



West Broadway School

Providence

SALT Visit Team Report

February 16, 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

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

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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 West Broadway School from February 13 through February 16, 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. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for West Broadway 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 West Broadway School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 93 full classroom observations and 43 partial classroom observations which totaled over 112 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 nine 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:*
 - *West Broadway Providence One 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*
 - *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers*
 - *Providence School District Teacher Contract*

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 31 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 West Broadway 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 West Broadway School

West Broadway School is located in the West Broadway neighborhood section of Providence. It is a diverse community that draws from many ethnic, racial, economic and cultural backgrounds. Of the 565 students attending West Broadway School, 57 percent of the students are Hispanic, 21 percent black, 12 percent are white, nine percent are Asian Pacific Islander, and less than one percent are Native American. Ninety-two percent of the students receive free or reduced priced lunch.

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. West Broadway School has a building administrator, 50 full and part time teachers and ancillary staff, two secretaries, four maintenance staff, one security guard, five food service workers, and seventeen teacher assistants.

West Broadway School has 26 classrooms: fourteen regular education classrooms, six ESL classrooms, six special education classrooms, a library, computer room, math-science lab, and an art room. Kindergarten is a full-day program. As part of the Balanced Literacy initiative, West Broadway School has a trained literacy coach, and six literacy lead teachers.

Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Rhode Island has formed a Business Partner in Education with West Broadway School. The administrators and employees of this company act as mentors to students and serve of the West Broadway School Improvement Team.

With the exception of the Rhode Island Writing Assessment and Mathematics Problem Solving, all of the scores on the New Standards Reference Examination showed growth ranging from three percent to 32 percent when comparing the 1999 scores with the 2000 scores. Equity gaps, a difference of 15 percent or more on the New Standards Reference Examination, exist between black students, Hispanic and white students in the area of Mathematics Skills. Black students scored below Hispanic and white students. In the area of Reading Analysis and Interpretation, black and white students scored below Hispanic students. In Mathematics Problem Solving and Writing Effectiveness subtests, scores were too low to determine equity gaps.

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 West Broadway School is available at www.rido.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF West Broadway School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

West Broadway School, a majestic turn of the century building, houses a culturally diverse student population. As you enter you are welcomed into an environment that is warm and inviting with children's work displayed on the brightly colored walls. The office staff is friendly and helpful. The energetic and approachable principal is available to all. Children are happy, friendly, and polite. They are eager to learn, feeling safe and supported within their school environment.

Classrooms vary in physical appearance and arrangement. Teachers welcome and support their students and clearly demonstrate a desire and acceptance that all students can learn. The teachers and the staff have embarked on a journey to improve student learning that requires that they let go of many comfortable practices and develop a willingness and acceptance of change in their practice. The overall layout of the school and the placement of the classrooms make collaboration difficult. While communication between and among grade levels is developing, the staff needs to value their differences and work together to benefit from the expertise of each individual.

The Balanced Literacy program is in its initial stages. Teachers are at various levels of implementation and commitment to this district mandated program. Teacher support and professional development opportunities are evident. Scheduled weekly planning sessions provide training for all teachers to maximize their involvement and develop understanding of the Balanced Literacy initiative.

The ESL and Special Education students are included with their same age peers in special subjects. These opportunities are not sufficient to maximize integration for these groups.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works! (1999 scores)*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *2000 SALT Survey Data*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with students and teachers*
- ◆ *observation of the school*

Conclusions

Students at West Broadway are caring and friendly. They are polite and happy to be in their school. They feel safe and trust the adults in their environment. Students are comfortable with their teachers and know how to behave appropriately in their classrooms. Students understand their expectations, are supportive of one another, and treat each other with respect. (*following students, classroom observations, 2000 SALT Survey Data {student chart E-C.1}, conversations with students, observation of the school*)

Students engage in reading a variety of literature. They successfully practice active listening, oral expression, and meaningful discussion during daily read alouds. Many appropriately apply multiple reading strategies to decode words and to create meaning from text. Many students work at their instructional level and some are learning to choose appropriate texts for independent reading. These experiences may contribute to the impressive gains achieved on the reading subtests of the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. (*classroom observations, New Standards Reference Examination, following students, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with students*)

Students frequently write in a variety of genres for a variety of purposes. Most students use, understand, and apply the writing process. This could account for the increase in the writing effectiveness and conventions subtests as measured by the New Standards Reference Examination (*New Standards Reference Examination results, following students, classroom observations*)

Some students utilize mathematical strategies when solving problems. Some effectively write explanations to their problems. Students, however, are frequently involved in low level mathematical problem solving activities. This practice contributes to the vast majority of students failing to achieve proficiency in

mathematical problem solving. (*observations of the classrooms, following students, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination, examination of student work*)

Most students have a general understanding of rubrics. Some students use rubrics effectively to score and/or to add missing elements to their work. Few students demonstrate the ability for the self-assessment required for genuine understanding and improvement. (*observations of the school, classroom observations, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with students*)

Commendations for West Broadway School

Friendly, well mannered students who persevere and who are genuinely happy to be in school

Recommendations for West Broadway School

Continue to engage students in daily reading and writing activities.

Engage students in higher order mathematical problem solving.

Provide students with opportunities to use rubrics to assess and improve their own work.

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 2000*
- ◆ *West Broadway Providence One Plan*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *classroom displays*

Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated and care about their students. Most teachers conduct effective lessons that lead to positive student outcomes. However, teachers provide limited opportunities for student-directed learning including independent research, applied higher order thinking, and critical thinking/problem solving skills. Consequently, many students do not maximize their potential as learners. (*classroom observations, interviews and conversations with teachers, parents, students, observations of the school, Providence One Plan*)

A concerted effort to implement a Balanced Literacy Program is evident at West Broadway School. Teachers are at various stages in their acceptance, understanding, and implementation of the program. All teachers use various components of the program, however a few still rely on the *Silver Burdett/Ginn Anthology Series* as their primary source of literature. As all teachers effectively implement Balanced Literacy and employ all the components of the program, greater gains in all areas of reading will be evidenced. (*Classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with teachers, students, school and district administration*)

On a daily basis, teachers engage their students in writing activities for a variety of purposes. Although the writing process is used throughout all grade levels, teaching effectiveness varies. Many teachers provide clear structure and instruction with a few demonstrating exemplary modeling and teaching of the writing

process. Many teachers do not provide sufficient feedback, beyond basic editing, to improve and extend the quality of student writing. (*examination of student work, classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students and teachers*)

In the absence of a standards-based mathematics curriculum, teachers have developed an eclectic approach that attempts to meet the needs of their students within a standards-based context. Although teachers provide daily practice with problem solving strategies, most do not give students opportunities to choose strategies, explain their work, discuss alternative solutions, or explore real life problems. Without these opportunities, scores on problem solving and on concepts subtests will continue to be low. (*classroom observations, conversations with teachers, students, building administration, New Standards Reference Examination results, SALT Survey 2000 Data*)

Special education teachers make a concerted effort to parallel the regular education program. They use the Balanced Literacy program and the students work at their instructional levels. These practices provide equal educational opportunities for special education students. (*classroom observations, discussions with teachers, following students, examination of student work*)

A variety of rubrics are evident throughout the school, but teachers are at the beginning stages of implementation. Their use of rubrics as assessment and feedback tools is inconsistent. Many teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work. Some use them to inform their instruction. A few use rubrics as a way to guide students to improve student work. (*classroom observations, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, classroom displays*)

Commendations for West Broadway School

Dedication of the staff to their students and desire to improve student learning

Strong efforts to implement Balanced Literacy throughout all grade levels

Efforts to use rubrics and standards across the curriculum

Recommendations for West Broadway School

Use a variety of teaching methods to provide greater opportunities for student-directed learning and the application of higher order thinking and problem solving skills.

Continue professional development in Balanced Literacy and expand implementation of the program within all classrooms.

Refine the use of rubrics so teachers can provide useful feedback to students and improve their instruction.

Recommendations for Providence School District

Select and adopt a 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, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers*
- ◆ *Providence Public Schools Teacher Union Contract*
- ◆ *West Broadway Providence One Plan*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 2000 data*
- ◆ *New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *Information Works! 2000 (1999 scores)*

Conclusions

The West Broadway School staff has been asked to make many changes in practice in a short period of time and teachers are feeling pressure to modify their teaching practices. Although most staff is cordial to and respectful of one another, in some instances there are underlying group dynamics and tensions that hamper meaningful collaboration and cooperation. Consequently, some teachers are isolated and do not benefit from an open and comprehensive dialogue that will enhance teaching practices. (*conversation and interviews with teachers, scheduled meetings with building and district administration, classroom observations, observations of the school*)

West Broadway School Providence One Plan is thoughtfully written, taking into account state, district, and school level data. Parental participation on the school improvement team has been limited and no parents were involved in the development of the Providence One Plan. (*scheduled meeting with school improvement team, review of Providence One Plan*)

While parents at West Broadway School feel welcomed, there is no active parent-teacher organization. The lack of such a group diminishes effective and positive communication among parents, the school, and the

community. *(scheduled meetings with parents, building and district administration, School Improvement Plan, SALT Survey Data)*

Criteria for students exiting ESL programs are unclear at both the school and district level. An inclusion model is in place, however it does not offer opportunities for effective interaction with peers in any meaningful manner. Although a number of ESL students took the New Standards Reference Examination, their scores were sheltered, preventing a thorough analysis of equity gaps. *(New Standards Reference Examination, classroom observations, interviews and conversations teachers, scheduled meetings with building and district administration)*

The current teacher evaluation model for the Providence Schools is not aligned with the standards, Principles of Learning, and current district initiatives. The dimensions of teaching as cited in this evaluation document do not hold teachers accountable for student learning or provide for the improvement of present practices. *(Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Non-tenured and Tenured Teachers, conversation with teachers, scheduled meetings with building and district administration)*

There is no formal mentoring program at West Broadway School, nor is there a consistent one system-wide. The district's current program is viewed as remedial rather than supportive, since mentors are assigned based on the principal's judgement of weak teacher performance. *(Providence Teachers Union Contract, interview and conversation with teachers, scheduled meetings with school and district administration))*

Commendations for West Broadway School

Overall commitment to and support of change

Providing time within the schedule for weekly professional development activities

Recommendations for West Broadway School

Examine SALT survey data at deeper levels to become more sophisticated in the use of data, update and revisit the West Broadway Providence One Plan, as more data becomes available.

Increase the use of SALT survey data and examine the 2001 Information Works! when it becomes available to determine equity gaps for special education and the ESL population. Revise your Providence One Plan to reflect this data.

Create a parent-teacher organization and improve community relations.

Reorganize the proximity of classrooms to maximize teacher collaboration.

Foster a spirit of staff cohesiveness so that personality conflicts are not misinterpreted as resistance to change.

Recommendations for Providence School District

Develop and communicate clear exit criteria for ESL students.

Revise the current teacher evaluation model to reflect standards- based instruction, Principles of Learning, and current district initiatives.

Develop and communicate an effective mentoring program.

7. Final Advice to the School

West Broadway School is at the beginning stages in the implementation of Balanced Literacy and standards-based instruction. However, meaningful two-way communication between all teachers is not evident. To build a cohesive learning community in West Broadway School, it is crucial that the staff work together in a collegial manner to improve instructional practice and to communicate not only among but also between grade levels.

You are committed to high standards for all students. Focus carefully on the principle of academic rigor as you work to improve your curriculum and instructional practices.

We commend your commitment to ESL and Special Education learners. Work to integrate them more within your regular education programs.

Parents are a valuable resource. Develop a plan to include them more in the day to day workings of the school. An effective parent-teacher organization will improve not only involvement, but also understanding and communication about students and school programs.

We applaud your progress and wish you continued success in your journey. It is our intent that this SALT report will help you as you move forward toward excellence, improved student learning, and achievement.

West Broadway School Improvement Team

Marie Arguer Teacher	Brian Allen Teacher	Rachel Aramini Teacher
Priscilla Baily Teacher	Frances Bennassi Teacher	Doris Bravo-Montalio Parent
Angel Brown Teacher Assistant	Pamela Carter Teacher	Lisa Caparco Teacher
Gina Carbone Teacher	Ronald Celio Teacher	Melissa Cote Teacher
Maria Defontes Parent	Karen Ferrell Teacher	Patricia Foley Teacher Assistant
Kendra Haggerty Teacher	Judy Healey Teacher	Linda Hazel Teacher
Davi Iem Parent	Maria Ieni Teacher	Francis Kowalik Teacher
Kathy Lawrence Teacher	Marilyn Lopes Teacher	Carol Lukowski Teacher
Jerry Luongo Teacher	Kerri Martello Teacher	Adele Matile Teacher
Cindy Matraccia Teacher	Thomas McGhee Teacher	Deborah McNamara Teacher
William Millea Teacher	Maria Nadeau Teacher	Paul O'Donnell Teacher
Ann Pace, Chairperson Teacher	Janine Paiva Teacher	Chris Palumbo Teacher
Judy Peterson Blue Cross/Blue Shield	Susan Prouty Parent	Christine Robinson Principal
Malou Rodrigues Teacher Assistant	Carolyn Saunders Teacher	Cherie Simoneau Teacher
Nelson Valentin Parent	Kim Walsh Teacher	

The SALT Visit Team

Donna H. Reinalda
Multi-age Teacher Grades 1-3
Sowams Elementary School
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Chair

Ronald Areglado
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Potowomut School
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Connie Allen
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Wilbur and McMahon School
Little Compton, Rhode Island

Elaine Delaney
ESL Teacher
Robertson School
Central Falls, Rhode Island

Renee Fouette
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Warwick Neck School
Warwick, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

West Broadway School

February 16, 2001

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, I observed a portion of the visit and I have reviewed this report. 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.
March 16, 2001