



Pleasant View School

Providence

SALT Visit Team Report

January 12, 2001



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@ridoe.net.

This report is available at www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt

1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

2. PROFILE OF Pleasant View School
3. PORTRAIT OF Pleasant View School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

Recommendations for the Providence School District

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

Recommendations for Providence Teachers Union:

Recommendations for the Providence School District:

7. Final Advice to the school

Pleasant View School Improvement Team

The SALT Visit Team

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

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 Pleasant View School from January 9 through January 12, 2001 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 Pleasant View 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 Pleasant View School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 73 full classroom observations and 51 partial classroom observations which totaled over 98 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 seven students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *classroom observations*

- ◆ *observations of students*
- ◆ *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:*
 - *Providence One Plan for Pleasant View School*
 - *district strategic plan*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *Balanced Literacy Program*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*

- *1998, 1999, 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 32 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 Pleasant View 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 Providence, 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 Pleasant View School

Pleasant View is an elementary school in the Providence School System. It serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The school was originally designed and constructed for special needs students. It served as the center for Providence's elementary special needs population from 1971-1987. In 1987, Pleasant View began its current program. The school presently has 29 classes, 13 special needs classes (six mild-moderate, seven-severe profound), 11 regular education classes, and 5 ESL classes. The school also houses the Child Outreach Program and Water Safety Program for the Providence School District.

A nine-member school board, appointed by the mayor, governs the Providence School District. A mayor and a fifteen-member city council govern the city. Pleasant View School students are served by one administrator, 44 full and part time teachers, two secretaries, five maintenance staff, one security guard, two food service workers, and 30 assistants.

Pleasant View School has an attendance rate of 91%. Of the 477 students attending the school, 36 percent are Hispanic, 35 percent are white, 18 percent are black, ten percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and one percent Native American. Fifteen percent of the students receive special education services, 19 percent are limited English proficient, and 78 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

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. Equity gaps, a difference of fifteen percent or more, exist among some sub-groups at Pleasant View School. Gender gaps exist in English Language Arts with females outperforming males. In this area gaps also exist between white students and black and Hispanic students with the white students outperforming the other groups.

On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination, 73 percent of Pleasant View students achieved the standard in Basic Understanding, 42 percent in Analysis and Interpretation. Only 31 percent achieved the standard in Writing Effectiveness and 20 percent in Conventions. These scores are below the district and the state performance in the areas of Reading Analysis and Interpretation, Writing Effectiveness and Conventions. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment only nine percent of the students met the standard. On the 2000 New Standards Mathematics only 38 percent of the students achieved the standard in Skills, 10 percent in Mathematical Concepts and 4 percent in Problem Solving. Mathematical concepts and Problem Solving scores were below the district scores and considerably below the State scores. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Pleasant View School is available at www.ridoe.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Pleasant View School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

As you approach Pleasant View School the starkness of the outside is deceiving. Once inside you are surrounded by bright colors, an unusual layout, and oddly shaped classrooms. This spacious cluster configuration provides potential for alternative groupings and teaching practices. As you move throughout the building the lack of windows and natural light leave you feeling disconnected from the outside world. The fortunate availability of a pool and water safety instruction adds another dimension to the school and to the experience offered to the children. This is especially important, as there are limited opportunities for students to play outdoors.

The unique facility houses an equally unique population that represents a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and abilities. This diversity presents the potential for weaving a rich human tapestry that celebrates individual differences by including all children equally in the life of the school.

The students and staff are striving to build a learning community that focuses on student achievement. The expectations are that students come to school to learn. This is supported both in the home and within the school. Instructional changes are emerging that will encourage the success of all learners. Teachers are at a beginning level in the implementation of the Principles of Learning and a Balanced Literacy Program. Total involvement in these programs will not only improve student learning, but will develop collegiality within the school as all work together for a mutual goal.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *observation of students*
- ◆ *observation of school*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *meeting with parents*
- ◆ *meeting with students*
- ◆ *meeting with the School Improvement Team*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *review of classroom assignments*
- ◆ *conversations with teachers*
- ◆ *conversations with students*

Conclusions

Pleasant View students love their school. They are happy, eager learners who are respectful toward staff and peers. Students take pride in their school. They accept responsibility for their belongings, classroom roles, and routines. This attitude creates a positive learning environment. (*observations of students and school, meeting with students, meeting with parents, conversations with teachers, conversations with students, School Improvement Team Meeting*)

Many students at Pleasant View are excited about reading. Students engage in small and large group reading, choral reading, silent reading, independent and partner reading. Some students read independently, while others have not learned to adequately decode print. Many students have few strategies when faced with unknown words. This impedes their ability to analyze and interpret text. Students in the upper elementary grades read across the

curriculum for a variety of purposes. They demonstrate factual recall of information through retellings, reading logs, and worksheets. Students' reading experiences help to develop basic comprehension that accounts for the relatively high scores on the New Standards English Language Arts comprehension subtest. However, these practices are insufficient to improve their analytical and interpretative skills that are necessary to become critical readers. (*observation of students, conversations with students, following students, examination of student work, review of classroom assignments, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results, classroom observations, conversations with teachers*)

Students at Pleasant View write frequently. Most students write in journals using self-selected or teacher directed prompts. Some students are producing polished final products. Through the use of writing rubrics some students demonstrate clear expectations for what should be included in their writing. Their finished pieces evidence good structure, descriptive language, and conventions. When writing many students effectively use word walls, dictionaries, and peers to assist them in writing unknown words. The continued and consistent use of these strategies for all students will increase their performance on the New Standards Language Arts Examination and the Rhode Island Writing Assessment. (*examination of student work, observation of students, meeting with students, classroom observation, following students New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination, Rhode Island Writing Assessment*)

Students engage in mathematical activities that are skill oriented and are predominately paper and pencil assignments. They do not often have the opportunity to use manipulatives to develop mathematical concepts or solve problems. Most students are learning computational skills with little connection to concepts or higher level problem solving. Some students are solving real life problems but there is limited writing about the process and their solutions. These practices develop basic computational skills. However, they will not improve the understanding of concepts and problem solving. (*classroom observations, examination of student work, review of classroom assignments, New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination, interviews and conversations with students, following students*)

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Polite, respectful, and well behaved students

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

Engage students in activities that require analysis and interpretation of text.

Utilize a variety of decoding strategies to improve fluency.

Revise, edit, and proofread writing routinely.

Use manipulatives when solving mathematical problems.

Use rubrics not only to assess student work, but also to provide opportunities for students to improve their work.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *student 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
- ◆ Examination of student work
- ◆ 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results
- ◆ 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment
- ◆ classroom observations

Conclusions

The teachers are committed to the student learning. The staff is working hard to become a unified learning community. They are embracing new teaching methodologies and beginning to integrate the Principals of Learning and the Providence Balanced Literacy Program. At this time, much of the instruction is predominately whole group and teacher directed. Effective use of cooperative grouping and learning centers will encourage the students to become actively engaged and responsible for their learning. Teachers did not consistently differentiate instruction to challenge high ability learners. (*classroom observation, following students, conversations and interview with teachers, meeting with school and district administration, meeting with school improvement team*)

The teachers at Pleasant View School use rubrics they have developed to grade student work. However, their usage and understanding of rubrics is inconsistent yet emerging. Some teachers and students perceive rubrics as grading scales while others have progressed to using rubrics to clearly define the expectations for a learning task. This deprives students of feedback and the opportunity to use the rubric as a tool to revise work and bring it closer to the standard. (*classroom observation, following students, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with students and teachers*)

Teachers at Pleasant View are in the process of implementing a new literacy program. They are at different levels in the understanding and participation of Balanced Literacy. Those who have been trained in balanced literacy effectively demonstrate many of the components of the program. Most teachers are still using the literature based basal series in a traditional manner. This practice limits the expansion of their instruction to include innovative teaching. Instruction is supplemented in some classrooms by components from the Providence Balanced Literacy. Full implementation of this program will lead to improved student performance in reading. Active participation of all teachers is essential to improve student learning. *(classroom observation, student observation, conversations with teachers, meeting with district and building administration, examination of student work, meetings and conversations with students, Rhode Island Writing Assessment, New Standards Reference Examination)*

Teachers provide a variety of writing opportunities throughout the day including journaling, responses to teacher prompts, summaries, retellings, and reporting of factual information. Although there is a quantity of writing, the quality does not indicate deep analysis, higher level questioning or development of ideas. Utilization of these qualities will empower students to think critically about their writing. While finished products of good quality writing are posted in classrooms and found in student folders, instruction in the writing process was not consistently evident. The lack of daily instruction in the process of writing does not allow students to grow to their full potential as writers. *(classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, conversations with teachers and students)*

Teachers are instructing mathematics through the use of the Scott Foresman *Exploring Mathematics*. This is not a standards based program. Teachers emphasize the development of computational skills using paper and pencil tasks. There is a minimal use of manipulatives to aid in the development and understanding of mathematical concepts. There is limited written and oral explanation of reasoning and process in problem solving. Some teachers are supplementing with real-life problem that integrates skills and concepts. This inconsistent instruction in problem solving strategies across all grade levels results in limited understanding of mathematical concepts and low performance on assessments. *(Classroom observation, examination student work, conversations with students and teachers, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination results)*

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Dedication of staff to foster student learning

Willingness of staff to participate in professional growth

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

Continue to participate in professional development opportunities in literacy.

Expand professional development opportunities to provide all teachers with more intensive literacy training.

Actively implement the Providence Balanced Literacy Program in all classrooms.

Daily instruction in process writing (getting ideas, first draft, revising, editing, preparing for publication).

Provide instruction for students in oral and written explanations of problem solving procedures and strategies in mathematics.

Instruct students in mathematics to use manipulatives to develop concepts and problem solving.

Recommendations for the Providence School District

Provide intensive professional development opportunities in the **Balanced Literacy Program**.

Provide professional development in the writing process.

Investigate and select a district-wide standards based mathematics program.

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, parents*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *Review of Providence One Plan for Pleasant View School*
- ◆ *Review of Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers*
- ◆ *Review of Providence Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Handbook*
- ◆ *Review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *Examination of computer lab*
- ◆ *Review of Balanced Literacy Program*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *2000 Information Works! data*
- ◆ *review of teacher schedules*
- ◆ *New Standards Reference Examination results*

Conclusions

Pleasant View School is an exceptionally clean, orderly and organized environment. Routines and expectations are clearly evident and uniformly enforced. Students and staff feel safe within the school. The classroom environment focuses on academics and student achievement is recognized. A school-wide awards assembly acknowledges students for their wide range of achievements. There is a coordinated effort to move the school forward to its next level of performance. These factors create a positive climate for learning. *(interviews and conversations with students, classroom observations, observations of the school, scheduled meetings with parents, following students, interviews and conversations with teachers)*

Although computers are available in the classrooms and there is an impressive computer lab, they are underutilized. Not all are connected to the Internet. There is no technology coordinator to provide teacher training and continued technological support. Without this support it is not possible to maximize the potential of this learning tool (*classroom observation, teacher interviews, Providence One Plan for Pleasant View School, meetings with student and parents, examination of the computer lab, conversations with students*)

The unique make-up of this school creates an exciting opportunity to investigate and implement inclusionary practices. Limiting inclusion of students to special subjects is inadequate in meeting the needs of the entire student population. Although, students are accepting of individual differences in this diverse population, this limited inclusion practice does not offer the opportunity to maximize social and academic growth. Increased inclusion is an important strategy to address the learning needs of all students. (*2000 Information Works! data, New Standards Reference Examination results, scheduled meetings with school and district administration, conversations with teachers, observations of classrooms and the school*)

The current teacher evaluation model for the Providence Schools is not aligned with the standards, Principals of Learning and current district initiatives. The dimensions of teaching as cited in this evaluation document do not hold teachers accountable for student learning. It does not include a mentoring program to assist teachers in the improvement of instructional practices that will insure student learning. (*review of Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers, review of Providence Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation Handbook, conversation with teachers, meetings with school and district administration*)

Scheduling does not include daily breaks or recesses for students to engage in unstructured social interactions. This lack of playtime limits the students' ability to independently negotiate solutions, make decisions, and cooperate with their peers. Indoor and outdoor spaces are not effectively used to encourage developmentally appropriate motor skills for all students. (*observation of the school and classrooms, interviews and conversations with students, review of the teacher schedules, interview with the building administration*)

The Providence One Plan for Pleasant View School is comprehensive and well written. Their self-study clearly addresses the needs of the school. Their action plans thoroughly address critical issues. The procedures are presented in a well thought out and logical manner. (*Providence One Plan for Pleasant View School, Meeting with the School Improvement Team, Meeting with the building administration*)

Commendations for Pleasant View School

Exceptionally clean orderly environment

Recommendations for Pleasant View School

Investigate inclusion models that would meet the needs of all students.

Reorganize to limit class size to allow for inclusionary practices.

Provide staff development on inclusionary practices and team teaching.

Allocate space both indoors and outdoors to include play areas to be utilized by all students.

Include in school schedule recess for all students.

Recommendations for Providence Teachers Union:

Review article six, “class size and composition” to provide the flexibility necessary to provide opportunities for inclusionary practices.

Recommendations for the Providence School District:

Hire a technology coordinator for Pleasant View School to maximize the use of technology and further staff development.

Provide necessary resources to support inclusion at Pleasant View School.

Revise the present teacher evaluation model to include accountability for Principles of Learning, Standards, student learning, and mentoring.

7. Final Advice to the school

The unique location of Pleasant View School gives a suburban setting in an urban environment. The facility provides an atmosphere that is clean, bright and colorful. The dedicated staff creates a feeling that is disciplined yet nurturing. These qualities foster student enthusiasm, excitement and an eagerness to learn. Students feel safe, cared for and motivated to attend each school day.

Continue your efforts in challenging your students to become critical thinkers. Expand your knowledge of developing instructional practices. When this becomes a common goal for all your school, you will be able to unite to raise the expectations and achievement of your diverse population and celebrate its differences.

Continue to utilize the common planning time and scheduled meetings with the literacy coach to develop understanding and confidence with the new literacy initiatives. Maximize your opportunities to visit classroom and take advantage of the expertise in your building. Experiment with implementation of literacy strategies in your classroom.

The unique configuration of your school plant has advantages, yet challenges the opportunities for collegiality. You have begun the journey to become a unified learning community. Your student and program diversity provides a variety of teaching strategies, knowledge of students, and learning opportunities. Capitalize on these and share your knowledge and expertise with each other. Open your doors to your colleagues and students to maximize learning opportunities for yourself and your students. Use the Balanced Literacy Program as an opportunity to integrate the process of reading and writing. Continue in your attempts to incorporate science and social studies within this construct.

Allow yourselves and your students opportunities to reflect on work. Through feedback, rubrics, and reflection give them the opportunity to improve the quality of their performance. With colleagues, share student work reflecting on improvement, feedback and continuity within and between grade level of student expectations and performance.

Our visit team hopes that you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to assist you as you continue on your journey toward excellence. We applaud your progress and hope that this report will help you move forward to improving the learning for all students.

Pleasant View School Improvement Team

Robert Rao
Principal

Paula Marandola
Mild/moderate Special Education Teacher

Debra Filliatreault
230-day Special Education Teacher

Linda Da Ponte
5th Grade Teacher

Maryellen Struck
4th Grade Teacher

Pat Lupoli
School Nurse/Teacher

Angela Gray Porter
Parent

The SALT Visit Team

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

Nancy L. Canestrari
Multi-age Teacher
Nayatt School
Barrington, Rhode Island

Henry De Vona
Lead Teacher
Johnston Public Schools
Johnston, Rhode Island

Elizabeth Durfee
Principal
Primrose Hill School
Barrington, Rhode Island

Colleen Holland
4th Grade Teacher
Emma Whiteknact School
East Providence, Rhode Island

Jan Martin
Parent
Warren, Rhode Island

Dina Needham
Self Contained Mild/Moderate Special Education Teacher
Winsor Hill School
Johnston, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Pleasant View School

January 12, 2001

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, 1st 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.
February 14, 2001