

FALLON MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

A REPORT TO THE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY THE SALT VISITING TEAM

November 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](#)
 - [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Fallon Memorial School:](#)

- [4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING](#)
 - [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Fallon Memorial School:](#)

- [5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL](#)

- [Sources of Evidence](#)
 - [Conclusions](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Fallon Memorial School:](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that the Pawtucket School District:](#)
 - [The SALT Visiting Team recommends that the Pawtucket School District and Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance:](#)
-
- [6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS](#)
 - [Most Important Conclusions](#)
 - [Final Advice to the School](#)
-
- [APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT](#)
 - [MEMBERS OF FALLON MEMORIAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM](#)
 - [MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM](#)
-

1. INTRODUCTION: THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

A Profile of the School

Fallon Memorial School is located in a residential section of Pawtucket. The Pawtucket School Committee, an elected body of 7 members who represent the city at large, governs it. They do not represent designated wards or districts. All committee members are elected to serve two-year terms.

The first section of the school was built in 1948. A new wing was added in 1968, and an addition was added to that wing in 1992. A new multipurpose room has just been completed (November 1999). The old cafeteria will be renovated to provide small rooms for specialists and resource staff and an art/music room. This work will be completed by spring.

Fallon Memorial School currently houses approximately 630 students in pre-k through grade 5. About 67 percent of the student population are eligible for free or reduced lunch. There are students from many ethnic backgrounds. Thirty-five percent are Hispanic, 8 percent Black, 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent Native American, and 54 percent white. Ten percent of these students receive ESL services, and 9 percent are involved in other programs. Seventeen percent of the students receive special education services – 8 percent self-contained and 9 percent resource. (1997-1998 data)

The principal is in his second year in the position. There is a staff of about 70. There are 4 half-day

kindergartens, 5 first grades, and 4 second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. Recent additions to the staff include a full time nurse, a classroom reduction teacher, and a literacy teacher. There are 4 ESL teachers. Two itinerant teachers service gifted students in grades 4 and 5.

The implementation of the Mimosa Math program, Accelerated Reader, and a computerized Spell-It program are new initiatives for the school. Teachers in grades one and two are beginning to implement readers' and writers' workshops. A reading resource teacher is helping with implementation of the CIRC Program.

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 their ongoing development and implementation of effective School Improvement Plans.

The purpose of the visit to Fallon Memorial School from November 16-19, 1999, 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 visiting team. The visiting team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners and a parent. Their affiliations are included in Appendix A.

Fallon Memorial School's School 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, 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 Fallon Memorial School.

The visiting team collected its evidence from the following:

- a total of 86 hours of classroom observation. All classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed at least once, and some teachers were observed more than once.
- many observations of the school (outside of classroom)
- following 7 students for a full day
- observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day
- meeting with 14 students from grades 2-5
- meeting with 4 parents
- meeting with principal
- meetings with district administrators
- meeting with the School Improvement Team
- meeting with RI Youth Guidance psychologist
- meetings with Special Education School Support Visit Team
- conversations and interviews with many staff, students, and school administrators
- examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school
- analysis of the school's performance on state assessments of standards
- analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on *Infoworks* data
- Review of the following documents
 - School Improvement Plan (June 1999)
 - Fallon Memorial School Mission Statement
 - District and school policies
 - *1998 Information Works!* (1997 scores)
 - *1999 Information Works!* (1998 scores)
 - Professional Development Plan
 - SALT Survey Report
 - Teacher Evaluation Document

The full team has built the conclusions and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The visiting team met for a total of 28 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 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 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 Fallon Memorial 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 of Pawtucket, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Following the team's summary statement, Portrait of the Condition of Your School at the Time of the Visit, team conclusions 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 should be considered in the context of the conclusions since that is the way they were written.

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

Fallon Memorial School is a racially diverse elementary school with a teacher directed focus. Teachers, students, and staff are warm and welcoming. Children are well behaved and like their school.

Teaching is highly traditional, but teachers are seeking ways to change instruction to close gaps in student achievement. Although there is clearly a need and recognition that change is necessary, teachers and administrators do not feel empowered to influence reform efforts within the school. The school lacks a vision of standards-based education to guide its reform efforts. A schedule with limited planning time for teachers prohibits collaborative reform efforts. There is no clearly articulated, focused plan for embedded professional development - either through the school or through the district - to support reform efforts. There is a sense of frustration among those teachers who embrace new curriculum ideas and strategies based on district standards.

Fallon Memorial School is a nurturing place where children feel safe. Teachers work hard and want the children to be successful. Parents have supported the library and the new building project.

3. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- *1999 Information Works!* (1998 scores)
- 1998 State Assessment results
- 1998 Rhode Island State Writing Assessment results
- 1999 Rhode Island State Writing Assessment results

Conclusions

Although only 15 percent of the third grade students achieved the standard on the Rhode Island Writing test, this represents an increase of 12 percent (12 children) from 1998 scores. (1998 Rhode Island State Writing Assessment results, 1999 Rhode Island State Writing Assessment results)

Fallon Memorial School fourth graders did not perform well on the 1998 English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam. On all four sub-tests they performed below similar students statewide. (*1999 Information Works!*)

Fallon Memorial School fourth graders performed poorly on the mathematics New Standards Reference Exam with 95 percent of the students failing to meet the standard on the Concepts and Problem Solving sub-tests. (*1999 Information Works!*)

An equity gap (a difference of 15% or greater) exists between the special education and the general education population, with general education students scoring higher, on the 1999 Grade Three RI Writing Assessment and the Reading Analysis and Interpretation and Mathematics Skills sub-tests of the 1998 Grade Four, New Standards Reference Exam. (*1999 Infoworks!*, 1999 Rhode Island State Writing Assessment results)

An equity gap exists between Hispanic and White students, with white students scoring higher, on the Mathematics Skills sub-test of the 1998 Grade Four New Standards Reference Exam. (*1999 Infoworks!*)

An equity gap exists between males and females, with females scoring higher, on the 1998 Grade 4 Reading Analysis and Interpretation sub-test of the New Standards Reference Exam. (*1999 Infoworks!*)

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Fallon Memorial School:

Establish and implement clear action plans that define timelines, roles, and responsibilities for teachers, students, and families to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy.

Examine 1999 test data for equity gaps.

4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- Classroom observations
- Following a student
- Examination of student work
- Conversations with teachers, students and staff
- Meeting with students
- 1998 state assessment results
- SALT Survey 1999
- Following students
- Meetings with School Improvement Team, school administrator, district administrators, and parents
- Fallon Memorial School Mission Statement

Conclusions

Due to the lack of clear expectations from district and school administration, ongoing professional development, and adequate classroom support, the recently adopted programs and strategies (CIRC, Mimosa, reading and writing workshops, and technology) have been inconsistently implemented across the grades contributing to poor student performance. (School Improvement Team Meeting, conversations with teachers, conversations with students, meetings with administrators, examination of student work, 1999 SALT Survey)

Professional development, assessments, student work, and instructional materials are not aligned with high standards and expectations for student performance. This results in an inability to close gaps in student achievement. (classroom observation, review of student work, 1998 state assessment results, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The identified teacher leaders do not have training in a facilitative model that would allow them to perform in that role. Classroom responsibilities and lack of opportunities to collaborate also impede their effectiveness. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers, meeting with district administrators)

Some teachers are trying to incorporate standards-based theories into their daily teaching practice. Lack of common planning time limits opportunities to share successful strategies with peers. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers, conversations with administrators)

Teaching is primarily focused on direct instruction with little evidence of diverse teaching strategies that would enable students to become “self-directed learners”. (Fallon Memorial School Mission Statement, classroom observation, conversations with teachers and students, SALT Survey Chart G2)
Science instruction is minimal and relies on the reading text and printed materials. It does not provide real life, hands-on opportunities for children to construct their own understanding of science concepts. (classroom observations, meeting with students, conversations with teachers, meeting with district administrators)

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Fallon Memorial School:

Provide an outside school-site facilitator to empower teacher leadership and guide professional conversations.

Pick a focus area across grade levels and begin to implement standards-based instruction in that area. Implement common performance-based assessments at each grade level, share student work, develop rubrics, identify benchmarks, and use the information to inform instruction.

Focus on sustained, job-embedded professional development that will support efforts to build and extend teacher knowledge.

Provide a wide variety of teaching strategies that will accommodate the diverse learning styles of all children including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that the Pawtucket School District:

Implement a hands-on, inquiry based science program.

5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with district administrator
- Meeting with School Improvement Team
- Information Works 1999 (1998 scores)
- Meetings and conversations with school administrators and teachers
- Meeting with parents
- Meeting with students
- Following students
- Teacher evaluation form

Conclusions

Educational leadership lacks a teaching and learning emphasis. This inhibits the school's ability to focus on the identification of resources and networks to close the gaps for all children. (School Improvement Team meeting, meeting with school administrator, meetings with district administrators)
Clear expectations about teaching and learning are not openly communicated throughout the school community – district, principal, School Improvement Team, staff, and parents. This causes confusion and lack of consistency; therefore, educational opportunities are not the same for all children. (conversations with teachers, School Improvement Team meeting, meetings with district and school administrators, meeting with parents)

The pull out model for LEP students limits the students' access to the same curricula and content as the general education students hindering their opportunities to achieve high standards. It is unclear who accepts ultimate responsibility and accountability for LEP students to meet standards. (following a student, classroom observations, conversations with teachers)

The inclusive, resource model in grades one and two, which effectively meets the needs of the children it serves, is in jeopardy because of the reduction of a special education position to half-time. (conversations with teachers, classroom observation, meeting with special education school support visit members)

No common professional time is provided or created for teachers in grades 1-5. This limits opportunities for teachers to share, reflect on, and assess teacher practice and student work. (conversations with teachers, school observations)

Although the principal makes an effort to meet with teachers to plan for improvement, the district teacher evaluation process does not provide opportunities for teachers to set goals, reflect on current practice, plan for improvement, and receive appropriate feedback. (teacher evaluation form, meetings with district and school administrators)

Integrated social services to meet the diverse needs of the entire school community are minimal. (conversations with teachers and staff, school observations, meetings with district and school administrators)

The splitting of classes to provide substitute coverage adversely affects the learning of students. The lack of substitutes also prevents teachers from collaborating, participating in professional development opportunities, and attending IEP meetings. (conversations with teachers, meeting with school administrator, meeting with district administrator)

The SALT Visiting Team recommends Fallon Memorial School for:

Eliminate the pull out program by implementing a K-5 ESL strand that provides ESL students equal access to all programs and materials.

Provide leadership training to teacher leaders, the School Improvement Team, and the administration to facilitate change.

Empower the School Improvement Team to assume pro-active leadership for teaching and learning.

Create opportunities for teachers to share, reflect on, and assess teacher practice and student work within or outside the school day.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that the Pawtucket School District:

Solve the substitute teacher problem.

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that the Pawtucket School District and Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance:

Develop a teacher evaluation system that supports the growth of teachers.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Most Important Conclusions

Educational leadership lacks a teaching and learning emphasis. This inhibits the school's ability to focus on the identification of resources and networks to close the gaps for all children. (School Improvement Team meeting, meeting with school administrator, meeting with district administrators)

Due to the lack of clear expectations from district and school administration, ongoing professional development, and adequate classroom support, the recently adopted programs and strategies (CIRC, Mimosa, reading and writing workshops, and technology) have been inconsistently implemented across the grades contributing to poor student performance. (School Improvement Team Meeting, conversations with teachers, conversations with students, meetings with administrators, examination of student work, 1999 SALT Survey)

Professional development, assessments, student work, and instructional materials are not aligned with high standards and expectations for student performance. This results in an inability to close gaps in student achievement. (classroom observation, review of student work, 1998 state assessment results,

conversations with teachers and administrators)

The pull out model for LEP students limits the students' access to the same curricula and content as the general education students hindering their opportunities to achieve high standards. It is unclear who accepts ultimate responsibility and accountability for LEP students to meet standards. (following a student, classroom observations, conversations with teachers)

The identified teacher leaders do not have training in a facilitative model that allows them to perform in that role. Classroom responsibilities and lack of opportunities to collaborate also impede their effectiveness. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers and administrators)

Final Advice to the School

The SALT team hopes that this report will be valuable to you as you develop action plans to support your reform efforts. During this time of transition it is essential that you develop a comprehensive professional development plan that is based on the strengths of your teachers and the needs of your children. This will build the internal capacity for Fallon Memorial School to work together as a learning community.

Find time for professional conversation and share your students' work. Insist that the district provide opportunities for you to share with grade level colleagues within the district and throughout the state.

Build consensus around the idea that all teachers and children can learn at high levels. Then, expand your instructional strategies to provide an atmosphere where all children can explore ideas, question evidence, and discover the world outside their classrooms.

Empower your School Improvement Team to make decisions about teaching and learning, and then, support those efforts in your daily practice.

Continue to reach out to your families. Entice them with performances and exhibitions of their children's work, and then use those opportunities to share the work you do.

APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT

MEMBERS OF FALLON MEMORIAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Karen Banas, Teacher

Sue Blake, Teacher
Jude Cunha, Parent
Christine Dubuc, Parent
Fran Duluk, Teacher (Alternate)
Karin M. Donovan, Parent
Denise Emond, Teacher
Heather Fox, Parent
Richard Fox, Parent
Miryam Hanna, Teacher
Elaine Hogan, Teacher
Denise Imond, Teacher
Phyllis Kayata, Teacher
Ron LaFontaine, Principal
Maria Loiselle, Teacher
Miryam Marchand, Teacher
Joe Marques, Jr., ESL Teacher
Nancy Mills, Teacher
Elaine Newman, ESL Teacher
Patricia O'Hern, Teacher
Jackie Provenceno, Business Partner
Judith Schoenfeld, Teacher
Geraldine Shea Teacher

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Carol Belair, Grade 4 Teacher
Wilbur McMahon School, Little Compton
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Judy Droitcour
School Change Facilitator
East Bay Educational Collaborative

Maria Lindia
Education Specialist
Rhode Island Department of Education

Cheryl McElroy, Teacher
Vartan Gregorian Elementary School at Fox Point, Providence

Nancy Owen, Principal
Charles N. Fortes Magnet Academy Providence

Connie Rogers, Resource Teacher
A.M.Waddington and Emma G. Whiteknact Schools, East Providence

Marilyn Salisbury, Teacher
Robert Kennedy Elementary School, Providence

Tom Wilson, Principal
Catalpa Ltd.
Coach to the Team