



Pilgrim High School

Warwick

The SALT Visit Team Report

February 14, 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 Pilgrim High School from February 10 to February 14, 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 Pilgrim 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 Pilgrim High School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 122 complete classes and 82 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 150 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 12 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

House Program team

department heads

Union building representatives

- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators for many 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:*

district and school policies and practices

Warwick Public Schools High School Program of Studies and Course Offerings, September 2001-August 2002

Agreement Between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers Union, September 1, 2000-August 31, 2003

New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Secondary Schools, Report of the Visiting Committee, Pilgrim High School, March 1-4, 1998

New England Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges, Pilgrim High School Two year Progress Report, October 1, 2000

Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs, Warwick School Support System Review, 1998
Warwick Public Schools Strategic Plan, 2001-2005
Warwick Plan for Mainstreaming, A partnership in Education, August 2000
Warwick teacher evaluation tool
Pilgrim High School Faculty Handbook, 1999-2000
Pilgrim High School Student Planner, 2002-2003, excerpts
Interdepartmental Newsletter, November, 2002
Pat's Update, Fall 2002 Newsletter
Pilgrim High School Report of the Interdisciplinary Committee Charged with Developing a Plan for the Writing of the Research Paper, 2001-2002
Directory of Volunteer Opportunities
school improvement plan for Pilgrim High School, 2002-2003
records of professional development activities, department binders
department binders of student work, student projects
department curriculum guides
classroom assessments
classroom textbooks
2002 SALT Survey report
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

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.

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 Pilgrim High School

Background

Pilgrim High School opened its doors in 1962 as a four-year comprehensive high school. It is located in the northern section of the City of Warwick, Rhode Island. It is situated in a residential area, surrounded by a busy commercial district on one side and an interstate highway on the other, and is in close proximity to the state airport. The sprawling nature of the building provides for approximately one-mile of corridors lined with classrooms, laboratories and offices. Some students take advantage of the vocational programs offered at the Warwick Area Career and Technical Center, located on the Toll Gate High School campus approximately six miles to the southwest of the high school. Pilgrim also offers a vocational program, Children and the Elderly, on campus. Students from all three Warwick high schools and the West Warwick High School enroll in this program.

A staff of one principal, two assistant principals, 125 classroom teachers, six guidance counselors, two library/media specialists, five special services professionals, two administrative assistants, seven clerks, two laboratory assistants, 16 teacher assistants, and one school nurse service the school. Seventeen cafeteria staff prepare food for Pilgrim High School and nine other schools in Warwick, and a total of 18 custodial staff service the school during various shifts.

Of the 1,324 students in attendance, 95.2% are white, 2.8% are Hispanic and black, and 2% are Asian Pacific Islander. Two hundred and fifty-eight (20%) students receive special education services. Of these, 215 receive resource assistance or are in intensive education less than 50% of the time, and 63 are self-contained students. Seventy-eight students (5%) receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Many unique educational and social opportunities are available at Pilgrim High School. Some examples include the Student Leadership Program, where seniors mentor freshman students; Epicurean Delight, a cooking and catering service run by students within the school; and Italian cross-age teaching at Holliman School. There are many community service opportunities, including the Pilgrim Playschool and many student clubs and groups. The music program provides students with outstanding opportunities to perform at the state and national levels. A well-rounded athletics program is also in place. Students participate in integrated classes such as PhyzBiz, Careers Class, and Humanities. A Pilgrim High School student received the Outstanding Business Student in the State of Rhode Island award and scholarship this past year.

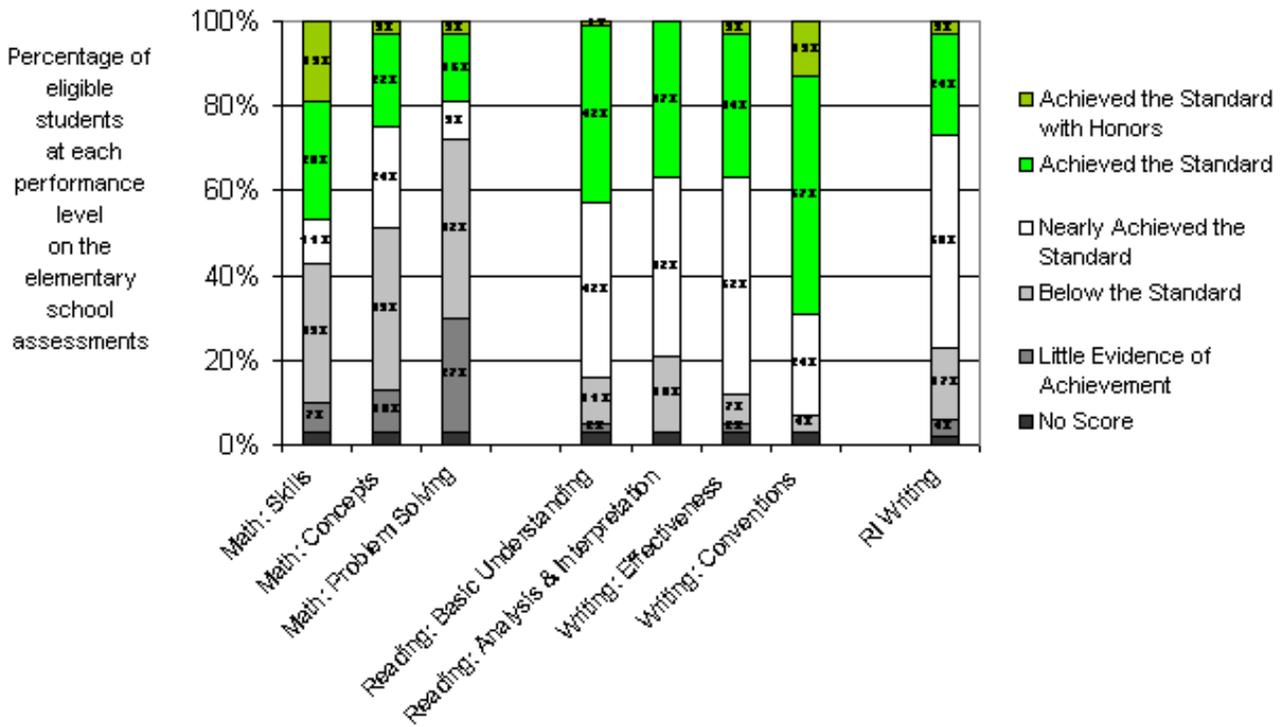
State Assessment Results for Pilgrim High School

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*.

Table1. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

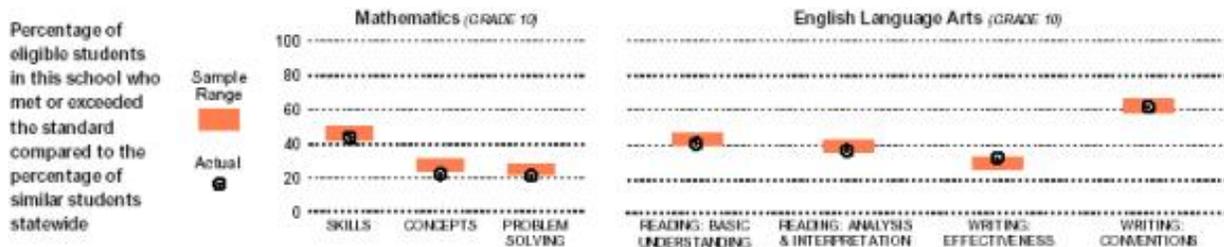


With the exception of basic understanding in reading, the percentages of students achieving the standard are greater in the math basic skills and writing conventions subtests that require basic knowledge as compared with those subtests that require more complex thinking.

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

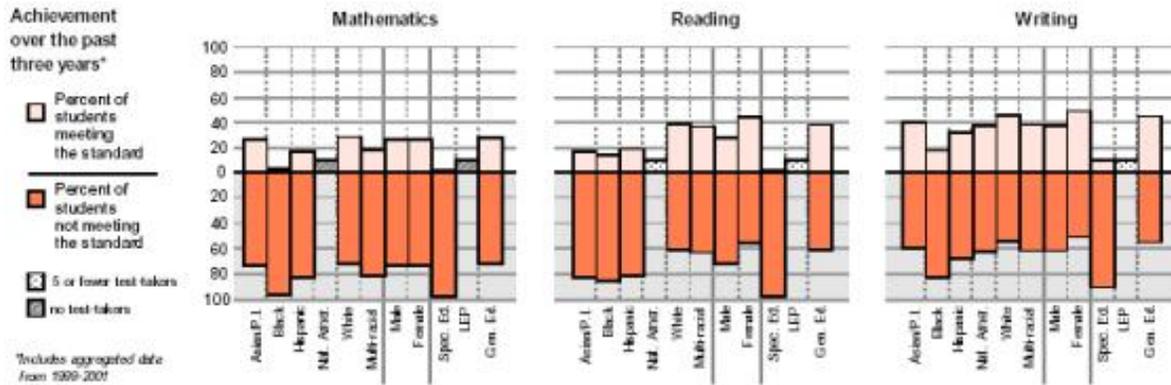


Pilgrim High School students performed the same as similar students across the state on all seven subtests.

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 black, Hispanic, and special education students achievement in mathematics, reading and writing, as well as for Asian Pacific Islanders in reading. Additionally, a gender gap exists for males in reading.

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

Pilgrim High School is low performing and improving in both Math and English Language Arts 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	Yes	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>
Yes	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	No	No	No

It is notable that students show increased achievement on both subtests on the reading portion of the New Standards Reference Examination. Additionally, student achievement shows improvement in the math and writing subtests, which require greater cognitive skill while showing no improvement in the basic skills in these areas (math basic skills and writing conventions).

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Pilgrim High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

The Pilgrim High School community exhibits a friendly, courteous atmosphere and a safe learning environment. The administrative team is dynamic, has a vision, and shows genuine care for all its students and staff. The students are respectful and show great empathy toward the diverse learners in the school. Teachers work hard,, enjoy their students, and are ready to make changes needed to improve their craft.

Pilgrim High School, however, is an urban high school in transition. It faces the types of problems that schools throughout America find they must solve. These include low reading, writing and math scores and an outdated system for delivering instruction, which begins at the district level and extends to the classroom. Fortunately, Pilgrim has a dedicated faculty, administrators and student body, who are willing to join together to improve their school. The vision, leadership and energy needed to make changes are in place. A seamless change process is difficult, however, because of the constraints of 'past practice' and the language of the collectively bargained agreement between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers Union. This agreement will be referred to as the teachers' contract in the School section of this report.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

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

Conclusions

Many students are self-directed learners who adapt well in spite of their demanding and hectic daily schedules. Students engage in respectful interactions with their teachers and administrators. They display a genuine empathy for the school's diverse population. Students take immense pride in their school community. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the students, school and district administrators and parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing the school outside the classroom)*

In most advanced placement and honors classes students demonstrate strong writing skills. Some students effectively synthesize information from various sources to create new ideas and apply their critical thinking to their writing. Students demonstrate their writing ability in creative, narrative, expository, persuasive, journalistic and technical writing. In college preparatory and general classes across the curriculum, students do not have high expectations of their writing. While students in some classes improve their work by peer editing, in general, most students do not use the steps of the writing process. The writing associated with projects is simplistic. Students in some classes write in journals. Although the types of writing found in the college preparatory and general classes are useful, they are not enough to improve student learning and achievement. While 70% of the students meet the standard in writing conventions, only 37% meet the standard in writing effectiveness on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination. *(following students, observing classes, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, meeting with students and parents)*

Students use problem-solving skills across the curricular areas. Many achieve success by working collaboratively to find solutions to problems. Students effectively use various tools, including graphing calculators, to enhance their computation skills. Some students demonstrate their analytical thinking both verbally and in writing. Other students think critically, as they successfully answer a series of focus questions. However, many students still struggle to understand math concepts and problem solving strategies. This is corroborated by the low percentages of students who met the standard on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination math subtests. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing*

completed and ongoing student work, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)

There is little evidence of student reading throughout the building. While some students read independently, as they work toward the standard of completing 25 books on their own, others participate only in teacher-directed reading. Some students read text in various classes. Students analyze and interpret poetry and historical documents, as well as humorous pieces written in a foreign language. They discuss symbolism in literature and read orally with role-play. Some students read out loud for basic understanding. Other students use a Reading and Writing Source Book to develop their skill in reading comprehension and proper writing. Very few students apply these skills consistently in all of their classes. While student assessment scores show that they have improved over time in their reading skills, only 43% meet the standard on the reading: basic understanding subtest, and 37% meet the standard in reading: analysis and interpretation. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students and teachers, following students, discussing student work with teachers, meeting with students and parents, reviewing classroom textbooks)*

Commendations for Pilgrim High School

Acceptance of diverse student body

Caring, respectful students

Students exhibiting school pride

Recommendations for Pilgrim High School

Establish and model high expectations for writing consistently across curricular areas. Involve all students in high level writing activities.

Use the steps of the writing process to guide the students in improving their writing.

Regularly engage all students in complex problem solving activities across the curriculum.

Establish a daily reading component across the curricular areas.

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 completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *2002 SALT Survey report*

Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated and caring instructors who relate well to their students. Many are enthusiastic and motivated. Teachers, administrators, and students mutually respect one another. Most are proud and active participants of the Pilgrim High School community. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators and parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Instruction is largely characterized by traditional teacher-directed practices with students as passive learners. Yet, there are pockets of teaching excellence, which are characterized by differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, and real life problem solving. These teachers do not provide all the answers. Instead, their role is as guides, listeners and facilitators, who encourage their students to become life-long, independent learners. They utilize creative techniques, which include multimedia presentations, interdisciplinary integration, teacher modeling and 'students as teachers'. On the 2002 SALT Survey students report an increase in teachers' instructional innovation and variety over the last three years. These instructional styles effectively connect students to their learning. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, meeting with parents, 2002 SALT Survey report*)

While some teachers hold students to high expectations for learning and behavior in their classes, in general too many others have low expectations of their students at all levels. Much student work is characterized as rote memorizing, completing simplistic worksheets or uninteresting assignments, or performing repetitive drills. Homework assignments lack academic rigor. Teachers start their classes late in order to check student homework, and they end their classes early, so students can begin working on their homework assignments. During class time, students are often off task, come to class late, leave class for extended periods of time, and/or complete their assignments for other classes. These activities allow students to become disruptive and non-productive in class. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers*)

Although standards are posted in most classrooms, evidence of their use is limited. In several classes teachers successfully integrate reading, writing and problem solving in their instruction. When teachers do this, students' skills in literacy and numeracy improve. These teachers have embraced the new initiatives, while others are reluctant to take the steps they need to

take to move forward. Many teachers are aware of the need for reform and express the desire for meaningful, on-going systemic professional development. In the 2002 SALT Survey teachers ranked professional development in the use of standards-based curricula and assessment as their number one need. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school administrators and parents, reviewing 2002 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Commendations for Pilgrim High School

Energetic, caring teachers

Empathy for students

Pockets of teaching excellence

Recommendations for Pilgrim High School

Continue your dedicated and spirited effort to improve student learning.

Seek professional development to improve teaching practices so that all students become active learners.

Maximize the time students spend on task. Hold all students to high standards of academic rigor and classroom behavior.

Uniformly enforce the school rules.

Obtain professional development in standards-based instruction.

Recommendations for the Warwick School District

Support the teachers in their efforts to obtain professional development in standards-based instruction.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, teachers' union representatives, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing SALT Visit binder*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing teachers' contract*
- ◆ *reviewing NEASC Report, 1998*

Conclusions

The current teachers' contract is an impediment to systemic change in this high school. The evaluation tool, which is a result of the current contract, fosters mediocrity, where 'satisfactory' is accepted as the norm. The school does not highlight its best teachers as excellent examples for their colleagues to follow. The evaluation process does not focus on improved learning and teaching. The school administration has relatively little input into the evaluation process; department heads evaluate. The administrators view the job fair process for filling faculty positions as a limiting factor in the growth of a cohesive community and the development of a team that shares a true vision of high standards for all. Thus, the administration is less able to move the school toward a unified culture of teaching excellence. At the same time, the teachers' contract limits the school's ability to implement a flexible schedule that includes common planning time for teachers, that provides an advisor/advisee program, and that increases student-to-student mentoring in all grades. (*reviewing teachers' contract, observing classes, reviewing district and school policies and practices, meeting with the school improvement team, union building representatives, students, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, following students*)

A very strong visionary team leads Pilgrim High School. This team consists of the principal, vice principals, and department heads. The vision of these leaders includes a student-centered school, which expands the 'pockets of teaching excellence' that are found here. Through this shared vision, the team works toward creating an affirmative school climate. At this time, the leadership is unable to implement this vision fully, since it lacks the necessary autonomy from the central administration to act in the school's best interest. All three high schools in Warwick develop their plans for change as if they were one school. The teachers' contract also hinders the leadership team, as mentioned above. The principal and his team are primarily relegated to 'managing' the school and are not afforded the opportunity to be true educational leaders. (*meeting with the school improvement team, teachers' union representatives, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing teachers' contract, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices*)

The current curricula guides are antiquated, and they are not true working documents. Generally, the school's curricula are not aligned to standards. Curriculum rewriting occurs at the district level and follows a cyclical time schedule, by department,

spanning many years. There is no curriculum committee at Pilgrim High School. Professional development is not in place to support the writing and teaching of a standards-based curriculum. *(observing classes, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, meeting with teachers' union representatives, school and district administrators and parents)*

While technology is evident in the building, there is a need for more equipment, training, and technical support. Although the school is moving in the right direction in providing teachers with these important resources, access is still limited. Many teachers, using their personal tools, have taken the initiative to integrate technology into their instruction. Others are utilizing the limited school technology in their lessons. However, many are in need of appropriate equipment and training to ensure standards-based teaching, using these resources. On the 2002 SALT Survey teachers report that professional development in using computers as part of their instruction is a high priority. Pilgrim High School lacks adequate technical support to maintain and expand technology effectively across the curriculum. Students have limited access to the media center in the school library. As stated in the findings of the NEASC Report, 1998, a serious need still exists to bring Pilgrim High School up to current standard in the use of technology across the school community. The recently purchased Star Base software package is not fully implemented throughout the school. Technical support is sparse for a school of this size. *(observing improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing NEASC Report, 1998, reviewing district strategic plan, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, following students)*

The atmosphere in the guidance department is not perceived as nurturing. Parents report they have difficulty communicating with the counselors and often wait several days for their phone calls to be returned. The staff also expresses concerns that internal communication from guidance to faculty and administration is inadequate. Many students indicate they do not receive individualized guidance services. They do not meet regularly one-on-one with their guidance counselors to formulate their personal education plans. When they do meet, it is to discuss general topics with large groups of other students during class time. Parents and students alike want more input in the yearly course selection process than is now available. However, if a student makes an appointment to see his guidance counselor, he will be seen. Students report the department is primarily a college counseling service and does not embrace school-to-career initiatives. The guidance curriculum at Pilgrim High School is not in use. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and parents, talking with students, and teachers, following students)*

The Special Education Department has a well-developed program that offers extensive services to meet the needs of its students. Teachers are organized and enthusiastic; they participate in interdepartmental professional development. Their standards-based instruction and assessments, evident in all classes, will help close the equity gap for special education students on the New Standards Reference Examination. However, as stated in the teachers' contract, the method for appropriating special education teachers in regular education classes leads to an imbalance of teachers as class size increases. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, SALT Visit binder, reviewing teacher contract, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, following students)*

Pilgrim has taken some positive steps toward reform. The Ninth Grade House program gives students the opportunity to be in a more personalized learning environment. Parents report, however, that their expectations for a high quality program are not completely realized. While some classes have high expectations, others do not challenge all students. Within the House program, teachers provide students with daily opportunities for teacher-to-student and student-to-student mentoring. This program is not sufficient in its current limited format to meet the needs of all students who could benefit from a more personalized environment. At the same time, the physical layout of the school building is conducive to developing a viable 'schools within a school' program. All components necessary for small learning communities are in place for the successful expansion of the House program. *(observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing district and school policies and practices, following students)*

Commendations for Pilgrim High School

Integration and acceptance of special needs students

Strong visionary leadership

Safe school environment

Recommendations for Pilgrim High School

Provide for extensive professional development to drive school reform. Investigate and implement an extended time schedule and advisor/advisee program. Adopt a standards-based teacher evaluation tool.

Establish district-wide and school-based curriculum committees. Develop a template for a standards-based curriculum for all departments. Align all curricula to standards.

Support the leadership team as it drives the initiatives of reform to improve student achievement.

Develop a procedure for guidance counselors to meet more frequently with students, one-on-one. Communicate more effectively with parents, the faculty and the administrators. Follow the guidance curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Establish a school-to-career component in the school, and collaborate with the school-to-career coordinator.

Offer teachers professional development in differentiated instruction across the curriculum.

Examine the process for the placement of special education teachers in regular education classes in an effort to close the equity gap in the New Standards Reference Examination results.

Advocate for an increase in funds for technology and technical support. Expand the accessibility of the library media center for student use. Fully implement the Star Base software program for greater efficiency in school operations.

Recommendations for the Warwick School District:

Provide the leadership team with the autonomy it needs to initiate school reform.

Implement school-wide professional development to improve student achievement.

Establish district-wide and school-based curriculum committees. Align all curricula to standards.

Increase funds for technology and technical support.

Take the actions required to meet the mandates for school reform (Board of Regents' High School Reform Initiatives, No Child Left Behind Act- NCLB).

7. Final Advice to the School

Teachers are beginning to implement many wonderful changes in your learning community. Take a moment to identify the strongest educational leaders within your faculty, and work with them to make your school the best it can be. Work toward meeting the learning needs of all of your students. They are among your loudest cheerleaders. They know when you conduct inspiring lessons. Listen to them when they share with you what others are doing and how they individually learn best. Talk with your colleagues and share your expertise with them, and also learn from them.

A dynamic administrative team that shows genuine care for all students and staff leads Pilgrim High School. It has a clear and up-to-date vision for how to improve student learning. Because the central office and the present teachers' contract relegate them primarily to the role of managers instead of accepting them as the inspirational leaders they are, this hardworking team will have a continual struggle to move their vision for the school forward.

Be visionary. In the upcoming negotiations, request from your school committee and your teachers' union a new contract that supports your improvement efforts and allows you to realize the vision you have for the learning of all your students. Use the new contract to make the students the focus of the education decisions and activities that take place here. Insist that your school should not continue to be tied to the workings of the other high schools in the district. To improve your school, make your first priorities to create small learning communities within the school, to set in place a standards-based curriculum, to focus on writing and teaching and to cultivate effective on-site professional development. Use the recommendations in this report and the similar findings in your 1998 NEASC Report to guide you in your next steps toward excellence. Congratulate yourselves on your successes as you move your school forward. Your students will be the worthy recipients of your success. Good luck to all of you in this work.

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Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Pilgrim High School

February 14, 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 not routine.

Catalpa completed the following steps that are part of the normal endorsement process:

- 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

RIDE certified that this team did not meet the expected minimum for a school of the size of Pilgrim. This required Catalpa Ltd. to pay particular attention to the potential negative effects of an undersized team in the completion of its work.

On March 17, Catalpa Ltd. received a copy of a letter from a group of Pilgrim teachers that challenged some aspects of the report. This triggered a full review of the alleged challenges.. The resulting technical memo prepared by Catalpa Ltd. for RIDE lists the additional steps that Catalpa Ltd. took to prepare this memo.

The following findings are based on all of these steps.

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff, with the exception of not meeting the minimum size for a school the size of Pilgrim.

There is no indication that neither the conduct of the visit nor the validity and strength of the conclusions were compromised by the too small team. This team did put in the extra work and attention required to ameliorate any potential difficulty.

2. A group of Pilgrim teachers prepared a letter challenging aspects of the visit and the report. The Catalpa review of this letter is presented in a Catalpa Technical Memo to RIDE.

The summary conclusion of this detailed review is:

While this visit, like all visits, was not perfect, none of the challenges made in this letter threaten the legitimacy of either how the visit was conducted or the conclusions of the report.

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.
April 21, 2003: