



Toll Gate High School

Warwick

The SALT Visit Team Report

March 7, 2003



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 of the 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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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Toll Gate High School from March 3 through 7, 2003. 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 deliberately chooses the words that best convey its message 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 findings of the SALT report are presented in six report sections:

Profile describes some of the key features of the school and sums up the school's results on state tests.

The team writes *Portrait* as an overview of what it thinks are the most important themes in the conclusions that follow. While *Portrait* precedes the team's conclusions, it is written after they are complete.

The team's conclusions are about how well the team thinks the school is performing in each of the three SALT focus areas: Learning, Teaching and The School.

The team may award commendations in each focus area for aspects of the school that it considers unusual and commendable. The team must make several recommendations to the school for each focus area, drawing on the conclusions for that area. The team may make recommendations to other agencies, e.g. the district.

The team provides the school with some brief comments about how it thinks the school should proceed, in the *Final Advice* section.

The Catalpa Ltd. endorsement of the legitimacy of the report and its conclusions appears on the final page.

The SALT report creates accountability for improvement by connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement directly 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 visit protocol and that this report meets all criteria required for a legitimate SALT visit 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.

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 improvement plan for Toll Gate 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 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 Toll Gate High School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 198 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 170 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and many teachers were observed more than once.*

- ◆ *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*

- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*

- ◆ *analyzing five years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*

- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

 - district and school policies and practices*

 - records of professional development activities*

 - classroom assessments*

 - school improvement plan for Toll Gate High School*

 - district strategic plan*

 - 2002 SALT Survey report*

 - classroom textbooks*

 - 2002 Information Works!*

 - 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*

 - 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary
2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary

Warwick Public Schools K-12 Standards and Benchmarks

Toll Gate PTSA Newsletter

Agreement between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union, September 1, 2000 to August 31, 2003

Toll Gate High School Parent Handbook

Warwick Public Schools Professional Evaluation Document

Toll Gate Parent/School/Student Compact, 2000-2004

Warwick Public Schools Code of Ethics

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 24 hours in six separate meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

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 deliberately chose the words, phrases, and sentences it used 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 how important it considers what the team has said and why, the school will take its first step in becoming accountable in a way that actually improves learning.

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

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

2. PROFILE OF Toll Gate High School

Background

Toll Gate High School opened its doors in 1972, becoming Warwick's third high school. For the first 23 years the school housed grades 10-12. Grade 9 students were added in 1995. In 1998 an additional classroom wing was constructed, and the Robert Shapiro Cultural Arts Center and music complex were completed in 1999. Currently a principal, two assistant principals, 99 full- and part-time faculty, and numerous support staff serve 1241 students.

Of the more than 1200 students attending Toll Gate, 94% are white, less than 2% are Hispanic, less than 1% is Native American, 3% are Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% is black. Six percent of the students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch. Fifteen percent are special needs students.

Among the many programs offered to students at Toll Gate, the Arts Integration Program, which promotes arts-integrated instructional practices across the disciplines, is a focal point. Artistic presentations are being used to create an invigorating learning atmosphere within the school. The state-of-the-art cultural arts center supports a very vital music program with opportunities for students to participate in band, jazz band, orchestra, and three different choral groups. An ongoing school-to-work initiative begins with a Career Exposition for ninth grade students. Students have an opportunity to explore different careers and career paths and to learn what types of education and training they need to enter those careers. Jobs for Ocean State Graduates is a public service program that assists high school students through graduation to prepare them to become well-adjusted, employable citizens. Toll Gate also has a transitional program for grade 9 students and parents, which consists of an ice cream social, an orientation, and the ASK (Alliance for Students Who Kare) peer mentoring program with grade 11 and 12 students mentoring grade 9 students.

Many Toll Gate students have earned state and national recognition for their academic accomplishments. Some have been designated National Merit and Presidential Scholars, Rhode Island Foreign Language Student of the Year, and first place finishers in the Academic Decathlon. Toll Gate is proud that its Academic Decathlon Team consistently finishes in the top ten among Rhode Island public high schools. Student participation in athletics is high, with a combined total of 24 male and female interscholastic varsity teams. Many Toll Gate students are involved in a variety of extra-curricular programs both within the school and the larger Warwick community. The Student Senate Executive Committee provides a forum for students to discuss their concerns with their peers and with the school administrators.

The Toll Gate faculty and staff have also received state and national recognition. Among these are the National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Award in writing, Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematic and Science Teaching, Milken Educator Awards, U.S. Department of Energy Teacher Research Awards, and the Rhode Island Foreign Language Teacher of the Year. Toll Gate teachers also have had their work published in several state, regional, and national journals. The Faculty Advisory Committee, composed of volunteer faculty members from each department, meets monthly and operates as an avenue for faculty concerns.

Parents are encouraged to be active members of the Toll Gate community. They are represented on the School Improvement Team. They are encouraged to join the Toll Gate chapter of the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (PTSA), an organization that publishes a quarterly newsletter. In 2002 the "Toll Gate L" was created. This listserv further enables communication between the principal, parents, and the school community.

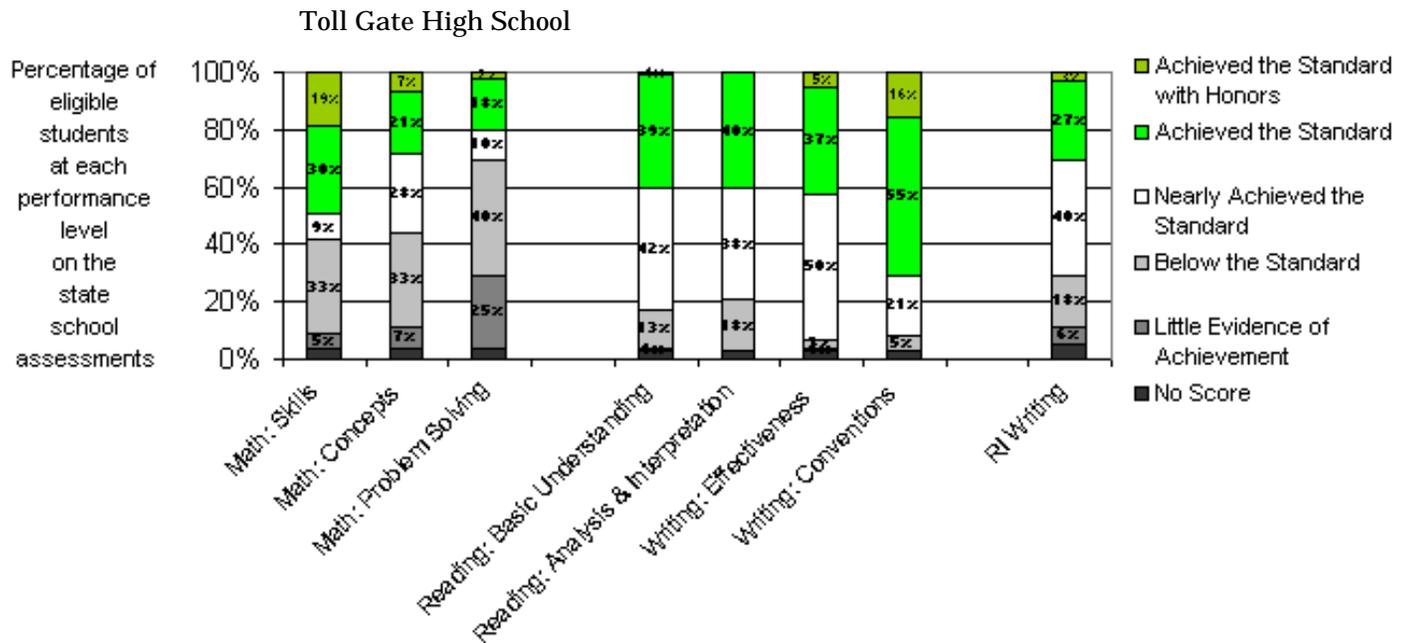
State Assessment Results for Toll Gate High School

This section of the school profile shows results from the latest available state assessment program four different ways: against performance standards; compared to similar students in the state; across student groups within the school; and over time. 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.

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. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

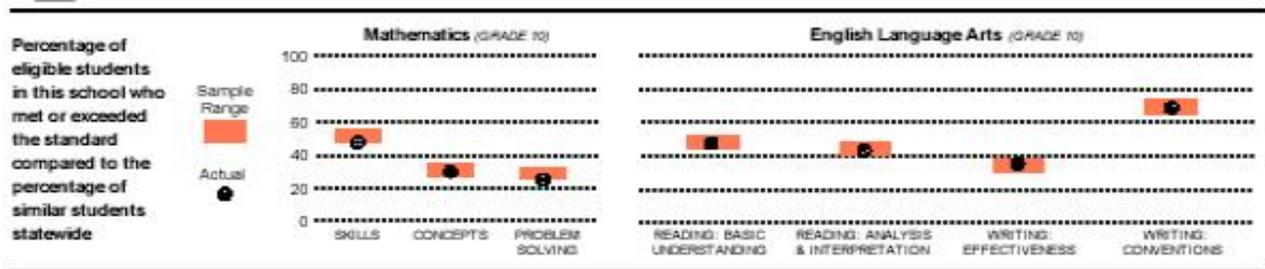


With the exception of writing conventions, fewer than half of the students have achieved standard on the Mathematics and English Language Arts subtests.

Results compared to similar students in 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. 2000-2001 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide

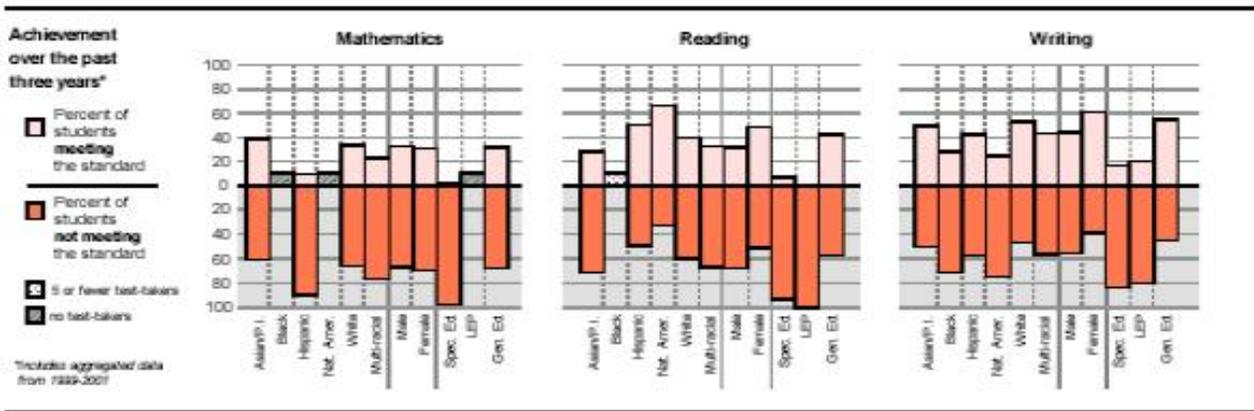


For all subtests students at Toll Gate High School are performing as well as similar students statewide.

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. 2000-2001 Student Results across Subgroups



Equity gaps exist between special education students and regular education students in math, reading and writing. Females outperform males in reading and writing. Hispanics perform less well than whites in math and writing.

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. These displays correspond to the targets the Department of Education asked schools to set four years ago and are the basis for the department categorizing schools as improving or non-improving.

Table 4. 2001-2002 Student Results Showing Change Over Time

Toll Gate High School has been categorized as a moderate performing, not improving school on the basis of its assessment results from 1998 to 2002. The following tables show if the school improved or not in each area that defines improvement (*Yes* denotes improvement and *No* denotes no improvement.)

Mathematics: Skills		Mathematics: Concepts		Mathematics: Problem Solving	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Reading: Basic Understanding		Reading: Analysis and Interpretation	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
No	No	Yes	Yes

Writing: Effectiveness		Writing: Conventions		Rhode Island Writing	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Toll Gate students are making less progress in the basic skills and basic understanding subtests than they are in the subtests that require more application, analysis, and interpretation. No improvement has been made in student performance on writing subtests.

Information Works! data for Toll Gate High School is available at <<http://www.rido.net>>www.rido.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Toll gate High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Visitors to Toll Gate High School soon become aware that they have entered a special place. The attractive, well-maintained, spacious, and clean buildings house an impressive learning community. It is evident that students, teachers, and administrators work well in a cooperative, respectful, relaxed, and supportive atmosphere. The education of Toll Gate students is taken very seriously, with compassion and humor contributing to an overall positive school climate.

Students are friendly, welcoming, and eager to share their experiences. They take tremendous pride in their considerable accomplishments, whether artistic, academic, or athletic. They respect the faculty and administrators, who obviously care about them and for them. As found in most high schools, Toll Gate students form circles of friends and acquaintances with those who share the same interests. However, this does not lead to pockets of isolation or exclusion for any group. Instead, a sense of security and comfort results with most students knowing they are part of something special and unique.

Toll Gate truly is a comprehensive high school. The faculty and administrators in this school work cooperatively and professionally to meet the needs of all students. They offer many high quality academic programs and also support a large number of extra curricular offerings, making it possible for students to avail themselves of a high quality educational experience. The “open door” policy fostered by the team of administrators results in very positive and effective communication among the professional staff. Students also have many opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns. It is no wonder that members of this school community take pride in their work and have confidence that their students are well prepared for future success.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2002 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2002 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*

Conclusions

The extraordinary student body is the heart and soul of Toll Gate High School. Students possess qualities of respect, maturity, caring, and motivation that are evident in the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria and, indeed, all places where students are found. “Titan pride” is more than a school slogan. Student pride is the foundation for this school’s climate. Students feel that the adults in this school care about their well being and success. Students trust each other and the adults in this school. Students express confidence that they are well prepared to meet the future. They understand and appreciate the opportunities that are available here. Their attitudes positively contribute to the overall atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation that exists in this school community. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Student achievement across all disciplines and ability levels is evident in the high quality of student work, especially in those classrooms where high standards are set and clear expectations are provided. Students demonstrate and express their learning in a variety of ways, including more traditional academic activities and highly creative and original projects. They solve problems, make connections across disciplines, and eagerly apply their knowledge to real world situations. Students work well individually and cooperatively. They appreciate their opportunities to collaborate with one another. Students at Toll Gate embrace opportunities to participate in student performances that allow them to connect their learning to the arts and across all academic disciplines. Students

in this school are increasing their understanding of themselves as learners. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Students read a variety of genres at appropriate levels and for a variety of purposes across the disciplines. While reading, many students make meaningful connections to other books they have read, to their own lives, and to the larger world. Students report orally on the books they read and engage in classroom discussions, debates, and learning projects that deepen their understanding of text. Student conversations about story elements and authors' styles indicate their mature approach to literature and demonstrate their abilities to synthesize, analyze and interpret what they read. However, not all students are able to read effectively and apply their skills in all disciplines. While many students read at an advanced level and use their reading to increase learning across the disciplines, others still struggle. (*2002 SALT Survey report, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 2002 Information Works!, observing classes, talking with students and teachers*)

Students at Toll Gate participate in a variety of challenging mathematics courses. All ninth grade students take some form of Algebra I, and many upper classmen elect to take additional courses beyond those required for graduation. Students of all abilities have access to graphing calculators, and many use them regularly. While in some classes student learning is predominately skills-based, in others students solve problems, apply their knowledge, and justify the processes they use with varying degrees of success. Student performance on statewide assessments supports these findings. (*observing classes, meeting with the students and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*)

Students at Toll Gate High School write in classes across the disciplines. Student writing is purposeful and aimed at a variety of audiences. However, student performances on the statewide writing assessments indicate that fewer than half of the students met the standard for Rhode Island Writing and Writing Effectiveness. The quality of student writing varies greatly. In classrooms across the disciplines, some students produce work that reflects knowledge and successful application of the writing process. They create rough drafts, revise, edit, and produce final products of high quality. Other students are developing the skills they need to produce better work, but they are not yet proficient. (*observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 2002 Information Works!*)

Commendations for Toll Gate High School

The mature, respectful, self-confident, and motivated student body

Student willingness to be cooperative and collaborative

Student willingness to be challenged

The emergence of students' understanding of themselves as learners

Recommendations for Toll Gate High School

Rigorously enforce and implement those elements of your School Improvement Plan and School Compact for Learning that you have identified to improve student learning in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Continue to foster a school environment that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *Toll Gate Parent/School/Student Compact, 2000-2004*
- ◆ *Warwick Public Schools Code of Ethics*

Conclusions

The overwhelming majority of teachers in this school are dedicated professionals. They demonstrate a willingness to provide students with a wide range of learning experiences. Along with the School-Based Coordinator they reach out to the larger school community for support for their programs. They participate in professional development activities that are provided by the district, and they take the initiative to look for additional opportunities for professional growth. Teachers in this school have joined together to support the Arts Integration program, a critical friends group, a “teacher to teacher” program, and a variety of other activities that take place beyond the school day. Students report that their teachers regularly support their extra curricular activities, and they express appreciation for their teachers’ involvement and concern. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

With few exceptions, Toll Gate teachers have established clear expectations for student behavior. They have established routines that allow transitions from one activity to another to take place in a seamless manner. Time in those classrooms is not wasted. Rules are established, and students are aware of behavioral expectations without teachers having constantly to remind them of their responsibilities. Students report that their teachers are compassionate and willing to listen to their concerns. As a result, teachers and students in most classrooms are able to focus on learning and teaching and have established an atmosphere of mutual trust and support. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, Toll Gate Parent/School/Student Compact, 2000-2004, Warwick Public Schools Code of Ethics*)

Most teachers at Toll Gate High School provide high quality instruction. In those classrooms, where teachers make their expectations clear and hold students to high standards, a high quality of student learning clearly is evident. Students are expected to play an active role in classes that are standards-based. Teachers provide opportunities for students to peer and self evaluate, work cooperatively, share their knowledge, and regularly use performance-based assessments. Students are given choices in their learning. These teachers help their students know themselves, as learners, and encourage them to demonstrate what they know, using several modalities. Students report that in these classrooms their opportunities for learning are optimal. (*observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Some teachers in this school prefer teacher-directed instruction and almost exclusively employ this instructional strategy. They are more likely to direct student learning with little flexibility and variety incorporated into their instruction or assessments. In these classrooms the quality of student learning is significantly diminished, and students express their disappointment. Students in this school are beginning to understand themselves as learners and have come to expect more. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Commendations for Toll Gate High School

The dedicated and professional members of the faculty

Those teachers who fully support their students academically, socially, and emotionally

Those teachers who optimize their students' learning experiences by providing a wide range of student learning experiences

Recommendations for Toll Gate High School

Continue to increase, emphasize, and implement a variety of teaching strategies to reach and meet the needs of all students.

Encourage and support all teachers to engage in high quality professional development that will enable them to implement standards-based instruction, performance-based assessments, and student-centered lessons.

Increase opportunities for teachers to share effective instructional strategies through modeling, lesson study, sharing of student work, co-teaching, and common planning time. Provide training so that these activities can take place in a non-threatening and supportive environment.

Continue to support the efforts of the school-based coordinator, and consider making this a full time position.

Recommendations for the Warwick School Department

Provide professional development opportunities in those areas where a need has been identified.

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 administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing Arts Integration binder and grant proposal*
- ◆ *Warwick Public Schools K-12 Standards and Benchmarks*
- ◆ *reviewing Toll Gate PTSA Newsletter*
- ◆ *Agreement between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union, September 1, 2000 to August 31, 2003*
- ◆ *Toll Gate High School Parent Handbook*
- ◆ *Warwick Public Schools Professional Evaluation document*

Conclusions

Toll Gate High School is an impressive facility that is able to support a variety of programs that enhance student learning. This spacious school is exceptionally clean and very well maintained. Display cases and bulletin boards in classrooms, as well as common spaces, provide opportunities to display student work and celebrate student and faculty accomplishments. The state-of-the-art auditorium and music rooms with computerized control centers and capacity for studio recording demonstrate this school is committed to the arts. Additional facilities that support student learning are a high quality language lab, keyboarding and computer application classrooms equipped with new computers, and a well equipped, frequently utilized library and media center. While students and teachers have some concerns about technology that is not always in operating condition, the overall availability and accessibility of technological resources enhances student learning. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

A strong spirit of collegiality, compassion, and mutual support exists in this school. Administrators, teachers, support staff, and students report that they are happy to be here. Members of this school community accept their responsibility for maintaining a school climate that nurtures and values every individual. An atmosphere of acceptance is evident. Special populations of students have been seamlessly integrated into this school community. Toll Gate High School exemplifies a true

learning community. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*)

The administrators at Toll Gate High School effectively work as a team, drawing on their individual strengths. All are highly successful in accomplishing their delegated responsibilities, while at the same time supporting each other's work. The principal establishes a clear vision, goals, and expectations for this school. She also provides an organizing structure to support teaching and learning. The assistant principals support her efforts and work collaboratively to provide a safe and orderly school environment. In spite of the fact that the teacher contract severely restricts the principal's authority to choose a leadership team, she has successfully managed to build a cohesive and effective team that helps make the mission of Toll Gate High School become a reality. (*Agreement between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union, September 1, 2000 to August 31, 2003, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices*)

Arts Integration is a unique program that has energized this school community. Students are excited about their opportunities to connect and express their learning through the arts. Along with the school's high quality art and music programs, it allows students to showcase their talents. It has provided a vehicle that will enhance the school's efforts to increase articulation and communication across the disciplines. This program encourages all students to apply their learning actively by engaging in project-based activities. Through this program students are realizing that learning can be fun. They are also raising their level of cultural awareness and appreciation for the arts. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing Arts Integration binder and grant proposal*)

The Warwick School district has established standards and benchmarks for all curriculum areas. With the exception of some classroom teachers and some members of the guidance department, the professional staff at Toll Gate High School has familiarized itself with these standards and has begun to implement them. In the case of guidance, some students, parents, and staff report that current services are not fully meeting student needs. They agree that counselors need to be more consistent in implementing the standards and benchmarks. (*2002 SALT Survey report, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with students, school and district administrators, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, observing classes, Warwick Public Schools K-12 Standards and Benchmarks*)

School and district administrators report that this community has been very supportive of Toll Gate High School. While administrators are very appreciative of this support, they express a desire for increased parent involvement in the educational process. School efforts to communicate with parents include a Toll Gate High School Parent Handbook, newsletter, the "Toll Gate L" list serve, local media, bulletins attached to report cards, and a web site. The school has a parent organization (PTSA) and has included parents on the School Improvement Team. Although these parents are actively involved, they are small in number. As a result the School Improvement Team has made increased parent involvement a priority in their School Improvement Plan. (*meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing Toll Gate PTSA Newsletter, Toll Gate High School Parent Handbook*)

The current teacher evaluation process is not likely to have a positive impact on teacher quality. The teacher evaluation process is antiquated and has not kept up with changes in instructional strategies. Characteristics listed in the document are not consistent with those considered reflective of current best practices and teacher quality. The use of the teacher evaluation form is not consistent in all departments. Some department chairs complete the basic form, while others opt to provide more feedback using an additional narrative. The current form calls for a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" assessment and does not require the evaluator to provide specific feedback to inform teachers fully on how to improve their practice. (*Warwick Public Schools Professional Evaluation document, talking with teachers and school administrators*)

Commendations for Toll Gate High School

The custodial staff that maintains and cleans these buildings and grounds

The state-of-the-arts facilities that support student learning

The strong school spirit of collegiality, compassion, and mutual support, as well as the seamless integration of the special needs population

The highly effective administrative team

The Arts Integration Program

The high quality art and music programs

Recommendations for Toll Gate High School

Provide for regular maintenance and timely repair of technology.

Continue to support and expand the Arts Integration Program.

Encourage teachers and staff in all departments to implement the standards and benchmarks that have been adopted by the district. Provide professional development that will make this possible.

Review the process of teacher evaluation and engage the department chairs in a dialogue that will encourage consistency and improve the process.

Investigate other means of increasing parental involvement.

Recommendations for the Warwick School Department and the Warwick Teachers' Union

Negotiate the implementation of a standards-based teacher evaluation process.

Negotiate contractual language for the appointment of department chairs to enable the school's principal to have greater input into the composition of the school's leadership team.

7. Final Advice to the School

Our visit to Toll Gate High School came at a time when your school was coping with several significant personal losses. The amazing character of this learning community was evident in the manner in which you welcomed us and revealed yourselves as students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Your ability to confront adversity and accept a challenge at such a difficult time is remarkable.

We are confident that these same qualities will enable you to consider the findings of this report and act upon those that you believe will lead to improved student learning. While we have recognized that Toll Gate High School provides opportunities for all students to learn, we encourage you to continue to strive for improvement. We urge you to continue to implement those action plans that you have identified in your school improvement plan, especially those that deal with improved student performance on statewide assessments.

This report has commended some the excellent qualities of this school community. Be certain to celebrate your many successes as you move forward. You can be confident that you have already had a positive impact on the lives of your students, and this SALT visit team has every confidence that this will continue to be true.

The Toll Gate High School Improvement Team

Dr. William A. Jutras, Assistant Principal and Chair

Kathleen Acciaoli, Parent

Rachel Adam, Student

Shannon Bradshaw, Parent

Candace M. Calouri, Assistant Principal

Andrea Campbell, Special Education

Richard Fucci, English

Linda Grande, Parent

Susan Leveille, Parent

Alison Machnik, Student

Deborah Miller, Foreign Language

Jaime Nash, Post Secondary

Madeline A. Perreault, Principal

Michael Resnick, Student

Dr. Gregory Rubano, English

Sean Sullivan, Student

Alan Webber, Community

Jonathan Wild, Support Staff

The SALT Visit Team

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Career and Technical Education Specialist
Rhode Island Department of Education, Providence, RI

Gerald S. Zannella
Guidance Counselor
Coventry High School, Coventry, RI

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Toll Gate High School

March 7, 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 two portions 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. The number of team members on this team just met the minimum number set by RIDE for a school of this size. That became a possible issue when the team lost an afternoon caused by Warwick schools closing early due to a heavy winter storm. The fact that the team stayed late and worked extra diligently coupled with the excellent cooperation of the school ameliorated any effect that the early closing might have had on the legitimacy of the conclusions.
2. RIDE has correctly certified that the team met the other membership criteria for a legitimate SALT team.
3. 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.
4. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
5. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
DATE: March 26, 2003