



Stadium Elementary School

Cranston, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

March 2, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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This report is available at www.ridoe.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 Stadium Elementary School from February 27-March 2, 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 Stadium 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 Stadium Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 99 classroom observations which totaled over 82 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 7 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/or interviews with 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:*
 - *School Improvement Plan for Stadium Elementary School*
 - *Cranston district strategic plan*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *district curriculum guides*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment result*
 - *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
 - *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*

Stadium Elementary School SALT Visit Handbook

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 26 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 Stadium 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 Cranston, Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Following your school’s review of this report, consider what changes to make in your school improvement plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with your district. The Compact’s purpose is to ensure that your school and your district work out an agreement about the most important priorities for your school to work and how to best target district support in reaching them. Your RIDE Field Service Team representative will offer some assistance in facilitating the preparing of the Compact.

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 Stadium Elementary School

Stadium School is one of 18 elementary schools in the city of Cranston, Rhode Island. Built in 1953, the school serves 237 students in the kindergarten through the fifth grades. It is part of the Cranston public school system. A seven-member school committee governs the school system and is elected to serve a two-year term.

Of the 237 students attending Stadium School, 78 percent are white, seven percent are Hispanic, seven percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, six percent are black, and two percent are Native American. Sixteen percent of Stadium School's students receive special education services and 32 percent are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch.

On the New Standards Reference Exams from 1998-2000, Stadium School's students show growth in all mathematics subtest scores and steady growth in three out of the four subtests in Language Arts. However, from 1998-2000, students' scores on the Rhode Island Writing Examination have declined steadily, with only four percent of students meeting the standard in 2000.

Equity gaps exist between students in the New Standards Reference Exam English Language Arts /Reading Analysis and Interpretation subtest, with poverty students scoring below non-poverty students and special education students scoring below general education students. Equity gaps are also present in the Writing Effectiveness subtest, with male students scoring below female students and special education students scoring below regular education students.

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 Stadium School is available at www.rido.net.

Stadium School's professional staff includes one administrator, 12 full time and 15 part time faculty including support personnel, five teacher assistants, one building aide, and two custodians; one full time and one part time.

Stadium Elementary School's students benefit from volunteers from the community and local colleges, who offer their assistance on a weekly basis to Stadium School's students. Students also participate in the Feinstein "Good Deeds" Project. The parent organization of Stadium Elementary School, "Stadium Partners in Education" plays an active role in many activities, such as biannual book fairs and a winter potluck supper. Through their fundraising activities, they have also given needed materials to individual classrooms, provided students with a planner/organizer in grades three through five and funded field trips.

3. PORTRAIT OF Stadium Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Stadium Elementary School is a school we would all like our children to attend. Nestled in a small, immaculate building is this exceptional educational community of friendly, engaging students and remarkable adults, whose high expectations and dedication serve students well. There is an air of calm and peaceful order throughout the building. The environment is permeated with warmth and nurturing support for all children, regardless of their race, background, strengths or challenges. Trust and respect among students and teachers is readily apparent and empowers all to learn and grow. Children's conversations both in and out of the classroom focus in a unique way on school and learning. Kindness, sharing and encouragement are evident in the actions of students and faculty. Exceptional educational leadership, which relies on consensus rather than command, creates an environment of possibilities, rather than problems. The teachers are inspirational role models who truly love their work. It is evident that children and their work are celebrated everywhere.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1997,1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998,1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with students*
- ◆ *conversations with students*

Conclusions

The children at Stadium Elementary School are wonderful!! They are diligent, take pride in their work, are motivated, inquisitive and curious. They willingly try what their teachers ask of them. They take their school pledge, “to study hard, to be fair in work and play and to make myself a good school citizen” very seriously. These children are genuinely kind and accepting of each other’s differences, whether they are academic, physical, socio-economic, racial, or cultural. Students are courteous, responsible, enthusiastic and cooperative with one another. They demonstrate these attributes through their interactions with both peers and all adults in the school. (*following students, classroom observations, meeting with students, conversations with students*)

Students at Stadium Elementary School are proficient readers. They are reading frequently and effectively for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. They read independently and cooperatively with their peers. By using different strategies and techniques, students are able to decode and understand material above their independent reading levels both for problem solving and research. They use many appropriate strategies to help each other phonemically decipher print to make meaning out of words. This is evident in all areas of the curriculum. They read in a choral fashion, use drama to enrich their understanding and employ sign language to interpret text. Students at Stadium School clearly read for enjoyment and share their responses to literature with enthusiasm. This is supported by their scores on the New Standards Reference Exam reading examination subtest (Basic Understanding: 89 percent Meeting the Standard). (*classroom observations, following students, student work, 2000 New Standards Reference Exam*)

Students enjoy writing and freely share their ideas with enthusiasm. They write often and creatively, using rich vocabulary to share personal experience in a meaningful way. Students also respond to literature, write in journals, use writing as a tool to explain and persuade, to inform and to express ideas. Most students clearly understand the writing process and some use peer editing and rubrics to self correct their work. The quality of students' writing is impressive and has made steady growth as evidenced by work samples in their portfolios and in their test scores in the New Standards Reference Exam (writing effectiveness subtest:56 percent meeting the standard and writing conventions subtest:58 percent meeting the standard). (*classroom observations, following students, student work, New Standards Reference Exam*)

While many students demonstrate adequate math skills, most students are weaker in their explanation and demonstration of math concepts. Students have recently begun to practice problem solving regularly, yet time spent is insufficient. Students use math in fragmented pieces throughout the day, contributing to the poor performance of many students, as reflected in their scores on the New Standards Reference Exam. (*classroom observations, following students, student work*)

Commendations for Stadium Elementary School

The energetic and respectful students

The high quality and creativity in students' writing

Recommendations for Stadium Elementary School

Continue to foster independent and cooperative reading activities throughout the school day.

Increase time spent on formal mathematics instruction and continue practice in concepts and problem solving.

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, School Improvement Team, and parents*
- ◆ 1999 Information Works!

Conclusions

The teachers at Stadium Elementary School are exceptional! They are dedicated, caring, and devoted to their students. They nurture their students. Teachers are willing to embrace reform to enable their students to succeed. By their extensive participation in professional development, they model lifelong learning for students. They have formed unique and supportive relationships with each other and other school professionals, sharing both ideas and knowledge. They are open and accepting of their students and their families. Teachers encourage parental engagement through their frequent communication and warm responsiveness. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, conversations with teachers, conversations with school professionals, meeting with parents, meeting with principal, meeting with district*)

Teachers use varied forms of assessment on a daily basis. They effectively differentiate their instruction based on the identified needs and strengths of their students. Rubrics are used effectively and consistently to set high expectations for students. In addition, teachers use rubrics for evaluation and to enable students to independently assess their work. Teachers successfully use standards-based instruction as a framework for their teaching. (*classroom observations, student work, following students, meeting with students, meeting with parents, student work, conversations with teachers*)

The overall quality of teaching at Stadium Elementary School is exemplary. Teachers facilitate learning using creative and innovative techniques, which address the multiple intelligence of their students. They are enthusiastic and engaging, making learning fun for students of all abilities. They read frequently to their students and impart a great enjoyment of high quality literature. They are masters of seamless transition. All instructional time is used effectively and efficiently. Teachers have high expectations for all of their students and provide the supports needed to fulfill these expectations. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, interviews with teachers, meeting with School Improvement Team, meeting with district, meeting with principal, meeting with parents*)

Commendations for Stadium Elementary School

The dedicated staff of caring teachers

Teachers' effective and consistent use of rubrics and standards in order to improve student learning

Teachers' ability to differentiate instruction based on students' needs

Teachers' use of creative and motivational teaching practices

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 and district administrators, students parents, and the School Improvement Team*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *Stadium School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *Cranston district Teacher Evaluation Tool*
- ◆ *Contract between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teacher's Alliance*

Conclusions

The culture of Stadium Elementary School is democratic, child centered, and celebrates the whole child. Citizenship and responsibility are encouraged through positive adult and student interaction. Students are proud of their accomplishments and adults note and applaud them for behavioral and academic successes. Expectations are clear and consistent throughout the school. Relationships are relaxed and open, making everyone feel accepted as family. Classroom atmosphere is sprinkled with humor and helpful guidance. Parents and visitors are welcomed and quickly become a part of this learning community. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, meeting with parents, interviews with teachers, meeting with principal, meeting with School Improvement Team ,meeting with district*)

The educational leadership at Stadium Elementary School is visionary, supportive, efficient, incredibly hard working, and truly exemplary. Teachers know that they are supported and feel comfortable asking for help and guidance when necessary. The principal is an advocate for the needs of students, teachers, and parents. Her leadership style fosters confidence, risk-taking, dedication, and contributes to a safe learning environment. All educational stakeholders are given a voice in decision-making. Children are often seen in her office for conversation and to share their work, as well as to seek her guidance. It is clear that students are her foremost priority and are at the center of her attention. In order to maintain these priorities, she spends many hours beyond the school day attending to the administrative duties of her position. (*following students, meeting with principal, meeting with students, meeting with district, School Improvement Team, meeting with parents*)

Teachers do not have the tools needed to develop math instruction to the same degree as other curriculum areas. The present exclusion of development in mathematics is due to the district's clearly expressed focus

on literacy. The Cranston Schools' Mathematics Framework and Curriculum Guide can not be fully implemented without comprehensive staff development, which has not been provided. Properly supportive materials, texts and consistent articulation from grade to grade are not provided. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations with students, student work, meeting with district*)

The Cranston district teacher evaluation plan is an effective tool for improving teacher performance. Standards and rubrics are used to clarify the observation and goals are set to improve instruction. There is flexibility in the choice of forms used for observations, allowing for individual learning needs to be met. (*Cranston district teacher evaluation tool, meeting with principal, contract between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teacher's Alliance*)

The Stadium School community has formed a unique and flexible school improvement team. Using a core group as a steering committee, they have created many action-planning teams, which are composed of a wide constituency. The school improvement plan reflects an in-depth study of the school's needs and the action steps are reasonable and thoughtful. The goals have been addressed and implemented in a timely manner and are continuing to improve learning for all students. (*School Improvement Plan. Meeting with School Improvement Team, meeting with principal*)

Commendations for Stadium Elementary School

The strong, child-centered, democratic culture

The cooperative learning community

The extensive celebration of students' work

The visionary and supportive leadership

Recommendations for the Cranston School District

Provide comprehensive professional development in mathematics instruction for your teachers.

Update texts and materials, which will enable teachers to implement the curriculum.

7. Final Advice to the School

There are masterful teachers at Stadium Elementary School. With so many different strengths here, make formal time to watch each other in practice and share the gifts you all display, not only with each other but also with aspiring educators. Continue to enrich your students' literacy as you implement a high quality, consistent approach to mathematics. Continue to build on the cohesive community of learners you have formed and take pride in the young lives you have helped to shape.

Stadium Elementary School Improvement Team

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Stadium Elementary School

March 3, 2001

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process 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 20, 2001