



# Howard Hathaway School

Portsmouth, Rhode Island

## SALT Visit Team Report

May 18, 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.rideo.net/schoolimprove/salt](http://www.rideo.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 Howard Hathaway School from May 15 through May 18, 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 Howard Hathaway 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 Howard Hathaway School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 69 full classroom observations and 54 partial classroom observations which totaled over 94 hours spent in direct classroom observation. All classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following seven students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *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 Howard Hathaway School*
  - *Hathaway Elementary Handbook 2000-2001*
  - *Howard Hathaway School Schedule*
  - *Portsmouth School Department Certified Staff Evaluation Program*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
  - *classroom textbooks*
  - *2000 Information Works!*
  - *1998, 1999 New Standards Reference Examination results*
  - *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment*
  - *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
  - *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*

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 23 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 Howard Hathaway 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 Portsmouth, 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 on 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 Howard Hathaway School

Howard Hathaway School, a kindergarten through Grade 4 school, is Portsmouth's largest elementary school. A part of the Portsmouth School District, it is situated on a hill overlooking the Sakonnet River.

A superintendent and a district staff of three, as well as a regional special education superintendent, administer the school system. The school is governed by a seven-member school committee, whose members are elected to staggered four-year terms. The staff of Howard Hathaway School includes a principal, 31 full and part time faculty, one secretary, one office clerk, 15 aides and support personnel, and two custodians.

The National Association of the Education of Young Children awarded the Howard Hathaway School with full accreditation as the result of a three-year preparation by its staff and administration. The Hathaway Parents Association has sponsored the new SMART Gallery that displays artwork by children. All students have been instructed in a variety of library and research skills. The accelerated reader program has 78 student participants from grades 1-4. A home-school reading program has over 60 percent of the students involved in reading from a variety of genres. All students at Howard Hathaway School are receiving health and guidance classes this year. For the improvement of social skills a "Lunch Bunch" student group has been organized.

Of the 425 students attending Howard Hathaway School, 97 percent are white, one percent are black, one percent Hispanic, and one percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Sixteen percent of the population receives some sort of special education services. Fourteen percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

An increase in all scores is evident comparing the 1998 scores to the 1999 scores on the New Standards Reference Examination. However, when comparing the results of the 1999 and 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination results, a decrease in math scores in all areas from 1999-2000 is indicated. Mathematical Skills (71 percent - 1999, 60 percent - 2000) Mathematical Concepts (36 percent - 1999, 30 percent - 2000) and Problem Solving (25 percent - 1999, 20 percent - 2000). All scores in reading have been relatively static over the past two years with the exception of Writing Conventions where there was a decrease from 57 percent to 19 percent. On the 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, only 11 percent of the population achieved the standard. This is below both the district and the state percentages, as well as lower than the previous two years. Equity gaps, a difference of 15 percent or more, exist in all areas of the New Standards Reference Examination, when comparing special education students with general education students. General education students outscored special education students in all areas.

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 Howard Hathaway School is available at [www.rido.net](http://www.rido.net).

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Howard Hathaway School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Tucked within a neighborhood overlooking the Sakonnet River, Howard Hathaway School is in the early stages of educational reform. Visitors are greeted warmly by office staff and welcomed into this neat, well-kept building. Student-crafted tiles line the walls of the primary wing. Celebrating students, the hallways display an abundance of their work. The classrooms are neat and orderly. Comfortable within their learning environment and greeted by a staff who genuinely cares about their social, emotional, and educational well being, students happily begin their day.

Devoted to their profession and eager to meet the learning needs of all students, Howard Hathaway School staff are poised to embrace change as the school works to provide a quality education for all children. As with all reform, some embrace the process more openly than others. Under the direction of new leadership they are beginning their journey to develop a unified learning community. There are remnants of previous tensions among staff that hinder meaningful cooperation and progress toward meeting common goals.

The school is developing its understanding of standards and standards-based instruction. Students complete assigned tasks, but they would welcome the opportunity for more challenge. There are pockets of coordinated learning environments within grade levels and with special subject areas.

The school-wide Safari reading program encourages students to read at home. Although students enjoy reading, their classroom libraries and classroom materials do not support a strong literacy initiative.

The Hathaway Parent Association supports programs and teachers in the school. Parents are encouraged to volunteer and to feel supported and welcome in their learning community. Parents value teachers and the education provided their children.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination result*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with students and teachers*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *classroom materials*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school and district administrators*

### Conclusions

Students enjoy writing; they perceive themselves as writers; they are eager for opportunities to use their imagination and express their ideas. Students write each day across the curriculum for a variety of purposes. Most student writing originates from teacher prompts. In some classes students brainstorm and use graphic organizers to plan their writing. Students write draft copies and recopy teacher-edited work to create their final copy. Many students effectively use criteria to improve their writing. Polished products show effective use of voice, word choice, organization, conventions, and vivid language. Few students utilize technology to produce writing. This continued focus on writing is likely to contribute to future student success as measured by increased scores on student performance on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary (*2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, scheduled meetings with school and district administrators, examination of student work*)

Students attending Howard Hathaway School read predominately from their anthology series. At school they read for instructional purposes, rather than for the pleasure. Although student reading is focused on attaining skills, students lack practice in reading for meaning. When coming to unknown words, most employ sounding out as their primary strategy and seem unfamiliar with other strategies. Many students are reluctant to read other than from the anthology. Students do not display a passion for reading; they do not spark each

other's interest by sharing their reading experiences. During their school day many students do not challenge themselves as readers. These practices contribute to the static scores on the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam (Basic Understanding, 89 percent and reading interpretation, 75 percent) (*conversations and interviews with students and teachers, classroom materials, following students, classroom observations, New Standards Reference Examination results, examination of student work*)

Some students are proficient in basic skills in mathematics. They practice those skills with limited connection to concepts and problem solving. While exploring strategies for problem solving, students do not consistently apply those strategies to solve problems. Some students effectively use manipulatives and tools such as base ten blocks, coins, clocks, and calculators to practice skills and concepts, while others primarily use worksheets without supporting materials. Students do not demonstrate use of the language of mathematics to communicate their understanding and to share their solutions. The student scores on the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination reflect weak concept knowledge. Only 30 percent met or exceeded the standard in mathematics and 20 percent met the standard in problem solving. (*New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination results, conversation and interviews with students and teachers, following students, examination of student work, classroom observations*)

The students at Howard Hathaway School enjoy coming to school and are ready to learn. They are respectful and compliant; they are able to carry out classroom and school routines. While happy in school, students are not consistently engaged or challenged by classroom activities. (*interviews and conversations with students, classroom observations, following students, examination of student work*)

## Commendations for Howard Hathaway School

### School-wide focus on writing

Respectful, happy, and polite students

## Recommendations for Howard Hathaway School

Expose students to a variety of classic and modern literature representing a diverse collection of material from different literary forms that will satisfy readers with various reading abilities and interests.

Give students the opportunity to self-select topics, discuss their writing, and edit and revise their work.

Provide extensions and challenges for students to apply and share their mathematical skills and concepts in real-life problem-solving situations.

Provide more academic challenges to help students reach their greatest potential.

## 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 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 Third Grade Rhode Island Writing Assessment*

### Conclusions

At the Howard Hathaway School teachers have embraced the importance of writing. They provide their students time, opportunity, and encouragement to engage in a variety of writing activities. Many teachers provide abundant and useful feedback for students to revise their work to improve their writing. However, few opportunities are available for students to self-edit independently or to select their own topics. The students' heavy reliance on teacher-edits does not allow them to internalize the rules and conventions of writing. This is reflected in the 2000 Third Grade Rhode Island Writing Assessment, where 88 percent of the students did not achieve the standard and 82 percent failed to reach the standard on the conventions subtest of the New Standards English Language Reference Examination. (*2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination, 2000 Third Grade Rhode Island Writing Assessment, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with students and teachers*)

Most teachers exclusively use the Open Court Series as their primary instructional tool for reading. Teachers emphasize the print-sound code (translating letters to sounds) standard in their instruction, but all do not provide their students with sufficient opportunities in the other two reading standards--getting the meaning from print and developing good reading habits. The teacher's exclusive use of the Open Court series does not provide all students with opportunities to develop proficiency in the reading and writing standards within a balanced language arts program. Reliance on this phonics-based program does not address the individual learning styles of the students. The controlled text does not encourage students to expand their reading experience with the goal of understanding more complex material. (*New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination, following students, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, scheduled meetings with school and district administrators*)

The majority of teachers are in the early stages of their understanding and implementation of standards-based instruction. Teachers are prepared, organized, and devoted to their profession. They care about their students. Teachers are responsive to parents; they are taking steps to further improve communication with parents. Students thrive on genuine teacher praise and welcome the abundant positive feedback. Student work is celebrated throughout the classroom and the school. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews*)

*with teachers and students, scheduled meetings with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, and students, observations of the school)*

Most teachers deliver instruction utilizing a whole-class, teacher-directed approach. In many cases teachers focus on the coverage of the lesson; in many instances they are unresponsive to the behavioral and learning needs of all students. While whole-group instruction can be effective, widespread use of this practice hinders opportunities for all students to be active participants during the entire lesson. This practice does not maximize the use of instructional time, nor does it promote a challenging, rigorous academic environment for all students. This could be a contributing factor to the equity gaps that exist on the New Standards Reference Examination where regular education students outperformed special education students in all areas. *(classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students and teachers)*

## Commendations for Howard Hathaway School

### Commitment to professional development in the area of writing

Teacher support of students

Celebration of student work

Efforts toward understanding and implementation of standard-based learning and teaching

## Recommendations for Howard Hathaway School

Create a balanced reading program by complementing the current series with a variety of reading materials and instructional strategies to address the reading needs and levels of all students.

Give students some opportunities to select their own writing topics and self-edit their work.

Along with whole-group instruction include a variety of teaching strategies within the classroom to meet the needs of all students, i.e., flexible grouping, cooperative grouping, and small group instruction.

Enrich your professional expertise by participating in available professional development activities in the area of mathematics.

## Recommendations for Portsmouth School District

Provide resources, increase professional development activities, and collaborate to develop instructional strategies in reading.

Provide more in-service opportunities to enhance teachers' skills in the use of their current mathematics program with emphasis on concept development and problem solving.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *Hathaway Elementary Handbook 2000-2001*
- ◆ *Howard Hathaway School Schedule*
- ◆ *Portsmouth School Department Certified Staff Evaluation Program*

### Conclusions

Howard Hathaway School provides a variety of support services for its student population. The RIPPS program parallels the phonetic structure of the Open Court program but does not adequately teach reading to support the needs of all struggling students or address their particular learning styles. Kindergarten students are identified as remedial readers early in the school year before they have had any formal reading instruction. Project Talent works with a small percentage of the population on topics not necessarily linked to the classroom curriculum. In addition, the school does not have an appropriate comprehensive approach for the identification of student strengths and weaknesses nor a method to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students and teachers, scheduled meetings with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, Hathaway Elementary Handbook 2000-1*)

Supplemental materials for classrooms and classroom libraries are lacking and insufficient to support a high-quality language arts program. Students do not have the materials necessary to become proficient readers or to develop an appreciation of literature. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with students and teachers, scheduled meetings with the school and district administrators, following students*)

The school schedule provides limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate with co-curricular teachers, with support staff, and between and among grade levels. The grade level teachers at Howard Hathaway School who regularly meet do construct an effective, cohesive approach to their instruction. (*Howard Hathaway School Schedule, classroom observations, School Improvement Plan, conversation and interviews*)

*with teachers, scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators)*

There is a lack of communication and understanding of regular education and special education programs in terms of the roles each plays in servicing the needs of special education students. There are an inadequate number of certified special educators to meet the needs of the identified Howard Hathaway School special education students. The heavy caseload in the resource program, combined with the lack of communication, negatively impacts the quality of services. *(School Improvement Plan, conversations and interviews with teachers, scheduled meetings with school and district administrators, classroom observations)*

The teacher evaluation tool is in its pilot year. This instrument requires standards-based instruction and is aligned with the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards. Communication between administration and certified staff for the purpose of better serving students is an integral part of the process and is reflected in this tool. *(Portsmouth School Department Certified Staff Evaluation Program, scheduled meetings with school and district administrators)*

The Howard Hathaway School Improvement Plan identifies some action steps that address important needs at the school, such as scheduling, special education programs, reading incentive programs, communication, and parental involvement. Action steps that explicitly address classroom practices and standards-based instruction are not well represented in the current plan. *(School Improvement Plan, scheduled meeting with the school improvement team)*

There is a strong sense of pride within the school community for Howard Hathaway School. Mutual respect among parents, staff, and students promotes a common purpose that provides a nurturing learning environment. Clear respect and support for visual arts are woven throughout the school and extend into the community. *(observation of the school, following students, scheduled meetings with students, teachers, school and district administrators, conversations and interviews with students and teachers)*

## Commendations for Howard Hathaway School

### Positive school community

High-quality student art displayed throughout the building

## Recommendations for Howard Hathaway School

Build common planning time into the schedule for all grade levels.

Provide regular opportunities for co-curricular staff to meet with classroom staff.

Provide scheduled opportunities for special education and regular education teachers to meet jointly to develop a cohesive plan for the students.

Review the School Improvement Plan and clearly link the action steps with exemplary instructional practices that will move toward the objectives.

Expose students to more high quality literature by expanding classroom libraries.

## Recommendations for Portsmouth School District

Re-evaluate the special education staffing at Howard Hathaway School.

Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Howard Hathaway School programs as they

impact student achievement.

Support expansion of classroom libraries.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

Howard Hathaway School's focused efforts on student writing showcases your dedication and commitment to improve student learning. You are emerging in your understanding of standards and standards-based learning. Continue to evaluate your teaching practices to align them with the standards.

You celebrate student learning; however, you need to challenge your students to reach their highest potential. As you move away from predominately whole-group instruction and increase the rigor within the curriculum, students will have more opportunities to expand their learning and to reach higher levels of performance.

Evaluate the processes that you use in your identification of students for support services. Coordinate efforts between classroom teachers and support staff to maximize learning opportunities and add variety to the instructional practices. Evaluate student learning styles and differentiate instruction to support learning in a variety of ways.

Find a vehicle to work out the differences within your staff. Realize that the greatest strength you have is each other. Remove the barriers that exist within the staff, as you work to develop cooperation, collaboration, and communication. Provide opportunities to reflect upon your practice and look to your colleagues for guidance and support.

Increase common planning opportunities between all constituents to allow better communication and cooperation between staff, resulting in enhanced student learning.

Enrich your classroom libraries and provide your students with opportunities to discuss a wide variety of literature. Broaden and vary your instructional practices in reading. Empower your students with choices.

You are building a foundation for your developing school reform. Continue your work in writing. Give your students opportunities to become active participants in their learning with your guidance.

This SALT report is not meant to celebrate all the changes that have already occurred within Howard Hathaway School. Rather it is a presentation of those items that, in the visiting team

's judgment, should be your focus as you work to help all students perform at higher levels as you build a collegial learning environment. Take pride in all of your accomplishments. Good luck as you continue on your journey.

## Howard Hathaway School Improvement Team

Beth Ann Battey  
Parent

Steve Cardone  
Community Representative

Samantha Cawley  
Parent

Cort Chapelle  
Community Representative

Mary Helen Chaplin  
Parent

Caroline Dalton  
Grade 1 Teacher

Claudia Divoll  
Pre 1 Teacher

Mary Dufour  
Grade 2 Teacher

Deb Goodridge  
Parent

Monica Kaufman  
Parent

Cindy Kneller  
Grade 3 Teacher

Marjorie Linhares  
Grade 2 Teacher

Christina Martin  
Principal

Eleanor Monis  
Kindergarten Teacher

Mary Short  
Speech/Language Therapist

Sarah Tarducci  
Art Teacher

## The SALT Visit Team

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Cheryl Daigle-Stein  
Parent  
Bristol, Rhode Island

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

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### Howard Hathaway School

May 18, 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.  
June 8, 2001