

JAMESTOWN SCHOOL

Jamestown, Rhode Island

A REPORT TO THE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY THE SALT VISITING TEAM

May 1999

CONTENTS

- [1. INTRODUCTION: THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS](#)
 - [A Profile of the School](#)
 - [The Nature of this Report](#)

- [2. PORTRAIT OF THE CONDITION OF YOUR SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT](#)

- [3. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT](#)
 - [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:](#)

- [4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING](#)
 - [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:](#)

- [5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY](#)
 - [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:](#)

 - [6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS](#)
 - [Most Important Conclusions](#)
 - [Final Advice to the School](#)

 - [APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT](#)
 - [MEMBERS OF JAMESTOWN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM](#)
 - [MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM](#)
-

1. INTRODUCTION: THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

A Profile of the School

Jamestown School District is comprised of two buildings while being considered one school. The buildings were planned to be connected, but a Native American Burial Ground prompted the separation of sections. The buildings remain a short distance from each other. Melrose building houses Pre School to grade 4, a large multipurpose room and the administrative offices. Lawn building houses grades 5 to 8 and a large gymnasium shared by the town's recreation department.

An elected five-member school committee sets school policies, oversees construction of the budget and evaluates the superintendent. The superintendent is also the principal of this PS to grade 8, 675 student, school. Another administrator is mainly responsible for special education and pupil services. Fifty-three teachers comprise the faculty with specialists being shared between the two buildings. In recent years the school committee has committed itself to supporting four classrooms at every grade level and four half-day K classes. The preschool uses a lottery system to fill available spaces in order to model inclusion from the onset of the children's public school experience.

Fifteen support personnel are mainly responsible for lunch room and playground supervision outside the classroom and student support in the classroom. Most are employees for only part of the school day.

Ninety-seven percent of the students are white and 6% are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Twelve percent receive special education services and 1% receive ESL instruction. The average class size is around 20.

A significant effort is being made by the school to focus on teaching and learning through a standards based approach. All teachers and some parents have had training in standards based instruction.

The School Improvement Team meets at least monthly. The community is invited monthly to a Superintendent's Forum to voice concerns and learn what is going on in the school.

The Nature of this Report

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 developing and implementing effective School Improvement Plans.

The purpose of the visit to Jamestown School from May 18 to May 21, 1999 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- Student Learning, Progress and Achievement;
- Teaching and Learning, and
- The School as a Teaching and Learning Community.

The purpose of the SALT Visit is to ensure 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 of the visiting Team is built upon the observations and conclusions of Rhode Island school practitioners. The majority of the members of the Visiting Team, whose names and affiliations are included in Appendix A, are practicing Rhode Island educators.

Jamestown School's Improvement Plan served as the Visiting Team's first touchstone in coming to an understanding of the School.

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, on the playground and in the hallways. The specific information generated by a Team visit is about how the students and 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 Jamestown School.

The Visiting Team collected its evidence from the following:

- a total of 153 hours of classroom observation. Every classroom teacher was observed at least once.
- many informal observations in and around the school
- following 10 students for a full day
- observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day
- meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators
- Jamestown School Improvement Plan
- Meeting with Jamestown School Improvement Team
- Minutes of Jamestown School Improvement Team meetings
- District and school policies, Jamestown School District test data, 1998 and 1999 *Information Works!* Data book; SALT Survey Report
- analysis of student work including a selection of work collected by the school
- analysis of the school's performance on state assessments of standards

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The Visiting Team met for a total of 24 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms and with teachers. 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 by consensus agreed to each conclusion, each commendation and each recommendation 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 Jamestown 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 Jamestown School Department, the citizens of Jamestown and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Jamestown School was the first school in the state to host a SALT Visit and a School Support System Visit at the same time. The school is to be commended for the leadership they have shown by their willingness to take part voluntarily in this process.

Following the Team's summary statement, Portrait of the Condition of Your School at the Time of the Visit, Team conclusions, commendations and recommendations are presented for each of the SALT focus areas. The report continues with the Team's most important conclusions and concludes with the Team's final advice to the school.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered as coming from the conclusions, since that is the way they were written by the Team.

2. PORTRAIT OF THE CONDITION OF YOUR SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Welcoming classrooms, dedicated staff, child-centered teaching, small class size and hallways filled with interesting student work are typical at Jamestown School. Teachers and staff have created a nurturing and challenging environment that encourages students to perform at high levels.

This PreK-8 school community is in the process of evolution as it focuses its energy and resources on creating an exemplary learning environment. The school community is using standards as tools to build a shared vision. The implementation of standards to build a shared vision contributes to the rigor of classroom instruction and high expectations for student performance. It has also caused some confusion and concern among teachers, parents and students about the use and value of standards based learning.

Jamestown School is reaching out to its community and is embracing the challenges it faces.

3. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Sources of Evidence

- 1998 *Information Works!* (1997 scores)
- 1999 *Information Works!* (1998 scores)
- 1998 State Assessment results
- Jamestown District test results

- Examination of student work
- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with School Improvement Team (SIT)
- Jamestown School Improvement Plan

Conclusions

Students at Jamestown School are independent, respectful of one another, good humored and articulate. (school and classroom observations, following students)

While Jamestown School students performed fairly well overall on state assessments there is considerable variation in the numbers of students who actually achieved the standard for the different subtests. (1999 *Information Works*, 1998 State Assessment results)

The percentage of Jamestown School students who met or exceeded the standard on all three subtests of the grade 8 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam has notably increased from 1997 to 1998. Performance on the 1998 exam is significantly better than similar students statewide. (1999 *Information Works*, 1998 *Information Works*)

Fourth grade students at Jamestown School performed significantly better than similar students statewide on three of the four subtests on the 1998 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam. (1999 *Information Works*)

Although 77% of students at Jamestown School did not achieve the standard on the 1998 grade 3 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, actual student writing is of high quality. (state assessment results, examination of student work)

Equity gaps between male and female students at Jamestown School exist on the grade 4 Writing Effectiveness and the grade 8 Analysis and Interpretation subtests of the New Standards English Language Arts Reference exam with females performing higher than males. (1999 *Information Works*)

It is notable that no equity gaps exist between general education and special education students on the 1998 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam Writing Effectiveness subtest. (1999 *Information Works*)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:

Student work in writing, reading and math.

Improved student performance in eighth grade math.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:

Determine basis of and close performance and equity gaps.

Continue to monitor performance on reference exams.

4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- Classroom observations
- Examination of student work
- Conversations with teachers, parents, students and staff
- Parent meeting
- Student meeting
- Meeting with School Improvement Team (SIT)
- SALT Survey Results
- School Improvement Plan
- Following students

Conclusions

Most teachers provide a learning environment that successfully encourages student responsibility to do work that meets or exceeds standards. (classroom observations, following students)

Most learning tasks are rigorous, engage students and are connected to performance standards with clear expectations leading to high quality work. (classroom observations, examination of student work)

Teachers provide students with experiences thoughtfully designed to deepen student understanding of complex concepts. (classroom observations, following students)

Writing is everywhere. The clear focus, skilled teaching, and an emphasis on writing across the curriculum leads to high quality writing in most classrooms. (school and classroom observations, conversations with teachers)

Curriculum, instruction and assessment is becoming standards driven and is working for Jamestown students. Parents, faculty and students are at varying levels of understanding the purpose and intent of standards implementation. (classroom observations, SALT Survey results, meetings with parents, students and, conversations with teachers, meeting with SIT)

Reporting of student progress and achievement within the standards based system continues to be challenging for all members of the school community. (meeting with parents and students, conversations with teachers)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:

Commitment to standards-based instruction.

Clear expectations focused on standards.

Variety of high quality writing across curriculum.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:

Continue efforts to clarify the strengths of a standards based curriculum for teachers, students and parents.

Continue to promote the use of standards in all classrooms.

Continue to work on refining standards based methods of reporting student progress and include parents and students as well as educators.

Make curriculum revision a priority to assist teachers in ensuring continuity among grades. Compensate teachers for curriculum work.

Ensure that instruction within the classroom is differentiated to meet the needs of students at all ability levels.

5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY

Sources of Evidence

- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with district administrators
- Meetings and conversations with administrators, school staff and faculty
- Meeting with parents
- Following students
- School and District policy documents,
- Meeting with School Improvement Team
- School Improvement Team minutes
- Jamestown School Improvement Plan
- District test results

Conclusions

There is a sense of caring and community among the students, staff and administration. The students feel safe, cared for, respected and are encouraged to make choices regarding their learning. (classroom observations, following students, meetings with teachers, administrators, students and parents)

School administration and staff are strongly committed to improving teaching and learning through carefully selected professional development focused on improving instruction. (Jamestown School Improvement Plan, conversations with administration, meeting with School Improvement Team)

The seventh and eighth grade subject area and special needs teachers share the same students, however they do not function as a team leading to inconsistent expectations and limited opportunities for curriculum integration. (following students, conversations with teachers, meeting with students)

Dr. Gallo, the superintendent and principal, uses common sense and creativity as she works collaboratively and skillfully with teachers, families, school committee and community to build a shared vision of high quality education for all students. (meeting with School Improvement Team, conversations with staff, administration and parents)

There are many opportunities for students to obtain extra support in meeting standards. Many teachers are available to assist students before and after school. The extended school year program is available at all grade levels to assist students in meeting grade level standards. (classroom observations, meetings with students, meeting with administration, conversations with staff and parents)

Teachers use a variety of methods to assess student learning in the classroom. Stanford test results are now available to assist teachers in monitoring student progress, in modifying instruction and closing student performance gaps. (conversations with administration and teachers, examination of test results)

Student performance and SALT Survey data is readily available to families and faculty, and is analyzed and communicated effectively by the administration. However, analysis and interpretation of the data and its implications are not part of the regular discussions of the School Improvement Team. (minutes of School Improvement Team meetings, Jamestown School Improvement Plan, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Jamestown School for:

Dedication to students.

Commitment to teaching and learning.

Strong connection between professional development and classroom practice.

Efforts to involve the community in school decision-making.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Jamestown School:

Provide professional development, and common planning time to support grade 7 and 8 teachers' efforts to work as teams to develop common policies, consistent expectations and more integrated curriculum.

Create more options for delivery of special education services in grades 5 through 8 including in-class support.

Direct the School Improvement Team to analyze, interpret and use state and local data to inform the School Improvement Plan.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Most Important Conclusions

Curriculum, instruction and assessment is becoming standards driven and is working for Jamestown students. Parents, faculty and students are at varying levels of understanding the purpose and intent of standards implementation. (classroom observations, SALT Survey results, meetings with parents and students, conversations with teachers, meeting with SIT)

Most learning tasks are rigorous and connected to performance standards with clear expectations and

they engage students, leading to high quality work. (classroom observations, examination of student work)

There is a sense of caring and community among the students, staff and administration. The students feel safe, cared for, respected and are encouraged to make choices regarding their learning. (classroom observations, following students, meetings with teachers, administrators, students and parents)

School administration and staff are strongly committed to improving teaching and learning through carefully selected professional development focused on improving instruction. (Jamestown School Improvement Plan, conversations with administration, meeting with School Improvement Team)

The seventh and eighth grade subject area and special needs teachers share the same students, however they do not function as a team leading to inconsistent expectations and limited opportunities for curriculum integration. (following students, conversations with teachers, meeting with students)

Final Advice to the School

Your serious work has established a foundation for excellence. Build on this foundation by continuing your work to implement standards. The professional conversation is ongoing and strong at Jamestown School. There is an atmosphere of support for taking risks and accepting challenge. Do not shy away from the difficult work ahead.

Although there are two separate buildings the school is one and must share responsibility for successes or failures. Build bridges of cooperation and collaboration. It is through working together towards common goals that you will truly achieve your vision.

Consider this report carefully. Take the time to reflect. Celebrate your accomplishments. Keep the momentum.

APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT

MEMBERS OF JAMESTOWN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Kathy Almanzor
Glone Baker
Carl Bednarczyk

Rosemary Burns
Gerri Cabral
Frances Gallo
Clifford Hamm
Susan Haskell
Nancy Heagney
Marilyn Hostetler
Janet Larson
Tony Lush
Debbie Murphy
Helen O'Hara
Harle Phelps
Suzanne Reynolds
Fran Sammons
Jean Uttley

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Patricia K. Ribeiro, Grade 1 Teacher
Providence Street School, West Warwick
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Ruth Beck,
Parent Consultant, Kent County CASSP
East Greenwich School District

Carol Belair, Grade 4 Teacher
Wilbur & McMahan Schools, Little Compton
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)

Diane Devine
Office of School Improvement
Rhode Island Department of Education

Robin Guenther, Grade 6 Teacher
Cumberland Middle School, Cumberland

Ruth Jernigan, Grades 5-8 Enrichment Teacher

Technology Program Leader
Narragansett Pier School, Narragansett

Carol Marginson, Grade 4 Teacher
Harold F. Scott School, Warwick
Teacher in Technology URI, 1998-1999

Lin Murray Patty, Grades 3-6 Enrichment Teacher
Metcalf School, Exeter/West Greenwich

Judy Ouellette, Grade 1 Teacher
Providence Street School, West Warwick

Susan Rotblat-Walker
Office of School Improvement
Rhode Island Department of Education

Thomas A. Wilson, Catalpa Ltd.,
Providence
Coach to the Team