



Cranston High School West

Cranston

The SALT Visit Team Report

January 31, 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 Cranston High School West from January 27 to January 31, 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 Cranston High School West 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 Cranston High School West.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 197 complete classes and 57 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 163 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and most teachers were observed more than once.*

- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*

- ◆ *following 15 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*

 - guidance department*

 - department chairs*

 - special education coordinator*

- ◆ *meeting and discussions with the Cranston Career & Technical SALT Visit team*

- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators for a total of 49 hours over the course of the week*

- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*

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

- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

 - Cranston Public Schools District Technology Plan, 2002-2005*

 - Cranston Public Schools Fiscal 2001/2003 Budget Revision 1*

 - Cranston Public Schools District Plan for Assessment, 2001-2002*

 - Cranston Public Schools, District Strategic Plan*

 - Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Special Needs, School Support System Report and Support Plan for Cranston Public Schools, November 1, 2002*

 - Cranston Public Schools, Mentoring Professional Development for Newly Hired Teachers, summer, 2002*

 - Cranston Public Schools, 'The Cranston Quarterly'*

 - Cranston Public Schools Administrators Retreat, 'Putting All the Pieces Together', August, 2001, folder*

 - Cranston Public Schools, A Guide to Curriculum Improvement*

 - Cranston Public Schools East & West Program of Studies*

 - Cranston Report Card folder*

 - Cranston High School West NEASC Report, March 1997*

 - Cranston High School West NEASC Report, Two-Year Response, 1999*

 - Cranston High School West NEASC Special Progress Report, November 2000*

 - Cranston High School West NEASC Five-Year Response Report, February 2002*

 - Cranston High School West/Cranston Area Career & Technical Center Guidance Department binder*

Literacy Department, Reading Specialist/Consultant, Roles and Responsibilities folder
Cranston High School West program of studies
Cranston High School West, Agenda 2002-2003
Cranston High School West, Cranston Area Career and Technical Center Welcome SALT Team binder, 2003
records of professional development activities
classroom assessments
school improvement plan for Cranston High School West
classroom textbooks
various curricular guides
school practices and policies
reviewing student newspaper
2002 Information Works!
2002 SALT Survey report
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

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 31 hours in nine 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.

A SALT Visit team chaired by Michael Barnes conducted a visit at the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center during the same week. While the two programs have important overlaps the visits were conducted as two separate visits. The two teams simultaneously met with the school improvement team for two hours, had representation at each of the school administrators meetings and spent two hours in joint discussions of evidence and working conclusions about matters relative to both schools. Informal conversations between the two chairs occurred throughout the week of the visits. Nevertheless, the respective team prepared each report independently. This joint process led to modifications in the generating evidence and the building of conclusions that are already established by the visit protocol.

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.

2. PROFILE OF Cranston High School West

Background

Cranston High School West is a large suburban school situated on an open campus in the western section of Cranston, Rhode Island. The school consists of five buildings, which include the Cranston Career and Technical Center. Approximately one third of the students are enrolled in the various programs at the Center, but these students receive their comprehensive education at West. They travel from the surrounding communities of Johnston, Foster, Gloucester, Scituate, and North Smithfield, as well as from Cranston.

A staff of one principal, three assistant principals, 122 teachers, four guidance counselors, two library/Media specialists, six student services professionals, eight secretarial staff, four teacher assistants, two technical assistant, one school nurse, 14 cafeteria and 11 custodial staff service the school.

Of the 1702 students in attendance, 1597 (94%) are white, 59 (3.5%) are Hispanic, 36 (2%) are Asian, and 10 (0.6%) are black. Two hundred-and-seventy-eight students (16%) receive special education services. Of these, 215 receive resource assistance, and 63 are self-contained. Seventy-eight students (5%) receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Cranston High School West is in the process of piloting a modified block schedule with six periods in the day. The second period of the day is 91minutes long, and all classes rotate through this longer period once in the seven-day cycle. Students at Cranston West participate in and are successful in various award-winning activities. Each year West students earn medals and keys in the Regional and National Art Competitions; the Falcon Band and the West Chamber Choir perform nationally and internationally. The Drama Club has placed first in the State Drama Fest twice in the last three years and hosted the Regional Drama Fest in April 2002. The school newspaper, *The West Wind*, has been recognized as the outstanding school newspaper in the state for the past several years.

Students received gold medals in competitions such as the Oceanography Bowl, the Science Olympiad and the Junior Engineering Team (JETS). The Math Team has been a state division champion for the past 17 out of 18 years. In the past three years 15 students placed first, second or third place in the National Language competitions in French, Spanish and Italian. The Career & Technical Center has earned the greatest number of medals, compared to other technical centers, in state competitions for the past four years.

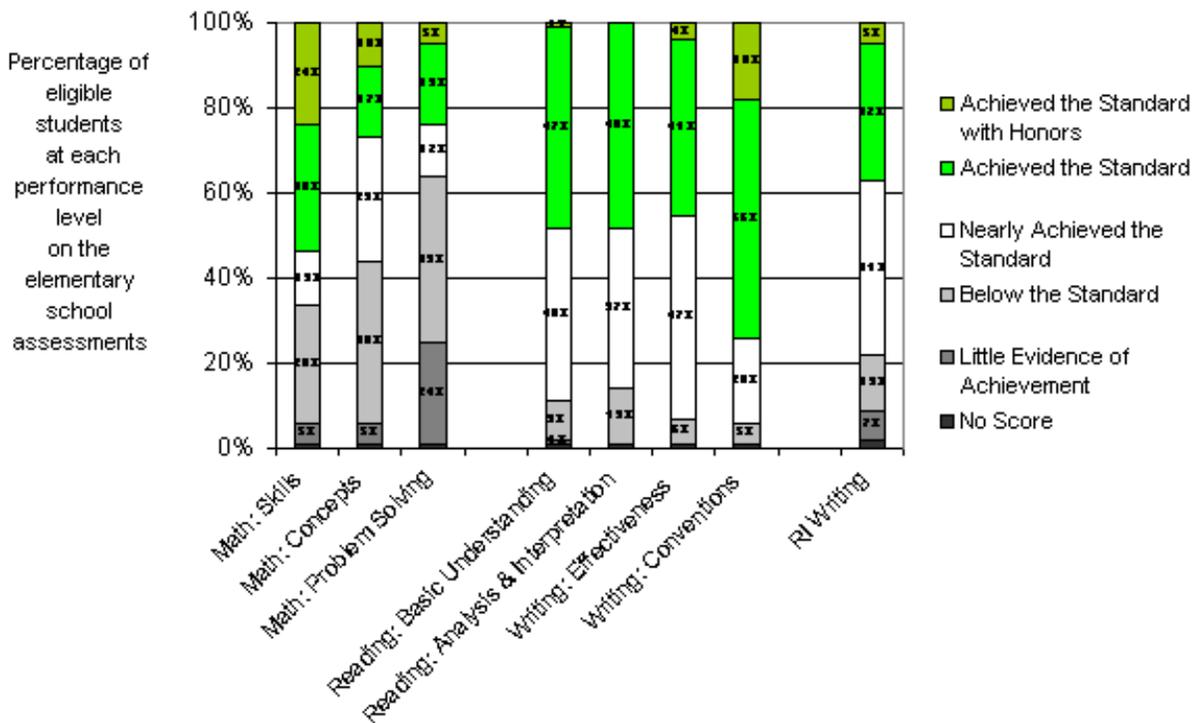
State Assessment Results for Cranston High School West

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

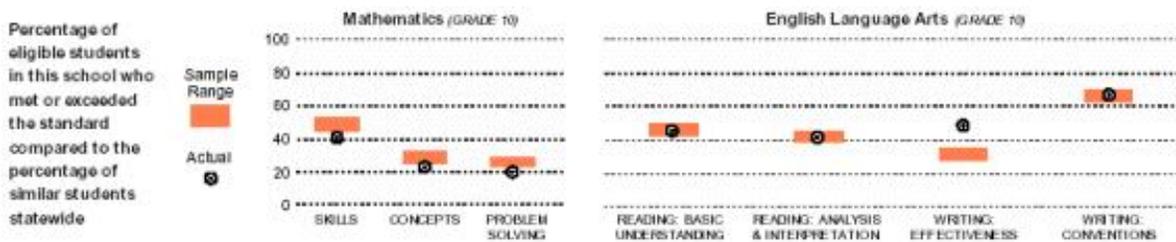


Students score well on the Writing Conventions subtest with a large percentage (74%) achieving or exceeding the standard. Conversely, achievement on the two more difficult math subtests is low.

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



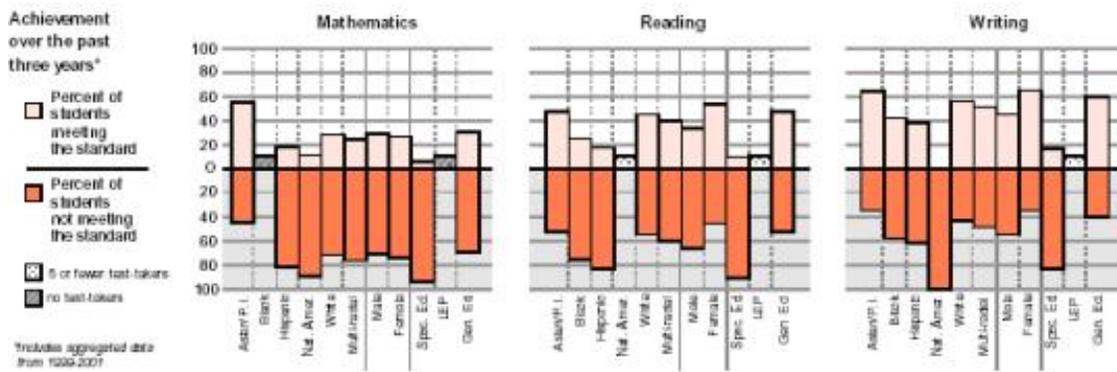
While overall students perform at about the same level as their counterparts across the state, they do outperform them on the Writing Effectiveness subtest. This indicates that students at Cranston High School West have 'value added' to their writing effectiveness instruction.

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 for special education students in every subject. They also exist for Hispanic and black students in reading and writing and for males in these same subjects.

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. 2002 Student Results Showing Change Over Time

Cranston High School West 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	Yes	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	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

It is notable that Cranston High School West changed status from low performing to moderately performing for the 2001-2002 testing period. Also, the percentages of students in the lowest performance levels decreased by at least 3% in six of seven subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Cranston High School West AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Cranston High School West, home of the Mighty Falcons, is a comprehensive high school that is rich in tradition. It offers academic and vocational preparation to its students, who come from within the district and surrounding communities. The school leadership is committed to change and is focused on creating a safe, nurturing environment so that students may flourish. The students enjoy the relaxed atmosphere here and take great pride in their school and the education they receive.

Teachers work diligently to implement a new cadre of instruction and assessment techniques they acquired through their numerous professional development experiences. The faculty is strong, and there are many talented teachers within its ranks. They have much expertise to offer one another.

However, the school faces several challenges as it attempts to move toward ever-higher levels of student achievement. Inconsistent is a word that best describes the present status of this grand school. Inconsistent expectations for acceptable student behavior and discipline—both in classrooms and around the building—create confusion for teachers and students alike. Other inconsistencies include the lack of uniform demand for all students to produce high quality work, the varied acceptance of the necessity for instructional change by teachers—especially in the extended period, and ineffective communication among those at all levels within the school and between the school and the Career & Technical Center.

Due to the financial crisis within the City of Cranston, the school feels the need to ‘make do’ in the areas of technology, library books, textbooks, supplies, and staffing. Also the police presence at the school is compromised due to a manpower shortage on the police force.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, parents*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *observing the school outside the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*

Conclusions

Students take pride in their learning. They eagerly enjoy sharing their work with peers, as well as with guests. They constructively accept criticism of their work with the goal of improving it. Students work cooperatively together and learn from one another. They think that learning is important and purposeful and see how it relates to their future endeavors. They appreciate quality instruction and value mutual respect between them and their teachers. (*observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Some students understand math concepts well and work hard to solve problems. Occasionally, they use technology to conduct math experiments and demonstrate their enthusiasm as they attempt various strategies to complete their work. These successful students work together to correct their mistakes, and they question each other to find solutions using various strategies. They explain their thinking in writing, when they are solving problems. In some classes, they effectively complete math computation using real life applications. In other classes, students enthusiastically use algebraic skills to formulate their solutions. They efficiently analyze data to determine its relevance. They understand and use the language of math to communicate competently about their work, and they transfer mathematical skills and concepts to solve problems in other disciplines. In contrast, many students practice math problems without understanding the whole, while grasping for the parts. Their understanding is superficial. Achievement scores on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination in Mathematics: Concepts and Problem Solving corroborate this low performance. The percentages of students achieving the standard are 27% and 24% respectively. (*observing classes, following students, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Students write well in honors classes; however, writing is not as well developed in the college prep and comprehensive classes. There is too large a disparity in the quality of writing among the levels. Generally, there is high quality writing in the AP/honors classes, mixed quality in the college prep classes, and mostly low quality in the comprehensive classes. Students in the two latter classes write for various purposes; however, they write at a basic level. They have difficulty articulating their thoughts in writing; specifically, their writing lacks voice and depth. Although students write a great deal, their writing displays little rigor or real purpose. Only 45% of the students achieved the standard on the Writing: Effectiveness subtest of the 2002 New Standards

Reference Examination. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students, teachers, discussing student work with teachers*)

Many students read well for basic comprehension. They exhibit this skill in a variety of ways: oral presentations, summaries, paraphrasing, text based discussions, finding evidence in the reading to support their points of view, drawing conclusions and using information problem-solving strategies (Big 6). While some successfully analyze reading on higher cognitive levels, most students struggle with this skill. Although students read textbooks to complete their assignments, read outside materials to fulfill the requirement that they read 25 books on their own during the year and use current events to expand class discussions, these activities alone do not challenge them to construct meaning on a higher level. Their use of prior knowledge to connect and expand ideas is limited. Less than 50% of the students met the standard on the Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination. (*following students, observing classes, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan*)

Commendations for Cranston High School West

Students with pride and spirit

Students who value quality learning

Recommendations for Cranston High School West

Teach for more in-depth understanding, concepts rather than content. Conduct additional student practice in reading so students will attain mastery.

Incorporate additional opportunities for students to use computers and other technologies to develop a deeper understanding in all areas of their work.

Use teaching strategies that stimulate students to explore independently and to apply their problem-solving abilities across the curriculum.

Increase your expectations that students will write well at all levels and across the curriculum. Increase the time students spend writing, allow them time to review and critically assess what they have written, with expectations for higher quality work.

Incorporate effective higher level reading strategies and provide reading experiences so all students can develop higher order thinking skills.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *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 and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing SALT Team Visit binder*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing student agenda*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing 2002 SALT Survey*

Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated, enthusiastic, open to change and responsive to school reform initiatives. They are committed to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of their students. Teachers engage in many professional development activities with the goal of changing and improving their instruction. They are at various stages of implementing new standards-based lesson designs, which include portfolios, project-based learning, process writing, and cooperative learning, and urging students to make connections between these and real-life situations. These strategies are effective ways to increase student motivation and encourage students to become active learners. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing 2002 SALT Survey, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities*)

Teachers have various levels of expectations for the quality of their students' work. In most instances, Honors/AP students are challenged to work toward high levels of thinking and performing. This is not true in many of the college preparatory and comprehensive classes. Too often teachers do not expect these students to perform to their fullest potential, which is contrary to the stated mission of the school. They accept any attempts students make to do their work, which leads to mediocre work and little true learning. Students are not encouraged to stretch and develop higher order thinking abilities. While teachers expose the students to a variety of writing, reading and problem solving activities, many are not clear about their expectations and do not hold students accountable for quality work. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Expectations for student behaviors are inconsistent from teacher to teacher. Students report a lack of respect on the part of some students toward teachers. Some students arrive late to class, and there are frequently no consequences. In some classes, students arrive unprepared for the day's work, which is often unacknowledged by the teacher. Undercurrent conversations occur in many classes. Students are not always encouraged to engage actively in their learning. (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers,*

staff, and school administrators, following students, observing the school outside the classroom)

Teachers are a talented group of professionals, who are passionate about teaching and who find value in their work. By being available before and after school, teachers show their accessibility to students. They do this in spite of a voluntary pay freeze. Students commend the efforts of teachers and administrators to support them, when they attend sports events, dances and other outside activities. By volunteering outside the classroom, teachers positively contribute to the overall harmony between students and faculty. Although professional development is required by contract, most teachers exceed the basic requirements. Standards-based instruction and project-based assessment are evident in some classes. Although some projects are very sophisticated, many do not have great depth or do not relate to the standards. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing 2002 SALT Survey, reviewing SALT Team Visit binder)*

Commendations for Cranston High School West

Commitment to professional development

Dedicated caring teachers

Excellent involvement in student activities

Recommendations for Cranston High School West

Use various teaching strategies to engage students in active learning, which requires in-depth standards-based performance.

Have high, clear and rigorous expectations for all students in all subjects. Hold students accountable for quality work.

Continue your commitment, and deepen your work in literacy and numeracy skills to allow the students to attain high cognitive levels.

Hold students accountable to the discipline policy both within the school and in the classroom.

Recommendations for Cranston School District

Continue to encourage teachers in their efforts to obtain high-level professional development opportunities.

Continue the district-wide emphasis on literacy.

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*
- ◆ *reviewing the program of studies*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing school's mission statement*
- ◆ *reviewing various curricular guides*
- ◆ *reviewing student agenda*
- ◆ *reviewing school practices and policies*
- ◆ *reviewing student newspaper*
- ◆ *reviewing 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*

Conclusions

Since the school occupies five buildings on a sprawling campus, the facility is a challenge to maintain. Various members of the school community report that building cleanliness is an issue. They indicate that the school has increased in size without an increase in custodial staff to maintain it. Despite financial constraints, there is a great need to avoid health and safety concerns. Although most in the school community report feeling safe on the campus, there are additional safety issues that need to be addressed. The police presence at the school is compromised due to a manpower shortage on the police force. Given the large size of the campus, the numerous unsecured exits and entrances, and the inability of the administration to patrol all areas, the school is left vulnerable. (*observing the school outside the classroom, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing student newspaper*)

The published discipline policy at Cranston High School West is inconsistently followed and enforced. Discipline in the high school is generally less consistent than at the Career and Technical Center. Teachers and administrators impose few consequences for student absences, tardiness and "cutting." Many staff and students report that there is a general sense within the school that decisions of consequences for infractions are not fairly made and, in some cases, that the rules are not seriously enforced. The size of the physical plant, the large student population, and the tight resources make enforcing some rules, such as smoking, very difficult. While staff and faculty have put effort into developing programs to hold students accountable for their behavior, such as the Saturday detention and the Planning Center, this is only a start. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing student agenda*)

Students receiving special services are integrated throughout the school. This provides an environment that does not discriminate, based on the diverse learning needs of students. Special educators work to the best of their abilities to create equity for all students in their endeavor to reach the standards. However, they are not adequate in number to serve students in both Cranston High School

West and the Career & Technical Center. Students requiring special services are negatively affected. *(talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing classes, following students)*

The caseloads of the guidance counselors are too large. As a result, students receive insufficient services. Students and parents report they do not receive personalized assistance in career and college planning or in course selection. Financial aid and scholarship information is not adequately provided. Communication among guidance counselors, parents, and students is infrequent. Some teachers feel they do not have enough contact with counselors about student scheduling and class composition. *(talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, reviewing school policies and practices)*

Students are offered a wide variety of courses that provide many opportunities for academic and vocational preparation. In addition, there are abundant elective offerings and extracurricular activities. However, scheduling difficulties exist within and between the two schools due to the present rotating block schedule and the large number of students. Conflicting schedules between the two schools cause students to miss classes on a regular basis; students must make up classes they have missed after school. This conflict also limits student participation in upper level courses. Due to the existing schedule, class time has been lost in certain subject areas in the tech center. Job shadowing and internship placements are also negatively affected. There is apparently no planning and coordination of scheduling needs at the Cranston West and Career & Technical Center. *(observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing program of studies)*

At the high school, several factors negatively affect the overall program. A lack of equity exists in teacher load, both in the number and level of classes each teacher teaches. How teachers are assigned to classes at various levels may not be in the best interest of the students. Instruction time for students is not always optimized, since large numbers are assigned to study halls, which they do not use productively. Also, frequent public address announcements interrupt all classes throughout the day. This deprives students of valuable instruction time and the best use of teacher resources. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with students, parents)*

Curriculum guides in many areas are dated and unformatted, and some do not reflect national and state standards. The current guides focus on subject content criteria; there is little or no evidence of performance criteria. The guides do not include a plan for program review and evaluation. Also, they offer students with few opportunities to work on interdisciplinary topics or use technology. Too few Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered for a large comprehensive high school. Honors level courses are noticeably missing in several curricular areas; therefore creating a gap between college preparatory and AP courses. Additionally, the number of core courses required for graduation is low. This limitation affects the school's mission "to prepare all students to reach their potential and reach high standards." More library resources and textbooks are necessary to meet curricular needs and to increase student achievement. *(reviewing school mission statement, reviewing various curricular guides, reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators)*

Preparation for the New Standards Reference Examination is a school focus in order to encourage all students to be present to take the test and to improve their performance on the test. The ninth and tenth grade study skills classes were created to achieve this goal. The most recent results show that this effort has had a positive result. Greater percentages of Cranston High School West students achieved the standard on six of seven subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination, compared to the 2001 test results. It is also notable that the percentages of students in the 'no score' category has greatly reduced in this time period (2001 (10%-24%) and 2002 (1%)). *(New Standards Reference Examination results, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing classes, reviewing program of studies, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Commendations for Cranston High School West

The varied academic and social opportunities for students

Improvement in testing results

Recommendations for Cranston High School West

Advocate for the presence of the school resource officer, additional custodial staff, guidance and special services personnel.

Consistently enforce the discipline policy as outlined in the student agenda for all students and for both schools.

Design a master schedule that coordinates and meets the needs of all students at Cranston High School West and the Career & Technical Center. Distribute comprehensive, college preparation, honors and advanced placement classes equitably among teachers.

Use instruction time more effectively. Reduce the number of study halls in the schedule.

Revise curricula to align with national content and performance standards in a timely fashion.

Offer additional interdisciplinary and technology opportunities to enhance student learning.

Create additional courses and classes for honors and advanced placement students.

Raise graduation requirements for all students.

Continue your efforts to increase achievement on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination.

Recommendations for the Cranston School District

Explore new sources of funding for additional staff, programs, library resources and textbooks, technology, custodians, and school resource officers.

Investigate and implement methods to better secure the campus.

Support the school recommendation to increase graduation requirements.

7. Final Advice to the School

Aside from the city's financial crisis, there is very little to prevent Cranston West from achieving its goal of excellence. The students are accepting of change and academic challenge and must be pushed to develop their talents to the best of their abilities. For this to become reality, the inconsistencies outlined in this report must be addressed.

A collaborative effort and open communication among all stakeholders will be a vital procedure. Teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and other special personnel must find ways to work collaboratively as a team to provide for the consistency in functioning that this school needs. Involve both Cranston West and the Career & Technical Center teachers in solving scheduling concerns for students and staff. Provide equitable special education services, expand the number of internships and job shadowing possibilities, and increase course choices for students in the upper levels at both schools.

Despite budget constraints, professional development for teachers and administrators is flourishing. Continue to learn how to use standards to most effectively improve student performance. Instruction time can be made more effective with increased use of productive standards-based activities. Critical assessment of student work with constructive feedback is essential. Revision of work is a necessary piece in all disciplines, so that students can learn from their mistakes. Every student must reach for the highest academic standard in every course he takes here. Academic rigor and high expectations should be the experience of every student in every course this school offers, so that all students, in fact, will become imaginative thinkers and true creators of new knowledge.

It is time to address the likelihood that student learning is compromised by behavioral distractions that result from inconsistent enforcement of discipline policies. Your students are well aware of the contradictions they experience in this area. They have learned to 'play the game'. Both administration and teachers must take responsibility for this. Do not look to one another for blame, but join together to fix this. Do not give up.

The spirited students at this school deserve to be challenged to do their very best in a safe and supportive environment. Make the changes spelled out in this report so that they are afforded this opportunity. As the school community comes to expect more from its students and challenges them with a rigorous in-depth curriculum, greater strides in achievement will materialize. Work together, communicate continuously, and continue to re-examine your purpose, goals and mission to ensure each student reaches his full potential. Good luck to you in this work. You have what it takes to get the job done.

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Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Cranston High School West

January 31, 2003 Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
DATE: March 3, 2003