

SALT SURVEY

Databook Overview

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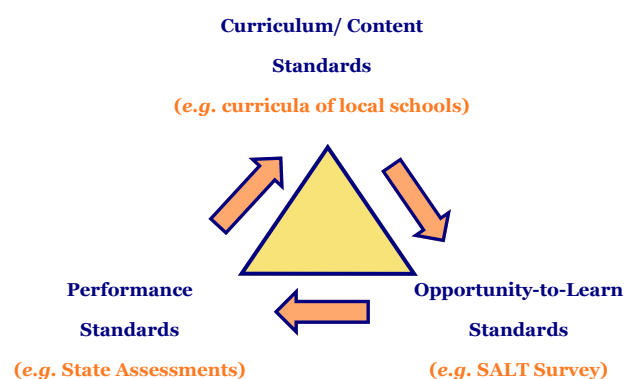
Introduction: The SALT Survey and School Improvement

High expectations for all students. Proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Development of life-long learning skills. A safe, healthy school climate. The attainment of these educational goals is at the core of countless school improvement plans and research studies. These are examples of real-life issues that concern teachers and administrators on a daily basis as they attempt to help all students learn and succeed.

In the past, many schools and their communities relied exclusively on student achievement data as a measure of progress. When these scores went up, people believed that good things were happening. When scores went down, they urged corrective efforts.

Comprehensive standards-based reform, however, is not just about student performance on standardized tests. As shown in the graphic above, there are three types of standards that measure what students need to learn and be able to do. The curricula of local schools ensure that students are exposed to appropriate *Content Standards*. State assessments then gauge the outcome of this content knowledge on *Performance Standards*.

Three Converging Types of Standards in Comprehensive School Reform



Finally, students require an environment where they feel safe and healthy in order to learn and succeed. The School Accountability of Learning and Teaching (SALT) Survey is one way to examine these opportunity-to-learn conditions.

The SALT Survey enables schools to collect reliable, valid information about the teaching and learning process from multiple sources. This school-level data provides a mechanism for making important decisions by raising key questions that lead to deeper engagement of all staff in a school’s transformation. Prior research has shown that high performing schools focus their improvement efforts on a wide variety of interconnecting factors that affect students, teachers, and parents.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has increased the emphasis on academic achievement of all student subgroups. To ensure that all students are exposed to quality learning environments, NCLB has also mandated that statewide school accountability systems, grounded in scientifically-based research, be in place.

The SALT Survey was designed to assess the current status of the school community and its inhabitants in each of the areas that the research literature has identified as critical to the teaching and learning process.

★ For more information about this research-based model, please see page 2.

The HiPlaces Model: A Scientifically-based Research Model to Meet the Needs of School Improvement

The Nine Dimensions Common to High Performing Schools

At the National Center on Public Education and Social Policy (NCPE), the principle that there should be no acceptable casualties among public school children guides our work. Over two decades of evaluation research with school reform initiatives have led Dr. Robert Felner and his colleagues at NCPE to the development of a two-level model for examining the implementation and ongoing refinement of reform efforts designed to ensure that all children have the opportunities to achieve to their highest potential.

The SALT Survey is grounded in existing and ongoing research on the conditions and practices that define continuously improving and high performance learning communities. At the first level, we have identified nine research-based dimensions which serve to organize the examination of the various complex elements existing in a school.

These dimensions impact and influence each other to strengthen the conditions existing in a school. In the above graphic, the central position of



“Ensure success for all Students” reminds school community members that in addition to serving as one of the nine interrelated dimensions, success for all students is the overarching goal of national, state, and local level school reform initiatives.

“There should be no acceptable casualties among public school children.”

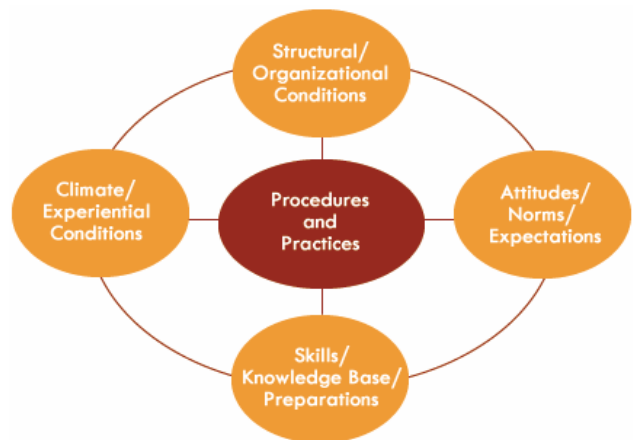
-a guiding principle of NCPE

The Five Components for Understanding Your Implementation Efforts

At the second level are five cross-cutting components which provide the context for operationalizing each of the nine dimensions and assessing its level of implementation.

analysis and implementation create a matrix which allows for the close examination of the implementation elements necessary for each of the interrelated dimensions.

★ **For a more in-depth discussion of each of the dimensions and components of the research-based 9 x 5 model, please visit our website at: www.ncpe.uri.edu**



Together the nine dimensions common to high performing schools and the five components for

Reliable and Valid Information to Guide Decision-making

The information in this data book provides the opportunity to use valid and reliable information to guide decision-making, rather than relying on individual opinion, emotion, and anecdote. Naturally, if more teachers, parents, and students complete the survey, a more robust picture of the school will be available.

★ *For more information and ideas on how to improve data collection in your school, see the tips at the right.*

When schools have been participating in the data collection process for more than a year, they are also given feedback on the levels of change in each of the categories assessed on the SALT Survey. In this way, the data can help schools ascertain if these changes, as well as the practices and processes that are targeted in their improvement plan, are being implemented at the school, grade, and classroom levels.

SALT Survey data give a clear picture of how the school is currently functioning, which gives the opportunity to improve that functioning, especially in regard to teaching and learning. Sharing your school's assessment results and improvement plan with the entire community will help you to build the support that will enable your school to become a high performance learning community.

A Note about Confidentiality

For purposes of confidentiality, no data from any individual will be identified or shared. In fact, it is impossible to determine the responses of any teacher, teaching team, or department from looking at the charts; only aggregate data from individuals will be reported.

Data from individual schools is similarly protected unless funding agencies or state or district requirements override these individual school protections.

EASING STAFF DATA COLLECTION:

- ◆ Plan a meeting in advance to explain the goals and objectives of the data collection.
- ◆ Make the connection between school improvement plans and SALT Survey data collection.
- ◆ Explain school improvement planning goals and objectives by using SALT Survey charts and tables.
- ◆ Choose a SALT Survey coordinator who commands respect from staff.
- ◆ Remind staff that their answers are confidential and make arrangements to ensure that the procedures for survey collection reflect that assurance.
- ◆ Involve staff in school improvement efforts.
- ◆ If it's possible to arrange for time to be set aside for Survey completion, plan on it.
- ◆ Be ready to answer questions from staff or inform them about how to contact staff at NCPE who can also answer questions.

MAKING STUDENT DATA COLLECTION A SUCCESS:

- ◆ Show students how the data collected will be used and has been used towards school improvement efforts.
- ◆ Ensure that you allow sufficient time for survey completion and that administering staff are committed and serious.
- ◆ Keep the reading pace steady and without interruption.
- ◆ Remind staff not to interpret questions. If asked, students should be advised to answer based upon what the question means to them or move on to the next question.
- ◆ Explain that questions are the same each year because that is the way we measure change.
- ◆ Allow students the opportunity to look at their school, district and state survey data on line.
- ◆ Arrange for the survey to be given on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

PARENT DATA COLLECTION: HOW TO GET IT DONE

- ◆ Plan ahead of time and inform parents about the goals and objectives of the data collection.
- ◆ Allow adequate time for parents to complete and return the survey but do not allow too much time.
- ◆ Send a reminder to parents about the deadline for the surveys' return.
- ◆ Offer incentives to students if parent surveys are returned. Some examples of incentives include: a homework pass, a class pizza party, etc.

Finding the SALT Survey Data You Are Looking for:

For organization purposes, the charts in this data book are arranged in sections according to respondents: Staff, Teacher Student Rating Scale (TSRS), Student, and Parent. In this way, school improvement teams may remove charts of interest from the binder, make copies, or rearrange the order according to the specific focus of the school improvement plan.

Your school's SALT Survey data is also available on the Schools Network webpage, accessible through our website: www.ncpe.uri.edu. Some improvement team members find this webpage easier to navigate when looking for a specific chart or topic. In the graphic below, letters A–E illustrate five ways to search for your data.

A

Learning Support Indicators: The LSI provide a compilation score of three areas critical to school improvement efforts: Instructional practices; Parent Involvement; and School Climate. A link to the LSI technical brief is also available to explain the computational process.

B

Search by Respondent: Similar to the hard-copy data book, this search option displays all charts pertaining to each respondent group.

C

Search by Key Word: This search option displays any charts pertaining to any key word which is typed. For example, if “reading” is typed into the box, all student, staff, parent, and TSRS charts relating to reading will appear. Also available is an alphabetical list of all key words.

D

Search by Subject: This search option displays all student, staff, parent, and TSRS charts for a specific broad, research-based focus.

E

Search by HiPlaces Model: This search option displays all student, staff, parent, and TSRS charts for a specific dimension, a specific component, or a combination of both.

Using SALT Survey Data to Help with School Improvement Planning and Change Efforts

Teacher, parent, and student responses to the SALT Survey are analyzed and formatted into tables and bar graphs that reflect what your school community says about its conditions, practices, and issues. As previously mentioned, these data charts are available to you in hard copy as well as on-line. Understandably, with over 150 charts generated per school, focusing on the key data for your improvement plan may seem to be a challenging task.

Researchers at NCPE have compiled a list of questions to offer improvement teams a “starting point” when taking a first look at SALT Survey data charts. Collaboration with schools and districts over many years has demonstrated that it is oftentimes helpful to ask this set of questions to aid with the interpretation and meaning of the data.

First Question

- ◆ *“Are the broad practices or conditions on this chart important to our school and its improvement plan?”*

Second Questions

- ◆ *“Are there aspects of these practices or conditions that we care about that are not represented on this chart? If so, what are they?”*
- ◆ *“What other data sources are already available that address these areas? How might we obtain this information?”*
- ◆ *“If no other data sources exist, what assessment processes might we want to develop to address them?”*

Third Question

- ◆ *“In examining any particular area or sets of charts that we care about, do they indicate that our school is where we want it to be?”*

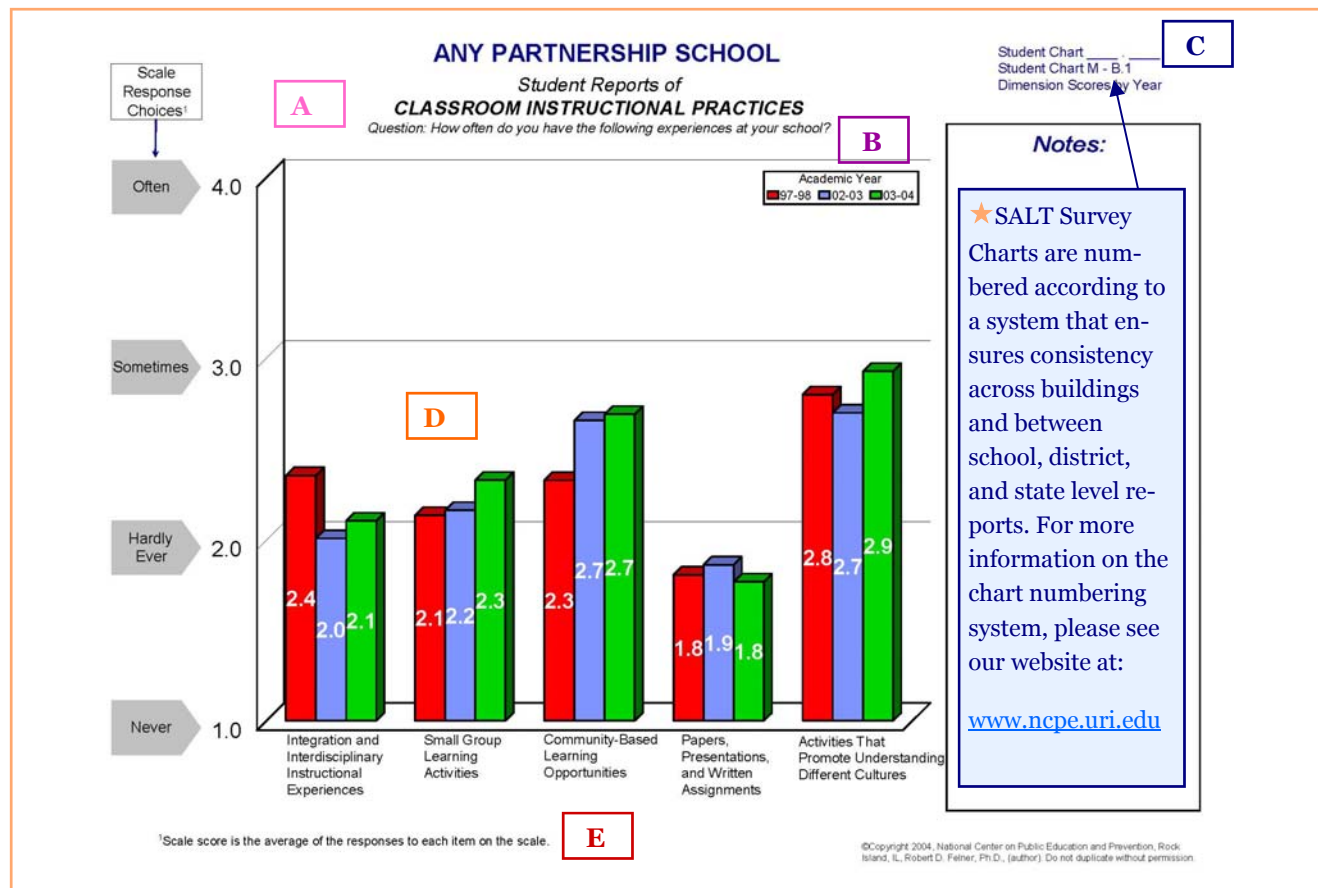
Fourth Questions

- ◆ *“Given current resources, what are acceptable levels of the practices and conditions on these charts that we can achieve at the end of a 3 or 5 year period?”*
- ◆ *“To reach these levels in the area of concern, what other practices, processes, or conditions, as measured by the SALT Survey and other data, might we need to change or consider?”*
- ◆ *“Given where we think we can be in 3 to 5 years, what is a reasonable goal for next year?”*
- ◆ *“What resources, structures, and related conditions may need attention to close the gap between what we have identified as the possible versus the desirable levels of a practice?”*

★ Sample Charts

On pages 6 and 7 are samples of the bar graphs and tables which are returned to your school. These two types of charts are always formatted in the same way. The various components of each type of chart are labeled and an example interpretation is given.

Examining Data Charts: Bar graphs—"An Example"



A Dimension reported on this chart: *Student Reports of CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES*

B Actual SALT Survey question: "How often do you have the following experiences at your school?"

C Chart type and number—★ **NOTE:** Student charts are disaggregated in 6 ways: *Grade Level; Gender; Socioeconomic status; Ethnicity; Number of books read outside of school; and Number of days/ hours without after-school adult supervision at home*

D Average response choices correspond to the height of the bars

E Titles of specific scales reported on this chart: *Integration and Interdisciplinary Instructional Experiences; Small Group Learning Activities; Community-based Learning Opportunities; Papers, Presentations, and Written Assignments; and Activities That Promote Understanding Different Cultures*

◆ **Example Interpretation:** A score of **2.3** indicates that, on average, students in this school reported that *Small Group Learning Activities* occur between **Hardly Ever** and **Sometimes**. Students have reported small improvements annually on this scale since the baseline year.

Examining Data Charts: Tables—"An Example"

2003-2004 TEACHER REPORTS OF FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- For each of the items listed below, teachers were asked to indicate how often they have participated in this form of staff development activity.
- Presented below are: (1) the rank order of the frequency of which teachers have participated in that form of staff development; (2) the average frequency reported by teachers (see 7 point scale); and (3) the number of teachers in your school that responded. B
- Teachers answered on a 7 point scale: 1-Never, 2-Once a year, 3-Several times a year, 4-Quarterly, 5-Monthly, 6-Weekly, 7-Daily.

A

	C	D	E
	Rank	Mean	N
Exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in your school	1	4.75	9
Workshops/in-services provided by staff in your school	2	3.26	8
Staff development activities within your grade level	3	3.22	9
Visits to other classrooms	4	2.67	9
Staff development activities within your team	5	2.56	9
Workshops/in-services provided through the school district	6	2.44	9
Workshops/in-services provided through the state educational agency	7	2.38	8
Professional development that supports teaching to standards for student performance.	8	2.22	9
Extended institutes (e.g., multiple day, summer)	8	2.22	9
Formal course work	10	2.00	9

A

List of staff development activities rated by teachers

B

Scale that teachers used to respond to their frequency of participation in staff development (*7-point scale 1- Never, 2-Once a year, 3-Several times a year, 4-Quarterly, 5-Monthly, 6-Weekly, 7-Daily*)

C

Ranking of the average teacher response

D

Average scaled teacher response

E

Number of teachers that responded

◆ **Example Interpretation:** *Staff development activities within your team* is the **fifth** most highly ranked staff development activity this year. The average teacher response is **2.56**. This means that, on average, teachers reported they participated in training related to *Staff development activities within their team* between **once a year** and **several times a year**. A total of **9** teachers responded to this item.

Steps Toward a School Improvement Plan Using Data

School improvement efforts are often hindered by two difficulties:

1. Time constraints
2. The labor involved in gathering and digesting all the information needed to develop an effective plan.

For this reason, we urge you to use your SALT Survey results as support to your existing school improvement process and not as a separate, added, or unrelated task. Used in conjunction with other data sources such as achievement scores, these data will add new dimensions to the conversation about your school's operation and functionality. Over time, you will be able to monitor the effects of the effort to raise or lower the

levels of the practices and conditions that your school has chosen for its focus. If your school does not have a clear improvement process in place at this time, these survey results are an excellent catalyst for creating one.

NCPE has developed a system, called *Stepping Toward Improvement*, for schools to use the assessment information as the basis for strategic planning and decision-making. Schools can receive assistance from NCPE staff at times that are mutually arranged; call **(401) 874-5672** to plan a training session. The goal of the additional training is to give schools the capacity to manage ongoing monitoring and planning that is based on comprehensive, current information.

★ **The steps below offer a place to begin your improvement planning process. The questions are intended to guide your thoughts as you form your plan. The next page displays an example of a data-based school improvement plan which focuses on raising reading achievement.**

Step 1: Mission and Goal Statement

What do we wish to change regarding students?

Step 2: Objective/ Target

What are the indicators for each area in our mission/ goal statement? How would we like to see them change?

Step 3: Expected Increment of Change

How much change can we expect in each targeted area?

Step 4: Tactic for School Change

On which large domain of change within the building should we focus to accomplish these goals?

Step 5: Evidence of Need from/ for Self-Study

What indicators show that our school is in need of improvement?

Step 6: Action/ Strategy

What specific actions will our school take to address this need in our building?

Step 7: Means/ Resources

What will it take to get our school to where we want to be on the Action/ Strategy step?

Step 8: Monitoring Ongoing Progress

How will we monitor our strategies on a monthly or quarterly basis?

Step 9: Ongoing Evaluation and Self-Study

Did our school meet the intended annual increases stated in the Action/ Strategy step?

Sample School Improvement Plan Using SALT Survey Data

MISSION/GOAL STATEMENT:		SPECIFIC TARGET:		EXPECTED INCREMENT OF CHANGE:	
<p>Enhance reading achievement at the middle school grade level.</p>		<p>All subgroups of students will meet the Annual Measurable Objectives/ Target (AMO) of 68.0 for English Language Arts for Rhode Island middle schools.</p>		<p>One-year AMO: Increase target scores of the students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency to 68.0.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Safe Harbor Provision: Reduce the overall number of students who are not proficient on the NSRE English Language Arts subtests by 10% yearly.</p>	
ACTION PLAN					
TACTIC FOR-SCHOOL CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF NEED FROM/FOR SELF-STUDY	ACTION/STRATEGY	MEANS/ ASSISTANCE REQUIRED	MONITORING ONGOING PROGRESS	ANNUAL EVALUATION AND EXPECTED OUT-COME
<p>On which large domain of change <i>within the building</i> will our school focus?</p>	<p>What indicators show that our school is in need of improvement?</p>	<p>What <i>specific</i> actions will our school take to address this need in our building? (Include where our school is now and where we want to be next year)</p>	<p>What will it take to get our school where we want to be on the Action/ Strategy? What needs to happen in the school?</p>	<p>How will we monitor our strategies on a monthly/ quarterly basis? How will we keep the principal, parents, and SIT informed and involved?</p>	<p>Check our Action Strategy. Did our school meet the intended annual increases? Structure discussion around why or why not.</p>
<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>Create a comprehensive standards-based instructional program and strategies with a particular focus on reading across the grade levels.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>Infoworks achievement scores show: -49% proficiency in Basic Understanding -26% proficiency in Analysis and Interpretation (available at www.ncpe.uri.edu) Equity Gaps of 6.9 points for students with disabilities and 8.9 points for students with limited English proficiency on the AMO targets in English Language Arts (available at www.rideoe.net)</p>	<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>We agree to increase the frequency with which teachers work together on curriculum coordination practices- Chart SF-C.1.1 from several times a year to quarterly this year and to monthly by next year.</p> <p>We agree to increase the percentage of teachers who implement integrated thematic units which include a focus on reading skill development at least 50% of the time- Chart SF-C.2 (2 of 2)</p>	<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>Increased time for teachers to work together on the planning and implementation of integrated instruction e.g., 79% of teachers report that lack of time necessary for adequate planning and/ or implementation- Chart SF-I.3 (1 of 2)</p> <p>Additional staff development in integrated curriculum, unit, and reading skill development e.g., teachers report wanting a moderate amount of additional SD in these areas-Chart SF-G.2 (1 of 2)</p>	<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>Use common planning time to discuss student work, reading skill development, and performance on unit assessment with team members</p> <p>Team reporting at monthly faculty/ school improvement meetings</p>	<p>EXAMPLE</p> <p>Increases in the levels of practices of teachers working together on integrated instruction as specified in the Action/ Strategy-Chart SF-C.1.1</p> <p>Decreases in the percentages of teachers who report that lack of planning time is a problem-Chart SF-I.3 (1 of 2)</p> <p>Gains on state/ district assessment and decreases in AMO equity gaps</p>

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For more information on:

- ◆ The SALT Survey
- ◆ Recent publications
- ◆ Educational resources
- ◆ School Improvement Planning
- ◆ Learning Support Indicators
- ◆ Participating schools and projects
- ◆ Frequently Asked Questions

Please visit our website

www.ncpe.uri.edu

How to Share Information across Your School Community: Some Examples

★ *Over the years, schools have taught us several strategies for presenting their information to the larger school community and the general public. The following are some of the most successful:*

◆ Approach #1: Share Goal-Setting

-Provide a small selection of charts that inform only one idea or concern (*e.g.*, curriculum and instruction, staff development, school climate, etc.) to school improvement sub-teams or committees.

-Ask each sub-team or committee to draw conclusions.

-Invite the teams and committees to share their conclusions with the full staff for further consideration and interpretation.

-Distribute copies of the charts along with a statement about the preliminary conclusions to all teams and committees for further discussion. This way all staff and other key stakeholders can participate in setting goals and deciding on realistic indicators of progress.

◆ Approach #2: Engage the Whole School Community

- Send selected charts to each team, department, or grade level for input on target-setting.

- Select representatives from each team, department, or grade level to attend the larger school improvement team meetings to discuss proposed targets.

- Distribute copies of the charts with the proposed indicators of progress clearly marked on them to all teams, departments, or grade levels for further discussion.

- Reconvene the school improvement team to discuss feedback from all staff. In this way, all staff participate in the planning and receive clear feedback about the indicators of progress for the upcoming year.

◆ Approach #3: Create a Feedback Cycle

- Enlarge to poster size a selection of charts dealing with a specific area (such as one of the nine dimensions common to high performing schools).

- Post a sheet of paper next to each chart where staff members and other stakeholders can write their responses. Place these poster-size charts and lists of suggestions in a common area, like the teachers' room, where staff can take the time to read comments and add their own.

- Bring responses back to the school improvement team or other faculty/ leadership group for discussion.

- Share the results with the faculty and continue the feedback/ discussion cycle.

In Conclusion—The SALT Survey Offers Evidence of Improvement

Schools that have participated in the SALT Survey for more than one year can demonstrate the success of their improvement efforts or identify and describe factors that are lagging or even hindering the improvement efforts. Even a highly committed school with a carefully constructed improvement plan might find that it takes several years of hard work before seeing significant increases in such hard-to-move indicators as test

scores. Student achievement is an *outcome*—factors *within* a school must first be improved in order to attain test score gains. With increased emphasis placed on annual school performance categories, it has become especially important to have evidence like the SALT Survey. SALT Survey data can demonstrate that learning conditions are improving even when it proves difficult to raise achievement test scores.