



Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy

Providence

SALT Visit Team Report

November 20, 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

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This report is available at www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt

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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 Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy from November 14-17, 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 Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy 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 Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 67 classroom observations which totaled over 62 hours of time spent in direct 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*
- *Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Board of Directors*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *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:*
 - *School Improvement Plan for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary Reports*
 - *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy SALT Visit Handbook*
 - *faculty and staff bulletins*
 - *Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Charter School Application*
 - *Academic Committee / School Improvement Team minutes*
 - *Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) testing program documentation*

- *parents newsletters*
- *Performance Assessment Tasks*
- *classroom assignments*
- *faculty meeting minutes*

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 31 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, the board of directors, 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 Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy 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 Providence School Department, the citizens of Providence, 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 Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy serves students in grades 9-12 for the city of Providence, Rhode Island and is the first charter school established in the city of Providence. This school grew out of a program that was operating in three different high schools. This school settling into its current building in 1996 and received its charter in 1997. Since its creation, the school has had and has been located in four different venues.

A nine-member school board, appointed by the mayor, governs the Providence Public School District—the largest in the state. A mayor and a fifteen-member city council govern the city. An eighteen-member Board of Directors governs Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy. The Board is comprised of six parents, six teachers and/or staff, and six business leaders. Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy students are served by a professional staff of two administrators, seventeen full and part-time faculty, seven education advisors, two support personnel, and two custodians.

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy has a high attendance rate of 94 percent. Of the 199 students attending this school 7 percent are White, 60 percent are Hispanic, 10 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 23 percent are Black. Twenty-five students totaling 12.5 percent receive special education services, ten students totaling 5 percent are Limited English Proficiency, and 68 percent applied for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

The school has recently increased the number of support personnel and placed each student in an advisory group under the guidance of an adult. Additionally, in an attempt to increase students' performance in mathematics, reading, and writing the school is using the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) testing to track student performance three times a year. Internships are an integral part of the learning experience for Textron students.

The team used the test score information found in *Information Works!* and the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam School Summaries to determine the performance gaps discussed in the student learning conclusions. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy is available at www.ridoe.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy School has developed a remarkable culture that is readily apparent the moment you enter. This culture, and the creation of a safe, comfortable learning environment meets the social and emotional needs of the students and has improved many young lives.

Members of the school community, with help and assistance from the Providence Chamber of Commerce, Textron, and local business people, have created a public charter school that is the best, and often the last, hope for many of the students it serves. The faculty and staff work determinedly to help students overcome enormous obstacles by providing structure and supports that meet the needs of Textron's students. The effects of these efforts are clearly evident in the students' behavior and have resulted in students that have a respect for each other, adults, and take pride in their school.

An air of maturity and respect permeates this building as students move through this school. The dedicated staffs emotional investment in their students is evident in the teacher-student interactions that occur throughout the day. Students understand that there are clear expectations for behavior that they must meet to remain in school, and most students willingly meet them.

The social service aspect of this school is further developed than the educational program. Students and parents freely express a belief that students have significantly more opportunities to achieve their potential than they were provided in a more traditional setting. To date, this Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy has not yet developed an academic program that fully capitalizes on the opportunities this unique school structure and culture provide.

Presently, this school is struggling to develop a commonly shared vision of the academic reforms, proper scope and sequence of curricula, instructional strategies, and methods of assessment needed to dramatically improve student performance. In essence the school's struggle is to provide an academic program that produces results comparable to the social, emotional, and structural supports it so ably provides.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary Reports*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary Reports*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meetings with school administrators, students, parents, and board of directors*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with teachers, students, staff and school administrators*

Conclusions

Students are reading often and in a variety of self-selected genres. Most students are excited about their reading. Some students are effectively analyzing the plot, setting and character development of the text. While students are clearly reading often, many students are still struggling with basic reading decoding, comprehension, analysis, and interpretation. On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the tenth grade students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Reading Basic Understanding* – 13 percent, *Reading Analysis and Interpretations* – 6 percent. While these scores are below the district and state averages, their performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam is comparable to similar students state-wide. (*2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 Information Works!, examination of student work, classroom observations*)

Students are writing often with a lot a variation within and across classes in the nature and quality of their writing. Students' writing focuses on creative writing, response journals and short opinion essays more than analytical writing that requires synthesis of information and a strong grounding in evidence. Many students are more skilled orally than with the written word. Some students are using graphic organizers to guide their writing and many are revising their work. Students demonstrated a stronger grasp of effective writing strategies than their performance on the New Standards Reference Exam indicated. On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the tenth grade students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy met or exceeded the standard on the following sub-tests: *Writing Effectiveness* - 2

percent, and *Writing Conventions* - 54 percent. While these scores are below the district and state averages, their performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam is comparable to similar students state-wide. Comparatively, on

the 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 12 percent of the 10th grade students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy met or exceeded the standard on this assessment. (*2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 Information Works!, examination of student work, classroom observations, following students*)

Students' knowledge of mathematical skills varies greatly within and among classes and grades. Students' work focuses on rudimentary practice of mathematics skills such as fractions and ratios. Some students are applying the knowledge of mathematical skills to real world data such as the recent presidential election results. Many students do not demonstrate a sufficient grasp of skills and concepts necessary to be effective mathematical problem solvers. These findings coincide with their performance on the New Standards Reference Exam where the tenth grade students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Skills* – 15 percent, *Concepts* – 0 percent, *Problem Solving* - 0 percent. While these scores are below the district and state averages, their performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam is comparable to similar students state-wide. (*2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 information works, examination of student work, classroom observations*)

The students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy represent the school in an exceptionally good light. They interact like one big extended family and provide a strong support system for each other. They exhibit a tremendous amount of self-awareness and poise. Students readily accept and welcome the structure of the day and the tasks and activities they are asked to do by adults. They are strikingly well behaved, courteous, and polite. The students clearly respect each other and the teachers, staff, and administrators of this school. While many students have encountered a variety of life experiences that place them at risk, they have demonstrated tenacity, resiliency, and willingness to take risks and work to develop the foundation they will need to be successful throughout their lives. (*following students, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, administrators, and students, classroom observations, meetings with parents, students, and the board of directors, observations of the school*)

Commendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

The remarkable and resilient students

The extremely well-behaved student body

The poise and maturity of the students

Recommendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

Examine the “What Students Need” section of the New Standards Reference Exam School Summary Reports for the past three years, cross reference this information to the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) results of your students, and use that information to guide the scope and sequence of curricula.

Continue to collect and analyze available data on student performance, including follow-up data, and use the findings to inform the choice of opportunities the school provides its students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *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*
- ◆ *examination of classroom assessments*
- ◆ *examination of textbooks*
- ◆ *examination of Performance Assessment Tasks*
- ◆ *examination of classroom assignments*

Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated, have consistent expectations for student behavior, and work tirelessly to help students overcome enormous obstacles. Teachers and staff have made a concerted effort to teach students the affective skills they will need to be successful in life and work. They have a high emotional investment in their students, and have made teaching responsibility, respect, and the role students must play in their own learning a school wide focus and emphasis. (*following students, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, students and staff, classroom observations, meetings with school administrators, students and parents, observations of the school*)

Some teachers have used a variety of pedagogical approaches to make students active participants in the learning process. These teachers effectively utilize the extended time provided by the block. They structure rigorous classroom discussions that enable the students to engage in a dialogue with the teacher and between and among each other, practice protocols for critiquing a paper and engage in peer reviews. Other examples of effective teacher practice include allowing students time for reflection and providing students opportunities to analyze and synthesize knowledge. However, notwithstanding the extended time, a large number of teachers use methodologies reminiscent of traditional teacher-centered classes such as skills-based dittoes and worksheets, a dependence on textbooks, and teacher-dominated discussions and presentations of fact-based information. Furthermore, some teachers overuse valuable class time for completing homework and providing answers rather than explanations. The use of technology in the classroom as an effective teaching and learning tool—especially where there is a need to differentiate instruction—is limited.

(following students, classroom observations, examination of classroom assignments, examination of textbooks)

Teachers at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy recognize the need to develop and use rubrics and performance-based assessments to measure students' ability to apply their knowledge of content and concepts, and are using a number of schoolwide rubrics. A few teachers are using this information to alter the scope and sequence of future instruction. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the proper use of rubrics as both a tool to guide instruction and assess student performance varies between and among classes. A few teachers are incorrectly applying the rubrics and assigning grades higher than the established criteria would indicate. *(examination of student work, following students, classroom observations, examination of classroom assessments, examination of classroom assignments)*

The nature and quality of feedback teachers provide to students varies widely between and among classes. Some teachers are doing an exemplary job of providing oral and written feedback that is both constructive and instructive. This feedback is an essential component of the foundation necessary to help students become self-directed, independent learners. Constructive, instructive feedback is not used schoolwide. *(examination of student work, classroom observations, following students, review of classroom assignments)*

Teachers are placing an emphasis on raising students' basic skill levels in the areas of math, reading, and writing. A number of strategies are being employed, such as: the DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) program, lab classes emphasizing basic math skills like fractions and ratios, and incorporation of the Accelerated Math Management software program. Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) are now being used in an attempt to increase subject integration, and to allow students to follow a line of inquiry over a period of time, engage in self-directed learning, and apply the skills that have been acquired earlier in the quarter. However, the primary academic focus is on building basic skills. This emphasis provides fewer opportunities for students to: communicate mathematically, create models, systematically analyze problem situations, make predictions, create and interpret graphs, focus on effective writing strategies, present appropriate evidence and explanations, and connect the main subject with other knowledge and experiences. This results in missed opportunities to reinforce skills through engaging classroom assignments that provide an intermediate step between skills acquisition and the school's Performance Assessment Tasks. *(following students, classroom observations, examination of student work, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, examination of Performance Assessment Tasks, examination of classroom assessments)*

Commendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

The exceptional dedication teachers, staff, and administrators exhibit toward students

The emotional investment teachers have in their students

The willingness to make changes for the betterment of the students

Recommendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

Expand the efforts to help students make the connections between their acquisition of basic skills and the concepts and higher order thinking skills needed to think critically, synthesize knowledge, and to problem solve.

Explore new approaches for teaching in extended periods of time designed to address multiple learning styles and provide students opportunities to be producers versus consumers of knowledge.

Expand the differentiation of instruction to further meet the needs of students and incorporate the use of technology into the students' acquisition and the teachers' delivery of curriculum.

Limit the amount of class time devoted to the completing / correcting of homework.

Incorporate content and performance standards and the related principles of learning into daily instructional strategies in order to bridge the gap between the acquisition of basic skills and the Performance Assessment Tasks.

Increase the nature and quality of detailed feedback on student work designed to help students become self-directed, independent learners and improve the quality of their work.

Provide professional development, on a school-wide basis, that focuses on performance-based assessment, standards-based instructional strategies, co-teaching, incorporating technology, and designing standards-based tasks.

Recommendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Board of Directors:

Insure that the school provides the professional development necessary to achieve the changes in instruction and assessment outlined above.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *review of course outlines*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of classroom assessments*
- ◆ *examination of classroom assignments*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school administrators, students, parents, and the board of directors*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *School Improvement Plan for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy*
- ◆ *examination of Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Charter School Application*

Conclusions

Teachers, staff, and administrators are very effective at creating an atmosphere where students can experience success and build self-esteem. There is a palpable culture that makes this school a truly remarkable haven. The Academy serves as an extended family for students and parents. The small size of the school and the commitment of the staff contribute to the personalized learning environment where anonymity is banned and adults know students well. Furthermore, parents and students have contributed to the strong sense of community that permeates this school. (*meetings with board of directors, school administrators, students and parents, classroom observations, observations of the school, following students*)

This school has done an extraordinary job of creating a culture of caring and support for students. This achievement is a result of a commonly held vision of the nature and type of social and affective skill development the school should provide. Students, parents, staff, teachers, administrators, members of the board of directors, and the school's community partners share this vision. Conversely, the school is struggling to develop a commonly shared academic vision. The school lacks consensus about the appropriate level of rigor and the curricula and instructional practices needed for the students this school serves. The newly developed School Improvement Plan for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy lacks targets with measurable goals and action plans with timelines and personnel responsible for their implementation. Without explicit plans, details, and commonality of purpose, it is difficult to coordinate the multitude of programs and efforts to improve student performance. The lack of a detailed plan derived from a shared

academic vision and focus has significantly hindered this school's attempts to provide an academically rigorous learning environment necessary to increase students' life choices after graduation as stated in the school's mission. *(review of School Improvement Plan, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, following students, classroom observations)*

The school's organizational structure provides a minimum of 13 days of professional development a year, which is laudable. Much of this time appears to be used to address programmatic school issues as opposed to the needs of individual teachers. There is not enough systematic identification of the professional development needs of the faculty. The present professional development, as designed and implemented, is inadequate to provide all teachers with the instructional and assessment tools they need. This professional development system, coupled with deficient teacher observations/evaluation, provides teachers with insufficient knowledge about the skills, knowledge, and abilities they need to improve professional practice and hinders the school's attempts to create a professional learning community. For example the collaborative work of a learning community could focus on co-teaching in an inclusion model, literacy instruction for adolescents, integrated curricula, effective standards-based instruction and assessment, or a thematic approach to instructional strategies. *(classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and administrators, review of professional development activities)*

As a charter school, this school has been able to build a number of unique programs and services into its design and structure. Exceptional social services are the distinguishing feature of the Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy. Other innovative features are internships and outside placements, community service, two mathematics classes for all freshman students, daily reading/math skills periods, an extended school year, a summer orientation for new students, and evening school programs. However, many of the school's powerful components—work-based learning, internships, advisory/skills period—have not been effectively coordinated with the academic learning that occurs in individual classrooms. *(following students, classroom observations, review of the school's charter school application, observations of the school)*

This school has gone to great lengths to meet the needs of students through outreach to the students' homes, community, and external agencies. The Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Board of Directors, staff, teachers, and administrators have created an extraordinarily broad series of social, emotional, and academic supports for students. The school offers an a.m. study session, an after school program, dinner, and an evening program that is both social and academic. Teachers and staff periodically meet after school to discuss individual student needs as well as serving as advisors to students. *(following students, classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, students and school administrators, meetings with school improvement team, school administrators, the board of directors, students and parents, examination of Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Charter School Application)*

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy is making a concerted effort to improve the basic reading scores of its students. To accomplish this goal they have increased the opportunities students have to read by implementing the DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) program and forming groups of students for forty-five minute reading labs, and increasing the free reading time in some classes. These efforts have been hindered by insufficient emphasis on teaching effective reading strategies and the limited connection of the advisory/reading/math/skills period to the students' classroom academics. *(following students, classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with teachers)*

In an effort to improve the quality of student learning and to provide an assessment gateway from the lower school to the upper school, the school has implemented longitudinal testing of students using the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) adaptive assessment program three times yearly. These results provide the school with a baseline for diagnostic purposes and a measure of growth over time. The school has used the results to place students in the reading and math skills classes. Additionally, this test serves as a motivational tool for students by providing them an opportunity to see incremental growth in their learning. *(meetings with school improvement team, school administrators, and students, conversations and/or*

interviews with teachers)

The school has incorporated the skills from the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) into various courses. However, it is unclear that specific graduation outcomes with measurable criteria exist for students at Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy. Grade level standards-based benchmarks for performance have not been adequately developed. Furthermore, the lack of standards-based curricula developed around specific outcomes for each grade level and class results in a disjointed scope and sequence of academic experiences for students that is insufficient to deepen student knowledge and understanding of skills, content, and complex concepts. *(review of course syllabi, New Standards Reference Exam School Summary Reports, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and staff, classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, review of classroom assignments, examination of classroom assessments)*

Commendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

The passion, drive, and willingness of this community to take the risk and initiative to become the first charter school in this state

The welcoming, wholesome haven provided to students

The strength and quality of the community-wide effort to provide support structures that help keep students in school

The readiness of the school to make changes to improve students' academic skills

Recommendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy:

Expand and coordinate the focus and duties of the educational officers and Chief Executive Officer to include a strong focus on educational leadership to a level commensurate with social and emotional leadership that is currently provided.

Define and implement a commonly shared vision for a rigorous academic program.

Integrate the standards expected to be achieved in the advisory/reading/math skills period with the learning that takes place in the academic classrooms. Moreover, integrate the work-based learning provided by your internships/community service with the learning that takes place in the academic classrooms.

Conduct a needs assessment for professional development and coordinate these findings in a formal plan designed to meet both the needs of the school and individual teachers.

Develop and implement a teacher evaluation system, tied to student outcomes and the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards.

Clearly define specific graduation outcomes with measurable criteria with benchmarks for each grade level and course.

Use the graduation outcomes and benchmarks outlined above to develop standards-based curriculum and identify appropriate instructional strategies and methods of assessment.

Work through the School Improvement Team to develop a School Improvement Plan with measurable targets and tactics with action plans that contain timelines and personnel responsible for the action plans implementation. Use this plan to coordinate all the programmatic, professional development, budgetary, and institutional decisions.

Recommendations for Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy Board of

Directors:

Ensure that the school devises and implements a School Improvement Plan and professional development plan as outlined above.

Work with the school to build on the existing social, emotional, and academic supports and provide a rigorous academic curriculum focused on skills, knowledge, concepts, and higher order thinking skills that results in tangible gains in student performance.

7. Final Advice to the School

This school has a remarkable culture that meets the social and emotional needs of students and has improved their lives. The present school design—a lower and upper school with a gateway assessment, internships, advisories, skill building/ramp-up periods, parental engagement, education career advisors, an extended school day and year, the various supports provided, portfolios, low class size, and the use of longitudinal testing data—places the design of this school far ahead of many Rhode Island high schools. For Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy, the major impediment to helping all children achieve at high levels, is not the organization and design of the school. The central challenge of this school is to fully implement these design components and execute your plans in a consistent and systematic way that permeates all aspects of the school.

The design of this school is strongly aligned with a number of reforms of the American High School taking place at the national level. They include, among others, the America's Choice High School Design Model by the National Center on Education and the Economy, New American High School by the United States Department of Education, and the tenets found in *Breaking Ranks: Changing and American Institution* by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Many of these reforms contain programs, services, and personnel that can help you more effectively implement your current design and plans. Moreover, the school might also benefit from the work currently taking place around the Principles of Learning at the University of Pittsburg and in the city of Providence. This work can provide you with valuable information about the nature and quality of teaching and student learning on a school-wide basis.

The health and success of the school community is dependent on the well being and success of all community members. Cultivate the relationships that exist in this school to better meet the needs of your students. Remember to focus your efforts on the needs of all stakeholders, including the adults. The changes in practice needed to help all students achieve at high levels will require a learning community, built around a common educational vision, with a shared commitment, and on-going job-embedded professional development. Build on the strengths of this school, and the opportunities for learning all your supports provide, and use them to deliver a rigorous educational program so all students truly will have greater opportunities when they graduate.

Work to improve the relationship you have with the Providence School District. Invite representatives from the district to visit your school, compile and send them information about your plans and successes, and capitalize on the significant resources they have to offer you. Providence Public Schools and the Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy each have something they could learn from the other. Strengthening the relationship that exists between the two parties will enable you to better meet the needs of your students.

A detailed School Improvement Plan with measurable goals and action plans would provide a strategic direction to your reform efforts and help shift the conversation at various meetings to a more substantive dialogue around the most effective ways to implement the school's plans and dramatically improve student performance. Contact the Rhode Island Department of Education. They have facilitators who can assist you in the strategic planning process. Work through your School Improvement Team to develop a comprehensive School Improvement Plan that contains the components recommended in this report, and let it and your charter become the overarching documents that guide all the decisions you make to improve student achievement.

This school has clearly made efforts to improve student learning and the design and delivery of the academic program. A number of very positive steps have been taken. However, considerable effort still needs to be invested in determining the proper curricula for each grade, the most appropriate instructional practices and classroom assignments to achieve the desired outcomes, and a full repertoire of assessment strategies to

accurately determine students mastery and understanding of the desired curricula and student outcomes. Expand the current alignment of individual courses to NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) skills to include clearly identified graduation outcomes that go beyond basic skill attainment.

The Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy has created a school with a sound educational design and a series of supports that have a demonstrated benefit for its target population. This report contains a number of specific recommendations, most of which are directed toward improving the educational objectives of the school. Our team has taken great care to produce a fair, accurate, and useful report for this school. It is our hope that all members of this educational community will exert the same care searching for ways to improve the academic component of the school without undoing any of the good work currently being accomplished.

TEXTRON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ACADEMY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Ann Marie Dunbar
Parent

Melissa Giampietro
Teacher
Chair

Andrea Jones
Parent

Thea Lacey
Parent

Richard Landau
Administrator, C.E.O.

Mario Mancebo
Science Teacher

Rob Pilkington
Operations Officer

Stephanie Poulin
Teacher

Dan Yates-Berg
Teacher

THE SALT VISIT TEAM

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

Joseph H. Crowley
Director
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Providence, Rhode Island

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

Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy

November 20, 2000

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I have reviewed this report, observed a portion of the visit, and discussed the conduct of the full visit 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, 1st edition*), I conclude that:

1. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
2. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
12/14/00

