



Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

North Providence, Rhode Island

The SALT Visit Team Report

March 22, 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 Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School from March 18 through 22, 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 Dr. Joseph Whelan 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 Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 54 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 79 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 six 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 report cards for the North Providence School District*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing teacher schedules*
- ◆ *reviewing North Providence School Department Weekly Time Allotment Schedule for Grades 1-6*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

classroom assessments

school improvement plan for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

district strategic plan

1999, 2000 SALT Survey report

classroom textbooks

1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results

1998, 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

1998 – 2001 School Performance Categories DISTRICT PROFILE

J.A.W.S. School Newspaper

Project Read Newsletter, March 2002

Whelan School Article 31 Professional Development Binder, 1998 to Present

Reviewing report cards for the North Providence School District

Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School Strategic Plan, 2001-2002

North Providence School Department Weekly Time Allotment Schedule for Grades 1-6

North Providence School Department Technology Plan, 2001-2006

North Providence School Department Teacher Evaluation Form

North Providence Federation of Teachers Local 920, American Federation of Teachers, ALF-CIO Collective Bargaining Agreement, Sept. 1, 2000 – August 31, 2003

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 [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 Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Background

Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School, located in North Providence, RI is a Kindergarten through grade six school that serves 249 students. Beginning in the 2002-03 school year grade six students will be housed in one of the city's middle schools. The professional staff comprises a principal, 30 full- and part-time faculty members, and 21 teacher assistants and support personnel.

Of the 249 students attending this school 88% are white, 9% are Hispanic, 2% are black, and 1% is Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty-one percent of the students receive special education services, and 19% qualify to receive free and reduced-price lunch.

Teachers in grades one and two currently participate in a professional development opportunity provided by the "I READ" funding grant. This grant provides funding not only for job imbedded in-service in the area of guided reading, but it also provides instructional materials to implement a successful balanced literacy program.

Several programs are in place that support and enhance the academic curriculum. Among these are Catch the Dragon Reading Incentive Program, a school store, Junior Achievement, Pizza-Hut Book-It Program, and the Scholastic Book Program.

Students at Whelan School participate in the Feinsein Good Deeds Program, Gingerbread Express, and Pennies for Patients as part of their community outreach. Extracurricular programs include the school yearbook, spirit week, field day, and class trips.

State Assessment Results for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination almost six in 10 of the fourth graders (58%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in five of the fourth graders (18%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one in 10 of the fourth graders (9%) met the standard in problem solving. Students at the Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School perform better than similar students in the state on Basic Skills and below similar students in the state on the Concepts and Problem Solving mathematics subtests.

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination seven in 10 of the fourth graders (73%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and six in 10 of the fourth graders (64%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for poverty students. Students at the Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the Reading: Basic Understanding and below similar students on the Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination one in two of the fourth graders (50%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and one in two of the fourth graders (53%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in four of the third graders (26%) met or exceeded the standard. Students at the Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School perform better than similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness and below similar students on Writing: Conventions.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. Information Works! data for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School is available at <<http://www.ridoe>.

[net](http://www.rido.net)>www.rido.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School is a neighborhood school where students and staff are happy and comfortable. An atmosphere of cooperation and camaraderie exists among the principal, faculty, staff, and students. Parents are confident that the academic needs of their children are being met.

While this school has been in existence since 1960 and members of the staff collectively have devoted many years to this learning community, the portrait of Whelan School can be considered as a work in progress. The professional staff is aware that in order for their students to be successful many changes and transitions need to take place. Teachers have engaged in professional development, and they have begun work to improve student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Although student learning is improving, especially in developing basic skills, all students are not yet fully engaged in their learning. Some students are prevented from assuming responsibility for their own learning because they have limited opportunities to be active participants in a variety of learning activities, and they have restricted opportunities to make their own choices and decisions in their learning. In order to take their place as capable adult citizens in the 21st century students will require an education that incorporates the use of technology across a varied curriculum. To make this possible the Whelan School community will need to continue its commitment to change and to improve student learning.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *observing classes.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *1998 – 2001 School Performance Categories DISTRICT PROFILE*

Conclusions

Students at Whelan School are happy to be here. Most are respectful of members of the faculty and staff, and many are respectful of one another. Students in this school are aware of academic and behavioral expectations; they comply with school and classroom rules and generally complete their class work and homework assignments. Students in some classrooms respond very favorably when teachers provide them with stimulating and engaging activities. They enjoy working in groups, engaging in hands-on activities, sharing their work with their peers, and having opportunities to make decisions and choices in the classroom. Unfortunately, these opportunities are not present in all classrooms. In some classrooms there is an overall lack of excitement, motivation, or engagement in student learning. As a result much of the learning that takes place for some students is passive in nature and does not nurture critical and independent thinking. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the students and parents, talking with students*)

Most students at Whelan School demonstrate proficiency in mathematical skills. They practice computational skills daily. Some students effectively use manipulatives to help them improve their math skills. Not as many students demonstrate a proficiency in the use of math concepts, and many are unable to use math concepts and skills effectively to solve problems. However, students are beginning to respond to the school wide emphasis on improving their problem-solving abilities in math by learning how to apply a variety of strategies and to explain their mathematical thinking using the language of mathematics. On the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination 58% of the fourth grade students met or exceeded the standard in Basic Skills; 18% met or exceeded the standard in Concepts; and only 9% met the standard in Problem Solving. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, talking with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*)

Most students understand and effectively use the writing process when responding to teacher prompts. They are able to plan their writing, to peer and self-edit using rubrics, and to produce a large number of finished pieces. Although students are engaged in the writing process, their work often lacks originality. Because students seldom select the topics for their writing, their work reflects a willingness to meet established requirements, rather than an enjoyment of the writing process. As a result, student “voice” is missing in many of their finished pieces. Students are being introduced to the vocabulary of “Write Traits,” which their teachers emphasize; they are incorporating some of these traits in their writing. As they continue this focus, teachers have high expectations that student work will improve. Some students are still having difficulty effectively applying writing conventions. As a result, their published work does not always meet high standards. On recent statewide assessments 53% of the fourth grade students met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness, and 50% met the standard in Writing: Conventions. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment 26% of the third grade students met or exceeded the standard. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 1999, 2000, 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*)

Students at this school are competent readers, who have developed strategies to analyze and interpret text successfully. Most students read from basal readers in either whole-group or round robin formats. A few teachers supplement student reading with trade books and poetry, and some students are reading leveled text during guided reading instruction. In some classrooms students enjoy participating in author studies or literature circles. These students are developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of literature, as they learn to employ higher order thinking skills. In most classrooms students are able to read books they select after they complete their assignments. Unfortunately some do not choose to read, but sit and wait for the next directed activity, suggesting they are not interested in reading for pleasure. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students and teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*)

Students at Whelan Elementary School have demonstrated academic growth by improving their performance on the statewide assessments. The *1998 – 2001 School Performance Categories DISTRICT PROFILE* reports improvement in 13 of 16 subtests of the New Standards Reference Examination and the Rhode Island Writing Assessments. (*1998 – 2001 School Performance Categories DISTRICT PROFILE, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, meeting with school and district administrators*)

Commendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Respectful and obedient students

Student performance on statewide assessments

Recommendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Increase opportunities for students to engage in hands-on activities, work in groups, share their work, and make choices and decisions for their learning.

Increase the use of manipulatives in mathematics instruction.

Continue the current emphasis on improving students' problem solving skills in math, and encourage them to explain their answers orally and in writing using the language of mathematics.

Encourage student creativity and develop students' appreciation for literature by providing more opportunities for them to select the materials they read and the topics they write about.

Continue to imbed the elements of "Write Traits" into the student writing process.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ 2001 Information Works!
- ◆ SALT Survey 1999-2000
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing report cards for the North Providence School District*
- ◆ *Whelan School Article 31 Professional Development Binder, 1998 to Present*

Conclusions

The teachers at Whelan School are well-liked and appreciated by the students, parents, and the principal. They are concerned, compassionate, and kind individuals who have built a supportive and collegial school community. The teachers at this school engage in a variety of professional development activities to enhance and improve their delivery of instruction. Teacher expectations for student behavior and classroom routines help to establish an atmosphere of respect and cooperation. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, Whelan School Article 31 Professional Development Binder, 1998 to Present*)

There are some examples of outstanding teaching practices in this school. These teachers engage their students as active participants in their learning. They encourage their students to become independent and confident learners by allowing them to make choices and decisions about their learning. Their students select the materials, strategies, and topics for their learning. Teachers also encourage students to learn cooperatively, to participate in classroom discussions, and to share their work. These teachers allow students enough time to formulate their responses to questions, and they accept a variety of answers to the same

question. These practices are not evident in all classrooms. Some teachers are more comfortable with whole-group, teacher-directed instruction. By holding to this practice teachers often overlook “teachable moments.” These teachers seem reluctant to allow students to take a more active role in their learning; they discourage students from accepting responsibility for their learning. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, and teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*)

In some classrooms teachers are not adjusting their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of all students; they rarely differentiate their instruction. Assignments are not rigorous for some students and do not challenge them to their full potential. These students finish their work quickly and are often content to sit and wait until the next assignment. Conversely, other students struggle to complete their work in the allotted time and are frustrated when they are not successful. In some cases teacher expectations for all students are not consistent, with lower expectations for students who do not consistently demonstrate proficiency. As a result, all students do not have an opportunity to reach their full potential. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

Some teachers at Whelan School, especially those who teach the primary grades, have participated in professional development provided by an “I Read” grant,. They have begun to incorporate best practices as stated in the Rhode Island Reading Policy, but it is limited to whole-group reading instruction. Plans are in place for them to continue to develop a balanced approach to literacy. These teachers have benefited from job-embedded professional development that is being provided by the school reading specialist. Teachers in the intermediate classrooms express a desire for the same kind of support for reading and writing instruction in their classrooms. They are aware of the necessity of integrating reading and writing instruction, but they are not yet confident of their ability to provide high quality literacy instruction for all students. (*meeting with the school improvement team, and school and district administrators, talking with teachers, observing classes, following students*)

Teacher feedback on student work is not always sufficient to guide improved student learning. Some feedback lacks specific information. Thus, students and parents report that they often do not understand how or why a particular grade was assigned. Additionally, the current school report cards do not accurately or specifically reflect student achievement and confuse many parents. Currently, teachers at Whelan School are providing rubrics for almost every student assignment. However, as designed, some rubrics do not contain enough specific information for students to improve and revise their work, nor do they help establish high and clear expectations for performance-based assessments. Often teachers are using rubrics to assign grades by converting the rubric scores to numerical values. In addition, ongoing classroom assessments are almost exclusively used to assign grades and rarely used to drive instruction or measure student growth. (*interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, following students, observing classes, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students and teachers, reviewing report cards for the North Providence School District*)

Commendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

The kind and caring teachers

Teacher commitment to professional growth

The job-embedded professional development provided by the reading specialist

Recommendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Provide more opportunities for teachers, who have exhibited strong instructional leadership, to model and observe in other classrooms.

Engage in professional development in the areas of cooperative learning, differentiation of instruction, performance-based assessments, and the use of rubrics.

Seek continued professional development as you fully implement a balanced literacy program.

Fully engage your students in their learning; provide opportunities for them to make choices and decisions daily.

Establish high and clear expectations for all students.

Recommendations for the North Providence School District

Provide resources needed for continued job-embedded professional development.

Review and revise the report cards being used to reflect student achievement more accurately.

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*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey Report*
- ◆ *Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School Strategic Plan, 2001-2002*
- ◆ *J.A.W.S. School Newspaper*
- ◆ *Project Read Newsletter, March 2002*
- ◆ *reviewing teacher schedules*
- ◆ *reviewing North Providence School Department Weekly Time Allotment Schedule for Grades 1-6*

Conclusions

Cooperation and communication are valuable assets at Whelan Elementary School. The principal and staff have developed a very positive rapport, and they nurture their personal and professional relationships. Teachers make good use of their grade level common planning time to prepare and share their lessons. Students report that they like their teachers and the principal, who show them kindness and consideration. Parents are very satisfied with the quality and quantity of printed communication they receive from the school. They enjoy opportunities to meet with their children's teachers and participate in "grade level nights" held by all classroom teachers. Although there are no regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, parents appreciate their opportunities to make appointments with their children's teachers. The Whelan School Improvement Team has prioritized increasing parental involvement in the current school improvement plan. At the same time some parents express a desire to be included more fully in the decision making for school policies and practices. (*Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School Strategic Plan, 2001-2002, J.A.W.S. School Newspaper, Project Read Newsletter, March 2002, 1999-2000 SALT Survey Report*)

The use of time at Whelan School does not support optimal learning conditions. Instruction time is not balanced across the curriculum. While guidelines for weekly time allotments specify the number of instructional minutes teachers are expected to spend in each curriculum area, there is no evidence to suggest that this occurs. In spite of the fact that sizable blocks of time are designated for teaching language arts, the

actual time spent on independent and instructional level reading is minimal. Additionally, students are not reading self-selected materials at their independent reading levels for any substantial length of time. This problem is compounded by the fact that there is a limited supply of quality literature available in the classrooms for students to read. Time spent for instruction in science and social studies is also limited. Some teachers state that they have not been adequately trained to institute a newly adopted science program and that they are not comfortable doing so without training. Few classroom schedules reflect the required weekly time allotments, and instruction in these areas is often determined by teacher interest in the curricula. The classroom schedules also lack continuity. The transitions or connections between instructional blocks are not smooth. As a result, students find the delivery of instruction fragmented and inconsistent. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, reviewing teacher schedules, reviewing North Providence School Department Weekly Time Allotment Schedule for Grades 1-6*)

The current staffing practices at Whelan Elementary School are problematic. Teacher assistants are assigned to support special needs students in most classrooms. Although they make themselves available in some classrooms to assist other students and provide a valuable service, this is not consistent throughout the school. There is little evidence to suggest that this use of staff is having the desired effect on student learning. The school has added additional teaching personnel to reduce the number of students in mathematics instruction in the primary grades. While the intent is commendable, the actual practice results in fragmented instruction and unequal opportunities for student learning. Instruction time is lost, when small groups of students are moved to other classrooms in the school. Teachers are not coordinating mathematics instruction for students from the same classroom or grade. Additionally, Whelan students need more support in the areas of reading, counseling, and student health. Staffing in these areas is not sufficient to meet the needs of all students. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, meeting with students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

The amount of available technology in this school is not nearly sufficient to meet the needs of all students. While some classrooms have computers, the number of computers in this school cannot support the educational programs that are needed for students to become proficient in computer literacy. Other kinds of technology are also in limited supply. Students do not regularly use calculators to support their learning in mathematics. The school library is not equipped to meet basic standards for a true media center. According to the District Technology Plan, substantial improvements are not scheduled until the 2003-04 school year. As a result, student learning is not enhanced by the use of technology. (*North Providence School Department District Technology Plan, 2001-2006, meeting with school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrators, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students*)

The current teacher evaluation instrument for the North Providence School District has been in place for many years. The document and the contractual agreement between the district and the teachers, who regulate the teacher evaluations, are very restrictive. The principal's formal observations of teachers do not necessarily result in opportunities for reflection, planning, or goal setting. The current method of teacher evaluation is not likely to lead to professional growth for teachers. (*North Providence School Department Teacher Evaluation Form, North Providence Federation of Teachers Local 920, American Federation of Teachers, ALF-CIO Collective Bargaining Agreement, Sept. 1, 2000 – Aug. 31, 2003, talking with teachers, meeting with school administrator*)

This school building, constructed in 1960, is beginning to show the signs of aging. In spite of attempts to brighten the learning environment with paint and polish, some structural and maintenance issues are impossible to overlook. Bathroom facilities for both staff and students are in need of updating and repair. The current cafeteria, which also serves as a gymnasium, is dark and unwelcoming. Staff members generally

are disappointed with the cleanliness of the building. Students also express disappointment in the overall conditions in the common areas of the school. Areas used for student recess are covered mostly with asphalt and not conducive to physical activity. There is no playground equipment, even for primary students. As a result, recess time consists of students mostly running excitedly in a confined area. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and parents, talking with students*)

Commendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Open lines of communication throughout the school community

Scheduled "Grade Level Nights" for teachers and parents

Recommendations for Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

Create more opportunities for parents to be included in decision making for school policies and practices.

Review and revise teacher schedules to maximize student learning, especially the time allotted for reading, science, and social studies.

Make every classroom a literature rich environment.

Recommendations for the North Providence School District

Review support services in the areas of reading, counseling, and student health.

Provide ongoing professional development for teachers as they implement the new science program.

Review and revise the current teacher evaluation process.

Provide needed technology so that teachers can incorporate technology into their instruction.

Address facilities and maintenance issues.

7. Final Advice to the School

This school community has already made progress towards improved student learning. When you contemplate your strategies and goals for the future and when you make important decisions, remember to include parents and students. This will encourage your students to become independent thinkers, to make their own decisions, and to develop higher order thinking skills.

Continue to engage in the type of professional development that has already made a difference in the delivery of instruction and improved student learning. As you select additional areas of focus, do not lose sight of the importance of continuing your growth in the previously targeted areas.

As you review and revise your plans for school improvement, remember to recognize and acknowledge those individuals who have taken the initiative as instructional and educational leaders in this school. Their hard work has already begun to pay dividends.

Continue to foster a school community that your students, staff, and parents can enjoy and appreciate. The sense of humor and camaraderie that pervades this school climate will serve you well as you face new challenges. Remember that your willingness to support and encourage one another is a critical element for your success.

The Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School Improvement Team

Paul F. Morry
Principal
Chairperson

Pamela Marciano
Parent

Debra J. Mesolella
Special Educator

Kim Savastano
Parent

Deborah Signoriello
Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

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Social Studies Teacher
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Lincoln, Rhode Island
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education
to serve as a SALT Fellow
Team Chair

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Lynn D. Perrault
Regents' Reading Fellow
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Elizabeth S. Riccitelli
Grade Four Teacher
Randall Holden Elementary School
Warwick, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Dr. Joseph Whelan Elementary School

March 22, 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.
April 22, 2002