



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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HENRY R. CAREY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Newport, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

May 19, 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 Carey Elementary School from May 16, 2000 through May 19, 2000 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- Student Learning
- Teaching
- The School

The SALT visit to Carey Elementary School was conducted during the same week that a SALT visit was conducted at these other Newport public schools: Cranston Calvert Elementary School, Thompson Middle School, and William J. Underwood Elementary School. As planned, RIDE was also conducting its regular district School Support Visit (with a focus on special needs education) which includes visits to all Newport schools.

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. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for Carey Elementary 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 Carey Elementary School.

The visiting team collected its evidence from the following:

- *a total of 37 classroom observations which totaled over 58 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. All classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- *following 5 students for a full day*
- *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
 - *school improvement team*
 - *school and district administrators*
 - *students*
 - *parents*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*
- *examination of student portfolios*
- *review of district and school policies*
- *review of professional development activities*
- *review of classroom assessments*
- *review of the following documents:*
 - *School Improvement Plan for Carey Elementary School*
 - *district strategic plan*
 - *SALT survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment*
 - *1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
 - *Parents and Community Outreach and Information Notebook*
 - *Carey School Improvement Portfolio*

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 27 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators. The team sought to develop conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

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

It is important to note that this report reflects a "moment" in the life of the school. The conclusions here are different from those that can be made from statewide assessment data or from information collected and

analyzed by members of the school. This report is not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, it is a different lens, one not clouded by the daily life of the school. This new lens is one through which the school can look to help focus on important issues resulting in the development of strategies for overall improvement in the teaching and learning process.

The value of this report is not determined by the hard work of the team. The value will be determined by how Carey Elementary 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 Newport, 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 HENRY R. CAREY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Carey Elementary School is one of six elementary schools in the city of Newport, Rhode Island. The school serves students in grades K-5. Newport is a city with a population of approximately 24,279. The present school first opened its doors to students in 1896. There was one addition built in 1930.

A seven-member school committee, whose members are elected, governs the Newport Public School District. A mayor and a seven-member city council governs the city. Both committees are elected to two-year terms. Carey Elementary School students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, thirty-three full and part-time faculty, eighteen aides and support personnel, one full-time secretary, and one full-time custodian.

Of the 215 students attending Carey School, 66 percent are white, 19 percent are black, 9 percent are Hispanic, and 6 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Fifty-seven students totaling 26 percent receive special services—17 percent have Individualized Education Plans and 9 percent are Limited English Proficient. Fifty-two percent are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Carey Elementary School is working on a variety of initiatives to improve the process of teaching and learning within the school. Teachers are using KITES a hands-on, inquiry-based science program. The school is increasing the focus on interdisciplinary units and some classrooms have begun using inter-grade units that involve students from more than one grade level. The school is increasing its outreach to the community through a Parent and Community Outreach Coordinator. And finally, the school has begun the process of incorporating standards into the teaching and learning environment.

3. PORTRAIT OF HENRY R. CAREY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Carey Elementary School is a warm, clean, caring, nurturing environment. Although it has a fifteen percent mobility rate it has the "feel" of a neighborhood school. The teachers, parents, students, and administrators clearly like, respect, and appreciate each other. They are proud of this school and like being here. Parents are strong advocates for the students and their school. An atmosphere of kindness, respect, tolerance, and camaraderie is nurtured and supported in this school.

This neighborhood school is well-served and supported by both its professional and support staff. The building is exceptionally clean and reflects the dedication of the custodian. Administrative assistants and general aides work together when the principal and/or the nurse are out of the building.

Carey Elementary School was built in 1897 when the needs of the students that attend this school were completely different from the instructional programs and services required for the 21st century. The present physical plant and space restrictions impact the delivery of the instructional program at Carey Elementary School. Carey has a dedicated faculty that recognizes that they need to augment their existing professional skills in order to meet effectively the needs of their students. They have a deep desire to make these changes while maintaining the learning community they have created.

Carey has a competent, caring, dedicated professional staff with expertise that serves the students of this school well. Teachers demonstrate a willingness to consider new teaching strategies and assessment practices in order to improve student performance. The professional staff has taken the first steps to implement standards. However, they are uncertain how to approach these changes and have some reservations about their readiness to successfully incorporate district and school-based reforms into their daily instruction. Often the professional development they have received has not sufficiently addressed these needs.

There is school-wide faculty involvement on the School Improvement Team. The implementation of standards-based curricula is identified as a major goal of the School Improvement Plan. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the instructional strategies, assessment practices, and principles of learning necessary to make standards come alive in the classroom are still at the awareness level. Many class activities are not strongly connected to standards, which limit their ability to improve student performance.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- 2000 Information Works!
- *1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
- *1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment*
- *examination of student work*
- *classroom observations*
- *observations of the school*
- *following students*
- *conversations and interviews with teachers and staff*
- *meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators*

Conclusions

On the 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the fourth grade students at Carey Elementary School met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Reading Basic Understanding*– 82 percent, *Reading Analysis and Interpretations* – 64 percent. This represents an 18 and 22 percent increase over the 1998 test scores. Despite these gains, many students still are not demonstrating the ability to

analyze and interpret what they read. These scores are at or below the scores of similar students statewide. (2000 Information Works!, *examination of student work, classroom observations*)

On the 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, the fourth grade students at Carey Elementary School met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Writing Effectiveness* - 49 percent, and *Writing Conventions* 51 percent. These scores are above the scores of similar students statewide and the average district scores. Students demonstrated strengths in their knowledge of the writing process, but seem to be weak in their knowledge of the traits of good writing. (2000 Information Works!, *examination of student work, classroom observations*)

On the 1999 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam, the fourth grade students at Carey Elementary School met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Skills* – 62 percent, *Concepts* – 21 percent, *Problem Solving* - 18 percent. In two categories these scores are below the scores of similar students statewide and below the average district scores. Students have not developed a deep understanding of concepts, a range of problem solving strategies, and ways of communicating their results. (2000 Information Works!, *examination of student work, classroom observations*)

On the 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, only 9 percent of the third grade students at Carey Elementary School met or exceeded the standard on this assessment. This is surprising in a school that places such a strong emphasis on writing, where one-half of the students met the standard on the fourth grade New Standards Reference Exam. (1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 1999 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary)

On the 1999 Rhode Island Health Education Assessment, only 10 percent of the fifth grade students at Carey Elementary School met or exceeded the standard on this assessment. (1999 Rhode Island Health Assessment).

Equity gaps (a difference of 15 percentage points or greater) exist between and among fourth grade Carey Elementary School students on the following 1999 New Standards Reference Exams:

- *Female students scored higher than male students on both the Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtest and the Writing: Effectiveness subtest of 1999 English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam. (2000 Information Works!)*
- *Male students scored higher than female students on the Mathematics Problem Solving subtest of the 1999 Mathematics New Standards Reference Exam. (2000 Information Works!)*
- *Students who are not eligible for free and reduced price lunch scored higher than students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch on the Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtest, the Writing: Effectiveness subtest, and the Mathematics Skills subtest of the 1999 Mathematics and English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exams. (2000 Information Works!)*

The students at Carey Elementary School are respectful, well-behaved, and eager to learn. Students have demonstrated the ability to work in groups within and across grade levels and a willingness to participate in classroom activities. Students are motivated and show confidence in their abilities. Most students are willing to complete assigned tasks, and are ready to become more strategic and reflective in their own learning by consuming, critiquing, and producing new knowledge. (following students, classroom observations, observations of the school, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff, meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators)

Commendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

The caring and respectful students

Recommendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

Capitalize on the unique qualities of your students so that they become more inquisitive, reflective, and involved in their own learning.

Analyze the "What Students Need" sections of the New Standards Reference Exam School Summary and use that to guide the choices you make about the sequence and selection of curricula activities K-5.

Investigate the factors contributing to equity gaps between and among groups and develop strategies for closing these gaps.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrator*
- *following students*
- *examination of student portfolios*
- *review of classroom assessments*
- *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- *1999-2000 SALT Survey Report*

Conclusions

Standards-based instruction exists at an emergent level in this school. Standards are posted in some classrooms and all teachers have a copy of the New Standards Performance Indicators. Some teachers are fostering higher levels of dialogue between and among students, student self-monitoring, problem-solving strategies and higher-order thinking skills. However, most teachers are unsure about how to use standards to design instruction and improve student performance. *(1999-2000 Salt Survey Report, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers, meeting with the school improvement team.)*

Carey Elementary School has made the improvement of student writing a school-wide focus. In many classrooms writing instruction emphasizes the process of writing (brainstorming, pre-writing, writing, editing, and revision) rather than the traits of writing (ideas/content, conventions, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence structure). Furthermore, revision of student writing focuses on skills-based improvements like punctuation and spelling, more than strategies and techniques designed to develop more sophisticated and effective writing. *(1999-2000 Salt Survey Report, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, examination of student work, following students)*

In an attempt to address the low problem-solving scores teachers have incorporated word problems into the math curriculum. This is a good first step. Although children are working on word problems throughout the school, they are not open-ended enough to develop the skills and strategies needed to deepen the students' understanding of concepts and problem-solving techniques. Furthermore, effective mathematics problem-solving strategies are seldom modeled. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student portfolios, meeting with students*)

Teachers have begun to incorporate rubrics as an assessment tool in all classes. Many teachers have translated district level rubrics into student friendly language. However, teachers' understanding of the value and purpose of this tool varies from class to class. Often, it is not used to provide clear measurable criteria that both the teacher and student can use to improve students' performance. Furthermore, on many assessments, teacher comments build self-esteem, but do not provide sufficient information to the students about what they need to do to improve their performance. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers, students, and staff, examination of student work, review of classroom assessments, meetings with students, parents, and district administrators*)

Carey Elementary School has adopted a new basal reading program that provides a supportive context for reading development. Print rich classrooms provide students opportunities for daily reading and discussion. In some classrooms, reading instruction challenges students to monitor and validate their understanding of text by asking questions, clarifying conclusions, critically analyzing, and writing in response to literature. In other classrooms, students' exposure to explicit strategy instruction as well as instruction in how to use the strategies and self-monitoring is limited. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, examination of student work, review of classroom assessments, meetings with students, parents, and school administrator*)

Commendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

The hard working and dedicated teachers, principal, and staff

Recommendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

Provide professional development activities to develop the instructional strategies necessary to make standards-based curricula, instruction, and assessment a reality in the classroom.

Expand the current focus on writing to include strategies that emphasize the six traits of writing.

Increase the frequency and effectiveness of modeling problem-solving strategies.

Provide professional development on the purpose for and effective use of rubrics in a standards-based classroom to develop the strategies necessary to measure both the process and product of student work.

Provide comments with specific suggestions students can use to improve their performance.

Give explicit instruction in comprehension strategies focusing on text support.

Recommendations for the Newport School District:

Expand the existing support to include clearer direction in the selection and implementation of professional development in standards-based instruction.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *observations of the school*
- *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school, and district administrators, students, and parents*
- *following students*
- *School Improvement Plan for Carey Elementary School*
- *Carey School Improvement Portfolio*
- *Parents and Community Outreach and Information Notebook*

Conclusions

Carey Elementary School is a warm and caring community where students, faculty, and staff feel welcome and secure. The school has made a concerted effort to reach out to parents and make them feel welcome in the school. Personal interactions reflect a respectful and considerate atmosphere where each individual is valued. Students have adopted the behaviors modeled by the adult school community, which have been incorporated into every facet of the school experience. The high level of camaraderie and the sharing of knowledge have contributed to this community building process. (classroom observations, observations of the school, meetings with parents, students, school and district administrators, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, staff, and the school administrator, Parents and Community Outreach and Information Notebook)

The current practice of moving a segment of the Carey school population to Cranston-Calvert after the third grade for an enrichment program deprives Carey Elementary School students in the fourth and fifth grade of role models. In addition, it impacts the heterogeneity in these classrooms, and disrupts the continuity of the whole educational experience of those students who elect to attend Cranston-Calvert Elementary School. (*meetings with parents, students, and school administrator, conversations and interviews with teachers and students*)

Professional development opportunities have been made available to teachers at Carey Elementary School. These have not always been effectively aligned with the needs articulated by the faculty. Teachers select professional development activities based on availability, individual teacher needs, and general connections to goals of the School Improvement Plan. These activities are not based on a needs assessment of the faculty, or specific plan of a professional development committee, to identify the most appropriate and relevant professional development for the entire staff. (*meetings with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, conversations and interviews with teachers, Carey School Improvement Portfolio*)

There is broad-based staff involvement in the school improvement team. The school improvement team has developed a child-centered School Improvement Plan that considered input from community, parents,

staff, teachers, and the administrator and SALT survey data. The team developed a variety of tactics to improve student performance in literacy, mathematics, and technology. Presently, tactics do not include measurable outcomes, timelines, and personnel responsible for implementation. (*meetings with parents, school improvement team, and school administrator, Carey School Improvement Portfolio, School Improvement Plan for Carey Elementary School*)

The availability and use of technology (overhead projectors, copying machines, software, etc.) are lacking in this school. Computers are available in most classrooms, and the recently renovated library now has eleven computers. Computers are primarily used for word-processing, email, and computer-based research. Teachers have varying degrees of computer literacy and knowledge of effective strategies for integrating technology into the curriculum. (*Carey School Improvement Portfolio, School Improvement Plan for Carey Elementary School, conversations and interviews with teachers, staff, students, and the school administrator, classroom observations, following students*)

Commendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

The caring, respectful, nurturing environment that exists between and among students and adults

The involvement of the majority of the faculty and staff in self-study and the school improvement process

The camaraderie that exists within this school community

Recommendations for Henry R. Carey Elementary School:

Eliminate the practice of sending fourth and fifth grade students to another school for a gifted and talented program, and expand the current enrichment program at Carey.

Attend standards-based training that concentrates on the National Center on Education and the Economy Performance Indicators and their Primary Literacy Standards.

Increase the use and availability of overhead projectors, computers, software, and other instructional technology.

Revisit the existing Carey School Improvement Plan and add measurable outcomes, timelines, and personnel responsible for implementation to the action plans.

Form a professional development committee to create a focus in the selection and implementation of professional development in a formalized plan. Design this plan to meet the needs of the faculty and the goals of the School Improvement Plan on a school-wide basis.

Recommendations for the Newport School District:

Eliminate the practice of sending fourth and fifth grade students to another school for a gifted and talented program, and expand the current enrichment program at Carey.

Support the teachers' pursuit of standards-based training that concentrates on the National Center on

Education and the Economy Performance Indicators and their Primary Literacy Standards.

Increase the availability of overhead projectors, computers, software, and other instructional technology.

Assist the school in forming a professional development committee that creates a focus in the selection and implementation of professional development in a formalized plan.

Guide the school as they add measurable outcomes, timelines, and personnel responsible for implementation to the action plans in their existing School Improvement Plan.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Carey Elementary School has many of the critical components necessary to provide your students with the academic and social foundation they will need to function in today's society. Continue to draw upon the camaraderie that exists between and among faculty, staff, students, and parents. Build on the obvious sense of pride that exists among these groups.

Reflect on the processes that you have used to create the strong learning community that exists in this school and use them to help increase the circle of involvement. Reach out to the community and parents from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to increase their participation in this school—especially on the school improvement team. Broader involvement on the Carey School Improvement Team would be a valuable asset that strengthens your efforts to improve student performance.

You have begun the long journey of becoming a standards-based school. Reaching your goal will take time, a strategic approach, changes in instruction and assessment, focused and ongoing professional development, and the leadership and support of the district. Develop a plan to involve all faculty in training that focuses on standards-based instructional practices, the development and use of performance-based assessments, the traits of writing, and mathematical problem solving. As you make changes in the processes of teaching and learning increase your use of different types of technology as both a teaching and learning tool. And finally, connecting classroom activities and units to standards, coupled with more in-depth teacher-led discussions of the content and concepts that lie beneath these activities, would help develop a strong foundation in your students.

Our visiting team wholeheartedly concurs with the self-assessment of this learning community. Carey Elementary School is a nice, child-friendly school led by a hard-working competent staff. As you work with this SALT report we hope you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you achieve your school improvement efforts. For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

APPENDIX

HENRY R. CAREY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Carol Abernathy, Parent

Liz Berube, Parent

Dr. Freesch, Community Member

Karen Gallagher, Teacher

Nona Gilmore, Teacher

Ray Gomes, Parent

Kathy Hole, Teacher

Barbara Kilcup, Teacher

David Koutsogiane, Teacher

Nancy Leary, Teacher

Terry Mason, Parent

Susan McDermott, Teacher

June McGreavy, Teacher

Cynthia Murrell, Principal

Edna O'Connell, Teacher

Kathy Owens, Teacher

Ellen Steigerwald, Teacher

Barbara Sullivan, Teacher

Kelly Turner, Custodian

Patty Varrecchia, Teacher

Beverly Weaver, Administrative Assistant

Peg Whitford, Teacher

THE SALT VISITING TEAM

Dr. Michael S. Barnes, Technology Education / Department Chairperson
Ponaganset Middle / Senior High School, Foster-Glocester, Rhode Island
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Ann Casey, Grade 4 Teacher
Lippitt School, Warwick, Rhode Island

Carol Hutchinson, Grade 4 Inclusion Teacher
Forest Avenue School, Middletown, Rhode Island

Nancy J. Lavey, Reading Specialist / Consultant
Reynolds and Byfield Schools, Bristol, Rhode Island

Mr. Joseph Pasonelli, Principal
Edgewood Highland School, Cranston, Rhode Island

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Henry R. Carey Elementary School

May 19, 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.

June 8, 2000