachers only have an emerging knowledge and understanding of the use of rubrics that clearly link assessment criteria to the bullets in content and performance standards. Often criteria found in rubrics describe the form work should take rather than its quality. Additionally, few standards-based rubrics are teacher and/or student generated. (*reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meetings with the SALT Committee, students, and school administrators*)

Mathematics is taught and reinforced in a number of content areas. Some teachers provide opportunities for students to communicate their mathematical thinking in written and oral form, as well as to apply their knowledge of skills and concepts to solve realistic problems. Too many classroom activities, schoolwide, focus on building basic skills, rather than promoting the development of higher order thinking skills and integrated problems focused on applications of knowledge. (*reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing classroom assignments, observing classes, following students, talking with students and teachers*)

Content and performance standards are clearly posted in most rooms, and these are implicitly developed in a number of classroom activities. However, the learning represented by these standards

is often not explicitly referenced and developed during lessons. Additionally, only a few teachers use the bullets found in content and performance standards to develop specific tasks, assessments, and objectives in their classrooms. This limits the teachers' abilities to transfer desired understanding and applications of knowledge to students. Ultimately, this obscures, for teachers and students, the relevance, the intended outcomes, the connections among pertinent subject matter, and the desired level of performance. (*observing classes, following students, meetings with the SALT committee and students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, interviews with teachers about student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing classroom assignments*)

## Commendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

The dedicated professional staff and administrators

The pride teachers have for their school

The ownership teachers have for the overall development and well being of their students

## Recommendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

Re-examine the current role of the reading teachers and increase the in-class collaboration within all content areas.

Increase the schoolwide emphasis on analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and the direct instruction of specific reading strategies.

Develop schoolwide rubrics for reading, writing, and numeracy with clearly delineated criteria that communicate the desired quality of student work; establish grade level benchmarks of performance in all subject areas.

Increase the number of diagnostic comments on student work so students know how to improve their work.

Establish clear expectations for learning for each class and for the instructional tasks in each class; make these expectations readily apparent in all classes in order to focus students on the desired outcomes.

Vary the instructional approaches used to teach mathematics; expand the focus on teaching students to apply their knowledge of skills and concepts to solve realistic problems.

Ensure that each teacher has a copy of the New Standards Performance Standards Volume 3.

Provide professional development on the writing process, the creation and use of standards-based rubrics, mathematical problem solving, the direct teaching of reading strategies, and the practices and procedures needed to devise, teach, and assess standards-based tasks.

Ensure that every classroom devises classroom tasks and assessments specifically designed to explicitly teach and assess the learning represented in content and performance standards.

## Recommendations for Board of Trustees

Re-allocate the resources necessary to implement the aforementioned recommendations.

Establish policy designed to support the changes in teaching practices recommended above.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *meetings with the SALT committee, students, school administrators, parents, and the board of trustees*
- ◆ *reviewing the strategic plan sub-committees' documentation*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing strategic plan for Davies School*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *reviewing curricula*
- ◆ *reviewing course offerings*
- ◆ *reviewing course schedules*
- ◆ *reviewing Destiny 2001 Yearbook*
- ◆ *reviewing the contract between William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School Teachers' Association and the Board of Trustees*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom instructional materials*
- ◆ *reviewing professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing the program of studies*

## ◆ SALT Survey 1999-2000

## Conclusions

William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School has a number of impressive and productive industry partnerships. These partners have provided almost four million dollars in equipment and materials to the school. The school has aligned its career and technical curricula offerings to meet the established standards in a number of industries. This alignment allows students to obtain credits and certifications in the respective industries that are recognized throughout the country. This pairing with industry is worthy of serving as a best practices model for other schools. *(meetings with the SALT committee, board of trustees, and school administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing classes, following students)*

A board of trustees, representing an impressive array of stakeholders, governs the school. This board strongly believes in the value of Davies, in particular, and career and technical education in general. In conjunction with the administrative team, the board spearheaded the development of a broad-based strategic plan with ten clearly defined strategies. The development of this plan was the catalyst for the current schoolwide conversation focused on continuous improvement. However, faculty, parents, and students were under-represented in the developmental stages of the planning process. While a large number of teachers are now involved, there is not common agreement on the strategic direction of the school. Presently, Davies is striving to develop a common vision that can be shared by all the partners in the educational process—board of trustees, administration, teachers, students, parents, industry, and community. Similarly, there are conflicting philosophies among the various parties regarding what students this school should serve. Additionally, the current plan does not have a bottom line focus on improving student learning and teaching; too few strategies and tactics are designed specifically to close gaps in student performance. *(meetings with the SALT committee, school administrators, and board of trustees, talking with teachers and staff, reviewing strategic plan for Davies School, reviewing strategic plan sub-committees' documentation)*

The mission of Davies School is to develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities students will need to be productive workers, future business leaders, entrepreneurs, and life-long learners. While students are provided a strong technical foundation, the present organizational structure of the school programs and courses, and the expertise of the professional staff are not optimized to make the most of student learning. Opportunities for students to become well-rounded, productive members of society are restricted by the absence of programs in the arts, the limitations in world language study, the minimum offerings in each of the academic areas, and the limited number of extra-curricula activities. Correspondingly, the writing lab and library are not used to their optimum effectiveness. The inflexibility of scheduling and the limited course selection is a source of frustration for many students and teachers. To date, Davies has not sufficiently focused on or developed a rigorous academic program that challenges students and effectively complements their career and technical programs while concurrently preparing students for a post-secondary education. *(meetings with the students and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing the program of studies, reviewing course offerings, reviewing Destiny 2001 Yearbook)*

There is a strong desire to improve the basic and higher order thinking skills of students. To accomplish this the school has hired additional reading teachers to support student literacy

development. It has implemented a floating reading period, developed standards-based curricula, made available a variety of staff development activities through their professional development academy, and provided technology support. Additionally, a small teacher-to-student ratio exists in many of the resource, reading, and career and technical classes. Unfortunately, these small ratios infrequently exist in the academic core. The large teacher-student ratios and the fact that teachers teach up to six classes per day place considerable demands on teachers. This limits the number of relevant and rigorous assignments focused on numeracy, literacy, and the application of knowledge that teachers can realistically assign and assess. *(reviewing professional development activities, talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing curricula, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Three main groups have decision-making responsibilities—the board of trustees, the school-based management committee, and the strategic planning committee. Significant confusion exists in this school regarding the roles and responsibilities of each group. There is duplication of effort by these groups and their purpose and functions are nebulous and evolving. Some groups have assumed responsibilities previously associated with other groups. The faculty, staff, administration, and board of trustees are embarking on a renewed effort to improve Davies school. Their efforts are hindered by the unclear roles mentioned above. Correspondingly, department heads and other leadership structures are underutilized for school-level budgetary, instructional, curricula, and operational decisions. *(talking with teachers and staff, meetings with the SALT committee, school administrators, and board of trustees, reviewing the contract between William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School Teachers' Association and the Board of Trustees)*

Parents and students have little formal voice in the decision-making process at this school. Parents are neither represented on the strategic planning committee, nor is there an active school-wide parents and teachers group. These constraints are exacerbated for Limited English Proficiency students and parents. Student government is limited to class officers representing the interests of each class, but an overall representation by an umbrella group, such as a student council, is lacking. The school provides a literary magazine, a student television (WDCT-TV) studio, and a radio station, but a student-generated newspaper is non-existent. Consequently, powerful communication tools for student and parent expression and input are missing. *(talking with students, teachers, and staff, meetings with students and parents, SALT Survey 1999-2000, reviewing Destiny 2001 Yearbook)*

An abundance of resources—supplies, materials, personnel, and facilities—has been secured by the board of trustees, school administrators, and teachers to support and improve programs at Davies. Considerable effort is expended to develop the career and technical programs. The distribution of many of these resources, however, does not fully capitalize on the maximum potential they can provide. Some classes are too small; others are too large. Existing personnel are sometimes used inefficiently and ineffectively. The sequence of academic and career and technical courses are not sufficiently aligned with the instructional needs of students. Little integration of curricula and courses occurs, resulting in missed opportunities for students to make connections between and among subjects, theory, and practice. Additionally, some textbooks and course materials in academic programs are inadequate to deliver the desired standards-based curriculum at appropriate reading levels. *(reviewing course schedules, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with the SALT committee, reviewing classroom instructional materials, reviewing textbooks, observing classes)*

## Commendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

The industry partners the school has cultivated

The credentialing and industry certification

The efforts to establish a strategic plan designed to provide a sense of direction for the school

## Recommendations for William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School

Conduct a thorough self-study focused on student learning; use data generated in self-study and this report to revise your current strategic plan to include strategies, tactics, and action plans specifically designed to measurably improve student performance.

Work to achieve a commonly held vision for the strategic direction of the school that includes consensus on the characteristics of students Davies wants to attract and educate.

Investigate alternate ways to schedule the school day to facilitate the integration between and within academic and career programs, to facilitate team building, and to allow more common planning time of teachers.

Select either the school-based management committee or the strategic planning committee to oversee the development and implementation of your strategic plan and to serve as a vehicle for shared decision-making; reconstitute the selected team to include students and parents.

Intensify schoolwide the focus on preparing students for a post-secondary education; strengthen the academic rigor and relevance of courses and increase the number of post-secondary partnerships.

Devise a formal professional development plan, based on identified needs, to build schoolwide understanding of the instructional practices, organizational principles, and standards-based strategies needed to improve student performance; include team building, activities, creating interdisciplinary units, developing shared leadership, and professional development previously recommended.

Review the current guidelines from the RI Department of Education, regarding Limited English Proficient students; consider disseminating important documents in native languages of students and activating an LEP parents committee.

Expand the utilization of the library before, during, and after the normal school day.

Establish a strong parent-teacher group and increase parental involvement.

Examine the current allocation of resources, teacher-student ratios, and the taught curricula in individual classes to ensure they are supporting and developing student learning as effectively as they could.

## Recommendations for Board of Trustees

Consider attending educational forums, conferences, and seminars on the latest research-based educational reforms in order to complement your roles as policy makers and partners in the strategic

planning of this school.

Ensure that the group ultimately responsible for revising and implementing the strategic plan represents all stakeholders and embodies a shared decision-making process.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

Your recently formulated strategic planning team can be a powerful tool for focusing the energy, efforts, and expertise of the entire learning community on improving the academic and technical education children receive. Before proceeding with your reform efforts, thoughtfully and purposefully examine this report and its recommendations.

In your efforts to strengthen and improve the educational experiences provided to students, work through your strategic planning committee. Continued broad-based involvement in the revision and implementation of a school strategic plan will facilitate the process of shared decision making. Work to ensure that the entire Davies community feels free to express their opinions and to become active members of productive teams. The best ideas often result from solution-focused discourse necessary to genuinely consider and resolve diverse opinions. Make the most of department heads and existing leadership structures in the decision-making process. Rely on the strengths of your staff, parents, and students to help you sharpen your focus and chart a course of action designed to build on the strengths of this learning community. The buy-in and commitment of the professional staff are necessary to make your planned reforms a reality.

As you move forward, expand the schoolwide focus on academic programs and partnerships in order to increase the number of students applying for and attending post-secondary education. Make student learning the focus of your efforts. Determine what skills, knowledge, and abilities you want all children to have attained upon graduation. Purposefully collect, analyze, and synthesize data from student work in each classroom and program, as well as from your state assessment results, to determine the current strengths and needs of your students. Then customize instructional strategies and programmatic approaches in order to close gaps in performance.

This school is clearly moving in the right direction. Your unique facilities, combination of academic and career and technical programs, industry partnerships, and commitment to children provide a strong foundation on which to build. Capitalize on this foundation and the expertise that exists in this school. Let on-going self-study activities and an analysis of student learning be the driving forces that guide your instructional choices, programmatic options, strategic planning, and budgetary decisions. In other words, let the specific learning needs of your students be the motivation behind your efforts at continuous improvement.

When reading and reflecting upon this report, the school, and its community should bear in mind that, by design, this SALT report is not a celebration of all the wonderful things taking place at William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School. Rather, it is a presentation of those items that, in the visiting team's judgment, must become the school's focus if it is to help all students of all achievement levels perform at higher levels. As you work with this SALT report, we hope you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you make this good learning community better meet the needs of your students. For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

# William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School SALT committee

Stephen Thorton  
Principal / Director

Brian Butler  
Assistant Principal / Director

Janet Butler  
Science Teacher

Stephen Cardoso  
Electronics Teacher

Eric Gartner  
Machine Teacher

Ann Marie Kachanis  
School Nurse

Carlotta Kelly  
English as a Second Language Teacher

Thomas Langois  
Science Teacher

William Murphy  
Auto Careers Teacher

Jack Riley  
Math Teacher

Patricia Tarpy  
Reading Teacher

Deborah Went  
Math Teacher

## The SALT Visit Team

Dr. Michael S. Barnes  
Technology Education / Department Chairperson  
Ponaganset Middle / Senior High School  
Foster-Glocester, Rhode Island  
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)  
Chair of the Team

Caroline L. Aldrich  
Parent  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Stephen Brady  
Electrical Department Teacher  
Warwick Area Career and Technical Center  
Warwick, Rhode Island

Jean M. Campbell  
Principal / Director  
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Cranston, Rhode Island

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Toll Gate High School  
Warwick, Rhode Island

Richard Silva  
Chemistry / Biology Teacher

East Providence High School  
East Providence, Rhode Island

Sandra A. Storti  
English Teacher  
Cranston High School West  
Cranston, Rhode Island

# New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2001)

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

**William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School**

November 7, 2001

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, and I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge derived from these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*), I conclude that:

1. 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.
2. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report as a legitimate SALT Visit Report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
November 7, 2001

