

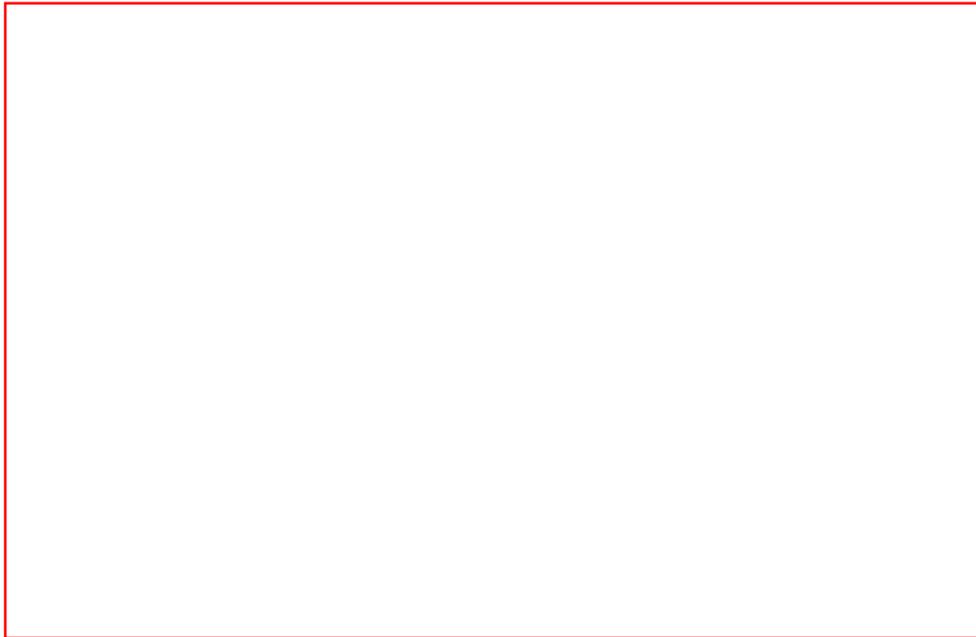


Marieville Elementary School

North Providence

The SALT Visit Team Report

December 7, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

The findings of this report are those of this SALT visit team. The names and affiliations of the members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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This report is available at <http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/visits.htm>

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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Marieville Elementary School from December 4, 2001 through December 7, 2001. The following features are at the heart of the report:

- ◆ The team seeks to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school presents a unique picture.
- ◆ The team does not compare this school to any other school.
- ◆ When writing the report, the team deliberately chooses the words that best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it has learned about the school dynamics.
- ◆ The team makes its judgment explicit.

The major questions the team addresses are:

- ◆ How well do the students learn at this school?
- ◆ How well does this school teach its students?
- ◆ How well does this school support learning and teaching?

The findings of the SALT report are presented in six report sections:

Profile describes some of the key features of the school and sums up the school's results on state tests.

The team writes *Portrait* as an overview of what it thinks are the most important themes in the conclusions that follow. While *Portrait* precedes the team's conclusions, it is written after they are complete.

The team's conclusions are about how well the team thinks the school is performing in each of the three SALT focus areas: Learning, Teaching and The School.

The team may award commendations in each focus area for aspects of the school that it considers unusual and commendable. The team must make several recommendations to the school for each focus area, drawing on the conclusions for that area. The team may make recommendations to other agencies, e.g. the district.

The team provides the school with some brief comments about how it thinks the school should proceed, in the *Final Advice* section.

The Catalpa Ltd. endorsement of the legitimacy of the report and its conclusions appears on the final page.

The SALT report creates accountability for improvement by connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement directly to the actual work going on in this school at the time of the visit.

The team closely follows the visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit*. The Catalpa endorsement certifies that this team followed the visit protocol and that this report meets all criteria required for a legitimate SALT visit report.

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examines test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Marieville Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team builds its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, the visit allows the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Marieville Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *observing a total of 78 complete classes and 36 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 96 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited more than once and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *observing in the classroom*
- ◆ *following eight students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*

◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

classroom assessments

School Improvement Plan for Marieville Elementary School

North Providence district strategic plan

North Providence checklist for tenured and non-tenured teachers

1999, 2000 SALT Survey report

classroom textbooks

1998, 1999, 2000 2001 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results

1999, 2000, and 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary

2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 22 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team must agree that every conclusion in this report:

- ◆ *is important enough to include in the report.*
- ◆ *is supported by the evidence the team has gathered during the visit.*
- ◆ *is set in the present.*
- ◆ *contains the judgment of the team.*

Using the Report

The team deliberately chose the words, phrases, and sentences it used in its conclusions, as well as in the *Portrait* and *Final Advice*. Thus, this report is the team's best attempt to encourage and support the school's continued improvement in strengthening the learning of its students.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

It is important to note that this report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report does not cover what the school plans to do or what it has done in the past.

This report is not prescriptive. The value of this report will be determined by its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. By considering how important it considers what the team has said and why, the school will take its first step in becoming accountable in a way that actually improves learning.

It is important to read this report and consider it as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in relation to the conclusions they follow.

After the school improvement team considers this report, it should make changes in the school improvement plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with the school district. The purpose of the Compact is to ensure that the school and its district work out an agreement about the best way to improve the school and the best way to target district support for the school. A RIDE Field Service Team representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

2. PROFILE OF Marieville Elementary School

Background

The Marieville Elementary School is a multi-story brick building located on Mineral Spring Avenue near the intersection with Route 146. The school was built in 1920. Additional space was added in 1960. Currently the school houses 290 students in grades kindergarten through grade six and special education. A middle school plan calls for the sixth grade to move to a middle school for the 2002-3 school year.

Of the students at Marieville School seven percent are black, 12 percent are Hispanic, and 80 percent are white. Thirty-three percent of the students receive free and reduced-price lunch. Six percent of the students, who are identified as English as Second Language students, are placed at the Stephen Olney School. Thirty-nine students (25 percent) receive special education services under a continuum of least to most restrictive environments. Some are in general education classes; others spend part-time in the resource room and part-time in the general education class; and many are included in the regular classrooms with a teaching assistant. Ten students receive all of their academic instruction in the self-contained special education classroom. Twenty percent of the students are Learning Adept Pupils. These students are part of a weekly pullout program.

Marieville School has one principal, 13 general education teachers, one self-contained teacher, two resource teachers, one reading specialist, and one physical education and health teacher. There are six trained teacher assistants, 13 part-time itinerant personnel, five lunch personnel, and two yard monitors.

Marieville is a Professional Development School with Rhode Island College and a Title 1 School. Students are involved in the Feinstein Good Deeds Program, Project READ, Junior Achievement, D.A.R.E., V.A.U.L.T., Travel/Passport, and the National Geographic Bee.

State Assessment Results for Marieville Elementary School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination two out of three fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one out of two fourth graders (45%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one out of four fourth graders (24%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for general education and special education students. Students at the Marieville Elementary School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the New Standards Reference Examination subtests: Mathematics: Concepts and above similar students in the state on the Mathematics: Basic Skills and the Mathematics: Problem Solving subtests as indicated by the 2001 Information Works! (2000 scores).

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination three out of five fourth graders (60%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding and in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for black and white students. Students at the Marieville Elementary School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Reading: Basic Understanding and below similar students in the state on Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination one out of two fourth graders (55%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and three out of five fourth graders (60%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one out of 10 third graders (11%) met or exceeded the standard. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in writing for black, white, Hispanic, white, multi-racial, male, female, special education, and general education students. Students at the Marieville Elementary School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness, and below similar students in the state on Writing: Conventions. The scores from Infoworks 2001 (2000 scores) were used to determine gaps.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report.

Information Works! data for Marieville Elementary School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

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

Marieville School is an old building that conspicuously needs repair and renovation; however, it shelters a warm, learning environment. It is home to a nurturing, child-centered community, where the principal, teachers, and staff hold the students at the heart of the school. The students are easy to accept, as they are happy, confident, polite, and motivated.

Although change with all of its challenges is never easy, Marieville teachers have begun to put together the components of a more effective learning program. Teachers are emerging in their understanding of standards-based learning and teaching. Their focus is on literacy and mathematical problem solving. While cooperation exists within the majority of the staff, there is a lack of a school-wide vision or direction. A tension exists within the school, as the staff seeks to balance traditional teaching practices with current and more effective strategies.

The relaxed and positive interaction between students and teachers is a celebration of student success. The confident students stand ready for the challenge of a more rigorous, self-directed learning environment.

Parents feel that their students are safe and nurtured, but they would welcome more frequent and more consistent communication with the school.

Marieville Elementary School is moving toward becoming a standard-based learning environment. Consistency in program, communication, and collaboration among all groups will help to unite the staff and develop a unified, cohesive program.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with teachers, parents, students, school and district administrators*

Conclusions

The students of Marieville School are respectful and highly motivated. They routinely follow directions and seamlessly work within pair and group structures. They are a community of learners, who support and encourage each other to do their best. They are articulate, as they participate in conversations and discussions. They love and respect their teachers and their school. Students come to school ready to learn and to take risks. They are comfortable with their present instruction, but some students report that they do not feel challenged. (*following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, parents, and teachers, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*)

The students at Marieville School are confident readers. They cooperatively partner read; some eagerly participate in small group discussions, pay active attention to read alouds, automatically recall facts, and retell stories. Many students wisely select books for independent reading. Through their written and oral responses, students demonstrate their understanding of story elements and genre. Many make authentic connections to their life experiences and prior learning. They readily compare and contrast information that they themselves have read or that has been read to them. Students' lack of independent word attack strategies and basic sight word identification limits their fluency, self-correction rate, accuracy, and comprehension. (*following students, meeting with students, teachers, and school administrator, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers*)

Students functionally communicate in a variety of ways in written form. They use graphic organizers well for prewriting. Students write, following a teacher model. They effectively self- and peer-edit, using the COPS (capitalization, organization, punctuation, and spelling) checklist. Students take pride in their handwriting, letter formation, spacing, and neatness, when publishing their final product. Most students do not revise to elaborate and expand their ideas or to be creative. Students report that they do not have opportunities to choose their own topics. Student potential is not maximized. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, 2001 New Standards English*)

Language Arts Reference Examination results, Information Works!, 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)

Working cooperatively, some students practice and apply mathematical concepts and skills in meaningful cross-curriculum projects. Most students confidently solve the Problem of the Day, but this practice alone is not sufficient to develop independent problem solvers. Their written responses focus on procedure, rather than on explaining their thought processes. *(following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking to students, meeting with students)*

Commendations for Marieville Elementary School

Mutual respect and support within the school family

Confident and eager readers

Use of COPS for editing

Recommendations for Marieville Elementary School

Teach students effective reading strategies.

Teach students revision skills that will help them elaborate and embellish their writing.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and school administrator*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with students, parents, school and district administrators, school improvement team*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination results*

Conclusions

Marieville teachers create an exceptionally warm, nurturing, and loving environment for their students. Dedicated, hard working teachers are committed to improving the quality of instruction and supporting the well being of the whole child. They are working to implement new programs and make learning more meaningful. Because differentiation of instruction is limited, individual student needs are not met. Teachers praise all student effort, but they do not challenge students to attain higher levels of learning. Regrettably, a lack of focused effort toward and support of common goals obstructs progress toward a unified school vision. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing the work of teachers and staff, talking to teachers and school administrator, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators*)

For most teachers an understanding and use of standards-based instruction is emerging. Although teachers repeatedly articulate clear expectations, they inconsistently use standards and rubrics. While teachers often attach rubrics to student work and use rubrics to score student work, students have limited opportunities to use this feedback to improve or extend their learning. (*meeting with students, school improvement team, following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, students, and school administrator*)

Teachers at Marieville use guided reading strategies. For many primary teachers the application and understanding of the Four Blocks are just emerging. While some components are effectively taught, inconsistent instruction in word attack strategies hinders fluency, accuracy, and self-correction. Upper elementary level teachers have successfully coordinated the reading program with classic children's literature within interactive thematic units.

Teachers read aloud to their students on a daily basis. They regularly and creatively prompt students to recall story elements, make predictions, and relate stories to real world models. Teachers encourage and provide a variety of genres, while empowering students to choose books for independent reading. Continued application of these instructional practices will further improve all student performance. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with school and district administrators, students, and teachers, New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination results*)

Most teachers provide students with daily opportunities to write. They follow most components of the writing process. The primary focus is on editing (using the C.O.P.S. checklist), not on revision. Teachers score work with rubrics and checklists; however, there are limited opportunities for students to improve the quality of their writing by revising it. Because students do not have the full array of necessary tools to improve the quality of their writing, their achievement of higher standards is limited. (*observing classes, following students, New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination results, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, meeting with students*)

Commendations for Marieville Elementary School

- Caring and nurturing environment
- Positive reinforcement of students
- Clear expectations of students
- Beginning implementation of the Four Blocks

Recommendations for Marieville Elementary School

- Set higher standards for all students.
- Instruct students in all of the processes of writing.
- Coordinate effort toward common goals through the consistent application of all programs.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with parents, students, school and district administration, and school improvement team*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement action steps*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *New Standards English Language Arts Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing Teacher schedules*
- ◆ *Junior Achievement Program*
- ◆ *2000 SALT Survey results*
- ◆ *North Providence Checklist for Tenured and Non Tenured Teachers*

Conclusions

Although resource services for students are primarily within the regular education classroom with adequate support; self-contained special needs students unfortunately are part of the regular classroom for only the morning exercises. This lack of inclusion and higher expectations affects their success and growth and does not provide a fair and equitable program. Furthermore, these students do not have access to materials, resources, and educational programs that coincide with school-wide initiatives. (*meeting with students, school improvement team, school and district administrators, New Standards Reference Examination results, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, Information Works!, reviewing teacher schedules*)

Marieville School lacks consistency in aspects of its programs. While teachers share common planning time within their grade levels, they lack the opportunity for vertical articulation. The physical organization of the school is not conducive to communication and collaboration. There are inconsistencies in instructional practices and programs, as well as in the use of standards and rubrics, and even in the scheduling of recess, which further limit the coordination of effort toward a school vision and common goal. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, talking with teachers, students, and staff, reviewing teacher schedules, observing classes*)

Parents have the opportunity to participate in school-sponsored programs, including the Junior Achievement Program, and to attend them. Parents are confident that their children are safe and nurtured in their school. While efforts to communicate include: PTO updates, weekly updates, homework logs, annual Open House, and unit celebrations, these are not consistently practiced school-wide initiatives. Without regular communication the essential home/school connection that supports student success is not fostered. Some parents report that faculty and staff are often inaccessible at the end of the day, making it difficult for routine communication and emergency situations. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled upon request; however, parents strongly state a need for scheduled conferences to discuss their children's growth and progress. *(meeting with parents, teachers and school improvement team, reviewing SALT Survey results, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing Junior Achievement Program)*

The current teacher evaluation tool is an ineffective checklist that offers limited feedback. This is not a standards-based tool, and it does not reflect the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards. While there is an orientation meeting with follow-up meetings for newly hired teachers, there is no formal mentoring program. A veteran teacher may act as a "teacher guide" for new teachers. Professional development is available to teachers. Teachers can request professional activities that they wish to be involved in. *(North Providence Checklist for Tenured and Non-Tenured Teachers, meeting with school and district administrators, talking with teachers)*

The present School Improvement Plan is incomplete; it does not reflect a thorough self-study, membership requirements, or accountability for action steps. It does not address the needs of the total school community. Membership on the school improvement team is limited, and meetings are not regularly scheduled. *(meeting with the school improvement team, school administrator, reviewing the school improvement plan action steps)*

Recommendations for Marieville Elementary School

Provide training and support to include the self-contained students in regular education classrooms.

Increase parent communication and involvement to develop a Home-School Partnership.

Provide on-site professional development to develop consistency within instructional programming and the implementation of standards-based instruction.

Review and revise the school improvement plan according to the SALT Guide for School Improvement. Focus on expanding the team membership and the self-study, including equity gaps.

Recommendations for North Providence School District

Provide necessary inservice opportunities for all staff to ensure continuity and equity of programs.

Support onsite initiatives with necessary resources and materials.

Develop a new standards-based teacher evaluation process and a teacher-mentoring program.

7. Final Advice to the School

Celebrate all of your successes! You have developed a caring, nurturing climate to meet the diverse needs of your students. As you work to implement new initiatives, encourage students to become creative and self-directed learners.

Develop a vision for your school. Plan the necessary steps to meet your goals. Take small workable steps. Rely on the strength of each other. Resolve the tension and underlying conflicts within your school. Join as a collegial group; include all members of the community. Continue to share ideas and initiatives. Take advantage of the expertise in your building.

Challenge your students to be creative and to make choices. Open the door to new experiences that include and celebrate all students. Develop consistent programs that will allow the needs of individual students to be met and that will provide continuity for your students as they move through the grades.

Marieville's parents are a valuable asset. Involve them in the school and inform them about their school. Work within the structure of the school to provide scheduled newsletters that not only inform, but also educate.

Your greatest strength is your desire to have your students reach higher levels of learning. We, as a team, hope that our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations will help guide you as you continue your efforts. Good luck.

The Marieville Elementary School Improvement Team

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Dawn Brown
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Hope Highlands School

Cranston

New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2001)

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Marieville Elementary School

December 7, 2001

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

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

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Lt
December 28, 2001