



# B. F. Norton Elementary School

Cumberland

## SALT Visit Team Report

November 17, 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

Peter McWalters, Commissioner

Regents

James A. DiPrete, Chairman

Robert J. Canavan, Vice Chair

Jo Eva Gaines, Secretary

Representative Paul W. Crowley

Elia Germani

Sue P. Duff

Gary E. Grove

Ms. Colleen Callahan

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

Mario A. Mancieri

Vidal P. Perez

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

**For information about SALT, please contact Ken Fish at 401-222-4600, x 2200 or [salt@rideo.net](mailto:salt@rideo.net).**

**This report is available at [www.rideo.net/schoolimprove/salt](http://www.rideo.net/schoolimprove/salt)**

1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS
2. PROFILE OF B. F. Norton Elementary School
3. PORTRAIT OF B. F. Norton Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

***Sources of Evidence***

***Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School***

***Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School:***

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School***

***Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School***

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School***

***Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Cumberland School District***

7. Final Advice to the School

*B. F. Norton Elementary School IMPROVEMENT TEAM*

*THE SALT VISIT TEAM*

*New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)*

*Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report*

# 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 B. F. Norton Elementary School from November 14, 2000 through November 17, 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 B. F. Norton 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, 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 B. F. Norton Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 61 full classroom observations and 30 partial classroom observations which totaled over 65 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 six 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 administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*
- ◆ *review of district and school policies*
- ◆ *review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments.*
- ◆ *review of the following documents:*
  - *B. F. Norton School Improvement Plan*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
  - *classroom textbooks*
  - *1998 Information Works!*
  - *1999 Information Works!*
  - *2000 Information Works!*
  - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
  - *2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

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 28 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 B. F. Norton 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 Cumberland, 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 B. F. Norton Elementary School

B. F. Norton Elementary School, located in the southern end of Cumberland, Rhode Island, is one of the five elementary schools in Cumberland's School System. The school system is administered by a superintendent and an assistant superintendent. It is governed by an elected school committee of seven members serving two year terms .

B.F. Norton has a professional staff of one administrator, 46 full and part-time faculty, 16 aides and support personnel, and three custodians. There are 464 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Of these students 88 percent are white, ten percent Hispanic, and one percent black. Twenty eight percent of the students receive special education services and 32 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 20 percent of the school population receive English as a Second Language (ESL) service.

There are six ESL classrooms, one at each grade level (K-5). There are three self-contained special education classrooms with configurations of kindergarten and grade 1, grades 2-3, and grades 4-5. Two full time resource teachers serve the students as well as one full time and two part time speech therapists. Occupational and physical therapists as well as adaptive physical education services are available. As a Title 1 school, there are two Reading Recovery teachers and an additional reading specialist who services grades 3-5.

B.F. Norton did not receive funding this year for its COZ (Child Opportunity Zone), which had been part of the school for the past six years. COZ provided adult education, after school enrichment, mentoring for students and parent classes. The building administrator and district school committee are attempting to find alternative funding. The preschool program continues, now sponsored by the Cumberland School Department.

The fourth grade students at B.F. Norton made gains in all three areas of mathematics and in the two reading subtests on the 2000 New Standards Reference Examination. On Mathematical Skills 70 percent of the students met or exceeded the standard and while only 21 percent in Mathematical Concepts and 17 percent in Problem Solving met or exceeded the standard. On Reading Basic Understanding 90 percent, and Reading Analysis 61 percent of the students met or exceeded the standard. Both the New Standards Writing and the Rhode Island Writing scores showed slightly decreased scores when comparing the 1999 and 2000 testing results.

Equity gaps exist in Mathematical skills and in both subtests of the English Language Arts for both special education and limited English Proficiency when compared to the General Education students on the 2000 Information Works! data. On the reading analysis and interpretation subtest, no Limited English Proficiency students met the standard.

The team used the test score information found in *Information Works!* and the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam School Summaries to determine the performance and equity gaps discussed in the student learning conclusions. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for B. F. Norton Elementary School is available at [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net).

### 3. PORTRAIT OF B. F. Norton Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

When you walk into the school, you are welcomed as part of the B.F. Norton family. This school is a safe haven where students are recognized as individuals and encouraged to reach their full potential. The principal is the heart of the school. Her overwhelming love for the students is evident in her tireless dedication to the school community. The staff nurtures the students and celebrates their uniqueness. The students are happy and feel comfortable in their “home away from home”. Parents, students, and staff are partners in learning. They are all proud of their school.

The classrooms are filled with active learners who are encouraged and challenged by their caring teachers. This is a community where parents, staff, and students learn from one another. The school is an integral part of the community. Some children arrive early for breakfast and stay late for after school child care. The loss of the COZ has had a devastating impact on the school community and the programs it provided for the children and their families. As a result fewer programs are offered, such as: adult education, parenting classes, and after school enrichment.

S.C.R.A.P.S. (Southern Cumberland Regional Association of Parents and Schools) is a wonderful organization. The parents are very committed in supporting their children’s education. They are an important part of the school. Parents initiate programs that enhance student learning and teaching.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *school observations*
- ◆ *conversations with students*
- ◆ *scheduled meeting with students*
- ◆ *scheduled meeting with parents*
- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *interviews with teachers*

### Conclusions

The students at B.F. Norton Elementary School are happy and take pride in their school. They respect adults, peers, and their building. Students work cooperatively and are notably courteous to each other. Enthusiasm shines through in their active participation in learning and their eagerness to share their knowledge. (*classroom and school observations, conversations with students, following students, meeting with students, meeting with parents, SALT Survey data*)

Students are very literate. They know how to apply reading strategies. Many are confident that they can read and enjoy books, even books higher than their independent reading level. Students talk about books. Many students enjoy being read to. They like to read independently and with their peers. Students understand what they read as evidenced by the high level of performance and dramatic increase in their scores over the last three years in the Basic Comprehension subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations with students, 1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination*)

Students can appropriately communicate their ideas in writing. Most students understand the structure and the mechanics of writing. Students write a first draft. Some students effectively use word walls, dictionaries,

and word boxes to help them write. Many students produce a final copy which is either self edited, peer edited, or teacher corrected. The over reliance of teacher corrected drafts provides little opportunity for students to edit or revise their writing. Students often simply copy the teacher's corrections which limits their ability to apply what they have learned about writing. They engage in structured writing activities. Only a few students had the opportunity for personal journal writing and writing across the curriculum. Since students have little opportunity to write in math, they cannot effectively communicate how they solve a given problem. This may contribute to the low scores in the Math Problem Solving subtest of the 2000 New Standards Reference Examination. *(1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination, classroom observation, meeting with students, following students, student work, conversations with teachers)*

In mathematics, most students are able to compute effectively with and without the use of manipulatives. They practice a variety of problem solving strategies. When looking at the New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam results, the students have improved their knowledge of math skills, but are not able to demonstrate application of concepts or problem solving. *(2000 New Standards Reference Examination results, classroom observation, examination of student work, following students)*

Significant equity gaps exist between Limited English Proficient (LEP), special education, and general education students in the areas of math skills and English Language Arts. This is surprising due to the learning opportunities available to LEP and special education students. *(Information Works! Data, classroom observation, following students, interviews with teachers, meeting with school improvement team)*

## Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School

Students as risk-takers.

Outstanding behavior of the students.

## Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School:

Opportunities to write across the curriculum.

Independent opportunities to apply their knowledge of writing skills,

Make connections between skills and concepts to solve mathematical problems.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ 2000 Information Works!
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam*

### Conclusions

The teachers and staff work extremely well as a team to provide a strong educational experience for all students. They cooperatively consult with each other and share their expertise. The diverse teaching styles are recognized and respected. (*meeting with school improvement team, interviews with teachers, meeting with parents, meeting with school and district administration, 1999-2000 SALT Survey data*)

Many teachers are at an emergent level in the use of rubrics to grade student work. Some use them to evaluate student learning and to assess student needs. A few even involve their students in the development of rubrics and provide opportunities for them to improve their work. (*interviews with teachers, examination of student work, classroom observations*)

The teachers use a variety of resources provided by the district to instruct students in mathematics. They stress the importance of memorizing mathematical facts. They teach problem solving strategies and provide practice for students in this area. Many teachers do not require the written explanation that is an essential component of problem solving. This could contribute to the low scores on the Problem Solving subtest on the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Assessment. (*examination of student work, classroom observations, meetings with school and district administration, teacher interviews, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Assessment*)

Teachers at B.F. Norton have a strong commitment to literacy for all learners. They provide a variety of opportunities for their students to read. Their emphasis on comprehension and reading strategies could account for the impressive scores on the Basic Understanding subtest of the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. Few teachers provide the opportunity for the students to apply higher level thinking skills to extend their reading. This could contribute to the low scores in Reading Analysis and Interpretation on 2000 New Standards Reading and Language Arts Examination. (interviews with teachers, interviews with students, meetings with students, classroom observations, examination of student work, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination)

Teachers model brainstorming and writing for a variety of purposes. They stress mechanics, structure, and spelling in writing. Some teachers give students the opportunity for individual and peer editing, however, many teachers edit student work. (*classroom observation, examination of student work, conversations and meeting with students, conversations with teachers*)

Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School for:

Strong sense of community.

Professional support of one another.

Effective balanced reading program.

Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School:

Continue and expand the use of the expertise within the building for ongoing professional development.

Continue in professional development in the use and creation of rubrics.

Understand the written component in mathematical problem solving, and provide instruction to their students.

Provide teachers with the needed professional development and the necessary materials to continue and expand the balanced reading program.

Provide opportunities for students to revise, edit, and publish selected pieces of writing.

Continue to focus on consistent instruction in the area of writing.

## 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, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *B.F. Norton School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *Cumberland School Department Teacher Evaluation document*
- ◆ *B.F. Norton Professional Development Report (Fall 2000)*

### Conclusions

The B.F. Norton Elementary School is rich in ethnic diversity. Differences are not only accepted, but supported and celebrated. The school's goal is to provide equal opportunities for all students through programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), inclusion, the enrichment program, and the site based summer reading camp. (*observations of the school, meeting with the school improvement team, conversations with staff, meeting with school and district administration, following students, school improvement plan*)

The Cumberland School Department Teacher Evaluation is an ineffective tool to evaluate teacher performance. It fails to provide teachers with feedback that will improve their teaching. (*meeting with school administration, teacher conversations, Cumberland School Department Teacher Evaluation document*)

As a whole, the school is at a beginning level of understanding standards. Some teachers implement the standards in their teaching practices. Several teachers attended Course 1 training. (*meeting with the school improvement team, B.F. Norton Professional Development Report Fall 2000, teacher interviews, classroom observation*)

The school's mathematics instruction is focused on problem solving and basic skills. Teachers use a variety of resources to supplement their current mathematics program. This results in inconsistencies in the comprehension of math language, concepts, and problem solving strategies. (*classroom observations, conversations with teachers, student work, meetings with district and building administration*)

B. F. Norton's School Improvement Plan evidences a thorough self study, however, it does not provide a timeline, cost analysis/ benefits, strategies, and responsibilities. (*B. F. Norton School Improvement Plan, Meeting with the school improvement team, meeting with building administration*)

Differences exist in the quality of technology available within the grade levels. In addition, the use of technology is inconsistent within the classrooms. Due to the lack of technology, the library does not function as a media center. (*classroom observations, following students, teacher conversations*)

#### Commendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School for:

Commitment to literacy.

Outstanding school community.

High expectations for all learners.

#### Recommendations for B. F. Norton Elementary School:

Re-examine the current mathematics program to insure a balanced math program across grade levels that includes skills, concepts, and problem solving.

Revisit the school improvement plan and develop comprehensive action plans.

#### Recommendations for Cumberland School District

Continue the effort to develop an appropriate teacher evaluation.

Provide an opportunity to evaluate the current mathematics curriculum.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

This is an outstanding school. The diversity mosaic of the B.F. Norton community is its uniqueness. You have developed a learning community and instilled values in your students. Continue to foster the high expectations and equal opportunities you have provided for all your students.

Share the strong commitment to literacy with your students and one another. Direct your energy to push your effective, balanced reading program to the upper elementary levels. You, the staff, are life long learners. This commitment to learning is evident to your students and provides an outstanding model.

We applaud your focus on writing, but remember to integrate writing in all areas of the curriculum. Give your students the opportunity to participate actively in all aspects of the writing process. Provide opportunities for them to do personal journal writing.

View math in its totality rather than as separate entities. This will improve your students understanding of mathematical concepts and their application. Examine your mathematics curriculum to see if it meets the needs of your students. Meet within and cross grades levels to insure a continuous mathematics program for your students.

Examine the 2001 Information Works! data when it becomes available for equity gaps between LEP students, special education, and general education students.

Focus your commitment. Engage in the necessary professional development. Implement what you have learned but take it one step at a time.

Our visit team hopes that you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you continue on your journey. Celebrate what you have accomplished. The success of your students' is your reward.

## B. F. Norton Elementary School IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Lisa Arone  
Parent (SCRAPS)

Bea Bergeron  
Parent

Laurie Ciosek  
Parent

Kathy Desjardins  
Principal

Eni Desmond  
Teacher

Mike Carey  
Non-certified staff

Linda Iannetta, Teacher

Mary Lynne Miller, Teacher

Sue Rossi  
Parent

Deb Sitkin  
Teacher

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Donna H. Reinalda Multi-age teacher  
Sowams Elementary School, Barrington  
(on leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT fellow)  
Chair of the Team

Linda Beaudry Grade 2 teacher  
Ashaway Elementary School, Chariho

Louise H. Beaulieu, Parent  
Warren

Ginny Curtis, Grade 4 teacher  
Ranger School, Tiverton

Claire Oliveira, Principal  
Greystone School, North Providence

Margaret Perrotto Grade 3 teacher  
Guiteras School, Bristol-Warren

# New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)

---

## Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### **B. F. Norton Elementary School**

November 17, 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 Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

December 7, 2000