



E.W. FLYNN ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY MAGNET ACADEMY

Providence, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

March 10, 2000



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 E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy from March 6, 2000 to March 10, 2000 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- *Student Learning*
- *Teaching*
- *The School*

The design of the SALT visit ensures that accountability supports improvement of schools by directly connecting judgments of quality and recommendations for improvement to the actual life and work of a school.

This report is built upon the observations and conclusions of the visiting team. The visiting team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners and a parent. Their affiliations are included in Appendix A.

The 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 E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy.

The visiting team collected its evidence from the following:

- *a total of 95 hours of classroom observations. All classrooms were visited at least once. Some teachers were observed more than once*
- *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- *following 8 students for a full day*
- *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
 - *Flynn Cabinet*
 - *building and district administrators*
 - *students*
 - *parents*
- *conversations and interviews with many teachers, staff, students, 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*
- *district and school policies*
- *review of professional development activities*
- *review of classroom assessments*
- *review of the following documents:*

- *School Improvement Plan*
- *District Strategic Plan*
- *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment*
- *1998,1999 New Standards Reference Exams*
- *SALT Survey Report*
- *1999 Information Works! Data Book*
- *Teacher Evaluation Handbook*
- *Self-Study*

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 20 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 E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy responds to the report. At first, the critical criteria will be the thoughtfulness of that response and later it will be its actual effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. The response of the faculty and staff will be most critical early on but later there is a shared responsibility to support the school in making progress. The School Department, the citizens of Providence, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Following the Team's summary statement, Portrait of E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy at the Time of the Visit, team conclusions, commendations and recommendations are presented for each of the SALT focus areas. The report 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 in the context of the conclusions since that is the way they were written.

2. PROFILE OF E.W. FLYNN ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY MAGNET ACADEMY

The E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Academy, located in South Providence, is one of six Magnet schools in the Providence School District. A nine-member school committee appointed by the mayor governs the

Providence Public School District. The Providence School district is the largest in the state.

The main building opened in 1968 as the district's first school-choice facility. The 728 students are currently served in three buildings. The main building serves 532 students in grades one to five. The Annex I Early Childhood Center, located directly behind the main building, serves 107 students in grades PreK-K. The Annex II, located approximately three blocks from the main building, serves 89 students in grades four and five.

A principal, assistant principal and head teacher lead a staff of over 100 full and part-time members. Eighty-eight percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Forty-four percent of the students are Hispanic, 41% are Black, 10% are White, 4% are Asian and 1% are Native American. Eleven percent of the students have IEPs and 18% of the students are enrolled in bilingual classes.

E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy has established a business partnership with Woman & Infants Hospital.

3. PORTRAIT OF E.W. FLYNN ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY MAGNET ACADEMY AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Staff at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy is dedicated and hard working. They care about their students. The school has a rich diverse student population.

Inconsistencies in curricula and teaching as well as the size and separation of students in three buildings are some of the challenges facing this school.

Teacher directed instructional practice is the predominant teaching strategy, leaving many students unchallenged. There are some examples of exemplary teaching. As a result, some children by luck of the draw will receive a better education than their peers.

The use of standards and rubrics across the curriculum is in the emerging stages. Attempts are being made for instructional change in math problem solving.

Currently the school is completing the second year of an Arts and Technology grant. Unfortunately, the school is missing a great opportunity to integrate the Arts across the curriculum.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- *1999 Information Works! (1998 scores)*
- *1998, 1999 State Writing Assessment results*
- *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Exam results*

Conclusions

On the 1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam, the students at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Skills* – 46%, *Concepts* – 17%, and *Problem Solving* – 7%. These scores are once again above the district percentages. However, at Flynn Annex II, while 54% met or exceeded the standard in *Skills*, no students met the standard in *Concepts* or *Problem-Solving*. (1998,1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results)

On the 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the students at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Reading: Basic Understanding* – 77%, *Reading: Analysis & Interpretation* 56%, *Writing: Effectiveness* – 28%, and *Writing: Conventions* – 35%. For the second year all scores are above district percentages. Reading subtests show signs of growth while writing scores have decreased. (1998,1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam results)

On the 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the one grade 4 class of students at Flynn Annex II met or exceeded the standards on the following: *Reading: Basic Understanding* – 76%, and *Reading: Analysis & Interpretation* – 52%. However, only 12% met the standard on *Writing: Conventions*, and 8% on *Writing: Effectiveness*. The reading scores show signs of growth and are above district percentages, but the writing scores have decreased and once again are below district percentages. (1998,1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam results)

On the 1999 Grade 3 State Writing Assessment, 18% of the students at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy met or exceeded the standard. This shows improvement from the 6% who met the standard last year. These scores are above the district percentages. (1998,1999 State Writing Assessment)

Equity gaps (a difference of 15% or greater) exist on the 1998 Grade 4 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam *Reading: Analysis & Interpretation* subtest and on the 1998 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam *Skills* subtest between Black and Hispanic students. Hispanics outperformed Blacks on the *Skills and Analysis & Interpretation* subtests. In addition, at Flynn Annex II, Black students outperformed Hispanic students on the *Skills* subtest. (1999 *Information Works!* Data book)

Gender equity gaps exist on the 1998 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam *Writing: Effectiveness* and 1998 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam *Skills* subtests. Males outperformed females on the *Skills* subtest and females outperformed males on the *Effectiveness* subtest. (1999 *Information Works!* Data book)

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy:

Continue to attend to any equity gaps on state assessments and modify plans accordingly.

Review the class and school summary reports from the state assessment, paying particular attention to the section "what students need", and utilize this information to develop a plan to improve student learning.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- *Classroom observations*
- *Examination of student work*
- *Conversations and interviews with teachers, and school administrators*
- *Following students*
- *Meetings with Flynn Cabinet, school administrators, district administrators, and students*
- *Self-study document*

Conclusions

E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy has recognized the need to improve problem solving skills in mathematics. It is apparent that instructional practices are in place and are being utilized to improve student learning in this area. This is a positive first step in implementing standards based instruction. (classroom observations, examination of student work, meeting with Flynn Cabinet, E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy self-study)

There is a lack of consistently high expectations for children in classrooms at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. Student time on task, methods of discipline, and the pace of instruction may be contributing factors limiting students' ability to achieve their full potential. (classroom observations, following students, meeting with students)

Communication and collaboration for curricula integration are limited and inconsistent, especially between buildings and programs (e.g., Bilingual, Special Education, Gifted and Talented, the Arts) at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. These are essential components for consistent standards based instruction. (classroom observations, following students, conversations with teachers and administrators)

Standards and rubrics are posted in most classrooms at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. Most students have an awareness of the use of rubrics, however it appears that students have not had opportunities to create and use rubrics to assess their own work. (classroom observations, meeting with students, conversations with teachers, examination of student work)

Teacher directed instruction is the predominant instructional approach in classrooms at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy, which severely limits student learning, motivation and accountability. (following students, classroom observations)

Reading language arts lacks focus and direction at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. A discrepancy exists in skill instruction between grade levels. There are insufficient reading support services at the primary level and there are no reading support services for students in the intermediate grades. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers, meeting with school and district administrators)

SALT Visiting Team Commends E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy for:

School wide focus on math problem solving (Working Wonders Grant).

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy:

Continue the emphasis on problem solving and move towards greater development of higher order thinking skills.

Raise the bar of expectations for all students.

Improve communication and collaboration to ensure curricula integration and consistency of instruction.

Continue to develop and refine the use of rubrics by students and teachers.

Utilize a variety of instructional practices so that students have the opportunity to actively engage in learning.

Implement a standards based reading language arts program and provide the necessary supports to ensure that all students reach high standards.

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that the Providence School District:

Work with the E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy to implement a standards based reading language arts program and provide the necessary supports to ensure that all students reach high standards.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- *Classroom observations*
- *Conversations and interviews with many teachers and school administrators*
- *SALT Survey 1999*
- *Following students*
- *Meetings with Flynn Cabinet, district administrators, students, and parents*

- *Teacher Evaluation Handbook*
- *Self-study document*

Conclusions

Each of the three buildings (main, annex I, annex II) within the E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy complex operates independently. There are inequities in instruction, communication, management, student services, materials, and facilities, which compromise the quality of students' education at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. There is not a sense of a cohesive school community. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers and administrators, following students)

The over reliance on negative ways of dealing with discipline detracts from student learning and deters students from taking responsibility for their own behavior. (classroom observations, following students)

There are inconsistencies in supervision and security within the three buildings and playgrounds at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. The play area at the main building is not enclosed and doors are not always locked during the school day. This compromises the safety of both students and staff. (school and classroom observations, meetings with parents and students)

All staff at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy do not understand the goals of the various programs. There is little understanding or articulation between programs. (e.g., Bilingual, Arts, Special Education, and Gifted and Talented). The quality of the educational programs does not match the mission statement. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The Flynn Cabinet utilized the SALT Survey report, state assessment results, and Infoworks data to establish their targets for school improvement. The school has thoroughly analyzed information relating to equity gaps. However, there are inconsistencies in the implementation of their action plans. (Self-Study document, meeting with Flynn Cabinet, classroom observations)

The current teacher evaluation process at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy is based on the five dimensions of teaching. It is a useful tool that promotes reflective practice. However, the present system does not correlate with the district's movement towards the 9 Principles of Learning. (Teacher Evaluation Handbook, meeting with district with administrator)

The SALT Visiting Team Commends E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy for:

Disaggregation of 1999 data addressing equity gaps.

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy:

Utilize positive reinforcement to enforce discipline.

Review and prioritize action plans.

Review and revise procedures to ensure safety for students and staff.

Develop ways to unify all staff.

Revisit the consolidation plan to ensure that the needs of special education and bilingual students are met in an equitable fashion.

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that the Providence School District:

Follow through with plans to consolidate Annex II.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

You have begun to build a foundation in standards based instruction especially in the area of mathematics. You now need to take these same steps in the area of reading and writing.

Establish clear and high expectations for all children and utilize the excellent talents and strengths of your staff to achieve this goal.

Open lines of communication in order to collaborate more effectively and to develop a sense of school community. This needs to take place across grade levels, programs and buildings in order to provide consistent and excellent standards based instruction.

Arts integration can only be achieved at the E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy through further staff development and common planning time for classroom and arts educators. Improving literacy in particular and education in general through the arts is a realistic goal only if arts educators and classroom teachers investigate the richness of curricular commonalities together.

Using the District-wide Code of Behavior as a guide, develop a school plan that addresses the disciplinary needs of your students at E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy. Stress positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors.

Celebrate your students and their work. Provide students opportunities to share their cultural and linguistic talents with your school community. Allow students more opportunities for ownership of their school and their learning. Remember that your students are the 'soul' foundation of E.W. Flynn Arts & Technology Magnet Academy.

APPENDIX

E.W. FLYNN ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY MAGNET ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Angela Lombardo, Principal

Maureen Bracewell, Head Teacher

Vanessa Velazquez, Teacher

Rose Ann Warren, Teacher

Susan Sasken, Teacher

Paula Joel, Teacher

Cynthia Jones, Teacher

Susan Desrosiers, Teacher

Deborah Major, Educational Assistant

Joyce Akinfolarin, Parent

Christine Gamez, Parent

Deborah Griffin, Parent

James Marcil, Parent

Mark Poirier, Parent

Yeamo Yang, Parent

Nadine Booker, Assistant Principal

Catherine Bodner, Magnet Focus Teacher

THE SALT VISITING TEAM

Patricia K. Ribeiro, Grade 2 Teacher

Providence Street School, West Warwick
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)

Chair of the Team

Celeste Bowler, Coordinator
Early Learning Center Northern Lincoln Elementary School, Lincoln

Virginia da Mota, Director of Office of Integrated Services
Rhode Island Department of Education

Miriam Hernandez, Parent
Central Falls School District

Elisabeth Newman, Co-Head /Music Teacher
Bristol Warren Arts Magnet Program at Reynolds School

Mary-Ellen Russell, Developmental Learning Program Teacher
Edgewood Highlands School, Cranston

Thomas Stepka, Principal
Garvin Memorial School, Cumberland

Cynthia Voccola, Grade 3 Teacher
Sarah Dyer Barnes School, Johnston

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

E.W. Flynn Arts and Technology Magnet Academy

March 10, 2000

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I have reviewed this report, observed a portion of the visit, and discussed the conduct of the full visit with the Visit Chair. Based on my knowledge derived from

these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visiting Team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *SALT Visit Handbook –(3rd edition)*, I conclude that:

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

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

CATALPA, LTD.

March 21, 2000