



Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

SALT Visit Team Report

March 30, 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

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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 Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School from March 27, 2001- March 30, 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 representative of the Rhode Island Department of Education. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for Elizabeth Baldwin 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 Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ a total of 115 classroom observations classroom observations which totaled over 91 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 10 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 and CSRD Team*
 - *school and district administrators*
 - *students*
 - *parents*

- ◆ conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators
- ◆ examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school
- ◆ analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on *Information Works!* data
- ◆ review of district and school policies
- ◆ review of professional development activities
- ◆ review of classroom assessments.
- ◆ review of the following documents:
 - *Elizabeth Baldwin School Improvement Plan*
 - *Pawtucket School District Strategic Plan*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *Pawtucket School Department Science Curriculum Guide*

- *Pawtucket School Department Social Studies Curriculum Guide*
- *Mimosa Correlation of Growing With Mathematics to the NCTM Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Math*
- *Pawtucket Literacy Handbook , Grades K-6*
- *CSRD Grant Information binder*
- *Article 31 professional Development Funds*
- *School Improvement Team Summaries*
- *CSRD Writing Workshop*
- *Contract between the School Committee and the City of Pawtucket*
- *Pawtucket School Department Progress Reports for K, 1, 2, 3,and 4,5,6*
- *Pawtucket District Technology Plan*
- *Pawtucket Teacher Evaluation Forms*
- *Parent Communication binder*
- *Teacher schedules*

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 33 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 a long term involvement in 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 Elizabeth Baldwin 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 Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in context with the conclusions. That is the way they were written.

2. PROFILE OF Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School serves students in the pre-kindergarten through the fifth grade. It is located in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and is one of 11 elementary schools in the Pawtucket school system. Baldwin school first opened its doors to students in 1963. Additions were made to the building in 1973, when three wings were added as open classroom areas. In 1990, the open classroom areas were enclosed into individual classrooms, and in 1992 a new gymnasium was built in a former open courtyard area. Plans are in place to build a new play area.

A seven member school committee, whose members are elected to two year terms, governs the Pawtucket school district. Elizabeth Baldwin's 801 students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, 61 full and part time faculty, thirteen teacher assistants, and three custodians.

Of the students attending Baldwin School, 29 percent are white, 27 percent are Hispanic, one percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, 42 percent are black, and less than one percent are Native American. One Hundred and Twenty students (15 percent) receive special education services and about 720 (90 percent) are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Students at Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School benefit from several educational initiatives such as a CSRD grant (Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration), which is a three year, \$75,000 a year grant to work on whole school reform, implement a a four- hour extended day kindergarten and a school/home reading and writing project, called WEB (Wonderfully Exciting Books).

On the New Standards Reference Exams, Elizabeth Baldwin's students have made gains over the past three years in most areas. The only test area in repeated decline is the Writing/conventions subtest (from 34 percent of students achieving the standard in 1998 to 19 percent achieving the standard in 2000). However, another area of concern, due to exceptionally low scores and a lack of improvement, is students' scores on the mathematics/problem solving subtest.

According to the 2000 *Information Works*, equity gaps exist in several areas and between several populations: in the Mathematics skills subtest between white and black students, white and Hispanic students, and general and special education students, and also in the Mathematics/problem solving subtest between white and black students, white and Hispanic students, and general education and special education students.

Gaps also exist between several populations in English Language subtests; in Reading/analysis and interpretation between male and female students and general and special education students, and in writing effectiveness between white and black students, white and Hispanic students, male and female students, and general and special 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 Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School is available at www.rido.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Elizabeth Baldwin School is a large, urban neighborhood school with a beautiful mix of colors and cultures. There is a warmth that is palpable and unusual in such a large building. Smiling faces greet visitors. The children are friendly and eager to learn. Teachers are nurturing and provide wonderful support for their students' emotional needs. The staff is unified in their admiration of the principal, whose task of educational leadership is gargantuan as the only administrator for 800 students.

Within this welcoming community teachers employ a variety of educational strategies, some of which are more effective than others. There is great inconsistency in the quality of instruction from grade to grade and even classroom to classroom.

Elizabeth Baldwin's students are eager to learn, and some benefit from teachers who, as one Baldwin student said, "give you hope for a better future."

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998,1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *conversations with students*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *SALT Survey*
- ◆ *Meeting with students*
- ◆ *Interviews with teachers*
- ◆ *Meeting with principal*
- ◆ *Conversations with support staff*
- ◆ *Meeting with parents*
- ◆ *Teacher schedules*

Conclusions

Students at Elizabeth Baldwin School are wonderful! They are respectful to adults and each other, well behaved, polite and appreciative of what their school offers. They are proud of their school and love to share their accomplishments. These students comprise a diverse community, accepting of individual differences and genuinely caring. They are happy, relaxed, enjoy school, love their teachers, and are eager to learn. Most students feel comfortable taking academic risks and approach challenges confidently. (*SALT Survey, following students, classroom observations, meeting with students, interviews with teachers, meeting with principal, conversations with support staff, meeting with parents*)

Students at Elizabeth Baldwin School are scoring well above similar students in reading. Between 1998 and 2000, their scores on the New Standards Reference Exam reading/basic understanding subtest went from 45

percent meeting the standard to 79 percent meeting the standard. Students read often, engaging in leveled reading books. They are excited about their selections and demonstrate a strong interest in reading. They take pride in their accomplishments and are enthusiastic readers. Some enjoy listening to stories read by their teachers. They read with partners, and in small groups. They demonstrate their comprehension by retelling stories. A few students respond to literature making connections to other texts and to their own lives. These students demonstrate an ability to analyze and interpret text. This corresponds with their performance on the New Standards Reference Exam reading/ analysis and interpretation subtest, which improved from 20 percent meeting the standard in 1998 to 55 percent meeting the standard in 2000. (*New Standards Reference Exam, following students, classroom observations, conversations with students, examination of student work*)

Many students enjoy writing. They use the steps of the writing process (pre-write, compose, revise, edit and publish) to develop their writing skills. Students use inventive spelling and some refer to word walls. They employ pre-writing strategies such as graphic organizers, independently and with teacher guidance. Some students create original stories using self-selected and teacher assigned topics. Many participate in retelling of stories. Students also use assessment checklists to help refine their writing. They practice “Daily Oral Language” activities as a part of their routine. Students also take part in interactive writing experiences with their teachers. However, the quality of students’ writing is inconsistent, with most students performing poorly in the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam writing conventions subtest (19 percent meeting the standard in writing conventions). Only nine percent of students met the standard on the 2000 Rhode Island Writing Exam. On the other hand, scores on the New Standards Reference Exam writing effectiveness subtest show improvement from 1998-2000 (from 31 percent meeting the standard to 43 percent meeting the standard). (*following students, student work, conversations with students, New Standards Reference Exam , Rhode Island Writing Exam, classroom observations, meeting with students*)

In mathematics, some students use manipulatives and offer different and appropriate solutions to the same problem. Some work on simple problem solving activities. Students explain their answers and mathematical understanding through oral discussions. They often use drawing to explain their answers. They use math in social studies explorations, and in science to help them understand concepts. Sometimes students write about math in journals, but explain their answers in rudimentary terms, rather than in language which demonstrates a depth of understanding. Most students do not apply mathematical thinking to complex problems. In addition, some students receive far less instructional time in mathematics than their peers. Their 2000 scores on the New Standards Reference Exam/Mathematics subtests, especially concepts and problem solving, are unacceptable (skills, 43 percent meeting the standard, concepts, 18 percent meeting the standard, problem solving, four percent meeting the standard). (*New Standards Reference Exam, following students, classroom observations, student work, teacher schedules*)

Commendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Elizabeth Baldwin’s wonderful, eager learners

Recommendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Provide more time for students to self-select topics and engage in creative writing.

Provide students with increased and equitable instructional time in mathematics.

Engage students in more hands-on experiences in mathematics.

Focus greater attention on problem solving in mathematics.

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*
- ◆ 1999 Information Works!
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999*
- ◆ *Meeting with parents*
- ◆ *Interviews with teachers*
- ◆ *Observations of the school*
- ◆ *Interviews with support staff*

Conclusions

Teachers at Elizabeth Baldwin School are remarkable in their approach to working with students' emotional needs and development. They create a caring, safe and nurturing environment. Their students respond to this environment by taking risks educationally, and are eager to come to school. Teachers take time to know their students, creating a feeling of family. They work collaboratively with the support staff to meet the individual health and social needs of their students. Their actions truly reflect the respect and love that they have for their students. (*following students, classroom observations, meeting with students, meeting with School Improvement Team, meeting with parents, interviews with teachers, observations of the school, interviews with support staff*)

Teachers at Elizabeth Baldwin are in the emergent stages of implementing standards based instruction. Although almost half of the classroom teachers have taken "Course One" training, there is little evidence of its use in classrooms. In some classrooms students use performance assessment checklists regularly. However, unequal levels of expectation for student performance exist from classroom to classroom and between grade levels. Teachers have insufficient time to plan together during the school day due to scheduling. Most teachers do not assist students in understanding the specific standards for their grade level or how their daily work connects to achieving the standard. Without the consistent use of detailed rubrics, constructive teacher feedback, and opportunities to revise their work toward meeting the standard, students

are left with an unclear vision of how to improve their performance. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with students, meeting with School Improvement Team, meeting with parents, meeting with principal*)

In most classrooms, assessment is not connected to improving or differentiating instruction. Many assessment strategies are inconsistently used throughout the school. Most assessment does not provide feedback to assist students in improving their work. Examples include the use of a district rubric of 'smiley faces', lack of a clear rubric to assess journals and some math rubrics which address neatness, rather than content. More successful, but inconsistently used strategies include: performance tasks, checklists from the mathematics program and the District Literacy Handbook, benchmarked texts to determine students' instructional reading level for guided reading lessons, and anecdotal notes to record children's progress. This disparate and disconnected application of assessment will not improve student learning. (*following students, classroom observations, New Standards Reference Exam, student work, Rhode Island Writing Exam, interviews with teachers, meeting with district, meeting with School Improvement team, meeting with principal, meeting with parents*)

There are a variety of instructional strategies utilized by teachers, within and across grade levels. There are some examples of exemplary teaching. Some teachers use collaborative groupings, peer reading and editing, learning centers, and a mixture of teacher- directed and student-centered instruction. Some differentiate instruction effectively to meet their students' needs. A few ask probing questions to encourage higher level thinking skills. These teachers encourage their students to become independent learners. However, other teachers continue to employ a limited variety of effective instructional strategies. These teachers only passively involve their students by relying on whole group instruction and ineffective use of learning centers. Their reading aloud often did not welcome student interaction and was not used to model effective reading strategies. They are unaware of their students' lack of engagement, do not provide enough opportunities for hands-on learning and use worksheets which do not require higher order thinking. Their students have limited opportunities to be involved and engaged in their own learning. Their students spend too much time copying sentences, spelling words, and 'retelling' stories. These activities do not foster creativity and independence in learning. (*classroom observations, following students, meeting with School Improvement Team, SALT Survey, meeting with principal, interviews with teachers, meeting with students*)

Commendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Teachers' sensitivity to their students' needs

Recommendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Provide clear, useful feedback to students to help them improve their work.

Coordinate professional development and provide ongoing support, especially in the areas of mathematics and writing.

Use professional development to work toward consistent implementation of standards, rubrics and performance assessments.

Use assessment to differentiate instruction.

Utilize the expertise within your building through peer coaching.

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

Support Elizabeth Baldwin School in its efforts to provide ongoing professional support, especially in the areas of mathematics and writing.

Support Elizabeth Baldwin School's efforts toward implementation of standards-based instruction.

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*
- ◆ *Observations of the school*
- ◆ *Teacher schedules*
- ◆ *Interviews with support staff*
- ◆ *Pawtucket District Technology Plan*
- ◆ *Pawtucket Teacher Evaluation Forms*
- ◆ *Curricula provided by the school*

Conclusions

The principal of Elizabeth Baldwin School provides strong leadership for this school. He is highly knowledgeable and advocates for the needs of his students and staff. One example of his advocacy is the extended kindergarten program. The principal knows this school well. He is hard working, energetic, resourceful, and spends long hours at the school. He is appreciated by staff, who feel supported on discipline and other issues. His collaborative style of leadership contributes to the climate of the school, which is child-centered and a valuable resource in the community. He fosters a respectful and supportive environment. Without an assistant principal, his time must be focused on managerial aspects of the school. (*following students, observations of the school, meeting with students, meeting with principal, meeting with district, interviews with teachers, meeting with School Improvement Team*)

The size and structure of Elizabeth Baldwin School does not optimize opportunities for learning. There is inadequate space to support the needs of the current enrollment of students. Teachers and staff are using hallways, closets, and shared space for instruction and other interventions. The physical placement of grade levels hinders opportunities for collaboration among and across grades. There is an insufficient amount of time and physical space allotted for support staff (e.g. guidance, translator, psychologist, speech therapist) to

service Baldwin School's students. In addition, this student population is too large to support optimal learning in an elementary school. (*classroom observations, following students, observations of the school, teacher schedules, interviews with teachers, meeting with principal, meeting with district, interviews with support staff*)

Elizabeth Baldwin School has four computers in most classrooms as a result of the district's technology plan. Many are outdated, often crash, and few are used for effective instruction. (*following students, meeting with district, interviews with teachers, conversations with students, Pawtucket District Technology Plan*)

The Pawtucket School District has two very different evaluation tools for teachers. The new document for non-tenured teachers includes performance rubrics and is an effective tool for promoting professional growth. However, the tool for tenured teachers is useless. It does not assist teachers in improving their practice and is focused to a great degree on unimportant qualities such as personal appearance and manner. (*Pawtucket Teacher Evaluation forms, meeting with district, meeting with principal, meeting with School Improvement Team*)

There are few outreach strategies in place to promote parental involvement in their children's education. The WEB program is a positive first step in this direction. However, this initiative alone is insufficient. Current outreach strategies are limited to mailings and flyers sent home with children. There are few programs to help parents help their children with homework or school readiness. Although parents attend some special events, there is little ongoing teacher-parent communication or parental input into school-wide decision-making. (*meeting with parents, meeting with School Improvement Team, interviews with teachers*)

There are no formal district curricula for several core subjects such as mathematics and reading. This lack of curricula makes instructional continuity between grades impossible. This is unacceptable. (*curricula provided by the school, interviews with teachers*)

Commendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

The strong, energetic, persevering leadership provided by the principal

Recommendations for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

Provide opportunities for common planning time.

Consider strategies to create smaller learning communities within this school.

Update technology and provide professional development to integrate it into instruction.

Develop and implement a parent outreach program.

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

Support the school in its efforts to update technology.

Create an evaluation tool for tenured teachers that supports professional growth.

Make the hiring of an assistant principal a top priority.

Provide adequate space and staff for Elizabeth Baldwin School and its students.

Develop standards-based curricula in all subject areas.

7. Final Advice to the School

Elizabeth Baldwin School has great strengths. Continue to learn about standards-based instruction. Students need consistent academic expectations that progress from grade to grade. Work together to unify your vision and share your expertise to promote excellence throughout your building.

With the same energy devoted to literacy, expand your academic focus to include mathematics. Provide teachers with support in understanding changes in mathematics instruction.

Strengthen your outreach efforts to families and provide them with strategies to help their children succeed in school. As you continue building toward your goals of improved learning, celebrate your greatest strength...an exemplary connection with your students.

Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School Improvement Team

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Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

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The SALT Visit Team

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School

March 30, 2001

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, I observed a portion of the visit and I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge derived from these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*), I conclude that:

1. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
2. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report as a legitimate SALT Visit Report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
May 1, 2001