



# CRANSTON-CALVERT 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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## THE SALT VISITING TEAM \*

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

- Student Learning
- Teaching
- The School

The SALT visit to Cranston Calvert School was conducted during the same week that a SALT visit was conducted at these other Newport public schools: Thompson Middle school, Carey Elementary School, William J. Underwood 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 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 Cranston Calvert Elementary School was an introductory 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 Cranston Calvert Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- *78 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 six students for a full day*
- *observing the work of classroom teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*

- *School Advisory Team*
- *school and district administrators*
- *students*
- *parents*
- *school support visit read-out*
  
- *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*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
  - *InformationWorks! 2000*
  - *InformationWorks! 1999*
  - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
  - *1998, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
  - *Cranston Calvert School Mathematics Focus Plan*
  - *Newport School District Literacy Outcomes and Competencies for Kindergarten through Grade 6*

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 Cranston Calvert 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 CRANSTON-CALVERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Cranston Calvert School is one of six elementary schools for the city of Newport, Rhode Island. It is part of the Newport School System. A seven-member school committee whose members are elected to two-year terms governs the city public school district.

The present school first opened its doors to students in 1876. There were alterations to the building in 1935 and 1976. A professional staff of one administrator, 29 full and part-time faculty, nine aides and support personnel, and two custodians serves 297 students.

Of the 297 students attending Cranston Calvert School, 56 percent are white, 28 percent are black, 13 percent are Hispanic, one percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and one percent are Native American. Twenty-seven percent receive special education services. Fifty-two percent are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

Cranston Calvert is involved in several community partnerships. The Bank of Newport Stop over Shelter sponsors Off the Curb Dance Programs. The Newport Navy Band provides lessons and concerts for Cranston Calvert schools. Salve Regina University offers a mentoring program, and the First Presbyterian Church provides tutors to Cranston Calvert students. Rogers High School offers a Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program. The Annenburg Institute at Brown University filmed Cranston Calvert School to highlight its KITES Program for inclusion in its national television series on innovative practices in education to be televised in July. Cranston Calvert School provides seasonal decorations to the USS Rhode Island and to St. Paul's Methodist Church soup kitchens.

## 3. PORTRAIT OF CRANSTON-CALVERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Cranston Calvert School is housed in an aging facility badly in need of renovation. Peeling paint, musty odors, and the lack of a gymnasium do not dampen the spirits of the people who work in this building. Cranston Calvert School is as rich in its emphasis on writing, problem solving, and technology as it is in its strong sense of community. Collaboration among the school, home, and partners in business and higher education provides support to address the academic and social needs of a diverse student body.

Cranston Calvert School is a learning community that invites teachers and students to grow, learn, and take risks together. The teachers have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of instruction and have voluntarily committed themselves to many professional development opportunities.

Cranston Calvert students feel safe and happy at school, and their teachers are working to help them reach high standards. Student teacher ratios allow for opportunities for differentiated instruction.

Cranston Calvert parents feel welcome at school and appreciate the quality of education and support provided to their children.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

## Sources of Evidence

- InformationWorks! 2000
- *1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *1998 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- *Cranston Calvert Mathematics Focus Plan*

## Conclusions

Twenty-five percent of third graders at Cranston Calvert School achieved the standard on the 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment. This is higher than the district score and represents an increase of sixteen percent over the 1998 results. (*1998 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*)

Fourth grade students at Cranston Calvert School scored above similar students statewide on the writing subtests of the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam. However, a considerably greater percentage of students were "below the standard" in 1999 than in 1998 on the Writing: Effectiveness subtest. (*1998 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, InformationWorks! 2000*)

Fourth grade reading scores on the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam were disappointing. Students scored below similar students statewide and a greater percentage of students did not meet the standard in 1999 than in 1998 on both subtests. (*1998 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, InformationWorks! 2000*)

Fourth graders scored well above similar students statewide and higher than both state and district averages on all subtests of the Mathematics New Standards Reference Exam. An emphasis on concepts and problem solving in the classroom contributes to raising scores in both the concepts and problem solving subtests. (*1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, InformationWorks! 2000, Mathematics Focus Plan*)

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

- *between students eligible and students not eligible for free and reduced priced lunch on all four reported subtests —Mathematics: Skills, Mathematics: Problem Solving, Reading: Analysis and Interpretation, Writing: Effectiveness — with students not eligible scoring higher*
- *between students receiving special education services and general education students on all four reported subtests —Mathematics: Skills, Mathematics: Problem Solving, Reading: Analysis and Interpretation, Writing: Effectiveness — with general education students scoring higher*
- *between black students and white students on all four reported subtests —Mathematics: Skills, Mathematics: Problem Solving, Reading: Analysis and Interpretation, Writing: Effectiveness — with white students scoring higher*
- *between males and females on the Writing: Effectiveness subtest with females scoring higher*
- *between students receiving special education services and general education students on the Grade 3 Rhode Island Writing Assessment with general education students scoring higher*

*(1999 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, InformationWorks! 2000)*

## Recommendations for Cranston-Calvert Elementary School:

Examine data on equity gaps and provide appropriate instruction and services to meet the needs of students at risk.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment*
- *conversations and interviews with many teachers*
- *following students*
- *examination of student work*
- *scheduled meetings with School Advisory Team, students, school and district administrators*
- *InformationWorks! 1999*
- *InformationWorks! 2000*
- *Newport School District Literacy Outcomes and Competencies for Kindergarten through Grade 6*
- *Cranston Calvert Mathematics Focus Plan*

### Conclusions

Effective instruction in writing is clearly evident at Cranston Calvert School. Writing is well integrated throughout the curriculum at all grade levels. Students produce and respond to literature, explain their thinking, write in journals, conduct research, evaluate their performance, and reflect on their learning and behavior. Teachers have developed writing rubrics and criteria for assessment and instruction that are clearly understood by students. Spring and fall writing assessments to measure growth over time have been developed district-wide and implemented at Cranston Calvert School. Student performance results on state writing assessments at both the third and fourth grade levels reflect these efforts. (*Literacy Outcomes and Competencies for Kindergarten through Grade 6, classroom observations, School Advisory Team meeting, examination of student work, 1999 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, InformationWorks! 2000*)

The Language Arts Enrichment Program (LAEP) in fourth and fifth grades provides a challenging and rigorous standards-based program. In light of the large equity gaps in achievement, it is unfortunate that this opportunity is limited to only 25 invited students in each grade, many of whom are drawn from other elementary schools. (*classroom observations, InformationWorks! 2000, conversations with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators*)

Cranston Calvert School is a literature rich environment, but it provides few opportunities for students to engage in self-selected independent reading. (*classroom observations, following students*)

For three years at least 80 percent of Cranston Calvert School teachers have signed on to participate as a focus school for mathematics with the East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC) with the goal of closing gaps in student achievement in mathematics. This commitment allows Cranston Calvert School teachers to

work with a network of East Bay teachers to look at student work, to review data, and to take part in professional development activities and conversations. The results of this work are evident both in classrooms where students use a variety of strategies to solve problems and explain their work in mathematical terms and in state assessments where problem solving and math concepts scores have improved. (*examination of student work, Cranston Calvert Mathematics Focus Plan, classroom observations, InformationWorks! 2000, Informationworks! 1999, conversations with teachers*)

Technology is used effectively for research, writing, and instruction in classrooms. The library program successfully supports students and teachers to use technology as a rich learning tool. Through this program, interested students develop skills as technology mentors. (*classroom observations, following students, School Advisory Team meeting, conversations with teachers, meeting with students*)

School-wide efforts to integrate curriculum are well supported by the collaboration among classroom, enrichment, and special subject teachers. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, conversations with teachers*)

## Commendations for Cranston-Calvert Elementary School:

Math focus school activities

Emphasis on writing across the curriculum

Collaboration among teachers

## Recommendations for Cranston-Calvert Elementary School:

Provide common planning time for professional conversations focusing on student work.

Open the Language Arts Enrichment Program to all fourth and fifth grade students at Cranston Calvert School.

Set aside time daily for independent, self-selected reading.

## Recommendations for the Newport School District:

Hasten the process for adoption of a math program to support Cranston Calvert School's efforts to provide standards-based mathematics instruction.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- *classroom observations*
- *observations of the school*
- *conversations and interviews with many teachers, scheduled meetings with School Advisory Team, school*

and district administrators, parents, and students

- following students
- School Improvement Plan
- Cranston Calvert School Wide Discipline Policy
- school support visit read-out

## Conclusions

Relationships among students, parents, principal, and teachers are respectful and supportive. There is a strong sense of community at Cranston Calvert School. Parents feel teachers are accessible and concerned. Students feel safe and appreciate their teachers' efforts to integrate curriculum. Many local businesses and organizations support learning and teaching. District and school administrators acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments of the teachers. (*classroom observations, observations of the school, meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators*)

The fifth grade mentoring component of the Language Arts Enrichment Program affords collaboration with Salve Regina University students and professors. It provides opportunities to Cranston Calvert students to develop and use research and technology skills both at Cranston Calvert School and at the University. In light of the large equity gaps in achievement, it is unfortunate that this opportunity is limited to only 25 invited students in the fifth grade, many of whom are drawn from other elementary schools. (InformationWorks! 2000, *meeting with School Advisory Team, conversations with teachers, classroom observations*)

The Cranston Calvert School Wide Discipline Policy allows teachers to use a "buddy teacher" to address problems of a "minor nature." Unfortunately, this does not afford students the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviors. Problems of a more serious nature are difficult to address because there is no staff available to provide needed support and suspension is not always appropriate or effective. (*classroom observations, following students, meetings with school administrators and parents, School Improvement Plan, conversations with teachers, school support visit read-out, Cranston Calvert School Wide Discipline Policy*)

The Cranston Calvert School buildings are antiquated and badly in need of repair and renovation. Peeling paint, worn floors, musty and unpleasant odors, glaring colors, leaks, and exposed radiators seriously detract from an optimal school environment for both teachers and students and create health concerns. The lack of a gymnasium limits the effectiveness of the physical education program, and the lack of adequate storage contributes to distracting visual clutter in many classrooms. (*classroom observations, observations of the school, conversations with teachers, following students, meetings with parents, students, and school and district administrators*)

Instructional time at the end of the school day is reduced by 15-30 minutes because of the district bus schedule. (*classroom observations, following students, meetings with school and district administrators*)

There is a lack of understanding regarding the composition and function of a school advisory team at Cranston Calvert School. The combination of the Parent Teacher Organization with the School Advisory Team is confusing and shifts the focus away from teaching and learning issues. (*School Improvement Plan, meetings with School Advisory Team, school administrator, and parents*)

Self-contained special education students are included for special subjects. Resource teachers use both pull-

out and in-class models of delivery. The School Improvement Plan appropriately addresses the need for more service delivery in classrooms, professional development in co-teaching strategies, and additional planning time for teachers and aides. With the encouragement of the principal, several teachers have taken the initiative and planned an inclusion model for some third and fourth grade self-contained students next year. (*School Improvement Plan, classroom observations, conversations with teachers*)

## Recommendations for Cranston-Calvert Elementary School:

Establish a professionally staffed behavioral support room as noted in the School Improvement Plan.

Examine the effectiveness and fairness of the "buddy teacher" system to address behavior issues.

Support efforts for more inclusive practices by providing professional development in co-teaching strategies.

Open the Salve Regina University Mentoring Program to all Cranston Calvert fifth graders.

Contact Rhode Island Department of Education East Bay Field Service Team for guidance on the development of school improvement action plans.

## Recommendations for the Newport School District:

Support Cranston Calvert School's efforts to establish a behavioral support room.

Do not ignore the physical needs of this facility.

## 7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Cranston Calvert School provides a strong model of teachers as learners. Your students have clearly benefited from your work. Continue to challenge your students as you challenge yourselves.

The equity gaps noted in this report must be addressed. Examine the data carefully and plan instruction to meet the needs of your wonderfully diverse population.

As you plan more inclusion of special education students into the general population, insist on professional development to help you support these students. Consider the resources available to you and their careful distribution to meet the needs of all students.

## APPENDIX

### CRANSTON-CALVERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Sol Rodriguez, Co-Chairperson

Paul Leys, Co-Chairperson

Alice Clancy, Principal

Fred Almanzor

Carla Brownell

Don Fitzpatrick

Katheryn Imes

Bonnie Marvelle

Dereke and Veronica Mays

Manny Medeiros

Linda Moitoza

Carol Munger

Barbara O'Neil

Linda Sweeney

Laurie Swistak

### THE SALT VISITING TEAM

Carol Belair, SALT Fellow

Rhode Island Department of Education

(On leave from Wilbur and McMahon School, Little Compton, Rhode Island)

Chair of the Team

MaryAnne Miller Allan, Speech/Language Pathologist

Forest Avenue Elementary School

Middletown, Rhode Island

Christine DeCosta, East Bay Educational Facilitator

East Bay Educational Collaborative

Portsmouth, Rhode Island

(On leave from Wilbur and McMahon School, Little Compton, Rhode Island)

Susan DeMay, Principal

John W. Horton Elementary School  
Cranston, Rhode Island

Barbara Fitzsimmons, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
North Kingstown School Department  
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

James Karon, Coordinator, State Assessment Program  
Rhode Island Department of Education  
Providence, Rhode Island

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Cranston-Calvert 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 4, 2000