



# Winsor Hill Elementary School

Johnston

## SALT Visit Team Report

March 2, 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.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt](http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt)**

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

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Johnston Public School District***

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

***Sources of Evidence***

***Conclusions***

***Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School***

***Recommendations for Johnston Public School District***

***Recommendations for Johnston Teacher's Union***

***Recommendations for Johnston Town Council***

7. Final Advice to the School

*Winsor Hill Elementary 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 Winsor Hill Elementary School from February 27, 2001 through 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. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School improvement plan for Winsor Hill 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 Winsor Hill Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 61 full and partial classroom observations which totaled over 79-1/2 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 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 the school administrator*
- ◆ *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 Winsor Hill Elementary School*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
  - *classroom textbooks*
  - *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*
  - *Winsor Hill Elementary School Magic of Learning 2000-2001*

- *Winsor Hill Elementary School Magic of Learning 1999-2000*
- *Johnston Professional Development Institute Document*
- *Johnston Teachers' Association Contract*
- *Class of 2000 Winsor Hill Wizards Reaching for The Stars Notebook*
- *Winsor Hill School the Magic of Learning Notebook Volume I*
- *Winsor Hill School the Magic of Learning Notebook Volume II*
- *Johnston English Language Arts Draft Curriculum*
- *Johnston Mathematics Draft Curriculum*
- *Long Range School Facility Planning Johnston, Rhode Island September, 2000*
- *Johnston Public Schools Pre and Post Observation Conference Forms*
- *Johnston Public Schools Teachers Formal Evaluation Form*
- *Johnston Public Schools Teachers Evaluation Form*
- *Winsor Hill Elementary School Self Study Document*
- English Language Arts Draft Curriculum
- Mathematics Draft Curriculum

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 27-1/2 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 Winsor Hill 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 Johnston, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Following your school's review of this report, use the information provided in this report to 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 Winsor Hill Elementary School

Winsor Hill Elementary School is one of six elementary schools in the Johnston Public School System. It serves students in grades 1-5 for the town of Johnston, Rhode Island. Johnston is a suburban town with a population of approximately 27,000. The present school first opened its doors to students in 1953. Additions were added in 1983 and 1996.

A five-member elected school board governs the Johnston Public School District. A mayor and a five-member town council govern the town. Winsor Hill Elementary School students are served by a professional staff of 1 administrator, 24 full and part-time faculty, 10 aides and support personnel, 2 custodians, and 1 cook.

Winsor Hill Elementary School has an attendance rate of 92 percent. Of the 249 students attending this school 86 percent are White, 7 percent are Hispanic, 4 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3 percent are Black. Twenty-eight students totaling 11 percent receive special education services, 18 students totaling 7 percent are Limited English Proficiency, and 33 percent applied for and receive 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 equity and performance gaps discussed in the student learning conclusions. Equity gaps, a difference of greater than fifteen percent, exist between male and females on two subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam. While scores on the mathematics and reading subtests have increased over the past three years test scores on the writing subtests have declined over the same time period. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Winsor Hill Elementary School is available at [www.rido.net](http://www.rido.net).

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Winsor Hill Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Winsor Hill Elementary School is a safe and orderly school brimming with students who like school and are eager to learn. Teachers and staff are working together to provide a caring environment where children can grow. Children are happy, well-behaved, like what they are learning, and care about each other and the adults in the building. Parents respect and appreciate the hardworking and dedicated principal, teachers, and staffs' willingness to go above and beyond for the betterment of their children.

In an effort to improve student performance, the teachers, staff, and community members came together to form a positive force for change and developed a school improvement plan complete with a strategic direction and tactics—becoming the first school in the Johnston Public Schools to complete this process.

Under the motivated and active leadership of the principal, the school community has entered, energetically, into the difficult task of changing this school. Teachers are making great strides to learn and implement new techniques necessary to provide an enriching educational environment where students can achieve their potential and attain high academic standards. They are, however, at the beginning of a process that will continue to challenge them in the years ahead.

An abundance of changes are happening at once: standards, rubrics, writing across the curriculum, multiple reading strategies, math problem solving, portfolios, and changes in instructional practices. Many of these practices, especially standards-based instruction and assessment practices are still emergent on a school-wide basis. Often the organizational and instructional changes the school is attempting occur at a pace that exceeds the availability of adequate training, appropriate materials, and time.

Facilities, space, adequate materials are lacking, and changes in leadership at the building and district level are far too frequent. Varied interpretations of instructional strategies and the lack of coordinated district-wide programs are additional obstacles facing this school. Despite these obstacles the faculty and staff continue their attempts to maintain momentum toward improving their students' achievement. They continuously and consistently put the best interests of their students first in the face of tenuous community-wide support for education.

In essence, Winsor Hill Elementary School is in the beginning stages of a cycle of continuous improvement. It is a school that is committed to improving and reorganizing to better meet the needs of the students it serves.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school administrator, students, and parents*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, and students*

### Conclusions

Students are kind, courteous and respectful to their peers and other members of the school community. Students demonstrate an eagerness to participate in the learning process and a willingness to share their personal work in a cooperative manner. They are extraordinarily well-behaved, enjoy school, and like learning. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, and students, observations of the school, meetings with school administrator, students and parents*)

Many students enjoy math and can directly relate what they are studying to applications in the real world. Students are developing a variety of specific strategies such as guess and check, working backwards, logical reasoning, making a table, and using manipulatives to solve mathematical problems. While many students are working to explain the process they went through to solve problems and the reasons behind the choice of strategies, only some students are able to do this effectively. These observations coincide with their performance on the New Standards Reference Exam. The fourth grade students at Winsor Hill Elementary School met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Skills* – 75 percent, *Concepts* – 22 percent, *Problem Solving* – 16 percent. Student performance on all three subtests has improved over the past three years. Additionally, the students' performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference is below similar students state-wide on all three mathematics subtests. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*)

Students are reading for a variety of purposes and in multiple genres. Most students at Winsor Hill Elementary School take pleasure in reading and value reading as a tool to find new information. Many students are successfully recalling literal facts from stories relating to story structure such as character, setting, and basic story plot. Some students have also demonstrated an ability to analyze, make connections, and draw inferences across content areas. Many students are using varied reading strategies, including word attack skills, contextual clues, and re-reading for comprehension with various degrees of success. On the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam the fourth grade students at Winsor Hill Elementary School met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Reading Basic Understanding* – 84 percent, *Reading Analysis and Interpretations* – 69 percent. Student performance on both subtests has improved over the past three years. Additionally, the students' performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam is comparable to similar students state-wide. (*classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, 1999-2000 SALT Survey*)

Students are comfortable writing and easily engage in the writing process across all subject areas. Most students are writing for a variety of purposes in all areas of the curriculum. Students are producing work that shows some understanding of writing conventions. Some students are writing to communicate their analyses of literature. Most students are skillful at the initial steps of the writing process such as brainstorming, using and following graphic organizers to produce a rough draft of their writing. Fewer students can effectively self-correct or peer edit for grammar and conventions, re-write for word choice and effectiveness, and expand their own thoughts. Although they are aware of rubrics, students are not effectively using the criteria in rubrics as a guide to producing and revising high quality writing. These findings coincide with their performance on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam. On this assessment, the number of fourth grade students at Winsor Hill Elementary School who met or exceeded the standard in the following: *Writing Effectiveness* 53 percent and *Writing Conventions* 20 percent. Student performance on both subtests has declined over the past three years. Additionally, the students' performance on the subtests of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam is above similar students state-wide in writing conventions and below similar students in writing effectiveness. On the 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, 10 percent of the third grade students at Winsor Hill Elementary School met or exceeded the standard on this assessment. (*2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, following students, examination of student work, classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with students*)

## Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

The students' positive attitude toward school and learning

The kindness and respectfulness of the students

The pleasure students take in reading and

The students' willingness to write

## Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

Increase the celebration of students' academic and social successes on a schoolwide basis to increase motivation and desire to learn.

Examine the "What Students Need" section of the New Standards Reference Exam School Summary reports for the past three years and use that information to make changes in instructional focus.

Provide students with additional opportunities to self-correct or peer edit using clearly identified standards-based indicators of performance.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with many students, teachers, and the school administrator*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ *review of student portfolios*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments*
- ◆ *examination of student work*

### Conclusions

Teachers are risk takers and have a demonstrated willingness and desire to seek out professional development to change professional practice. They have succeeded in creating a culture that makes their students want to learn. The staff has shown considerable initiative in writing grants, seeking external resources, and purchasing essential instructional materials with their own money to enrich the students experiences. Additionally, teachers, in conjunction with the principal, are actively working to chart an ambitious plan for their school's future growth and success. (*meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and staff*)

Most teachers do an admirable job fostering children's positive attitudes about themselves as readers. Teachers are working very hard to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies such as working with words, word walls, independent reading, read alouds, and literacy centers to improve students' reading experiences to help their students become effective readers. There is a focus on helping students improve comprehension and establish the reading and writing connection. Although teachers are working hard in their individual classrooms to provide students with opportunities to become effective readers, approaches are inconsistent among and across grade levels. Varied interpretations and understanding of reading strategies and the lack of a comprehensive reading program lead to this inconsistent implementation. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, and students*)

Improving the nature and quality of student writing is a schoolwide focus. Teachers have fostered an environment where students take pride in their writing, especially when it is displayed on classroom walls and shared with classmates. Most encourage the use of writing for a variety of purposes, such as authoring stories and articles, writing reports, keeping journals, and writing across content areas. However, the level of expectation varies from class to class. Although there is a strong focus on writing and a number of teachers are effectively teaching writing as a craft versus a skill, as well as using writing to extend lessons to a higher

level of thinking, students' performance on state assessments has steadily declined for the past three years. The writing tasks that students complete often offer too few opportunities to respond to a writing prompt, conference with the teacher and peers, write and revise their work according to the criteria clearly delineated in the standards, use specific details, and create cohesion between sentences and paragraphs. (*classroom observations, following students, review of portfolios, examination of student work*)

There is a concerted effort to expose students to problem solving strategies in every classroom. Teachers often supplement the existing mathematics program with problem solving activities and real life connections. Most teachers employ cooperative learning strategies. A few teachers have expanded math instruction to include the development of mathematical concepts through the use of manipulatives and rich focused conversations. Most often mathematics lessons contain traditional teacher-directed instruction focused primarily on worksheets designed to practice and reinforce basic skills, augmented by mathematical problems of the day. There is an insufficient focus on the development of mathematical concepts and the connections among skills, concepts, and problem solving. Moreover, the teaching of mathematics is hindered by the lack of appropriate curricula, resources, and materials. (*following students, classroom observations, examination of student work*)

While rubrics and performance-based assessments are clearly being used throughout the school, teachers' understanding of the role and value of these assessments in a standards-based environment varies greatly. The use of assessments to guide future instruction and provide meaningful, diagnostic feedback that provides students with the information they need to improve the quality of their work is not occurring consistently in all classrooms. Teachers are making concerted efforts to collect student work in portfolios, but the creation and use of a student portfolio system is still in the developmental stage. Although a few teachers are effectively using portfolios to provide teachers, students, and their parents with a clear understanding of student growth over time, guidelines for the collection and use of the portfolios' contents are not clearly defined. (*examination of student work, classroom observations, review of portfolios, review of classroom assessments, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and students*)

Teachers have made the adoption of standards-based instruction a schoolwide priority. Standards are posted in every classroom, have frequently been rewritten in student friendly language, and are often used to provide the students and teacher with a direction for learning. While there are some noteworthy examples of open-ended inquiry-based teaching that allows students to take ownership of their learning, teacher-selected and teacher-directed lessons remain the predominant form of instruction. A few teachers are consistently developing in-depth engaging projects with their students, using standards and rubrics to provide their students with clear expectations, and empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning. However, these practices are not yet consistently a part of most classroom cultures. (*classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with students, teachers, and staff, following students, examination of student work*)

## Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

Putting "students first"

The dedication and professionalism of teachers

Teachers' pervasive desire to cultivate positive changes

## Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

Routinely schedule "teacher talks" to share thoughts and ideas on teacher selected topics related to the craft of teaching.

Continue long-term professional development focused on developing a common understanding of reading strategies, standards-based instructional practices, differentiation of instruction, the use of performance-based assessments, the effective development and use of portfolios, and developing standards-based writing assignments.

Conduct a needs assessment and use a Professional Development Committee to form a professional development plan for Winsor Hill School that prioritizes the professional development identified in the needs assessment and recommended above.

With the help of a consultant, implement a school-wide quarterly writing prompt and examine student work to establish anchor papers and benchmarks for student performance at each grade level.

Use classroom assessments to determine the performance level of students and use that information to guide instruction, and teach students at their instructional level in order to meet their diverse learning needs.

Investigate and consider adopting the Principles of Learning developed by the Institute for Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

Focus on the development of mathematical concepts and the connections among skills, concepts, and problem solving.

## Recommendations for Johnston Public School District

Provide the resources and technical assistance Winsor Hill Elementary School will need to implement the recommendations in this report.

Review the professional development needs assessment and plan, when completed, and use that to inform the Professional Development Institute offerings at the district level.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and the school administrator*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *school improvement plan for Winsor Hill School*
- ◆ *Johnston Public Schools Pre and Post Observation Conference Forms*
- ◆ *Johnston Public Schools Teachers Formal Evaluation Form*
- ◆ *Johnston Public Schools Teachers Evaluation Form*
- ◆ *Winsor Hill Elementary School Self Study Document*
- ◆ *review of English Language Arts Draft Curriculum*
- ◆ *review of Mathematics Draft Curriculum*

### Conclusions

The facilities at Winsor Hill Elementary School are a significant impediment to the delivery of an adequate instructional program. The lack of suitable space has resulted in inappropriate educational settings such as teaching in closets, partitions in the cafeteria and classroom, the housing of Limited English Proficiency classes in the library and a hallway, and the lack of confidential meeting space. These deficiencies in the physical plant have negatively impacted classroom instruction, Limited English Proficiency, library, resource, physical education, art, and music programs. (*classroom observations, observations of the school, meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, staff, and school administrator, Winsor Hill Elementary School Self Study*)

The teacher evaluation instrument does not provide meaningful feedback to assist teachers in improving their practice. Although non-tenured teachers are evaluated three times a year, the evaluation tool consists of a checklist of observable behaviors and lacks appropriate guidelines for the evaluator. This evaluation tool provides little opportunity for teacher-evaluator collaboration, self-assessment or planning for professional development. It consists of predetermined goals that do not provide teachers with an opportunity to select areas for specific feedback. Pre-observation and post-observation conferences are based on this form.

Tenured teachers are evaluated only once every three years. (*Johnston Public Schools Pre and Post Observation Conference Forms, Johnston Public Schools Teachers Formal Evaluation Form, Johnston Public Schools Teachers Evaluation Form, meetings with school and district administrators, conversations and/or interviews with teachers*)

A thirteen-member School Improvement Team consisting of teachers, a parent, and community member devoted considerable energy to develop the current school improvement plan—becoming the first team in the district to complete a plan. The present plan includes five tactics with action plans for each of the tactics and provides a good first step toward a cycle of continuous planning. Of considerable note for this school is the academic focus emerging in tactics four and five. They provide the greatest opportunity for Winsor Hill Elementary School to make substantive instructional changes, implement safety net programs, and establish a clear, distinct, and commonly understood schoolwide focus on improving student performance. Specific examples of these tactics include parent partner reading, study buddies, across grade peer editing, and a magical mailbox writing program. Additionally, parents are a supportive and integral part of this learning community. Their efforts have resulted in a strong home school connection that supports the learning taking place at Winsor Hill Elementary School. (*review of school improvement plan, meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents, and students*)

The teachers and staff of this school demonstrate a strong commitment to schoolwide systemic change. To accomplish this task teachers are working on standards, rubrics, writing across the curriculum, multiple reading strategies, math problem solving, and portfolios, often without the necessary resources and a focused plan for professional development. This hinders teachers' ability to successfully implement the changes necessary to improve student performance and causes an increasing level of stress. Teachers are expending an inordinate amount of energy attempting to implement too many changes in a short time frame. These efforts at sustainable change will be difficult to maintain without the continued support of the new district leadership and much needed support from the community leadership. (*meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students and parents, review of school improvement plan, review of self-study documents, conversations and/or interviews with teachers*)

Johnston Public Schools has chosen to house Limited English Proficient students at Winsor Hill Elementary School. Although faculty and staff provide a supportive environment for the Limited English Proficient population in the building, the lack of appropriate curricula, materials, and suitable physical space puts in question this population's equitable access to learning. Additionally, grouping special needs students in grades 2-5 in a self-contained setting also raises equitable access and compliance concerns. In spite of these obstacles, teachers are collaborating and working hard to meet the instructional needs of these two student populations. (*meetings with school improvement team and district administrators, classroom observations, observations of the school, conversations and/or interviews with teachers*)

There is lack of adequate K-12 standards-based curricula in several subjects and coordinated, consistent, district-wide standards-based literacy and mathematics programs with supporting classroom materials and resources. These limitations are exacerbated by a significantly inadequate library media collection. This has made it difficult for the school to offer coordinated literacy and math programs and instruction designed to sequentially deepen students' knowledge and proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics. (*review of English Language Arts Draft Curriculum, review of Mathematics Draft Curriculum, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents*)

## Commendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

The initiative of the School Improvement Team and tactic teams

The dedicated principal, teachers, support staff, and parents

## The strong commitment to schoolwide systemic change

### Recommendations for Winsor Hill Elementary School

Continue with the development and implementation of academic enrichment and safety net programs for students before, during and after school.

With the help of an outside consultant, collaboratively determine where each teacher is on the continuum of change toward standards-based education and use that information to focus your reform efforts and decide on future plans.

Devote time to reflecting individually and as a group on a regular basis to build cohesion, collegiality and a shared focused vision.

Use the information found in this report to inform your school improvement plan with an emphasis on developing clearly delineated action steps specifically targeted to raise student performance.

Revamp the library media facility, collection, and program to more closely align with the classroom curricula and the desired instructional program.

### Recommendations for Johnston Public School District

Develop appropriate curriculum and materials, establish appropriate physical space, provide relevant professional development, and adopt policies that ensure equity for all diverse populations.

Complete a K-12 English Language Arts curriculum and then select a reading program and the requisite classroom materials to support the desired curricula.

Complete a K-12 Mathematics curriculum and then provide the necessary programs and materials to support the desired curricula.

Work with the union to devise a performance-based teacher evaluation process that is based on professional teaching standards. Build into this system opportunities for teacher-evaluator collaboration and an annual focus on professional growth for all teachers.

Immediately act on the existing plan to eliminate overcrowding, remedy the deficiencies in the physical plant that impede the delivery of an adequate instructional program at Winsor Hill Elementary School.

### Recommendations for Johnston Teacher's Union

Work with the designee of the school committee to devise a performance-based teacher evaluation process that is based on professional teaching standards. Build into this system opportunities for teacher-evaluator collaboration and an annual focus on professional growth for all teachers.

Actively join with and support the district in its attempts to secure the proper resources and technical assistance necessary to deliver an a high quality educational program.

### Recommendations for Johnston Town Council

Allocate the financial resources necessary for the educational program the parents, teachers, staff, and principal of Winsor Hill Elementary School are working to provide their students.

Obtain the financial resources needed to support the district's proposal for facility renovations at Winsor Hill Elementary School

## 7. Final Advice to the School

While a SALT visit report is designed to promote productive action, it is the school improvement team, not the visiting team that decides what that action should be. How Winsor Hill Elementary School and the community respond to the report is much more important than what the report says about the school. Thus, it is important for the school to consider the information in this report carefully and decide deliberately what changes it wants to make based on the insights the report generates. Refer to the *SALT Guide: Using the SALT Visit Report* for guidance on considering the information presented in the various sections of this report and using this information to make modifications to your school improvement plan.

The Winsor Hill Elementary School community has clearly worked hard to develop a school improvement plan that charts a strategic direction for this school. As you use the information in this SALT report and your recently completed self-study to inform your strategic plan, consider the current level of student learning, teaching, and the school's organization for continuous improvement. You have been working on a broad array of changes that have pulled you in many directions. Take time to pause and reflect on your current school improvement plan and more importantly the focus of Winsor Hill School to ensure that they provide a clear and distinct path to improving student learning. Use this period of reflection to narrow your focus, and let that focus be student learning.

Change is ever a process, not a destination. You have set out on a voyage of self-reflection, self-evaluation, and change. Systemic change, under the best of circumstances, is an arduous task. Numerous leadership changes at the district level have exacerbated this difficulty. The new district leadership has begun to address a number of the obstacles you face and build the necessary capacity to support this school in its reforms, but building these supports will take time. While this makes your desire to implement systemic and sustainable change more difficult, do not become overly focused on issues largely beyond your control—facilities, district-wide curricula, coordination of district-wide programs, programs and services for special populations. Focus your efforts and attention on those items that are within the control of your school with a direct bearing on student learning—the culture and organizational focus of the school, changes in instruction and assessment, among others.

You are a robust faculty with a strong passion for teaching. Achieving your mission “to educate all students to achieve high academic standards” will require a strong team effort that ensures everyone feels connected to the school's overarching objectives and supported in the work that they do. As you continue to make changes for the betterment of your students, don't overlook the human side of change. Expand on the recognition of students' successes presently taking place in teachers' classrooms to include schoolwide celebrations of individual student's academic achievements on a regular basis.

An increased schoolwide emphasis on team building and appreciating, both privately and publicly, the hard work, extra effort, and accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students will help ensure that everyone feels a part of the team and yield its own rewards. Take time to recognize, and celebrate your accomplishments, both large and small. Even incremental progress can seem like milestones to others, especially the children who trust you with their future.

You have created a setting where students enjoy learning and being in school. Capitalize on this essential foundation by working to concurrently improve both the academic and social well-being of students. Build on the tremendous energy and commitment present in this school and continue your willingness to grow as professionals. This foundation has and will continue to serve you well.

As you work with this SALT report we hope you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you make this strong learning community better meet the needs of

your students. For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

## Winsor Hill Elementary School Improvement Team

Carmille A. Acciardo  
2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher

Kristen Albertelly  
ESL Teacher

Stephen J. Angell  
Community Member

Sandra Barboza  
Principal

Roberta L. Herchen  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

Stacy L. Landi  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher

Margaret M. Lessa  
Parent Representative

Dina M. Needham  
Special Education Teacher

Nancy Nelson  
1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher

Debra Sgambato  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

Jill Souza  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

Patricia M. Vecchione  
Reading Specialist / Consultant

## The SALT Visit Team

Dr. Michael S. Barnes  
Technology Education Department Chairperson  
Ponaganset Middle / Senior High School  
Foster-Glocester, Rhode Island  
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)  
Chair of the Team

Lois Petruccillo  
ESL Teacher, Grade 2  
Alan Shawn Feinstein School  
Central Falls, Rhode Island

Sheri Poyant  
Child Care Director  
Henry Barnard School  
Providence, Rhode Island

Lorraine Rappoport  
ESL Teacher, Grades 1-2  
Orlo Avenue School  
East Providence, Rhode Island

Michelle Theberge  
Principal  
Aquidneck School  
Middletown, Rhode Island

Kay Wood  
Director of School Programs  
Coventry Public Schools  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Margaret McCann  
Grade 5 Teacher  
Warwick Neck School  
Warwick, Rhode Island

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

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### Winsor Hill Elementary School

March 2, 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, 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.  
March 16, 2001