



Winman Junior High School

WARWICK

SALT Visit Team Report

January 19, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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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 Winman Junior High School from January 16, 2001 to January 19, 2001 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 and a parent. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

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

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 95 full classroom observations and 3 partial classroom observations, which totaled over 85 hours of time, spent in direct classroom observation. Most classrooms were visited at least once. Some teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following ten students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*

- *School Improvement Team*
- *school and district administrators*
- *students*
- *parents*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *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:*
 - *Winman School Improvement Plan*
 - *Warwick Public Schools Strategic Plan*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The visit team met for a total of 27 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators. The team sought to develop

conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

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

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

The value of this report is not determined by the hard work of the Team. The value will be determined by how Winman Junior High 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 Warwick, 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 Winman Junior High School

Winman Junior High School serves students in grades seven and eight. It is located in the southern geographical section of Warwick, Rhode Island and is one of three junior highs in the Warwick's School System. An elected school committee of five members governs the school district. A superintendent and assistant superintendent manage the schools.

Winman's administrative team consists of a principal and an assistant principal who oversee a full faculty of 60 teachers with seven special services staff. Four secretaries and nine teacher assistants, four custodians and one maintenance person are on duty during the school day. Students at Winman JHS are arranged into three seventh grade teams and four eighth grade teams. Each team shares a common geographical area in the building. A departmentalized organization exists, as well, with eight department heads.

Of the 700 students attending Winman JHS, 97 percent are white, one percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, one percent Hispanic and one percent black. Fourteen percent of the student population receive special education services, two percent receive ESL support, and ten percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Important school initiatives include the Saturday Academy to close the educational gaps of underachieving, disadvantaged youth, a peer mediation program, the Career Day 2000. Winman also received several recognitions: Best of Fair, State Science Fair; Gold Medal Chorus at Great East Festival; several state and national awards in the 2000 French Contest; and the State Silver Key award in art.

Students' scores on the seventh grade Rhode Island Writing Assessment increased markedly over the past three years. The percentage of students achieving the standard and achieving the standard with honors increased (18%-47%). Scores have also shown gains on the eighth grade Mathematics, Problem Solving subtest of the New Standards Reference Exam (19%-29%) as well as losses on the eighth grade English Language Arts, Reading Analysis and Interpretation subtest (36%-24%) during this same time period.

The percentage of eighth grade students at Winman who meet or exceed the standard on three of the seven subtests of the NSRE is the same as the percentage of similar students who meet or exceed the standard statewide. This shows improvement over the same comparison for the 1997-1998 school year where the percentage of Winman student performance was the same as similar students statewide on only one of the seven subtests.

Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist between general education and special education students on all four subtests of the Mathematics and English Language Arts portions of the 2000 NSRE with general education students outperforming special education students. Equity gaps also exist between males and females on the English Language Arts Reading Analysis and Interpretation and Writing Effectiveness subtests of the 2000 NSRE with females outperforming males.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Winman Junior High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Winman Junior High School is a large, attractive, and very clean building. Students are happy, take pride in their school, and treat it as a special place. They are excited and enthusiastic about learning and care about their grades. They show genuine respect for the teachers, administrators, and for one another.

Teachers are energetic and truly display affection for their students. They are dedicated to the education and development of all students. Parents are heavily involved in the school and feel very positive about the professional and committed staff with whom their children work.

Teachers and parents alike, view the principal as a student-centered or "kids" principal. She is a high-energy administrator who has a vision of Winman becoming a middle school in organization and operation. She is very intent on this vision, and progress toward the middle school philosophy is evident. However, district administrators and the teachers' union have not fully worked out the details of this transformation, thus leaving the school in limbo as to its next steps. This is not an educationally sound position.

There is some tension between the administration and teachers partially due to a lack of open two-way communication. Both seem very concerned about students receiving the best education, but are not always on the same page as to how to accomplish this. The principal is in control of all aspects of the building and does not delegate responsibilities to her entire faculty. This causes a feeling of disconnection and isolation among the staff. Also, the brusque, aggressive manner of the principal is not conducive to fostering the most effective working relationship between staff and administration.

There are several school wide issues that need to be dealt with now. This year has been a turbulent one for Winman. The union job action last fall has caused some institutional stress. Also, a third of the faculty has come on board over the course of the first semester. Most of these new faculty are first year teachers. They require mentoring but staff and time constraints are limiting the effective implementation of this important professional support. This also puts a burden on the school's smooth functioning.

Winman students, generally, are not successful at reading analysis and interpretation. Seventy six percent of the eighth graders did not meet the standard on the NSRE English Language Arts Reading Analysis and Interpretation subtest taken last spring. Very few special education students are proficient on four subtests of the NSRE. No special education students met the standard on the Mathematics, Problem Solving and the English Language Arts, Writing Effectiveness subtests. There is no formal plan to remedy this.

Lines of communication need to be improved. Systemic professional development for teachers is minimal. Teachers have taken the first steps towards implementing standards based instruction but more work must be done.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999, 2000, Information Works!*
- ◆ *1999, 2000, 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work and displays*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with students, parents, teachers, administration*
- ◆ *student portfolios in team room*
- ◆ *following students*

Conclusions

Most students are engaged in and enthusiastic about learning. They are actively involved in activities such as discussions, cooperative groups, problem solving, hands-on activities, and independent work. Other students are not fully involved in the work of the class. Some students are disconnected from the lesson, participating in side conversations and/or walking around the room, thus impeding the learning process. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, following students*)

Some students are writing well in a variety of ways across curricular areas. They are engaged in writing reflections, essays, summaries, resumes, brochures, problem-solving explanations, lab reports, mock Congress legislation, narratives, and journal entries and personal letters. This is consistent with the rise in the percentage of students meeting the standard on the New Standards Reference Exam English Language Arts Writing Effectiveness subtest over the last two years (45%-65%). Also, the seventh grade RI Writing scores show improvement over the same time period (33%-47%). (*NSRE results, RI Writing Assessment results, classroom observations, examining student work, following students*)

Students are problem solving in many activities throughout the curriculum: building CO₂ cars, calculating the age of fossils, simulating stock market investments, participating in the Science Fair, experimenting with probability, solving math word problems, and explaining math processes through graphing. These activities require higher order thinking skills that extend and refine knowledge. This coincides with the increase in the percentage of students meeting the standard on the NSRE Mathematics Problem Solving subtest (19%-29%) over the last three years. The school has exceeded its own target of 27% set for school year 2001. (*classroom observations, examining student work and displays, following students, conversations and interviews with teachers, NSRE results, 2000, 2001 Information Works*)

Students are engaged in reading in a limited number of classes. They participate in literature circles where they interpret and analyze through discussion and writing in English Language Arts classes. Student portfolios include examples of reading journals, response journals, and book reports done in a variety of ways. Some students read aloud from textbooks in class. The limited evidence of reading available to the team does not

contradict the low percentage of students meeting the standard on the NSRE Reading, Analysis and Interpretation subtest for the last two years (25%-24%). (*following students, classroom observations, student portfolios in team room, NSRE results*)

Ninety to one hundred percent of special education students do not meet the standard on all subtests of the NSRE. Resource time is used for tutoring rather than remediation. This is unacceptable. (*NSRE results, following students, classroom observation*)

Commendations for Winman Junior High School

Respectful, friendly students

Recommendations for Winman Junior High School

Increase the number and variety of activities that engage all students in their learning.

Build on your good writing practices so that all students will improve their capacity to write well.

Continue to incorporate problem-solving activities across the curriculum.

Incorporate the teaching of reading analysis and interpretation skills in all subject areas.

Reformat the way special education services are delivered to ensure learning for these students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ 1999, 2000, and 2001 Information Works!
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999, 2000*

Conclusions

Some teachers are not fully engaging their students to participate in the lesson. This is evident in the off task behavior of some of the students. Students' chatting and walking around the room disrupt the continuity of the lesson. Learning then becomes disjointed and loses meaning. Also, some teachers are not using the full class period for learning. (*classroom observations, conversations with students, following students*)

Most teachers utilize a variety of age appropriate instructional strategies and engage the students in meaningful learning. Some teachers challenge all of their students in lively hands-on activities. They involve the students in problem solving, role playing, performance-based assessments, students as teachers, real world applications, oral presentations, creative writing experiences, literature circles, peer revision and peer evaluation. These activities meet the needs of various students' learning styles and foster increased interest in learning and achievement. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work*)

Excellent rapport exists between general and special education teachers. For those who work together in the classroom, however, there is little evidence that they are collaborating on lesson plans or co-teaching. Because the expertise of the special education teacher is underutilized, not all students in these classes are well served. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers, following students*)

The beginnings of standards-based instruction are apparent throughout the building. Standards are posted in most classrooms. Rubrics are used in a variety of ways. Some displays of student work reflect standards-based activities. Some students are aware of the content standards and their relevance to the work at hand. These are excellent first steps that students will learn at high levels. However, expectations are inconsistent across instructional levels. All students are not held to a high standard. More work needs to be done. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, and administrators, examining student work*)

Commendations for Winman Junior High School

Dedicated teachers who display a high degree of professionalism and a genuine affection for their students

Recommendations for Winman Junior High School

Provide professional development for all teachers in designing and implementing standards-based units of instruction.

Provide planning time and professional development in collaborative teaching for general and special education teachers who co-teach.

Provide opportunities for teachers to observe and learn practical classroom management skills.

Recommendations for Warwick School Department

Provide reading specialists and special education teachers and staff to help close equity gaps in student achievement and learning.

Provide mentoring support to this school commensurate with the number of non-tenured teachers.

Support the school in its efforts to implement a standards-based instructional program.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ *School Improvement Team meeting*
- ◆ *Winman School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *Winman SALT Team Handbook*

Conclusions

Tension and a lack of effective two-way communication exist between the principal and teachers. Teachers report that they do not feel valued or included in decision making. This negatively impacts the professional environment, the effectiveness of the instructional program, and contributes to the general sense of low morale among the staff. (*conversations and interviews with teachers and administrators, SIT meeting*)

There are twenty-three first year teachers in the building. These professionals are in need of ongoing support and mentoring during this crucial time in their careers. The one fully trained mentor in the building works with one first year teacher. Additionally, the informal “buddy” mentoring is inadequate to meet the comprehensive needs of new teachers. (*conversations and interviews with administrators and teachers, Winman’s SALT Team Handbook, classroom observations*)

A common vision for the structure and function of the school is missing here. This dovetails with the issues around effective communication and shared decision making between administration and staff. Some components of middle school philosophy have already been embraced. Teaming students and some looping are in evidence. However, team planning can only occur during the teachers’ unassigned work period. This is inadequate time for full implementation of a middle school model. (*Winman SALT Team Handbook, conversations and interviews with teachers, parents, and administrators, classroom observation*)

The school has made some effort to correct the low student performance on the NSRE Reading subtests by: planning to train faculty in reading in content areas, instituting the Saturday Academy, planning to train special education staff to use the Wilson Reading Program, and scheduling a daily “Drop Everything and Read” (DEAR) time. These activities are commendable but not enough. Ongoing, practical training for all faculty to teach reading in all content areas, and a regularly scheduled reading class for all students not meeting the reading standards on the NSRE are critical to improve student learning. Special efforts must be made to address the equity gaps in reading which exist between special needs students and the general student population, and to focus on reading analysis and interpretation skills for all students. (*NSRE results, classroom observations, following students, School Improvement Plan, SIT meeting, Winman SALT Team*)

Handbook, conversations and interviews with teachers and district administrators)

Commendations for Winman Junior High School

A committed, high-energy, student-oriented principal

Professional, dedicated support staff

Recommendations for Winman Junior High School

Establish a mechanism to foster effective two-way communication between administration and faculty.

Ensure that all teachers are included in the decision-making process so that there is ownership around new initiatives and an increase in trust.

Develop a more effective comprehensive ongoing support system for new teachers.

Institute a school-wide reading program to ensure that all students become proficient readers.

Decide on and implement the organizational structure and schedule that will provide the best age-appropriate educational and developmental program for students at Winman.

Recommendations for Warwick School Department

Assist Winman Junior High in deciding the organizational structure and schedule that will provide the best age-appropriate educational and developmental program for the students. Support the implementation of that decision.

7. Final Advice to the School

Winman Junior High School is a community of dedicated teachers, administrators and staff who want what is best for the students they serve. It is therefore imperative that they make a decision regarding its status. Will a concerted effort by all be made to transition to a full middle school model of some type or will it remain a junior high school? The answer to this question will determine priorities that must be set so that all students can reach high standards you set for them.

In order to make this decision and effectively carry it out, it is necessary to bridge the communication and trust gap that now exists between administration and staff. The principal must work with all constituencies of this professional community in a respectful, unifying manner so that trust and positive cooperation can flourish. An encouraging professional school environment is also necessary to foster the growth of the 23 new teachers on staff. Establish a true support system to assist them in classroom management and standards-based teaching. Find coverage for classes and use your proficient tenured teachers to model appropriate teaching and discipline techniques. Have weekly sharing sessions for problem solving and strategies.

Re-examine the school's Improvement Plan and make it a real blueprint for all decision-making by involving a truly representative group in its revision and implementation. Incorporate your organizational "next steps" into your plan, but only after discussions with the entire staff have occurred and agreement has been reached.

If an "all kids" agenda is a priority in this school, then the equity gaps must be addressed. A viable reading program for all students not reaching the standard must be implemented. Also, hire additional teaching staff to ensure students receive the necessary instruction in reading to close the equity gap between special education and general education students.

Please talk to and with one another and work together in a professional constructive way. Remember, it really isn't about us; it's about the kids. There are lots of positives here. You have tremendous talent in this building. Use it. Focus your energies on accentuating the positives and cooperatively working on those issues that need immediate attention. In this way, you will successfully ensure that Winman is a place where all students achieve.

Winman Junior High School Improvement Team

Families

Mrs. Michelle Addison & Matthew

Mrs. Shannon Bradshaw & Megan

Mrs. Ruth Clegg & Garrett

Mr. Mark Gresens & Kathryn

Mrs Peggy McKeever & Julie

Mrs. Robin Neale & Kaela

Mrs Kathryn Vient & Christine

Administration and Teachers

Mr. Joe Bleczirnski, Assistant Principal

Mrs. Kristine Gervais, Music Teacher

Mrs. Patricia Lytle, Math Department Head

Ms. Joanne E. McInerney, Principal

Mr. Rory Smith, Science Teacher

Mrs. Sheila Zompa, Foreign Language Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

Margaret M. Della Bitta, Science Teacher
South Kingstown High School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island
(on leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Lisa Beaudoin, Special Education Teacher
Park View Middle School
Cranston, Rhode Island

Arthur Faria, Science Teacher
South Kingstown Junior High School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Sandra Gauvin, ESL Social Studies Teacher
Jenks Junior High School
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Judy Isaacson, MI Teacher
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New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Winman Junior High School

January 19, 2001

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.
3. While the principal's consternation about a sentence in the report led to several deviations from the procedures for conducting the factual review of the Pre-Release Report, the wording was not changed for this Final Report (except for one factual addition). The result is that this report retains the full legitimacy of the visit protocol.

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



Thomas A. Wilson, Ed D
Catalpa Ltd.
February 3, 2001

