



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
www.ridoe.net

# Lincoln Central Elementary School

Lincoln

## SALT Visit Team Report

October 27, 2000



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

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

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

Peter McWalters, Commissioner

Regents

James A. DiPrete, Chairman

Robert J. Canavan, Vice Chair

Jo Eva Gaines, Secretary

Representative Paul W. Crowley

Elia Germani

Sue P. Duff

Gary E. Grove

Ms. Colleen Callahan

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

Mario A. Mancieri

Vidal P. Perez

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

**For information about SALT, please contact Ken Fish at 401-222-4600, x 2200 or [salt@ride.net](mailto:salt@ride.net).**

**This report is available at [www.ride.net/schoolimprove/salt](http://www.ride.net/schoolimprove/salt)**

1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS
2. PROFILE OF Lincoln Central Elementary School
3. PORTRAIT OF Lincoln Central Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Lincoln School District***

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendation for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Lincoln School District***

7. Final Advice to the School

*LINCOLN CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM*

*THE SALT VISIT TEAM*

*New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)*

*Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report*

# 1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) is Rhode Island's comprehensive school accountability system. SALT is based on using information to improve learning and teaching so that the learning of all students in the state dramatically improves. The SALT visit and other major SALT components are designed to aid schools in their ongoing development and implementation of effective School Improvement Plans.

The purpose of the visit to Lincoln Central Elementary School from October 24, 2000 to October 27, 2000 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- ◆ Student Learning
- ◆ Teaching
- ◆ The School

The design of the SALT visit ensures that accountability supports improvement of schools by directly connecting judgments of quality and recommendations for improvement to the actual life and work of a school.

This report is built upon the observations and conclusions of the visit team. The visit team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for Lincoln Central Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. However informative written reports may be, there is simply no substitute for being at the school while it is in session in the classroom, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The specific information generated by a team visit is about how the students, staff and administrators go about their day. Thus, this visit allowed professional colleagues and stakeholders to build informed judgments about the teaching and learning that actually takes place at Lincoln Central Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 64 full classroom observations and 37 partial classroom observations which totaled over 67 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. All classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following six students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*

- *School Improvement Team*
- *school and district administrators*
- *students*
- *parents*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *community meeting*
- ◆ *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*
- ◆ *review of district and school policies*
- ◆ *review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments*
- ◆ *review of the following documents*
- *Central Elementary School Improvement Plan*
- *district strategic plan*
- *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
- *classroom textbooks*
- *1998 Information Works!*
- *1999 Information Works!*
- *2000 Information Works!*
- *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The visit team met for a total of 27 hours in six separate meetings spanning

the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators. The team sought to develop conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

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

It is important to note that this report reflects a “moment” in the life of the school. The conclusions here are different from those that can be made from statewide assessment data or from information collected and analyzed by members of the school. This report is not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, it is a different lens, one not clouded by the daily life of the school. This new lens is one through which the school can look to help focus on important issues resulting in the development of strategies for overall improvement in the teaching and learning process.

The value of this report is not determined by the hard work of the Team. The value will be determined by how Lincoln Central Elementary School responds to the report. At first, the critical criteria will be the thoughtfulness of that response and later it will be its actual effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. The response of the faculty and staff will be most critical early on but later there is a shared responsibility to support the school in making progress. The School Department, the citizens Lincoln, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in context with the conclusions. That is the way they were written.

## 2. PROFILE OF Lincoln Central Elementary School

Lincoln Central Elementary School serves students in grades two through six for the suburban community of Lincoln, Rhode Island. There are five elementary schools in the district. Three of the elementary schools serve students in grades two through six, one school serves pre-kindergarten through first grade students, and one school serves kindergarten through sixth grade students. Lincoln Central was built in 1964. Four classrooms were added to each wing in 1988.

Lincoln School committee members are elected for a four-year term with one member representing each of the five districts in Lincoln. The school system is administered by a district staff that include the following: a superintendent, assistant superintendent, business manager, special education director, technology director, and director of buildings and grounds/non-instructional activities. Lincoln Central Elementary students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, one secretary, 33 full and part time faculty, eight assistants, four support personnel, and two custodians.

Of the 418 students attending Lincoln Central, 97 percent are white, 2 percent are black, and 1 percent is Asian/Pacific Islander. Thirteen percent receive special education services, and 5 percent are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination, the fourth grade students at Lincoln Central Elementary School met or exceeded the standard as follows: Reading Basic Understanding 88 percent, Reading Analysis and Interpretation 83 percent, Writing Effectiveness 79 percent, and Writing Conventions 18 percent. On the 2000 third grade Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 38 percent of the students met or exceeded the standard.

On the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination the students at Lincoln Central Elementary School met or exceeded the standard as follows: Mathematical Skills 74 percent, Mathematical Concepts 39 percent, and Problem Solving 31 percent.

There are equity gaps between special education students and general education students in all areas tested by the New Standards Reference Examination for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Some of these are very large (40 percent). (For comprehensive information on the school's test scores go to [www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu](http://www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu))

School initiatives have been put in place to improve learning. The *Write Source* program is used to improve written expression in grades two through six. During the 1999-2000 school year, Lincoln Central focused on math problem solving, utilizing a variety of resource publications in this area. The percentage of students achieving the standard on the 1999 New Standards Mathematics Problem Solving subtest was 41 percent and on the 2000 assessment was 31 percent.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Lincoln Central Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

As you enter the doors of Lincoln Central Elementary School, you are immediately immersed in a welcoming and accepting environment. It is a school where a deep sense of community is evident. Members of this community are respected by all. It is a warm friendly school filled with polite, dedicated, and hard working teachers and students. They are led by a very competent principal. The children's work is celebrated and displayed throughout the school. Students seem happy and secure in their environment and enjoy their learning experiences. Students, staff, parents, and the principal are proud to be part of this bonded community.

All at Central Elementary have dedicated themselves to improve learning and teaching. The adults work hard to guide students to reach common school-wide goals. General education teachers and special education teachers work in a collaborative way to provide quality education for all students. Teachers share ideas and materials with each other. The overall atmosphere is very supportive. Teachers seem willing to take the necessary steps to implement new teaching strategies and practices to improve student performance.

The instruction is well organized and well delivered, but tends to focus on product rather than process. The teachers have embarked on the journey to provide standards-based learning. They have many of the tools in place to make this school an even better educational institution, but have not taken the "leap of faith" necessary for a true commitment to student centered learning. Teachers have not consistently empowered their students to be involved and take responsibility for their learning. They have not encouraged their students to work together to solve problems, take risks, and learn independently.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1998,1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *meetings with students*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *following students*

### Conclusions

Large equity gaps exist in all areas of the New Standards Reference Examination between students in special education and those in general education with general education students outperforming special education students. These large gaps are surprising due to the quality of the special education program at Lincoln Central. (2000 Information Works!, *classroom observations, examination of student work, following students*)

Students at the Lincoln Central Elementary School read a variety of texts throughout the day and in different content areas. They support their responses to reading with evidence from the text. These responses to literature are both oral and written. Students discuss and write about their reading. This emphasis on reading may account for the steady increase in student performance over the past two years in the Reading Analysis and Interpretation subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, 2000 New Standard Reference Examination results, 1999, 2000 Information Works!*)

Many students work independently, but few are independent learners. They know the expectations, follow directions well, and know the routines. They do the work that is asked of them. However, the structure of many tasks prohibits them from exploring and extending beyond what is asked of them. (*following students, classroom observations, examination of student work*)

Many students at Lincoln Central Elementary School are accomplished writers. They write for many purposes. Prompted writing and writing across the curriculum is evident across grade levels. The percentage of fourth grade students who meet or exceed the standard on the New Standards Writing Effectiveness subtest has increased significantly. Also, the results on the Rhode Island Writing Assessment show an

impressive 20 percent increase in student performance over the past two years. (*following students, classroom observations, examination of student work, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 1999 Information Works!, 2000 Information Works!*)

Students practice basic problem-solving strategies in mathematics. They duplicate these learned strategies on similar problems. They also complete workbook pages that reinforce skills and concepts. A few students use manipulatives to complete math tasks. These practices are not enough to raise student performance on state assessments. (*following students, classroom observations, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results, examination of student work*)

Lincoln Central Elementary School students are happy, friendly, and respectful. They are proud of their school community. They exhibit the traits of their motto, "Quality, Pride and Integrity." (*observations of the school, classroom observations, following students, meetings with students*)

#### Commendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

The improved performance on the Rhode Island Writing Assessment

Student pride and respect

#### Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

Provide students with more opportunities for choices in writing.

Acknowledge the equity gaps between special education and general education students. Implement an action plan to narrow the gaps.

Strengthen student learning by empowering students to become active learners.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 2000*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*

### Conclusions

Teachers at Lincoln Central Elementary School work very hard to provide meaningful instruction. However, this instruction is predominately whole class and teacher directed. Many teachers repeatedly lead the students step by step through assigned tasks. Learning is primarily passive. Instruction fails to actively engage students in hands-on activities. The learning styles of all students cannot be addressed with these instructional practices only. (*following students, classroom observations, observations of the school*)

Many teachers' questioning techniques limit student's responses to the literal recall of prescribed information. Often the skill being taught is figuring out the one correct answer. This inhibits the students' ability to stretch to higher levels of understanding. (*following students, classroom observations, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*)

While teachers in this school are very aware of mathematics standards, their math instruction is hindered by the lack of a standards-based program and hands-on activities. Teachers struggle to close gaps by sharing limited manipulatives and using outdated materials. Students have few opportunities to develop strategies, share their work, and defend their answers. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators*)

All teachers effectively use a combination of commercially and teacher developed rubrics for evaluation that are aligned with standards. They explain rubric criteria to the students and students know the expectations. Some teachers use rubrics for ongoing assessment. They examine student work to guide instruction. A few teachers even use rubric criteria to provide their students with feedback and opportunities to improve their work. (*following students, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, meetings with parents and students, 2000 SALT Survey*)

Many teachers engage their students in partner activities. Most teachers seat their students in small groups.

However, there is little evidence of the effective use of cooperative learning. Active learning is not encouraged. Teachers do not give students opportunities within peer groups to discuss, question, evaluate, make decisions, and support their opinions. Without these experiences students are limited in their ability to challenge themselves to reach a higher level. (*following students, classroom observations, meeting with students, 2000 SALT Survey*)

#### Commendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

Teachers' hard work to provide meaningful instruction

Effective use of rubrics

#### Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

Include students in rubric development.

Engage in professional development in cooperative learning techniques and implement those strategies in classroom practice.

Increase the use of higher level questioning techniques in daily practice.

Increase the use of hands-on activities.

#### Recommendations for Lincoln School District:

Provide the resources necessary for Lincoln Central Elementary School staff to participate in professional development activities in cooperative learning techniques.

Move quickly to implement a standards-based math program.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *Central Elementary School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *Lincoln School Department Certified Staff Evaluation document*
- ◆ *Lincoln School Department Curriculum Development Cycle*
- ◆ *community meeting*

### Conclusions

The Lincoln School District has adopted a comprehensive, standards-based, certified staff evaluation linked to the new mentoring program and Course 1. Teachers and administrators have received training in the new evaluation process. This tool has the potential to enhance teaching and learning at Lincoln Central Elementary School. (*Lincoln School Department Certified Staff Evaluation document, meetings with school and district administrators and school improvement team, conversations and interviews with teachers*)

Lincoln Central Elementary School has an exceptional sense of community. Students, parents, staff, and the Lincoln community members are respected and valued as part of a “family.” All students are celebrated as individuals with unique talents and gifts. A strong sense of pride permeates this school. There is a commitment to provide all students with “a high quality educational environment.” (*observations of the school, Community Meeting, meetings with school administrator, school improvement team, parents, and students, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff, observations of the school*)

Each classroom has several computers with internet access. However, these are not utilized within most classrooms as effective tools for learning and teaching. While new computers have been added to the upper grades, many of those in the lower grades are broken or outdated. The lack of in school support and resources significantly impairs the implementation of technology. (*classroom observations, meetings with district administrators and school improvement team, following students, interviews with students, observations of the school*)

The current math program at Lincoln Central Elementary does not meet the needs of its students. The school

lacks a current standards based mathematics program. The district plan to implement a new math program in 2002-03 does not address the immediate needs of Lincoln Central's present population. (*Lincoln School Department Curriculum Development Cycle, following students, classroom observations, meetings with district and school administrators, conversations and interviews with teachers*)

The Central Elementary School Improvement Plan addresses four objectives: 1. math problem solving instruction, 2. writing instruction, 3. academic support for regular education students, and 4. after school enrichment activities. Objective 1 of the plan fails to address mathematical concepts and skills. Objective 3 does not include all children. Excluding special education students from the planned tutorial program will not narrow the equity gaps between those students and general education students. (*meeting with the school improvement team, Central Elementary School Improvement Plan*)

#### Commendation for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

The exceptional sense of community

#### Recommendations for Lincoln Central Elementary School:

Take advantage of district technology training.

Have representation on the district math committee.

Revisit and revise the school improvement plan to include the needs of all students.

#### Recommendations for Lincoln School District:

Provide Lincoln Central Elementary School with on site support for technology.

Provide the necessary resources and support to meet the needs of the current population in mathematics instruction.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

At Lincoln Central Elementary School you have many of the critical components in place to guide students to higher levels of learning. The environment of collaboration and camaraderie you have developed within your school community, along with your commitment to high standards, will guide you to boldly take the next steps to reach new heights.

Use your strong sense of community support to establish even higher levels of student performance. Your students are willing learners. They are proud of their school and their work. Parents are supportive and involved in their children's education.

You have been working very hard to improve your students' understanding of problem solving strategies. Work with the district to select and implement a standards-based mathematics program that will provide balanced instruction for your students.

Continue the strategies that are working for you in writing. You have committed yourselves to the *Write Source* program. You have participated in the training and have dedicated yourselves to implement this program.

As you continue your self-study, scrutinize 2001 Information Works! when it becomes available. Compare your school with "similar students statewide." Evaluate the equity gap information between special education students and general education students. Use this information to aid you in the development of a rigorous educational program for all students.

You have provided your students with a foundation, now empower them to become active learners. Allow them to take risks and have ownership for their learning. Provide them with a varied and challenging learning environment.

Our visit team hopes that you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you to continue on your journey toward excellence. We applaud your progress and hope that our report will help you move forward to the next level of learning.

## LINCOLN CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Sam Williams  
Principal

Moira Fairhurst  
Grade 2 Teacher

Janice Dzialo,  
Grade 3 Teacher

Joanne Caranci  
Grade 4 Teacher

Lisa Peterson  
Grade 5 Teacher

Donna McCutcheon  
Grade 6 Teacher

Patricia Greene  
Special Education Teacher

Donna Dyer  
Psychologist

Amy Devault  
Art Teacher

Colleen Boisvert  
Parent

Sandra Gonsalves  
Parent

Mark Krieger  
Parent

Roberta O'Brien  
Parent

Barbara O'Rourke  
Parent

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Donna H. Reinalda  
Multi-age Teacher  
Sowams Elementary School  
Barrington, Rhode Island  
(on leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)  
Chair of the Team

Diane Dulude  
Grade 4 Teacher  
West Glocester Elementary School  
Glocester, Rhode Island

Kristen Matthes  
Resource Teacher  
Sowams Elementary School  
Barrington, Rhode Island

Stephen Medeiros  
Principal  
Walter E. Ranger School  
Tiverton, Rhode Island

Christine Murphy  
Curriculum Coordinator  
Johnston School Department  
Johnston, Rhode Island

Sandra Olson  
Grade 7 English Language Arts Teacher  
Ponaganset Middle School  
Foster/Glocester, Rhode Island

# New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)

---

## Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### Lincoln Central Elementary School

October 27, 2000

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I reviewed this report carefully, observed a total of ten hours of the visit on three of its four days, and discussed the conduct of the full visit and factual review with the visit chair. Based on my knowledge derived from these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*, I conclude that:

1. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair.
2. The team and the school made several minor deviations from the visit procedures that contributed to the unfortunate generality of some conclusions. Nevertheless, the critical tests for legitimacy of a visit's conclusions (e.g. accuracy, fairness) and of a visit report were fully met.
3. The school and its district should not hesitate to consider fully the findings of this report in its improvement planning as set out by the overall SALT process.

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
November 24, 2000