



Oldham Elementary School

East Providence

The SALT Visit Team Report

March 15, 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 Oldham Elementary School from March 11, 2002 through March 15, 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 Oldham 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 Oldham Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 81 complete classes and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 93.5 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 6 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*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

student portfolios

district and school policies and practices

classroom assignments

classroom assessments

school improvement plan for Oldham Elementary School

district strategic plan

2001-2002 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

*East Providence School Department K-12 Curriculum Guide All Subject Areas
Notebook*

East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance Instrument

Math Portfolio 2001-2002

English Language Arts Portfolio 2001-2002

Professional Development Portfolio 2001-2002

Teacher Communications Notebook

Parent Communications Notebook

East Providence Teacher Mentoring Notebook

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 26 hours in six separate meetings spanning the 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 Oldham Elementary School

Background

Oldham Elementary School is one of six elementary schools in the East Providence Public School System. Oldham, which is located in the Riverside section of East Providence, Rhode Island, serves students in kindergarten through grade five. The school first opened its doors to students in 1952. An addition was added to the school in 1970.

A city manager, a five-member elected city council, and a mayor selected by the city council govern the city. A five-member elected school committee governs the East Providence Public School District. Oldham Elementary School students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, 17 full-time teachers, 16 part-time teachers, one educational specialist, one parent liaison, one secretary, seven aides, two custodians, and three cafeteria workers.

Oldham Elementary School has an attendance rate of 95 percent. Of the 299 students attending this school 85 percent are White, 11 percent are Black, 1 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are American Indian/Alaskan. Seventeen percent of the students receive special education services, which include resources and speech/language, occupational, and physical therapies. In addition, forty-nine percent of the students applied for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

State Assessment Results for Oldham

On the subtests of the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination (NSRE) approximately six in 10 of the fourth graders (62%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; approximately one in two of the fourth graders (53%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and approximately one in three of the fourth graders (33%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. From 1998-2000 equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for the following groups of students: Black, Male, and Special Education. On the 2000 NSRE students at Oldham perform above similar students in the state on the Mathematics: Basic Skills subtest and the same as similar students on Mathematics: Concepts, and Mathematics: Problem Solving subtests.

On the reading subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination approximately two in three of the fourth graders (69%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and approximately three in five of the fourth graders (61%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. From 1998-2000 equity gaps exist in reading for the following groups of students: White, Black, Male, and Special Education. On the 2000 NSRE students at Oldham perform below similar students in the state on Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests.

On the writing subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination approximately seven in 10 of the fourth graders (61%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and approximately six in 10 of the fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in five of the third graders (20%) met or exceeded the standard. From 1998-2000 equity gaps exist in writing for the following groups of students: Male, Special Education, and Limited English Proficient. On the 2000 NSRE students at Oldham perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness and below similar students on Writing: Conventions subtests.

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

report. Information Works! data for Oldham is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

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

The colorful artwork on the walls and the cheerful greetings from the students and faculty are representative of the school's welcoming atmosphere. Wonderful children, a dedicated and nurturing faculty, and a supportive principal craft this positive environment.

Students are excited to come to Oldham School, where they enjoy learning. They feel happy and safe here. The polite, courteous, and well-mannered students love and respect their teachers and enjoy interacting with their peers. Students readily and consistently identify their teachers as people who care about them. Most students go out of their way to please faculty, staff, and visitors alike, and they are actively involved and engaged in learning. Similarly, parents feel welcome here and respect the teachers and the principal.

Teachers are competent professionals, who strive continuously to improve and adopt the latest research-based practices and collaborate among themselves to meet the learning needs of their children more fully. However, the real strength of this faculty lies in the way it takes ownership for the diverse student body it serves. This sense of ownership by the staff extends to the larger community. The staff's commitment, dedication, and willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty creates a learning environment that effectively meets the academic and emotional needs of many students. This school offers a caring community where students learn and grow—socially, academically, and emotionally. The principal promotes this community through his dedicated and caring attitude and his low-key approach to leadership.

Oldham Elementary School teachers set high expectations for student performance. They are committed to and thoroughly invested in efforts to provide students with a top-notch solid education and to provide a strong academic and social foundation on which children can build and grow. The professional staff really cares about and is devoted to the children attending this school. Rather than viewing the diverse needs of their students as insurmountable barriers to learning, they recognize and accept these needs as a personal and professional responsibility that they conscientiously assume. It is evident that they expect all children to learn and that they are working hard to ensure that all students succeed. In essence, this is a school hard at work implementing a variety of programs to reinforce and support its students positively.

Oldham Elementary School is clearly moving in the right direction and making strides toward increasing student learning. Fully realizing the goals of the school will require additional job-embedded professional development, a more explicit focus on standards-based tasks and assessments, the ongoing refinement of the balanced literacy and math problem-solving processes, continued attention on higher order thinking skills, and building student ownership. Maintaining its focus as a learning community, as well as its ongoing efforts at continuous improvement, will continue the positive contributions it is making to students.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing student portfolios*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *reviewing 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*

Conclusions

Students at Oldham school are polite, courteous, and respectful of adults as well as their peers. They are anxious to share their work and to demonstrate their knowledge. These well-mannered students are proud of their accomplishments and report being happy, safe, and supported by their teachers, staff, and principal. They are eager to please, help each other willingly, and operate as members of a learning community. They are proud of their school and take ownership in their role as students here. Students strive to succeed at their assigned tasks; they collaborate effectively when working with their peers and when assisting each other in furthering their learning. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students*)

Most students are secure with basic mathematical skills such as computation. Students are effectively using unifix cubes, pattern blocks, calculators, number charts, and math word walls to deepen their understanding of mathematic skills and concepts. School wide, students use a common language to talk about mathematics. Most can successfully use a variety of strategies to perform basic mathematics skills, and many can solve simple word problems. They are using math journals and workbooks to record their mathematical thinking and document their thought processes. Most students are using the AWESome (answer, work, explanation) work rubric to guide the work they produce. Some students can proficiently communicate mathematically and explain how they arrived at their answers to math problems. While most

students know a variety of problem-solving strategies, they are experiencing varying degrees of success. Fewer students have an intuitive understanding of number theory, which contributes to the difficulties they have independently selecting and using these strategies to solve multi-step problems. Similarly, many students do not check their own work for accuracy to determine if their answers make sense. (*observing classes, talking with students and teachers, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, following students, reviewing student portfolios, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*)

Oldham School students are writing across the curriculum in a wide variety of genres. Most students like to write and are excited about sharing their writing. They are journaling, writing poetry, creating research papers, responding to writing prompts and literature, doing retellings, and writing creatively. Most students are conscientiously using the writing process—brainstorming, pre-writing, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing—to guide and shape their writing. Additionally, students are using graphic organizers to brainstorm and pre-write. While students understand the importance of editing and revising their own work, some still have difficulty revising their writing to add effective words, compelling details, fluent sentences, and engaging hooks. Similarly, most students are better at editing for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling than using the conventions of English for grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph construction. (*talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing student portfolios, observing classes, following students, reviewing 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary report*)

Children enjoy reading and are reading multiple genres in a variety of subjects. They are enthusiastic readers. Students effectively use a number of strategies to unlock words, and most students can read for meaning and comprehend text at a literal level. Additionally, many students proficiently make text-to-text and text-to-self connections. When working in groups many students successfully find details in text, make predictions, compare and contrast, build and develop vocabulary, retell stories, summarize, discuss, and identify main ideas and other story elements. While most students can successfully interpret text at a literal level, many have difficulty independently making inferences, summarizing and paraphrasing, and perceiving relationships among ideas in text. In addition, many students are reading independently at home. (*reviewing 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, teachers, and staff*)

Commendations for Oldham Elementary School

- Students' caring and concern for others
- The students' exceptional behavior
- Students' enjoyment of reading, writing, and math
- Students' hard work and commitment to learning
- Students' willingness to embrace learning and their love of their school

Recommendations for Oldham Elementary School

Continue to further develop students' intuitive understanding of number theory application and mathematical concepts, as well as their ability to select and use problem solving strategies independently to solve multi-step problems.

Further develop in your students their ability to check their own work for accuracy to determine if their answers make sense.

Continue to strengthen your students' proficiency with revising their own writing to add engaging hooks, effective words, compelling details, and sentence fluency. Enhance their ability to edit for grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph construction.

Continue and expand your efforts to develop your students' proficiency with independently making inferences, summarizing, paraphrasing, and perceiving relationships among ideas in text.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Continue to support the efforts of the teachers to improve student performance.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing student portfolios*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assignments*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

Conclusions

The Oldham Elementary School teachers foster an environment in which students are learning. They are risk takers who clearly care about the academic and social well being of their students. Teachers have set high expectations for their students' education as well as for themselves. There are clear expectations for behavior, academic performance, and class routines that enhance the learning process and daily experiences of their students. They challenge students to think, observe, listen, and perform, which contributes to their students' willingness to learn. Learning environments filled with meaningful activities that are necessary to enrich an array of student learning are provided by teachers. Teachers are caring, nurturing and kind. They consistently give positive feedback and praise. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, following students*)

Teachers conscientiously and competently use a number of strategies to develop their students' love of reading, as well as their reading proficiency. They are establishing classroom libraries with rich literature to supplement the basal readers with leveled books. To foster independent reading at home, teachers are sending students home with leveled books and tracking their reading progress. They are teaching students how to use diagrams and a variety of graphic organizers to help them identify interrelated and underlying inferences in story elements in order to understand what they read. Teachers are knowledgeably working with students in guided reading groups to teach them more effectively to read and comprehend by coaching

and facilitating their learning at their instructional and/or independent reading levels. Teachers report these groups are based on students' reading levels more than they are on the individual reading strategies each student needs to further develop. A few teachers even use literature circles to deepen student reading comprehension and analysis. Similarly, most teachers are reading aloud to emphasize and teach a variety of skills such as: vocabulary, the author's craft, and listening comprehension. Conversely, fewer teachers consistently engage in shared reading with students to model and exemplify the skills students need to predict, monitor, confirm, and make inferences. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students and teachers, observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Teachers are teaching math in a way that many students can grasp basic skills, concepts, and problem solving strategies. Problem solving is emphasized and, through the use of the AWEsome rubric, teachers encourage students to speak in mathematical terms, build math vocabulary, and use math word banks. They spend time building student computation skills through the use of math boxes found in the Everyday Math workbooks. Teachers are actively engaging students in the study of mathematics through a variety of math tools and strategies such as Venn diagrams, math manipulatives, group discussion, child created math books, and child-led explanations of math processes and techniques. In addition, direct instruction and teacher-modeling are used to deepen student understanding of math concepts and procedures. They consciously help students develop their understanding of math concepts from the concrete to the abstract by using manipulatives and by incorporating pictures, numbers, and symbols. Fewer opportunities are provided for students to conduct authentic mathematical investigations in different content areas. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, and parents reviewing classroom assignments)*

Oldham Elementary School teachers exert considerable effort to improve their students' writing. Teachers have students write often for a variety of purposes and in a variety of genres including narratives, persuasive essays, informational writing, and haiku and other forms of poetry, among others. Many teachers also incorporate writing into mathematics, science, and social studies. A number of teachers are actively working to teach their students to effectively embed the traits of writing—voice, ideas, organization, sentence fluency, conventions, word choice, and presentation—into their work. Additionally, teachers support students in the writing process through the use of student checklists, mini-lessons focused on specific skills, brainstorming activities, and teacher modeling. They are also developing student awareness of their thought processes and their ability to share that process with others. While a number of effective writing instructional practices are clearly evident, some classrooms allot too little time to teacher conferencing and peer conferencing and offer limited opportunities for students independently to select their own writing topics. *(reviewing classroom assessments, following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing student portfolios)*

Standards-based teaching and assessment practices are emerging at Oldham school. Teachers make concerted efforts to provide diagnostic oral feedback and written comments with specific suggestions that students can use to improve their work. Many teachers are creating and implementing criteria for individual assignments with their students. While most teachers are using general rubrics, fewer teachers are writing task-specific rubrics that clearly link the criteria to the standards. Teachers are using a number of standards-based performance tasks in their daily instruction to support student mastery of the learning that is represented by the standards. Many of these tasks, which are created by outside organizations to augment existing school programs, are aligned only broadly with the standards. Teachers place less emphasis on creating individual standards-based tasks that are explicitly linked to the bulleted indicators

under grade-level content and performance standards benchmarks. This can obscure for both teachers and students the specific aspects of what is being taught, learned, and assessed. Additionally, most teachers are effectively building basic skills and working to develop students' higher-order thinking skills. A number of powerful opened-ended tasks encourage students to investigate, analyze, synthesize, summarize, and predict. However, the tasks, assignments, and the types of questions asked of students occasionally result in opportunities to develop these higher order thinking skills. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, teachers, and staff, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom assignments, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Commendations for Oldham Elementary School

The high expectations teachers set for themselves and their students

The nurturing atmosphere teachers have created for life-long learners

The collaboration among the teachers

The dedication of teachers, staff, and the principal to the whole school community

The high-quality teaching practices

Recommendations for Oldham Elementary School

Review the existing framework for teaching reading in each grade and, when appropriate, expand the frequency of child-centered reading activities such as book chats, language experience activities, and literature circles.

Build on the effective practices of the current guided-reading groups to include even more emphasis on the reading strategies each individual student needs. When determining the membership of the reading groups, expand the practice of shared reading with students to model and exemplify the skills needed to comprehend, analyze, and interpret text and to predict, monitor, confirm, and make inferences.

Expand the effectiveness of the writing process by increasing the time allotted to teacher and peer conferencing. Provide additional opportunities for students independently to select their own writing topics.

Increase the opportunities for students to put mathematics concepts and skills to work across the curriculum in a large-scale open-ended project or investigation designed jointly by teachers and students.

Build on the existing practice of establishing criteria with students by developing task-specific rubrics with criteria clearly linked to content and performance standards.

Augment the existing use of standards-based tasks by creating individual standards-based tasks and assessments explicitly linked to the grade-level content and performance-standards benchmarks and performance indicators.

Continue the focus on higher order thinking and increase the frequency of tasks, assignments, and questioning techniques designed to develop higher order thinking skills.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Provide Oldham School with the resources and technical assistance needed to implement the recommendations of this report.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan for Oldham Elementary School*
- ◆ *reviewing the East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance Instrument*
- ◆ *reviewing East Providence School Department K-12 Curriculum Guide All Subject Areas Notebook*
- ◆ *reviewing Parent Communications Notebook*

Conclusions

The East Providence Public School District is in the beginning stages of providing system-wide supports for the implementation of standards-based education. The district is developing quarterly assessments in mathematics and writing to ascertain student performance across grade levels. It is also starting to implement a standards-based portfolio system to track and gauge student progress. In addition, it has recently developed a K-12 curriculum for language arts and mathematics. These curricula include content standards and performance standards delineated by grade level, as well as suggested resources, instructional strategies, and assessments. While teachers readily support the chosen direction of the district, many report that the expectations and explanations regarding the proper implementation of these initiatives are not clear. These unclear expectations are impeding the overall effectiveness of these initiatives. *(meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, reviewing East Providence School Department K-12 Curriculum Guide All Subject Areas Notebook)*

A number of supports are in place that should be effective in improving the professional practice of teachers. East Bay Educational Collaborative and other sources offer quality professional development on the traits of writing, guided reading, literacy centers, and everyday mathematics, among others. The Title I Program provides the school with needed resources to purchase leveled books across the curriculum, to hire staff to support the literacy development of students, and to expand the home/school connection. Conversely, the teacher evaluation instrument is an ineffective instrument to improve the professional practices of teachers. It contains a rudimentary checklist that is unsuitable to ascertain the nature and quality of the standards-based instructional practices found in most classrooms. This instrument, without accompanying performance descriptors aligned to standards-based practices, significantly limits the type of information that teachers and the principal can use to improve teaching and learning. *(reviewing the East*

Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance Instrument, talking with teachers, meeting with the school and district administrators)

The principal, teachers, and staff take the task of educating children seriously. They are conscientiously working to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. Teachers are collaborating and building continuity between and among grades. Children are unconditionally welcomed here and are often able to overcome obstacles to their success. Support flows from the principal down. He is visible, and he initiates a mutually respectful environment that is evident throughout the building. The respectful tone and positive reinforcement created by the principal and staff allows the students to put forth their best efforts. The courtesy and respect the staff display when interacting with students and their colleagues serve as an effective and positive model for their students. In an attempt to put the social and academic needs of the students first, the school is reaching out to parents through workshops, after school activities, and take home book/video bags. The school also provides a parent liaison, monthly school newsletters, and classroom correspondence. Parents feel welcome at the school and like its open-door policy. Nevertheless, many parents are currently not actively involved in the school. *(meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers and staff, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing Parent Communication Notebook)*

Oldham Elementary School is committed to providing students with a high-quality education and to developing a strong academic and social foundation on which they can build. There are clear expectations among the parents, teachers, and students. The teachers are talented professionals, who continuously strive to improve their craft. To more effectively meet the needs of their students, teachers willingly seek out the latest research on effective practice and are actively incorporating this into their daily teaching. Although teachers desire more opportunities to participate in job-embedded professional development to more fully meet the diverse learning needs of their students, they are hindered by the lack of professional development days in the their teachers' contract. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff)*

The school improvement team for Oldham Elementary School recently drafted a revised school improvement plan. The current plan is practical, and much of what is happening in the classroom is aligned with it. Presently, many of the action plans lack measurable criteria, and often the timelines do not contain definitive completion dates. This limits the school's ability to ascertain when and to what extent it has successfully accomplished the plans' objectives. *(reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team and school administrator, observing classes)*

Commendations for Oldham Elementary School

- The extraordinary school culture
- The continuity that exists between and among grades
- The leadership of the principal and faculty
- The willingness to meet the diverse needs of students

Recommendations for Oldham Elementary School

Continue your efforts to create a safe and nurturing environment for your students and to capitalize on the foundation and the expertise that exists in this school.

Provide the job-embedded professional development that is necessary for teachers successfully to implement the recommendations of this report.

Continue and expand your efforts to reach out to parents, to educate them, and to strengthen the home/school connection.

Review the current School Improvement Plan and add, when appropriate, measurable criteria and timelines with definitive due dates.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Negotiate with the East Providence Teachers' Union to create a teacher evaluation system that will support and enhance the standards-based instructional practices currently being used by teachers.

Work to establish effective two-way communication between and among the district, school, and teachers to clarify expectations and more effectively incorporate the ideas and input of teachers.

Support new programs and initiatives from the district with additional and ongoing professional development.

Negotiate with the East Providence Teachers' Union to add professional development days to the teachers' contract to provide teachers with more opportunities to improve their teaching practice.

Recommendations for East Providence Teachers' Union

Negotiate with East Providence School Committee or its designee to create a teacher evaluation system that will support and enhance the standards-based instructional practices currently being used by teachers.

Negotiate with East Providence School Committee or its designee to add professional development days to the teachers' contract in order to provide more opportunities for your members to improve their teaching practice.

7. Final Advice to the School

Oldham school is headed in the right direction in its efforts to meet the needs of the students it serves. It is clear that you are making conscious efforts to motivate your students and provide them with a solid academic and social foundation. Maintain your love and enjoyment for what you do for it fosters an environment that welcomes both students and parents. The drive most teachers have toward improving themselves is evident. You are hardworking and dedicated to truly becoming a community of life-long learners.

The professionalism that permeates the school is evident in the principal's support and teacher practices. Persist with your efforts to adopt research-based instructional practices, as well as your efforts toward the implementation of standards-based practices. Review existing classroom tasks and assessments to ensure that each classroom concurrently builds a strong academic foundation of both basic and higher order thinking skills and concepts. Fully implementing many of your existing practices school wide will support your desire to obtain success for all students.

Continue to embrace students and maintain your efforts to seamlessly integrate those with diverse needs into your classrooms. It is through your hard work, dedication, and willingness to change your professional practices that students are learning and growing.

Oldham School has a strong spirit of collaboration and a feeling of community. Build on these, as well as the professional relationships in this school. The family-like atmosphere at this school is an important and powerful attribute of the staff and contributes to the quality of education provided to your students. Continue and expand your efforts to broaden the parent and community involvement in the school.

As you move forward and begin to work with the recommendations of this SALT report to construct a Compact for Learning, conduct additional self-study activities to determine your students' current strengths and learning needs in each subject area. Purposefully collect and analyze student work from each classroom. Use this information in conjunction with district prompts and state testing data to guide and inform your current school improvement plan. You adeptly use a variety of instructional practices. A thorough school wide analysis of local and state assessment data will enable you to target both your classroom and your school wide efforts more effectively to the learning needs of your students and teachers.

When reading and reflecting upon this report, the school and its community should bear in mind that, by design, this SALT report is not only a celebration of all the wonderful things taking place at Oldham Elementary School. It is also a presentation of those items that, in the visiting team's judgment, must become the school's focus if it is to help all students of all achievement levels perform at higher levels. As you work with this SALT report, we hope you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to help you make this good learning community better meet the needs of your students. For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Oldham Elementary School

March 15, 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, 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.
March 29, 2002