



# EDEN PARK SCHOOL

Cranston, Rhode Island

## SALT Visit Team Report

April 28, 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 Eden Park School from April 25-28, 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 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 Eden Park 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, 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 Eden Park School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- *a total of 77 hours of classroom observations. All classrooms were visited at least once. Most 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*
- *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
  - *school improvement team*
  - *school and district administrators*
  - *students*
  - *parents*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, parents and school administrators*
- *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Infoworks data*
- *review of district and school policies*
- *review of professional development activities*
- *review of classroom assessments*
- *review of the following documents:*
  - *Eden Park School Improvement Plan*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *2000 SALT Survey report*

- 2000 InformationWorks!
- 1999 InformationWorks!
- *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *Eden Park School SALT visit binder*
- *Eden Park School Reading/Pacing binder*
- *Guide to Using Standards for Instruction & Assessment*
- *Cranston Mathematics Framework and Curriculum Guide*
- *Cranston Public Schools Teacher Evaluation Handbook*

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 23 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 Eden Park 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 Cranston, 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 EDEN PARK SCHOOL

Eden Park School is one of 18 elementary schools in the city of Cranston that serves students in grades K-5. It is located in the Eden Park neighborhood of Cranston, Rhode Island and is part of Cranston Public Schools. An elected school committee of five members governs the Cranston school system.

The school first opened its doors in 1950. In 1993, a portable classroom was added which currently holds two grade five classrooms.

The principal, who is in his third year at the school, leads a staff of 45 full and part time employees. Of the 351 students attending the school, 92 percent are white, 2 percent are black, 1 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Nine percent of the students receive special education resource services, seven percent receive speech and language services, and 15 percent receive guidance services. Twenty-seven percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

A strong PTO organization provides funding for many cultural arts activities at the school.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF EDEN PARK SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Nestled in the midst of an older neighborhood, Eden Park School has established itself as a close-knit community school. The dedicated faculty and staff exhibit a warmth and concern for each other, the students, and visitors.

The students are happy, safe and engaged in learning. The students are cheerful and willing to share all aspects of school life, projects, and lessons learned, in an effort to demonstrate their love of learning. There is trust and mutual respect amongst all members of this school community.

Teachers are in the beginning stages of implementing standards-based curriculum into their classrooms with the goal that all students may achieve or exceed the standards. Exposure to these new ideas and concepts has given the teachers cause for reflection about their own educational philosophies and teaching styles. The staff has worked hard to develop and implement a school-wide rubric. Some teachers are taking the next steps to incorporate standards-based instructional practices into their classrooms.

This continuous improvement is being guided by the school improvement plan. Implementation of this plan is underway with a focus on written communication and mathematical problem-solving.

Eden Park School is part of an extended family. Many of the parents are actively involved in supporting their teachers and encouraging their children to learn. Through strong communication, parents and teachers are kept informed about new ideas to improve the quality of education and those events that are happening at the school.

The school and district need to address the role of the library media program as an integral part of the standards movement. The issues of adequate space and resources to enhance the quality of art and music programs should be discussed.

### 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

#### Sources of Evidence

- 2000 InformationWorks!
- *1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *1998 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *examination of student work*
- *following students*
- *school and classroom observations*
- *Eden Park School Improvement Plan*
- *Eden Park School SALT visit binder*
- *Meeting with students*

#### Conclusions

The students at Eden Park School enthusiastically welcome visitors. They are happy learners who respect and support each other. These students eagerly share ideas about learning and thoughts about their school. They genuinely love being in school. (following students, school and classroom observations, student meeting)

On the 1999 grade 4 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam, students at Eden Park School achieved or

exceeded the standard on the following: Skills 73%, Concepts 35%, and Problem Solving 22%. These scores show signs of improvement and are at or above those of similar students statewide on the Skills and Concepts subtests. The Problem Solving scores have increased from 1998. In 1999, the Problem Solving scores are lower when compared to the score of similar students statewide. There is an increase in the number of students at the lowest level of achievement. (2000 InformationWorks!, 1998, *1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results*)

On the 1999 grade 4 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the students at Eden Park School achieved or exceeded the standard in the following: Reading: Basic Understanding 88%, Reading: Analysis & Interpretation 79%, Writing: Effectiveness 45%, and Writing: Conventions 46%. The scores on the reading subtests show improvement and are on target with similar students statewide. The scores on the writing subtests have decreased and are at or below those of similar students statewide. (2000 InformationWorks!, 1998, *1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam results*)

On the 1999 grade 3 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 37% of the students at Eden Park School achieved or exceeded the standard. This is an increase from the 1998 scores and is above both the district and state percentages. A greater focus on writing may be contributing to the increase in student achievement. (1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, examination of student work, Eden Park School Improvement Plan, Eden Park School SALT Visit binder)

Equity gaps (a difference of fifteen percent or greater) exist:

- between males and females on New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam *Writing: Effectiveness* subtest with females scoring higher.
- between students eligible and not eligible for free or reduced price lunch on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam *Reading: Analysis & Interpretation* subtest with those students not eligible scoring higher. (2000 Information Works!)

## Commendations for Eden Park School:

The students' warmth, openness, attentiveness, and respect to self and others

## Recommendations for Eden Park School:

Analyze state assessment results on an ongoing basis to guide instructional planning.

Review equity gaps on state assessment results to modify instruction.

# 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

## Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *examination of student work*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, and school administrators*
- *following students*
- *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- *1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results*
- *SALT Survey 2000*
- *Eden Park School Improvement Plan*
- *Cranston Mathematics Framework and Curriculum Guide*
- *Reading/Math Pacing binder*

- *Guide to Using Standards for Instruction & Assessment*

## Conclusions

In some classrooms at Eden Park School, students receive small group and individual instruction, yet in many classrooms the prevalent method is whole class instruction. In a few classrooms, cooperative learning groups, paired learning, and discovery learning, as well as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile experiences are being used to meet the needs of individual students. However, these grouping methods and teaching strategies, which are essential components in a standards-based classroom, are neither varied nor consistently practiced to accommodate the learning needs of all students. (*classroom observations, following students, Guide to Using Standards for Instruction & Assessment, conversations with teachers, meeting with district administrators*)

Standards and rubrics are posted in classrooms at Eden Park School, yet their use and understanding varies from class to class. The teachers have recently developed and implemented a school-wide rubric. Some teachers have begun to create rubrics for individual projects as they work to implement standards based instruction in their classrooms. Most students are beginning to understand the concept of a rubric as a means of assessing their work, but have had little input into the development or use of rubrics as a self-evaluation tool. (*classroom observations, conversations with students and teachers, meetings with students, school administrator, and parents, examination of student work*)

Students at Eden Park School love to read. Students are actively engaged in reading a variety of literature both in school and at home. Monthly reading logs are recorded by teachers and submitted to the principal. Many students creatively report on the books they have read. This is a positive step towards meeting the reading standards and may be contributing to an increase in reading scores on state assessments. (*classroom observations, meeting with students, parents and school administrator, SALT Survey 2000, Reading/Math Pacing binder*)

To formalize instruction in written communication at Eden Park School, the school improvement plan targeted writing. Each classroom has common expectations for correcting and increasing writing effectiveness. The school is using outside consultants to familiarize the staff in grades 1-5 with the correction process. Some teachers are providing opportunities for students to use different forms of writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. With continued and consistent implementation of this action plan, the students' overall written communication should improve at Eden Park School. (*classroom observations, following students, Eden Park School Improvement Plan, examination of student work, meeting with school administrator and school improvement team*)

The students at Eden Park School are beginning to identify and apply strategies necessary to be successful mathematical problem solvers. The plan for professional development to support the instruction of problem solving in classrooms is in the emerging stages. From grade to grade there is a lack of continuity and consistency of instruction in problem solving, possibly contributing to scores which are below those of similar students statewide. In many classrooms there is not an effective use and understanding of how manipulatives support problem solving. (*classroom observations, Cranston Mathematics Framework and Curriculum Guide, 1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results, conversations with teachers and students*)

## Commendations for Eden Park School:

Efforts to foster a love of reading

Development of a school-wide rubric that has been implemented by the staff

## Recommendations for Eden Park School:

Provide ongoing professional development for all teachers that focuses on problem solving, written communication, grouping methods, and teaching strategies.

Work to provide a balance in meeting the learning styles and needs of all students through differentiated instruction.

Continue and expand the use of classroom and individual reading logs and journals at all grade levels.

Continue to develop and incorporate the use of rubrics across the curriculum at all grade levels and allow student involvement in the creation of rubrics and as a form of self-evaluation.

## Recommendations for the Cranston School District:

Continue to support Eden Park School with professional development as it relates to their school improvement plan.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *observations of the school*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, parents, and school administrators*
- *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- *Cranston Public Schools Teacher Evaluation Handbook*
- *School Improvement Plan*
- *SALT Survey 2000*

### Conclusions

A positive energy exists at Eden Park School. The dedication of students, staff, administration, and parents creates a sense of belonging to an extended family. This supportive, safe, and nurturing environment is fostered through mutual trust. The school community sets a tone that enhances student learning through a shared partnership between school and home. (*school and classroom observations, conversations with teachers, staff, students, administrators and parents, SALT Survey 2000*)

The Eden Park School Improvement Plan is the vehicle driving change. The team has used extensive data in determining areas of need and is in the process of accomplishing many of their stated goals for grades 1-5. They have been successful in the areas of communication, parent involvement, increasing an awareness of individual differences, and community diversity. By the exclusion of Kindergarten in action plans relating to problem solving and writing, the foundation for learning these skills is not being addressed. (*Eden Park School Improvement Plan, classroom observations, meeting with school administrator and school improvement team*)

The Second-Step program is a vital component in a day at Eden Park School. Students are actively involved in conflict resolution, problem solving, effective communication, and social skill development. This allows for social development in a climate of respect for and acceptance of others. (*school and classroom observations, meetings with students, parents, and school improvement team, SALT Survey 2000*)

In a school of 351 students, who are eager to learn from a variety of literature, the present collection of resources in the library media center and in classrooms is limited. The library media center and its collection are outdated and

inadequate to meet the needs of a school moving towards standards based teaching and learning. (*meetings with parents, students, and district administrators, school and classroom observations*)

There is a lack of formal common planning time provided during the daily schedule for teachers at Eden Park School. Teachers are volunteering hours of their time, stealing minutes in bits and pieces, struggling to discuss and coordinate units, topics, and themes. This may be a contributing factor in the lack of continuity and consistency of learning experiences across grade levels and subject areas. (*classroom observations, conversations with teachers, SALT Survey 2000, meeting with school administrator*)

In an effort to focus on the professional growth and development of teachers, a new teacher evaluation system is currently being piloted in the Cranston Public Schools. Two teachers at Eden Park School have volunteered to participate in this two-tiered approach that uses a goal setting model. This process is a collaborative effort enhancing the concept of continuous teacher improvement, which should promote higher student achievement. (*Cranston Public Schools Teacher Evaluation Handbook, conversations with teachers, meeting with school and district administrators*)

### Commendations for Eden Park School:

Warm, nurturing environment that fosters learning

Dedicated, hard-working staff

Implementation and integration of Second-Step Program

### Recommendations for Eden Park School:

Explore additional ways of obtaining funds to update and enhance the library media center facility and collection.

Review and revise action plans.

Continue implementation and integration of Second-Step program.

Plan professional development inclusive of all grades.

Seek creative ways to provide opportunities for common planning time.

### Recommendations for the Cranston School District:

Provide additional funding to update and enhance the library media center facility and collection.

Provide support to school administrators and teachers in the implementation of new teacher evaluation system.

Work with Eden Park School to find creative ways to provide opportunities for common planning time.

## 7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

You have worked hard to establish a climate of trust where everyone has a sense of ownership and investment. You

have recognized and cultivated the importance of community involvement and parental support in creating a learning environment.

Continue this connection between school and home. In keeping with this balance, encourage active participation of additional staff on the school improvement team.

In striving to meet the goals of the school improvement plan, be sure to include all classroom teachers and specialists. You have worked hard to develop a school improvement plan that focuses on standards-based curriculum. Now it is time for all staff to increase their level of knowledge on standards, understanding and implementation of rubrics, how manipulatives enhance mathematical problem solving, differentiated instruction, and the writing process. Seek professional development opportunities that support the goals of the school improvement plan and the developmental needs of each individual staff member.

Your students are enthusiastic about reading. Make more books accessible to them. Continue to develop the library media center as the heart of the school where research and learning take place for all, making the school community effective users of ideas and information.

As you continue working to achieve your common goals, Eden Park School can only continue to develop life long learners who will become responsible contributors to their community and society.

## APPENDIX

### EDEN PARK SCHOOL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Mrs. Linda Ardito, parent

Mrs. Joanne Davis, parent

Mr. George Gagnon, principal

Mrs. Meri Kennedy, parent

Mrs. Anita Lindberg, teacher

Mrs. Leslie Milner

Mr. Stephen Mulcahy, parent

Mr. Joseph Pelosi, parent

Mrs. Nadine Podgurski, teacher

### THE SALT VISITING TEAM

Patricia K. Ribeiro, grade 2 teacher  
Providence Street School, West Warwick, Rhode Island  
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)  
chair of the team

Doreen Bethea, parent  
Providence School District

Patricia Carter, visual arts specialist  
Anna B. McCabe & William Winsor Schools, Smithfield, Rhode Island

Regina Caruolo, grade 1 ESL teacher  
Asa Messer School, Providence, Rhode Island

Nancy DaPonte, principal  
Frenchtown School, East Greenwich, Rhode Island

Ednor Larson, library media specialist  
Elizabeth Baldwin School, Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Francine Marzilli, reading consultant  
Robertson School, Warwick, Rhode Island

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Eden Park School  
April 28, 2000

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I have reviewed this report, reviewed working drafts during 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.

May 11, 2000

