



COTTRELL F. HOXSIE SCHOOL

Warwick, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

April 11, 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 Cottrell F. Hoxsie School from April 11-14 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 Cottrell F. Hoxsie 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 Cottrell F. Hoxsie School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- *a total of 87 hours of classroom observations. All classrooms were visited at least once. Many 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, school and district 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:*
 - *Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Plan*
 - *district strategic plan*
 - *Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Self-Study Binder*
 - *SALT Survey report 2000*
 - *1999 InformationWorks!*
 - *2000 InformationWorks!*
 - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment results*
 - *Warwick Teacher Evaluation form*

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 Cottrell F. Hoxsie 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 COTTRELL F. HOXSIE SCHOOL

Cottrell F. Hoxsie School is one of 20 elementary schools in the city of Warwick that serves students in grades K-6. It is located in the Hoxsie neighborhood of Warwick, Rhode Island and is part of Warwick's School System. A five member elected school committee governs the district. The Warwick school district is the second largest in the state of Rhode Island.

The current Cottrell F. Hoxsie School first opened its doors to students in 1969. In 1998, three new classrooms were added to this structure.

A principal, who has been at the school for four years, leads a staff of 46 full time and itinerant personnel. Of the 390 students attending Cottrell F. Hoxsie School, 94 percent are white, 3 percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are black and 1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty percent are special needs students and ten percent are Title I students. Thirty-three percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Cottrell F. Hoxsie School has established community partnerships with Southwest Airlines, Johnson & Wales University, and Newport Creamery.

3. PORTRAIT OF COTTRELL F. HOXSIE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Together Everyone Achieves More, T.E.A.M., truly characterizes the atmosphere at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School. Whether in the halls, classrooms, cafeteria or playground you are welcomed by happy children supported by kind and caring adults.

The principal's excitement about the students, teachers, and programs at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School is contagious to the rest of the community. This positive leadership, together with close parent/teacher involvement, sets the tone for mutual respect at Hoxsie School.

Teachers are at various stages of implementing standards-based practices and have worked diligently to develop student-centered rubrics that are used and understood by students and parents.

A lack of common planning time and the amount of space available for student instruction are issues the school and district are facing, yet the entire school community works together in its quest towards making Cottrell F. Hoxsie School a safe, nurturing place to learn.

The members of Cottrell F. Hoxsie School have truly formed a team and have achieved many of their goals. By continuing to work together, this team can only accomplish more.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- o 2000 InformationWorks!
- o 1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
- o 1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results
- o 1998, 1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment results
- o *scheduled meetings with students and parents*
- o *examination of student work*
- o *classroom observations*

following students

Conclusions

On the 1999 Grade 4 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the students at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School achieved or exceeded the standard in the following: Reading: Basic Understanding 87%, Reading: Analysis & Interpretation 70%, Writing: Effectiveness 37%, and Writing: Conventions 54%. The Basic Understanding, Analysis & Interpretation, and Conventions subtests are at or above similar students statewide. The Effectiveness subtest is below that of similar students statewide and reflects a slight decrease from the 1998 Hoxsie scores. (2000 InformationWorks, 1998, 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam results)

On the 1999 Grade 3 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 30% of the students at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School achieved the standard. This is a 20% increase over the 1998 scores and is above both district and state percentages. The emphasis on writing and the use of rubrics for the purpose of instruction and assessment is evident in classrooms. (1998,1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, examination of student work, classroom observations)

On the 1999 Grade 4 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam, the students at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School achieved or exceeded the standard in the following: Skills 66%, Concepts 47% and Problem Solving 31%. These scores show considerable improvement over the 1998 scores and are above the scores of similar students statewide on the Concepts and Problem Solving subtests. There have been gains in students reaching a higher level of performance. Although there has been a decrease in the number of students exhibiting little evidence of achievement in the Skills and Concepts subtests, there has been an increase in the number of students performing at the lowest level of achievement in the Problem Solving subtest. There is a focus on problem solving seen in most classrooms, which may be contributing to the increase in students achieving the standard. (2000 InformationWorks, 1998, 1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results, examination of student work, classroom observations)

On the Grade 5 1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment, 55% of the students at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School achieved or exceeded the standard. This is a significant increase from the 1998 scores and is above both district and state percentages. (1998, 1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment results)

Students at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School exemplify the philosophy of the Hoxsie Code of Behavior and the Feinstein principles of good citizenship. They show respect for themselves, their peers, staff, and visitors. Students show a strong commitment to learning through cooperation and mutual trust. (classroom observations, following students, meetings with students and parents)

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

- *between special education and general education students on 1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam Skills subtest and New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam Writing: Effectiveness subtest with general education students scoring higher.*
- *on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam Reading: Analysis & Interpretation subtest between students eligible and ineligible for free and reduced price lunch, males and females, and special education and general education students. Students ineligible for free and reduced price lunch, males, and general education students scored higher. (2000 InformationWorks!)*

The SALT Visiting Team Commends Cottrell F. Hoxsie School for:

Strong commitment of students to learning

Student behaviors and attitudes

Efforts to close equity gaps and raise the level of proficiency for all children

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that Cottrell F. Hoxsie School:

Continue to identify and address equity gaps in instructional planning.

Continue work to close gaps between and among all students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- *following students*
- *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, building and district administrators, students, and parents*
- *examination of student work*
- *Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Plan*

Salt Survey 2000

Conclusions

Most teachers are using rubrics very effectively as a tool to define and assess student work, especially in writing and problem solving. Most students understand and articulate how the rubrics apply to their own work and use the rubrics for self-evaluation and growth. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, meetings with students, parents and building administrators, conversations with teachers and students*)

Most teachers at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School employ a wealth of teaching strategies in their daily lessons. Teachers use cooperative learning, "buddy" activities, integration of technology, pair sharing, and modifications of instruction, materials and homework effectively to close gaps in student learning. (*classroom observations, following students, SALT Survey 2000*)

Cottrell F. Hoxsie School has a school wide focus on problem solving and writing in order to improve instruction for all students. Teachers attend many workshops, as well as after-school monthly staff and curriculum meetings to develop and refine teaching skills in these areas. The teachers are committed to improving their own practices to improve student achievement. (*Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Plan, conversations with teachers and administrators, meeting with Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Team*)

The teachers at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School are moving towards standards based instruction through a focus on good teaching practices. In some classrooms, cooperative learning, hands-on activities, higher order thinking skills, real life application to everyday learning, use of technology, and problem solving excite many students who are actively participating in and taking responsibility for their own learning. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators*)

SALT Visiting Team Commends Cottrell F. Hoxsie School for:

Faculty collaboration on the continuous development and application of rubrics

Commitment and dedication of teachers

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that Cottrell F. Hoxsie School:

Continue the integration of rubrics into the development of standards based instruction.

Continue adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students in all classrooms.

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, building and district administrators, students and parents*
- *Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Plan*
- *SALT Survey 2000*
- *Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Self-Study binder*
- *Warwick teacher evaluation form*

Conclusions

A dynamic principal, dedicated staff, supportive parents and enthusiastic students characterize Cottrell F. Hoxsie School. The willingness of these partners to work together exemplifies T.E.A.M.- Together Everyone Achieves More. (*classroom observations, meetings with students, parents, building and district administrators, conversations with teachers and staff, SALT Survey 2000*)

The principal at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School uses effective leadership skills to motivate, inspire, and support the entire school community. He has a clear vision for the future and knows where he wants to lead Hoxsie School. In so doing, he forms alliances within and beyond the school and cultivates the strengths of all partners in order to benefit students. (*school and classroom observations, meetings with students, parents, district administrators, and Hoxsie School Improvement Team, conversations with staff and teachers, SALT Survey 2000*)

Directly related to action plans developed by the school improvement team, many professional development

opportunities are offered. This gives faculty and administration a foundation for accomplishing their goal of increasing proficiency in academic and communication skills. (*Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Plan, meetings with school and district administrators, conversations with teachers*)

After-school programs have been implemented to close gaps in student learning, develop social skills, and create a sense of community. Students and parents are excited about these opportunities for after-school involvement that enrich the school/community experience and cultivate a desire for learning. (*meetings with students and parents, conversations with teachers, students and administrators, Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement plan*)

The School Improvement Team at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School is empowered to work together to develop and implement an ongoing plan that focuses on the following areas: Academics, Technology and Safety. The team develops action plans and works one step at a time, continually evaluating and modifying their course of action as needed. (*meetings with Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Team, building administration, and parents, Cottrell F. Hoxsie School self-study binder*)

A lack of formal, common planning time among grade level teachers is a barrier to communication and program development. Duplication of efforts and disparity of instruction are occurring. Some obstacles to common planning time are schedules, classroom locations, and shared itinerants between buildings. Teachers attempt collaboration and program development before and after-school hours and informally during the school day. This is not enough to ensure long range continuity of instruction. (*classroom observations, conversations with teachers, meetings with district and building administrators*)

Although not aligned to standards, the current teacher evaluation process at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School is being used by the administration as a means of providing feedback to all teachers. (*meetings with building and district administrators, Warwick teacher evaluation form*)

The SALT Visiting Team Commends Cottrell F. Hoxsie School for:

Outstanding leadership of the building principal

Commitment of Cottrell F. Hoxsie School Improvement Team

Willingness of the school community to work together for the good of the students

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that Cottrell F. Hoxsie School:

Continue and expand professional development opportunities in standards based instruction.

Explore ways to provide for more common planning time.

Pursue ways to expand after-school programs.

The SALT Visiting Team Recommends that the Warwick School District:

Work with Cottrell F. Hoxsie School to find ways to accommodate common planning time.

Collaborate with all appropriate stakeholders to develop a teacher evaluation system that reflects standards.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Your T.E.A.M. at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School has an obvious commitment to standards as a means of improving student learning. The teachers' willingness to implement differentiated teaching strategies and a shared commitment of the entire school community has provided an excellent educational climate.

Although you have done much to close gaps in student learning, keep up your efforts in developing more standards based instruction.

Continue to develop and expand your special programs, designed to improve student learning, both during and after school hours at Cottrell F. Hoxsie School.

You have designed an operative school improvement plan. Continue to develop, implement and assess your objectives on a timely basis. The extensive professional development is a credit to the school and district administration as well as the faculty. Remain focused on your school objectives when planning for and participating in future professional development.

You have established the groundwork for achieving your goals in academics, safety, and technology. Continue your work in these areas. Increase access to technology, a necessary component of standards based instruction, in all classrooms.

Be mindful of the "growing pains" you are beginning to experience, as you plan for future growth of Cottrell F. Hoxsie School.

Cottrell F. Hoxsie School is setting a standard for school reform- not only within your district but also within the state. Continue your hard work and commitment to students. Keep Hoxsie a place where parents want their children to attend, a place where teachers vie to teach, and a place where children feel safe and respected.

APPENDIX

COTTRELL F. HOXSIE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Mrs. Debbie Kunz, parent

Mrs. Kathy Curtis, teacher

Mrs. Karen Gadrow, teacher

Mrs. Mary K. Sine, teacher

Mr. Paul McVety, parent

Mr. Richard Lefebvre, parent

Mr. George Dubuque, parent

Mr. Daniel O'Rourke, parent

Mrs. Elaine Kenney, teacher assistant

Mr. Gene Kelly, city councilman

Mrs. Ann Blackmar, parent

Mr. Robert Hockenhull, parent

Mrs. Gerrie Bastia, teacher

Miss Kate Sharkey, teacher

Miss June Marchant, teacher

Mrs. Linda Goolgasian, teacher

Mr. Robert W. McKenna, principal

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

Susan Caputo, principal
William Winsor School, Smithfield, Rhode Island

Janet Carroll, Office of Instruction
Rhode Island Department of Education

Nikki Karon, grade 5 teacher
Asa Messer School, Providence, Rhode Island

Janice Mowry, math specialist. Title I teacher/director
Captain Isaac Paine School, Foster, Rhode Island

Eileen Riley, parent
Matunuck School, South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Holly Scripsack, grade 3 teacher
Eden Park School, Cranston, Rhode Island

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Cottrell F. Hoxsie School

April 11, 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.

May 2, 2000

