



Blackrock School

Coventry

The SALT Visit Team Report

April 5, 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 Blackrock School from April 1 through April 5. 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 Blackrock 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 take place at Blackrock School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 100 complete classes and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 85 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 seven students for a full day, two students for a half day each*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *conducting many interviews with the principal, faculty and staff*
- ◆ *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:*

1998, 1999, 2000 2001 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 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

Coventry Public Schools Strategic Plan

Coventry Public Schools RHODE Recognition and Honoring of Demonstrated Excellence

Coventry Public Schools Gifted and Talented Programs: TAPS and AEGIS binder

Coventry Public Schools English/Language Arts Curriculum 1999-2000

Coventry Public Schools Math Curriculum, 1999 - 2000

Coventry Public Schools and Coventry Teachers Alliance Teacher Evaluation Handbook

Agreement Between Coventry Teachers Alliance School Related Personnel and the Coventry School Committee, September 1, 2000 to August 31, 2003

Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs, Coventry School Support System Review, December 6-10, 1999

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

Blackrock School SALT Survey, 1999-2000

Blackrock School Improvement Plan, 2001-2002

Blackrock School Self-Study Process, November, 2001

Blackrock School Literacy Centers, Intermediate, November 15, 2001

Blackrock School Literacy Centers, Primary, December 13, 2001

Blackrock School Professional Development binder

Blackrock Elementary School PTA folder

Blackrock School's Parent Education Series, 2001-2002

Blackrock School, "A Great Place to Grow" team binder

Blackrock School Handbook

The Learning Center Portfolio Initiatives

Writing at Blackrock K-6 binder

Parent Information Night, Tools of the Writing Process Story Hour Parents Workshop binder

The Feinstein "I Can Make a Difference" Program, Blackrock binder

Implementing Your Science Kit folder

SALT Student Work Samples binder

Reading Specialists binder

Kindergarten binder

Grade One Profile binder

Second Grade binder

Grade Three Profile binder

Grade Four binder

Grade Five binder

Sixth Grade Informational binder

classroom assessments

classroom textbooks

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 30 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 Blackrock School

Background

Blackrock School, a suburban neighborhood school, is located in the eastern section of Coventry, Rhode Island. One of six elementary schools in Coventry, Blackrock serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Constructed in 1970, the school increased in size with the addition of four classes and a gymnasium in 1990.

A professional staff consists of one principal; 42 full-time and part-time faculty, which includes; a part-time psychologist; two part-time social workers; and two full-time and 13 part-time assistants for reading, instruction, supervision, kindergarten, and special education. Also, one part-time occupational and one part-time physical therapist, one nurse, one full-time and one part-time secretary, three custodians, and three kitchen staff service the school community.

Of the 556 students attending classes here, 94.7 percent is white; 3.6% is black; 0.2% is Asian; 1.3% is Hispanic; and 0.2% is Native American. One percent of the student body receives ESL services. Twenty-two percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and 13% of the students receive special education services.

There are many noteworthy activities in place at the school for both students and the community. A Gates Foundation grant to Coventry supports the Gateways to Success Program. This grant maintains the work of the Reading Academies. Also, with help from the Literacy Coach, parents work in a workshop format to enhance their children's writing and reading. The school has achieved 100% student participation in the Feinstein "I Can Make A Difference" program. In the Meaningful Minutes Mentor Program teacher mentors provide an extra adult connection for at-risk students at the school. All teachers are implementing a standards-based portfolio that supports home-school partnerships and student ownership of work. These constitute a "short list" of the many activities available to students at Blackrock School.

State Assessment Results for Blackrock School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination one in two fourth graders (56%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in four fourth graders (28%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one in seven seventh graders (14%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for special education students. Students at Blackrock School perform below the level of similar students in the state on the Mathematics subtests: Basic Skills, Concepts, and Problem Solving.

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination eight in 10 fourth graders (78%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and nearly seven in 10 fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for poverty students, males, and special education students. Students at the Blackrock School perform below the level of similar students in the state on the Reading: Basic Understanding subtest and at the same level as similar students on the Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtest.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination nearly one in seven of the fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness and three in five of the fourth graders (60%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in four of the third graders (28%) met or exceeded the standard. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in writing for Hispanic, poverty, and special education students. Students at the Blackrock School perform above the level of similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness and Writing: Conventions.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Blackrock School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Blackrock School is situated in a quiet residential neighborhood in Coventry, Rhode Island. Even before entering the building, one sees evidence of student involvement in the colorfully painted rocks that line the way to the main entrance. Just inside the school door there is a foyer with eye catching, colorful murals and cozy park benches. The students are enthusiastic and welcoming with bright eyes and happy smiles. Parents are pleased with the education their children receive here

The bustling classrooms are well staffed by dedicated, hard working teachers who genuinely want the best for their students. The principal is a sensitive, caring person, who has guided her staff to the successful implementation of a number of student learning initiatives. The staff works collaboratively and supports one another in their work. There is a sense of family throughout the school community.

While Blackrock School is a pleasant, clean place, it is extremely overcrowded. The lack of adequate space within the building results in “classrooms on carts” and teachers “doubling up” in available rooms. Technology for student instructional use is inadequate. Also, student behavior and discipline in the open areas of the school and on the playground need attention.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with students*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *2000 and 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

Conclusions

Most students in the school understand the purpose of standards and the use of rubrics. They comfortably use rubrics to guide their learning, to self evaluate, and to clarify what is expected of them. Students know what they are learning and why they are learning it. This enables them to reflect confidently on their work and to self assess in order to achieve their personal best. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

Students read in leveled books, textbooks, and books of their personal choice. They practice their reading in several settings that include whole class, small group, paired, and independent reading. Students read with ease from a variety of genres across the curricula. They enjoy reading and listening to literature for pleasure and enthusiastically participate in discussions about their readings. Students successfully extend their knowledge by using various graphic organizers, making predictions, completing projects, and writing responses to literature. Children effectively compare and contrast various story elements and connect what they read to their personal lives. They skillfully use a number of decoding strategies to aid in their comprehension. These good reading practices correlate favorably with the high percentage of students meeting and exceeding the standard on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination subtests, Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, 2000 and 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing*)

student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)

Evidence of student writing can be found throughout the school. Writing and journaling are integral parts of the students' day. Children use the complete writing process exceptionally well to create their own stories, to respond to prompts and literature, and to write for a variety of purposes. Students effectively use available resources such as word walls, Quick Words, and word lists to write vocabulary-rich pieces. Their writing is organized and includes voice, supporting details, and a sense of closure. Not surprisingly, students at Blackrock School perform significantly better than similar students in the state on the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination subtests, Writing: Effectiveness and Writing: Conventions. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, following students)*

The students at Blackrock School are friendly, respectful, and well mannered. These creative students, who have a broad range of abilities, eagerly share their knowledge, work cooperatively, and take risks while supporting and encouraging their peers. They are aware of high expectations and meet each challenge with positive attitudes. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Students learn to solve complex problems by using a variety of strategies. They competently explain their multi-step thinking process orally, pictorially, and in written form. The children question, infer, predict, explore, analyze, and graph data with confidence. They effectively use manipulatives and games to solve problems, find patterns, and draw conclusions. The continued practice of these valuable problem-solving strategies will ensure improved student performance on the New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination subtest in Problem Solving. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom assessments, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!)*

Commendations for Blackrock School

Friendly, enthusiastic, diligent learners

Cooperative and polite students

Students who take pride in their school

Recommendations for Blackrock School

Continue the good reading and writing practices established in your classrooms.

Incorporate additional problem-solving opportunities across curricular areas.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, teachers, school administrator, parents*
- ◆ *reviewing Coventry Public Schools English/Language Arts and Math Curricula, 1999-2000*
- ◆ *reviewing various grade level binders*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing Writing at Blackrock K-6 binder*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

Conclusions

Teachers work together as a cohesive group to develop and implement numerous initiatives. Despite the lack of common planning time, the staff goes above and beyond what is required in order to provide a rich and supportive learning environment for all students. Participation in self-study endeavors, academic academies, lunchtime meetings, the Meaningful Minutes Mentor Program, Parent Workshops, and district-wide committees are just a few of the worthwhile activities to which teachers freely give their time. Their general attitude is “to do whatever it takes” to improve and support student learning. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrator and parents, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing records of professional development activities*)

Teachers at Blackrock School have done an outstanding job incorporating the use of standards and rubrics in their instructional practices. They set clear and high expectations. The teachers engage their students in purposeful activities and “jobs” throughout each grade level and instructional area. They foster cooperation and respect among students. Teachers create an encouraging learning environment where children feel safe to take risks. These exemplary teaching practices ensure high-level student learning. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing Coventry Public Schools English/Language Arts and Math Curricula, 1999-2000, reviewing various grade level binders*)

Teachers, along with their Literacy Coach, create a community of strong readers and writers through the implementation of a balanced literacy program. They utilize a variety of approaches to meet the individual needs and learning styles of all students. Teachers maintain accurate running records to assess reading levels. They incorporate guided reading at each student's instructional level, encourage independent reading, and use an anthology for whole-group instruction. A well-organized, school wide writing program ensures consistency in how students learn the writing process. Most student writing is in response to prompts or topics generated by the teacher, rather than by the student. The school wide use of common editing marks, the Writer's Workshop, and the language resource notebooks that follow students from-year to-year help students develop valuable writing skills. These various approaches increase the students' love of reading and writing and enhance their success in reading. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing Writing at Blackrock K-6 binder, meeting with the school improvement team, students, teachers and school administrator, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Teachers emphasize problem-solving skills in a variety of settings that include the content areas, physical education, and the arts. They consistently model strategies and encourage students to explore alternate methods for solving particular problems. Teachers promote the effective use of manipulatives in various subject areas to help students visualize a problem and frame it in real life situations. Students at Blackrock come to learn that successful problem solving is an important part of everyday living and that it is a process, not the arrival at one correct answer. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Commendations for Blackrock School

- Teachers, as learners, embracing change
- Hard working, positive, collegial professionals
- Cohesive effort to improve student learning
- Consistent and high expectations of students
- Excellent use of standards and rubrics

Recommendations for Blackrock School

- Continue your efforts to enhance student learning.
- Continue your momentum in implementing the initiatives that are already underway.
- Continue your efforts to improve student behavior.
- Increase opportunities for students to write creatively on self-selected topics.
- Create additional opportunities for students to problem solve.
- Explore scheduling to provide for common planning time for teachers and staff.

Recommendations for Coventry School District

- Support the Blackrock community as it develops a schedule that includes common planning time for teachers and staff.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, teachers, staff, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing Coventry Public Schools and Coventry Teachers Alliance Teacher Evaluation Handbook*
- ◆ *reviewing Coventry Public Schools district strategic plan*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing Blackrock School Professional Development binder*
- ◆ *reviewing Blackrock School Handbook*
- ◆ *reviewing Blackrock School Self-Study*
- ◆ *reviewing Blackrock School team binder*
- ◆ *reviewing Blackrock Elementary School PTA folder*
- ◆ *reviewing the Feinstein “I Can Make a Difference” Program binder*

Conclusions

Blackrock School provides a pleasant and inviting atmosphere for learning. Despite teachers’ creative efforts, the facility is inadequate for the number of students and staff at this school. The lack of space detrimentally affects student learning. This is evident in the presence of “classrooms on carts,” as well as in teachers and specialists sharing classroom space. Although the building is clean and well maintained, certain problems exist. Parents and staff report that the old rugs and poor ventilation detrimentally affect members of the school community who have health issues. Also, the playground area has a loose surface that does not provide sufficient footing for safe play. It is muddy after rain and dusty in dry weather, the latter exacerbating respiratory problems. (*observing classes, following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing Blackrock School Self Study, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*)

Teachers have consistent expectations for good behavior and the conduct of students in the classroom setting. However, in common areas of the school, as well as on the playground, students misbehave, which sometimes results in fights. Parents and students report that episodes of bullying and teasing are commonplace. The number of playground staff is inadequate, as well as the supervision of students. The staff reports that there is no support of their attempts to enforce the behavioral expectations as stated in the Blackrock School Code of Conduct. Also, the presence of a few disruptive students in the classroom may be at the expense of the larger group. The behavioral consequences at the administrative level are inconsistent. The entire school community reports that there is a definite need for more leadership in this area. A strong, supportive leadership role in the area of student behavior has not been established. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing Blackrock School Self-Study, reviewing Blackrock School Handbook, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The school improvement plan is a workable document with realistic goals. As written, the plan supports increased student learning. The needs and talents of the whole child are considered. However, the plan is heavily dependent on grant money. The Central administration indicates that it will give support only to district-wide programs, and the continuation of certain innovative initiatives is in jeopardy after the grant funds are exhausted. The loss of these initiatives would negatively affect the momentum of improved student learning that has been established at Blackrock. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Technology for instructional use is severely lacking. The computers in use are inadequate in number, and they are unreliable. Also, the library is not automated. The district strategic plan indicates that by 2004 the student/workstations ratio will be 5 to 1. The district administration states that technology is regularly “put on the back burner” at budget time. Considering the current lack of technology at Blackrock School and the expressed lack of fiscal support within the district for financing technology, the district is not making progress toward this goal. *(reviewing district strategic plan, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom)*

Both central and school administrators encourage the professional growth and development of the staff. The school administrator strongly supports both district and school wide initiatives. The entire teaching community participates in a plethora of excellent offerings. The teacher evaluation instrument is standards-based, and it solidly supports the professional growth of the staff. *(talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing Professional Development binder, reviewing Coventry Public Schools and Coventry Teachers Alliance Teacher Evaluation Handbook, reviewing district strategic plan)*

Parent involvement is a valuable asset to the learning community at Blackrock School. Volunteer parent tutors work with individual students. An active Parent Teacher Association supports many programs within the school. Students learn the value of helping others by participating in a variety of public service activities, such as contributing to a local food bank, Jump Rope for Heart, Pennies for Patients, and the Feinstein Good Deeds Program—to name just a few. *(reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing Blackrock Elementary School PTA folder, reviewing the Feinstein binder, reviewing Blackrock School team binder)*

The principal of Blackrock School displays pride in her school and takes a pro-active approach to educational leadership. She provides her faculty and staff with numerous professional development opportunities. The principal enthusiastically embraces educational initiatives and learns along with her staff. She has developed a comfortable rapport, which puts teachers at ease with the many changes that are underway here. Her shared leadership style helps to empower others to assume responsibility and ownership. The principal has a clear vision of excellence for this school. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing professional development binder)*

Commendations for Blackrock School

Principal as an educational partner

A well thought-out school improvement plan

High parent involvement

A strong commitment to student learning

Recommendations for Blackrock School

Take a pro-active approach to student discipline and misbehavior in non-structured situations.

Clearly define and communicate inappropriate student behaviors and their consequences. Consistently enforce the rules at all authoritative levels.

Continue to participate in professional development.

Recommendations for Coventry School District

Alleviate overcrowding.

Continue to support and fund school initiatives that work after the grant money has been exhausted.

Continue to provide teachers with various professional growth opportunities.

Improve the air quality inside the school and remove the moldy carpeting.

Repair the playground area in a timely fashion to improve student health and safety.

Provide new and adequate technology. Provide training to staff in the use of technology as an instructional tool.

Increase the number and training of yard assistants.

7. Final Advice to the School

Blackrock School serves its students well. You have created a warm, happy, nurturing environment for your students in which they blossom. An air of cooperation and a love of learning are established in your classrooms! Your effective use of standards and rubrics to enhance student learning is commendable. Continue your hard work and excellent efforts in implementing the many initiatives underway here. The school leadership and staff are dedicated to “raising the bar” by using best practices in instruction to provide rigorous, standards-based curricula. You have an extraordinary commitment to the “whole child.”

However, you need to clearly communicate the “may” and “may not” behaviors in large-group situations such as in the cafeteria and on the playground. Consistent, meaningful consequences must be in place for all situations. This should be a simple task for a principal and faculty, who have already done so much. Work together creatively to develop a plan of action. Your firm follow-through will increase your students’ academic and social success.

Work with the district administration to find ways to improve the facility. Space is a serious issue that you must confront. It is less than ideal for classes to “double up,” and “classrooms on carts” should be only temporary solutions. It is essential that you remove moldy rugs, improve ventilation, and address playground limitations in a timely fashion. Also, technology, specifically computer use in instruction as outlined in the district strategic plan, must be addressed so that your students are prepared to work in the 21st century.

The principal is an excellent educational leader. She has the energy and vision to keep this school on a solid course of improved student learning. The teachers, for their part, are devoted and driven to do what is best for the children. It is as if you have internalized the message found in the kindergarten classroom: “Always aim for the cherry on top.” Good luck to you as you continue your quest to become an exemplary school.

The Blackrock School Improvement Team

Susan Buckin
Principal

Suzanne Bettencourt
Grade 2 Teacher

Jayne Bailey
Grade 6 Teacher

Christyna Bousquet
Grade 5 Teacher

Sharon Eagleson
Resource Teacher

Derek Hitte
Gym Teacher

Mary Leyden
Kindergarten Teacher

Kristina McKenna
Grade 4 Teacher

Pat Palmieri
Grade 1 Teacher

Bob Robillard
Community Member

Pat Shurtleff
Community Member

Lynn Sisson
Grade 3 Teacher

Frances Sturdavant
Parent

Mary Vandervelde
Grade 1 Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

Margaret M. Della Bitta
Science Teacher
South Kingstown High School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island
on leave to the Department of Education to serve as a
Regents SALT Fellow
Team Chair

Janice K. Adamec
Grade 1 Teacher
Sherman School
Warwick, Rhode Island

Susan S. England
Grade 1 Teacher
Quidnessett Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Ruth Haynsworth
Grade 5 Teacher
Stony Lane Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Virginia McIver
Intermediate Resource Teacher
Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School
West Warwick, Rhode Island

Christine Petrarca
Grade 4 Teacher
Metcalf Elementary School
Exeter, Rhode Island

Daniel Rivers
Principal
Raymond C. LaPerche Elementary School
Smithfield, Rhode Island

Jennifer L. Sinotte
Special Education Teacher
Bradford Elementary School
Westerly, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Blackrock School

April 5, 2002

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

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

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
May 22, 2002