



FOGARTY MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Glocester, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

May 5, 2000



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary 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 Fogarty Memorial School from May 2-5, 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. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for Fogarty Memorial 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 Fogarty Memorial School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- *76 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. Most classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- *following 6 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*
 - *12 students*
 - *nine parents*
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- *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 InformationWorks data*
 - *review of district and school policies*
 - *review of professional development activities*
 - *review of classroom assessments*
 - *review of the following documents:*
 - *School Improvement Plan 1999-2002*
 - *district strategic plan*
 - *SALT Survey report*
 - *InformationWorks! 2000*
 - *InformationWorks! 1999*
 - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *Manual for Teacher Evaluation, September 1993*

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 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 Fogarty Memorial School responds to the report. At first, the critical criteria will be the thoughtfulness of that response and later it will be its actual effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. The response of the faculty and staff will be most critical early on, but later there is a shared responsibility to support the school in making progress. The school department, the citizens of Gloucester, 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 FOGARTY MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Fogarty Memorial School is one of two elementary schools in the town of Glocester, Rhode Island. These two schools comprise the Foster-Glocester Regional School District. Children from Fogarty Memorial School go on to Ponaganset Middle and High Schools, which are in the Ponaganset Regional School District.

The school was built in an open classroom design in 1975. It was remodeled in the summer of 1991 to build classroom walls. All the plasterboard walls are part of the renovation. Concrete block walls are from the original construction.

A six-member school committee is elected for staggered terms of four years. These members are elected at large from the town. Three hundred eighty one students are served by a staff of one administrator, 32 full and part time teachers, 11 aides and support personnel, and four full and part time custodians. There are two half day kindergarten classes and three each of grades one through five.

Of the students attending the school, 99 percent are white. Two students are Hispanic and one student is black. Seventeen percent are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Seventeen percent receive special education services.

The school is wired so that the computer lab, every classroom, and office has two drops for internet access. Most classrooms have at least one computer that is internet accessible.

An after-school enrichment program serves about 200 children over the course of a year. Before and after school care is provided by the Smithfield YMCA.

3. PORTRAIT OF FOGARTY MEMORIAL SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Surrounded by fields and woodlands Fogarty Memorial School sits peacefully off a winding country road. A sense of calm and order sets the general tone of the school. Although all the elements for success — courteous and respectful students, a spacious facility, ample staff, supportive community, and involved parents — are present, Fogarty Memorial School relies on direct instruction and classroom control. This creates a teacher-centered environment that often fails to spark curiosity and inquiry.

High test scores in the English Language Arts areas of state testing provide a false sense of security and create a stumbling block to the progress of district standards-based reform efforts. Because of its size, the district is limited in its capacity to develop and implement a standards-based curriculum. Although some teachers realize the need for change and have begun the work, few have the training required to support necessary reforms.

With the notable exception of the third grade writing project that expanded beyond the third grade to include other grades and the West Glocester School's teachers, the school culture does not promote professional growth. Teachers with expertise are not educational leaders in the building. Weaknesses in curriculum and in instruction are not addressed effectively and collaboratively. A common understanding of the school's stated mission to "... work cooperatively with all members of the learning community to help each child reach his or her highest

potential..." is not evident.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- InformationWorks! 1999
- InformationWorks! 2000
- 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
- 1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
- 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results
- conversations with teachers and school administrator

Conclusions

Fogarty Memorial School fourth graders scored exceptionally well on the reading subtests of the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam with 96 percent achieving or exceeding the standard on Basic Understanding and 90 percent achieving the standard on Analysis and Interpretation. (*1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*)

Fourth graders also scored well on the writing subtests of the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam with 81 percent achieving or exceeding the standard on Effectiveness and 71 percent achieving or exceeding the standard on Conventions. These scores are considerably above similar students statewide. (*1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, InformationWorks! 2000*)

Although fourth graders scored well and higher than similar students statewide on the Skills and the Concepts subtests of the Mathematics New Standards Reference Exam, their performance on the Problem Solving subtest was disappointing. Only 27 percent of fourth graders met or exceeded the standard on the Problem Solving subtest. This score was below that of similar students statewide. (*1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, InformationWorks! 2000*)

Performance on the grade three 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment was disappointing with only 38 percent achieving the standard. However, this represents a considerable improvement from 1998 scores when only 24 percent of third graders achieved the standard. This improvement may be due to the efforts of teachers to address the 1998 scores with the third grade writing project, a collaborative effort by third grade teachers, the language arts coordinator, and specialists to develop a common structure for writing. (*1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, conversations with teachers and school administrator*)

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

- *between males and females on both the fourth grade Mathematics: Skills subtest and the Mathematics: Problem Solving subtest with females scoring higher. There was no gender equity gap on these tests in 1998.*
- *between the general education students and the special education students on both the fourth grade Mathematics: Skills subtest and the Mathematics: Problem Solving subtest with general education students*

scoring higher.

- *between the general education students and the special education students on the fourth grade English Language Arts Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtest with the general education students scoring higher. Although there is an equity gap on this subtest, 70 percent of special education students met the standard.*
- *between the general education students and the special education students on the third grade 1999 Rhode Island Writing assessment with general education students scoring higher.*
- *between those students eligible and those not eligible for free or reduced price lunch on the fourth grade English Language Arts Writing: Effectiveness subtest with students not eligible for free or reduced price lunch scoring higher.*
- *between males and females on the fourth grade English Language Arts Writing: Effectiveness subtest with females scoring higher. There was a similar gap on this subtest in 1998.*

(InformationWorks! 1999, InformationWorks! 2000, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results)

Commendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Student performance on the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam

Recommendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Address gaps in student performance especially in mathematics problem solving.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *conversations and interviews with many teachers*
- *following students*
- *scheduled meetings with school and district administrators, and students*
- *1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- *examination of student work*

Conclusions

In order to address gaps in writing performance on the grade three Rhode Island Writing Assessment, the language arts coordinator, third grade teachers, and specialists developed common tasks and rubrics based on English Language Arts standards. This important work may have contributed to more third grade students achieving the standard on the 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment than achieved the standard on the 1998 assessment. In most classrooms writing is taught in isolation. Effective writing is not successfully integrated into other subject areas. (*meeting with students, classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*)

Failure to investigate math texts and programs handicaps both teachers and students and prevents the development of a true problem-solving component to the math program. The present program is not sufficient to close gaps in problem solving performance. Although most teachers supplement the text, children are not allowed sufficient opportunities to work together to solve problems, to use manipulatives, to explore alternate strategies, or to explain their thinking. (*meetings with school and district administrators, classroom observations, following students, examination of student work*)

Most children are eager to read and read well, but there are no clear objectives and assessments across grade levels to guide English Language Arts. The apparent lack of instruction in the use of reading strategies — e.g., locating supporting details in the text, comparing and contrasting, understanding point of view, inductive and deductive reasoning — may impede the students' ability to apply these strategies to content areas and more difficult material. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, examination of student work*)

Although direct instruction is sometimes effective, most teachers rely too heavily on this method and do not employ other teaching strategies to address different learning styles. Simple rote responses are accepted without requiring students to work cooperatively, to investigate, to share their thinking, and to develop and use higher order thinking skills. (*classroom observations, following students, SALT Survey 1999-2000*)

Some teachers are using rubrics appropriately to assess students' writing especially in the three upper grades. These rubrics were developed by teachers involved in the third grade writing project. Rubrics are not used effectively to score math problems, to help students improve their answers, or to plan instruction. Early grades do not engage in clear, consistent scoring practices in any subject area increasing the students' confusion about what is expected. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, conversation with teachers*)

Commendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Effective use of the language arts coordinator to develop common tasks and rubrics

Recommendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Develop a repertoire of strategies to engage students and encourage higher order thinking.

Expand the third grade writing project to include all grade levels.

Integrate writing into all curriculum areas.

Continue the benchmarking of student work begun in the third grade writing project.

Recommendation for the Glocester School District:

Accelerate the development of curriculum maps, curriculum, and program/text selection for mathematics.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *observations of the school*
- *conversations and interviews with many teachers, staff and school administrators*
- *scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school, and district administrators, parents, and students*
- *following students*
- *School Improvement Plan 1999-2002*
- *District Strategic Plan*
- *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- *Manual for Teacher Evaluation, September 1993*

Conclusions

Although students feel safe and comfortable at Fogarty Memorial School, teachers exercise control of students in ways that seem to stifle enthusiasm, excitement, and discovery. (*observations of the school, classroom observations, meeting with students, following students*)

Parents feel welcome at Fogarty Memorial School. They are active participants on the School Improvement Team and PTO fundraising activities. Many parents express a desire to learn more about reform efforts and how these reforms are important for their children's success especially in the areas of standards and mathematics. (*SALT Survey 1999-2000, meetings with parents and School Improvement Team*)

The teacher evaluation document is not an effective tool for teachers, especially those in need of improvement. Because there is no opportunity for the administrator or the teacher to develop goals for improved performance, its value as a tool to improve instruction is limited. (*conversation with school administrator, Manual for Teacher Evaluation, September 1993*)

The library is a large, spacious facility with an extensive collection of print resources. Computers in the library are not connected to the school network. The library is underutilized with student use mostly limited to whole class periods depriving some students of opportunities to enrich and extend their learning. (*School Improvement Plan, meeting with School Improvement Team, observations of the school, classroom observations, conversations with teachers*)

The failure of the School Improvement Plan and the District Strategic Plan to address the teaching of mathematics with immediacy stymies improvement efforts in this area. The Professional Development Committee does not require that professional development funds be spent to support School Improvement Plan tactics. This also may delay improvement efforts. (*meetings with School Improvement Team and with school administrator, School Improvement Plan, District Strategic Plan*)

The Gloucester School District is offering Course One in standards-based instruction to all teachers this summer. Most teachers at Fogarty Memorial School plan to take advantage of this opportunity which will further their common understanding of the standards initiative. (*meetings with school and district administrators, conversation with staff*)

Commendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Teachers' willingness to participate in Course One training.

Recommendations for Fogarty Memorial School:

Foster the natural excitement and enthusiasm of your students.

Involve parents in curriculum development and text selection. Keep parents informed of your progress in implementation of standards.

Implement your School Improvement Plan tactic to help children reach standards by developing an accessible media center in the library space.

Allow only professional development activities that support your School Improvement Plan and District Strategic Plan.

Recommendation for the Gloucester School District and the Gloucester Teachers' Association:

Develop a teacher evaluation tool that encourages professional development and goal setting.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Here at Fogarty Memorial School you have all the elements to create a model-learning environment. The summer training in Course One will afford you the opportunity to share ideas, units, and assessments. Continue this collaboration into the school year as you develop and implement your units. Allow the students to dive into the activities you design. Let go of their hands and afford them the opportunity to make mistakes and take risks along with you.

Continue as a school to further the development of the third grade writing project. You have seen its positive effect on your scores. With participation from the primary grades, writing can only improve.

You cannot wait for district guidance. Make math a priority now. Problem solving efforts must be expanded to allow for group work and greater emphasis on higher order thinking skills.

APPENDIX

FOGARTY MEMORIAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Martha Condon, Co-Chair, Parent

Henry Kyle, Co-Chair, Parent

Beth Groleau, Principal

Penny Altman, Teacher

Kari Barber-Coyne, Community Member

Mary Fermanian, Teacher

Morgan Hardwick-Witman, Parent

Meg Keefe, Parent

Christine Mathieu, Recorder, Parent

Carla Moore, School Librarian

Kathy and David Plante, Parents

Sally Ryan, Teacher

Tammy Strik, Teacher

Marcia Waterman, Teacher

Lisa Guernon, Parent (resigned in October)

THE SALT VISITING TEAM

Carol Belair, Grade 4 Teacher

Wilbur and McMahon School

Little Compton, Rhode Island

(On leave serving as a SALT Fellow for the Rhode Island Department of Education)

Chair of the Team

Deborah Britton, Grade 3 Teacher

Forest Park School

North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Kelley Cerbo, Grade 5 Teacher

Thornton Elementary

Johnston, Rhode Island

Sandra Farone, Grade 3 Teacher

Winsor Hill School

Johnston, Rhode Island

Fran Murphy, Principal

Hopkins Hill School
Coventry, Rhode Island

Patricia Ribeiro, Grade 2 Teacher
Providence Street School
West Warwick, Rhode Island

(On leave serving as a SALT Fellow for the Rhode Island Department of Education)

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Fogarty Memorial School

May 5, 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 14, 2000