



# Social Street School

Woonsocket, Rhode Island

## The SALT Visit Team Report

March 1, 2002



**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 on Conducting a 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 Social Street School from February 25 through March 1, 2002. 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 Social Street 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 Social Street School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 67 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 68 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following five 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 administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing teacher schedules*

- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

*Social Street School Improvement Plan 2001-2002*

*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*

*Woonsocket Public Schools January 2, 2002 Enrollment Report*

*Social Street School Proposed Budget 2001-2002*

*Woonsocket Public School Purpose of Evaluation document*

*Rhode Island Limited English Proficiency Regulations, Chapter 16-54, September 14, 2000*

*Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System, November 2-13, 1998*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of twenty-two hours in six separate meetings spanning the four [five] 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 Social Street School

### Background

Social Street School is located on the corner of Social Street and East School Street in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The school serves approximately 240 children from the immediate neighborhood and from other parts of the city. The school consists of one class in each grade from grades one through five, except fourth, which has two classes. Additionally, there are two primary self-contained special education classes, two intermediate self-contained special education classes, three inclusion classes (one each in grades three, four, and five), and one ESL classroom for grades one/two.

Social Street School was built in 1902. As many schools of that era, it was designed as a neighborhood school; its children would go home for lunch and play in neighborhood sand lots. Many multi-family dwellings and apartments surround it. The 100-year-old building has had some changes over the years. Part of the basement was converted to a cafeteria, which is used as a teaching or testing area when needed. Another part of the basement was converted to the library. The third floor originally had an auditorium and stage; however, over the years it has been redesigned to house three small classrooms, a computer lab, and two regular sized rooms. The school does not have a gym, an auditorium, or a multi-purpose room. Art and music are conducted in the regular classrooms; physical education is held outside when weather permits, but otherwise in the regular classrooms. The guidance counselor and ESL teacher serve students from a trailer on the school property.

The school population is diverse and mobile. The mobility rate of the school is approximately 35%, with the school population maintained at about 240 students. Forty-four percent of the students are white, nine percent are black, 33% are Hispanic, and 14% represent other nationalities. Approximately 29% receive ESL services, and 41% receive special education services. Ninety-three percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Twenty-one percent receive speech and language services.

### State Assessment Results for Social Street School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination one in four of the fourth graders (26%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in 10 of the fourth graders (11%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one in 50 of the fourth graders (2%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for the following groups of students: black, Hispanic, white, multi-racial, and special education. Students at the Social Street School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the mathematics subtests.

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination one in three of the fourth graders (35%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding. There has been a steady decline in performance on this subtest over the last four years. Just more than one in 10 of the fourth graders (13%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for the following groups of students: Asian/Pacific Islander, black, Hispanic, white, male, and special education. Students at the Social Street School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the reading subtests.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination two in 10 of the fourth graders (22%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and four in 10 of the fourth graders (40%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in 50 of the third graders (2%) met or exceeded the standard. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in writing for the following groups of students: black, Hispanic, special education, and LEP. Students at the Social Street School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Writing: Conventions and better than similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness.

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

Information Works! data for Social Street School is available at <<http://www.ridoenet.net>>www.ridoenet.net.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Social Street School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Upon entering the one-hundred-year-old building that houses Social Street School, visitors can't help but wonder how this aged, outdated, and substandard facility could support a learning environment that inspires hope for the future of its students and teachers. Yet visitors will discover that teachers and students persevere in spite of the many obstacles they face on a daily basis.

Teachers begin each day's journey with a walk to the school from a parking lot a block away. Some teachers then face the daunting task of providing remedial instruction in hallways and converted basement spaces. Few teachers in this school are provided with the tools and professional development they need to deliver high quality instructional programs. They rely on one another for advice and support, which is readily available. Their collegiality and teamwork make it possible for them to accept difficult circumstances and maintain a collective sense of humor.

It is a substantive challenge to deliver instructional and support services to culturally diverse students with many physical, social, emotional, and educational needs. While the school teaching and support staff makes every effort to meet these needs, the condition of the physical plant, the fiscal restraints, and the ineffective communication with district administrators currently hinder those efforts. Teachers have little confidence that things will change in the near future. Sadly, some seem to be resigned to the idea that circumstances will not improve.

There is concern that the frustration of some teachers and students dampens hopes for the future of this school. A great deal of energy is expended in an effort to survive, rather than to thrive. Clearly the current learning environment is in immediate and serious need of intensive efforts for improvement on the part of all stakeholders.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students*
- ◆ *meeting with students, the school improvement team*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 SALT Survey Report*

### Conclusions

Some students in this school take responsibility for their learning. They work cooperatively with other students, share their knowledge, take risks when encouraged to do so and actively participate in classroom activities and discussions. They ask questions when they are confused or need more direction. However, far too many students in this school are not active participants in their learning. They are not able to stay focused on the task at hand. Some students are distracted by others, who are not engaged in learning or motivated to reach high standards. Many students in this school are not openly enthusiastic or excited about the learning process. Many equate completing their work as a sign of success, even if the quality of the work is below standard. Although rubrics are posted in almost all classrooms, students' understanding and application of these rubrics to check and improve their work is inconsistent from one classroom to the next. Additionally, many students are unable to explain the purpose or relevance of their lessons. As a result, many students in this school are not producing high quality work, meeting established standards, or experiencing success. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!, 2000 SALT Survey Report*)

Currently, only some students at Social Street School are able to communicate effectively through their writing. These students use checklists and rubrics to guide, edit, and revise their work. However, few students express

enthusiasm for writing. While most students are aware of the writing process, few are able to use the process to produce high quality work because they are skipping some of the steps. Students do not always understand the printed or verbal directions for their assignments. They do not always review the established criteria for their assignments. In some cases student writing is limited to copying words from the blackboard. Additionally, students do not have opportunities to write across the curriculum; in some classes the time scheduled for such activities is severely limited. As a result, few students produce a high quality or quantity of written work, and student performance on statewide assessments has been disappointing. On the most recent statewide assessments only 40% of the fourth grade students tested achieved the standard in writing effectiveness, and only 22% achieved the standard in writing conventions. No students tested achieved the standard with honors. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment only 2% of third grade students (one student) achieved the standard. *(1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, observing classes)*

Few students at Social Street School are able to read well. While many teachers read to their students, few students spend enough time reading independently. Many students are not given an opportunity to self-select independent reading materials for classroom use, and they are not able to choose materials appropriate to their reading levels. During formal reading instruction they have limited opportunities to respond to literature, and these usually involve literal recall of the text, rather than its analysis and interpretation. Some students are unable to apply the strategies needed to become proficient readers. Some express frustration with their inability to read. In some cases students cannot read the printed directions to complete expected lessons independently. These findings are supported by the results on recent statewide assessments in which only 35% of the fourth grade students met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding and only 13% met the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. *(observing classes, following students, analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary)*

Student knowledge of basic math skills and math facts is limited. Computational skills are weak. Few understand mathematical concepts, and many are not able to apply these concepts to solve problems. There is little evidence that students use manipulatives to assist them in math. Only some students are required to write explanations for their answers and explain their choice of strategies to solve problems. Some students express frustration with their learning in mathematics. Additionally, student performance on recent statewide assessments has been disappointing. Only 26% of the fourth grade students tested met or exceeded the standard in Mathematical Skills; only 11% met the standard in Mathematical Concepts; and only 2% met the standard in problem solving. *(observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with students, meeting with the school improvement team and students, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results)*

In spite of the many obstacles they face in their learning environment most students in this school make the best of their situation. Some serve as peer tutors, make school wide announcements, and help in the operation of the school store. All students celebrate the success of their peers at "town meetings." They contribute to an atmosphere of comfort, acceptance, and support for one another. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, talking with students, meeting with the students)*

## Commendations for Social Street School

Student perseverance in spite of the many obstacles they face

## Recommendations for Social Street School

Encourage all your students to take a more active role in their learning such as asking and answering questions, responding to literature, and working in cooperative groups.

Provide more opportunities for hands-on learning such as the use of manipulatives.

Raise the level of student awareness of the purpose and relevance of their lessons.

Instruct students in all steps of the writing process.

Provide more opportunities for all students to self-select appropriate reading materials for independent reading.

Require all students to write explanations for their answers in mathematics.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999-2000*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing teacher schedules*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

### Conclusions

In spite of tremendous obstacles most teachers in this school give their best efforts each and every day. Teachers in this school have developed an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and camaraderie. Many have taken responsibility for the educational leadership of this school. The hard working teachers personally provide the needed resources to make their classrooms environments that are conducive to learning. Most express a sincere desire for initiatives that would support improved student learning. Hungry for guidance, they actively pursue opportunities to improve their craft. They have become frustrated and disappointed by the lack of support and direction they have received in spite of the numerous attempts they have made to obtain assistance. Teachers continue to persevere in their attempts to improve. Unfortunately, many have lost hope that support for learning and teaching will occur, given the current state of the physical plant, the lack of sufficient resources, and the lack of effective administrative leadership at both the school and district levels. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Some teachers at Social Street School engage students in their learning, encourage them to meet high standards, and provide the tools they need to experience success. While some teachers are employing effective teaching strategies in their own classrooms, the use of these strategies is inconsistent from classroom to classroom. In some classrooms the majority of lessons are teacher-focused and teacher-directed, giving students few opportunities to become active learners. Whole-group instruction is prevalent, and there is limited differentiation of lessons to meet the needs of all students. Additionally, the effective use of visual aids, modeling by the teacher, opportunities for students to have hands-on learning experiences and connect what they are learning to their real life experiences, and

the application of student learning across the curriculum are not evident in all classrooms. Classroom management is problematic for some teachers. In these classrooms students are not familiar with the routines; they are unclear about what teachers expect of them; and they sometimes engage in disruptive behavior that goes unchecked. As a result, all students do not have the same opportunities for learning. (*observing classes, talking with teachers, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

There are examples of very effective team teaching practices in some inclusion classrooms, with both teachers simultaneously engaged in the process. While these classrooms contain many special needs students, English Language Learners, and a limited number of students to serve as “models,” teachers provide maximum opportunities for these students to learn. The teachers in some of these classrooms are providing high quality instruction. They employ effective teaching strategies and establish classroom routines and practices that provide the structure and support that their students need. The ability of these teachers to work as teams, while optimizing each other’s strengths, results in a positive, supportive, and conducive environment for learning. (*observing classes, following students, talking with teachers and staff, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators*)

Teachers currently do not use classroom assessments to inform their instruction. Many teachers are unaware of the connections between classroom assessment and instruction. Teachers do not often use classroom assessments to group and regroup students for instructional purposes. While teachers post standards in their classrooms and display a variety of rubrics, there is no evidence that these are consistently applied. In some cases student work that does not meet established criteria is determined to “exceed the standard.” There are limited opportunities for teachers to share student work with their peers, for students to peer and self edit, and for teachers to conference with their students. Many teachers have expressed a need for further professional development and training in standards-based instruction and performance-based assessment. However, they feel unsupported in their quest to receive this training. In spite of the hard work and efforts of these teachers to provide quality instruction for all students, the instruction remains fragmented. Often there are not high and clear expectations for all students. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with students and teachers*)

Teachers do not allocate enough time in their daily teaching schedules for reading, writing, and mathematics instruction. In many cases the teaching of reading and writing takes place with no integration. While most teachers assign student writing, direct instruction is not always evident. Time for direct instruction in reading is also limited, and the teaching of comprehension skills and reading strategies is not emphasized in every classroom. Time scheduled for daily mathematics instruction is sometimes limited to only thirty minutes. In some classrooms no mathematics instruction is scheduled for one day of the week. As a result, students are not acquiring the basic skills and concepts necessary to build a foundation for learning. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing teacher schedules, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

## Commendations for Social Street School

The perseverance and determination of the teachers to seek support for the improvement of teaching and learning

Teacher efforts to support one another

The willingness of the teachers to use personal funds for classroom expenditures, even those items that are fundamental to instruction

## Recommendations for Social Street School

Engage in sustained job-embedded professional development in the areas of standards-based instruction, performance-based assessment, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, a balanced approach to literacy and numeracy, and classroom management.

Create opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge about best teaching practices.

Revise classroom schedules to increase time for daily instruction in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

## Recommendations for the Woonsocket School District

Provide teachers with opportunities to examine and discuss samples of student work and benchmarks that will raise their awareness and level of expectation for high quality student work.

Actively support and guide the professional development of the teachers in needed areas.

## 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 administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *Woonsocket Public Schools January 2, 2002 Enrollment Report*
- ◆ *Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System, November 2-13, 1998*
- ◆ *Social Street School Proposed Budget 2001-2002*
- ◆ *Woonsocket Public School Purpose of Evaluation document*
- ◆ *Rhode Island Limited English Proficiency Regulations, Chapter 16-54, September 14, 2000*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom textbooks*

### Conclusions

The physical facilities at Social Street School are abysmal. Dark and narrow corridors are used as assembly halls and instructional spaces, where instructional programs such as ESL and reading are delivered. These programs include students who especially need a quiet environment that is free of distractions. Some special education services take place in substandard spaces; occasionally more than one specialist provides services at the same time in the same room. Additionally, one extremely small special education classroom is located in the basement. The library, also located in the basement, consists of a few shelves holding very few books, many outdated. This small library does not meet the criteria for a media center. The basement cafeteria is also in serious need of updating. Because there is no gymnasium, physical education classes take place outside, even in the winter months. When weather is inclement, physical education and recess take place in the regular classrooms and the school corridors. While many teachers have personally managed to create welcoming environments in their classrooms, no one has made an effort to improve the areas outside of the classrooms. These conditions result in a dismal climate that impedes instruction and presents health and safety issues. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*)

In spite of the serious limitations of this facility the Woonsocket School District continues to place students from other city neighborhood schools at Social Street School. These students often need special education services. The resulting disproportionate number of special needs students in this school places increased demands on its already

overburdened resources. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, Woonsocket Public Schools January 2, 2002 Enrollment Report, Social Street School Proposed Budget 2001-2002, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators*)

Communication between Social Street School and the district is seriously flawed. The district's perceptions of the school are disconnected from the realities within the school. While teachers insist that they have made their considerable concerns known to the district, the district states that it is either unaware of the issues or it has already addressed and resolved the issues that continue to frustrate teachers. The school principal is unable to bridge this gap in communication. The educational leadership that teachers seek is currently missing in this school. The resulting lack of confidence in the principal's leadership, both by school and the district personnel, contributes to the many problems this school faces. Furthermore, lack of mutual trust and support between the school and the district is having a negative impact on every aspect of this school community. (*meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

The Social Street School Improvement Team currently is coordinating all school improvement initiatives. Teacher leaders on this team accept responsibility for providing educational leadership in this school. Some members of this team took full responsibility for the preparation of every detail for this SALT Visit. Unfortunately, their efforts are sometimes misconstrued and unappreciated by district administrators. Consequently, these team members have submitted letters of resignation from these positions. This situation is indicative of the failed communications with the district and the prevailing frustrations of the school improvement team. (*meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

The current supports for teacher practices are not likely to result in improved teaching and student learning. There is no evidence that teacher evaluations are taking place. Some tenured teachers report that they have not been evaluated in several years, in spite of the district administrators' stated expectation that evaluations take place each year. Even first year non-tenured teachers have not been evaluated, although the evaluation instrument for the district indicates that formal evaluations will take place quarterly. The absence of evaluative feedback hinders professional growth. The current mentoring program often pairs retired middle school teachers with first year elementary school teachers, thus limiting the effectiveness of the program. Teachers needing daily support must seek it from their colleagues, which they often do. (*talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, Woonsocket Public School Purpose of Evaluation document*)

Both teachers and district administrators state that at the current time the various texts that have been selected for instruction provide the guidance for the curriculum, as well as its content. District administrators state that clear and complete information has been conveyed to teachers regarding curriculum standards and benchmarks and that copies of these are available on the school department website. However, in some cases, when teachers have attempted to access this information, the system was not functioning. Even when teachers are able to access the information, in its current form it does not provide the direction or content continuum they need to institute standards-based instruction and performance-based assessments in their classrooms. (*talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing classroom textbooks*)

Instruction for those students who are English Language Learners mainly comprises reading instruction, rather than language development. There are no uniform curriculum materials or guides to support the delivery of high quality instruction. Because there are no ESL classrooms for grades three to five, new arrivals are routinely placed in the inclusion classrooms, where they receive minimal language development support. They do not receive the mandated daily instructional time of one-hundred-and-thirty-five minutes, as specified in the Rhode Island LEP regulations. In most cases services to students are based upon the convenience of classroom schedules, rather than upon student proficiency levels. Additionally, many of these students receive services in the dimly lit school corridors or in a detached trailer on the school property. Because classroom teachers instructing ESL students are not familiar with stages of language acquisition, a number of ESL referrals for special education are sometimes based on language issues, rather than on student ability. Furthermore, because there are no adequate resources

available to translate school communication into students' home languages, the effective dialogue between home and school is hindered, and parents find it difficult to become informed about their child's educational program. The school's current reliance on a full-time classroom teacher for translation services is inappropriate. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, talking with teachers, school administrator, meeting with the school and district administrators, Rhode Island Limited English Proficiency Regulations, Chapter 16-54, September 14, 2000, Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System, November 2-13, 1998*)

While teachers at this school make every effort to provide quality instruction, the procedures and policies of specific programs in special education and ESL do not adhere to the established guidelines. For example, there is no functioning Teacher Support Team in this school. Evaluation Team meetings do not always include remedial teachers, who have expertise about the learning needs of the students. This has resulted in the inappropriate identification of students as having special needs. IEP meetings are often conducted without the presence of the regular education teacher, who is responsible for providing the modifications and adaptations of instruction. Many of these concerns, documented in the *Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System, November 2-13, 1998*, have not been remedied. For example, the report addresses the composition of integrated classrooms that contain "a large percentage of those considered nondisabled who have been retained, receive ESL services, or manifest behavioral issues," which is a continuing problem. (*1998 School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System from the Office of Special Needs at the Rhode Island Department of Education, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents, observing classes*)

## Commendations for Social Street School

The teacher leadership on the School Improvement Team

## Recommendations for Social Street School

Eliminate the use of the corridor and basement areas for instruction.

Update and increase the number of volumes and materials in the school library and renovate the area to establish a true media center.

Observe and formally evaluate teachers on a regular basis. Provide formative and summative feedback to foster their professional growth.

Comply with the Rhode Island LEP regulations for instructional time.

Provide ESL classrooms for students in grades three to five.

Provide language development materials for the ESL classrooms.

Provide professional development in the stages of language acquisition and an awareness of cultural diversity for those teachers who have ESL students in their classrooms.

Reorganize and restructure the composition of the inclusion classrooms to better reflect the accepted standards for an inclusion model.

## Recommendations for the Woonsocket School Department

Provide resources to make the needed changes in the use and structure of the physical plant.

Provide additional financial resources to make the delivery of high quality instruction a reality for this school.

Immediately establish positive communication with all members of the Social Street School community in an effort to reconcile the lack of mutual trust that exists.

Provide additional translation resources for this school.

Review district compliance with those recommendations made in the *1998 School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Woonsocket School System from the Office of Special Needs at the Rhode Island Department of Education*.

Reduce the disproportionate number of special needs students at Social Street School.

Provide needed professional development in those areas identified in this report.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

In the week that this SALT Visit team has been at Social Street School we have recognized your struggles and appreciate the efforts that have been made to address so many daunting issues. We commend those members of this school community who have not given up hope that school improvement can and will occur. Mutual support among the teachers is the strength that keeps this school community intact. Never lose sight of the importance of this collegiality.

The willingness of many members of this faculty to recognize and acknowledge their needs for professional growth and development are commendable. The support provided by the teacher leadership of the School Improvement Team has been instrumental thus far. All teachers must continue to participate actively in professional development in order to increase student achievement. This must continue to be the primary focus of this school and the entire school district.

Make decisions based on what is best for children. Demand excellence for them and from them, even if it means a struggle for you. Remain resilient in your quest for the improvement of student learning. While this journey is arduous, it must be continued for the rewards will be great.

## The Social Street School Improvement Team

Donna Bourgeois  
Paraprofessional

Donna L. Bromage  
Grade 1 Teacher

Patricia A. Dubois  
Grade 5 Teacher

Darlene M. Forcier  
Resource Teacher

Holly M. Gray  
Grade 5 Inclusion Teacher

Darlene M. Forcier  
Resource Teacher

Suzan C. Trinque, Chairperson  
Grade 4 Teacher

Dr. Robert Wiese  
Principal

## The SALT Visit Team

JoAnn LaBranche, Chair  
Social Studies Teacher  
Lincoln Senior High School  
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Central Falls, Rhode Island

Stephen Tanasio  
Fourth Grade Teacher  
J.J.M. Cumberland Hill School  
Cumberland, Rhode Island

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

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### **Social Street School**

March 1, 2002

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.  
April 5, 2002