



Agnes B. Hennessey School

East Providence

The SALT Visit Team Report

May 10, 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 Agnes B. Hennessey School from May 6 through May 10, 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.

Sandy Olsen, an experienced visit chair, substituted for the designated chair on Monday, due to an unavoidable schedule conflict. This change was agreed to before the visit by the school and Rhode Island Department of Education.

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team reviewed test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Agnes B. Hennessey 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 Agnes B. Hennessey School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 112 complete classes and 30 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 125 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 nine students for a full day and one student for one-half-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:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - classroom assessments*
 - posted student work*
 - student portfolios*
 - Everyday Mathematics student journals*
 - Outline of Programs and Activities at Agnes B. Hennessey School*
 - school improvement plan for Agnes B. Hennessey School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 1999, 2000 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 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

WriteTraits Program Manuals

Agnes B. Hennessey School Professional Development Log

East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance

District curricula guides

Agnes B. Hennessey School Self Study Binder

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 Agnes B. Hennessey School

Background

Agnes B. Hennessey School is one of the eight elementary schools in East Providence, Rhode Island. The original building was constructed in 1957 with a major addition in 1989. The school presently serves kindergarten through grade five. Of the 327 students attending Hennessey School 81% are white, 14% are black, four percent are Hispanic, and one percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Forty-seven students (14%) receive special education services, 67 students (21%) are Limited English Proficient, and 45% receive free or reduced-price lunch.

A professional staff of one administrator, 37 full- and part-time faculty, seven aides and support personnel, and two custodians serve the students of Agnes B. Hennessey School.

Agnes B. Hennessey School has a variety of local, state, federal, and international resources and partnerships. Many local volunteers provide programs and support to this school community. Hennessey is affiliated with the East Bay Educational Collaborative and has been a "Focus School" since 1999. The Rhode Island universities and colleges have students working here as tutors, classroom assistants, and student teachers. Several students have been followed for a study done by Brown University to better understand the social development of second-generation immigrants. Hennessey School has a Title I Reading Program and a Reading Recovery Program that provide services for students in kindergarten through grade three. Due to its participation in The Fulbright Teachers Exchange/Brazil Initiative, Hennessey is also a Fulbright School.

This year the district is piloting a new English/Language Arts and Mathematics curricula. Training is beginning in *WriteTraits* with full implementation slated for September 2002. The East Bay Educational Collaborative work has focused on problem solving, incorporating standards, setting criteria, using rubrics, and assessing student work. All teachers are trained in Kits in Teaching Elementary Science (KITES). Grade four and five teachers are implementing a new Social Studies curriculum. New textbooks were purchased for these grades.

State Assessment Results for Agnes B. Hennessey School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination six in 10 of the fourth graders (61%) met or exceeded the standard in Basic Skills; four in 10 of the fourth graders (39%) met or exceeded the standard in Concepts; and two in 10 of the fourth graders (22%) met or exceeded the standard in Problem Solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for Limited English Proficient and Special Education students. Students at the Agnes B. Hennessey School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the Mathematics subtests for Basic Skills and Problem Solving and above the level of similar students in the state on the Mathematics subtest for Concepts.

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination two in three of the fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and one in two of the fourth graders (54%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for Limited English Proficient and Special Education students. Students at the Agnes B. Hennessey School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on the subtests Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination four in 10 of the fourth graders (41%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and six in 10 of the fourth graders (61%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in writing for Limited English Proficient and Special Education students. Students at the Agnes B. Hennessey School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Writing: Effectiveness and below the level of similar students statewide on Writing: Conventions. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment two in 10 of the third graders (18%) met or exceeded the standard.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Agnes B. Hennessey School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Smiles, joyful voices, and energy permeate Agnes B. Hennessey School. Students love their teachers and their school. Parents value education and support the Hennessey staff. The dedicated teachers continually challenge themselves to develop and nurture the children within this learning community. A culture of mutual respect abounds. Safe, clean, and attractive, this culturally diverse kindergarten-through-grade-five neighborhood school exhibits a strong sense of “family.”

The students are openly enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy the challenges of active hands-on learning experiences and are motivated to master tasks presented in this fashion. Therefore, math and science are favorites. Whether students are working together in groups or pairs, their respect for one another is evident to all. They interact with others while they are learning. Although they read well, they do not immerse themselves in reading, discussing books, or relating the books they read to their own real life experiences.

The teachers honestly appraise their programs and then actively seek ways to improve. This provides a solid basis for their work improving instructional practices and implementing new initiatives so that they can better meet the needs of individual students.

Teachers’ openness to opportunities to enlarge their toolboxes of knowledge highlights their beliefs in themselves as life-long learners. Teachers diligently work to provide successful learning opportunities for their students. Science and mathematics instruction actively engages students in learning. Students thrive in these areas. Teachers embrace initiatives to improve reading and writing. Lower elementary teachers benefit from the support of a reading specialist; however, the district does not provide upper grades with the same level of in-class support.. Many teachers work beyond the school day to tutor students and to provide before and after school activities for them.

The principal is a highly visible, proud, and competent leader. Her approachable, friendly manner supports students, parents, and staff. She encourages all and does her best to provide the needed resources.

Concerns do exist regarding resources and support. Teachers provide many of the resources for their classrooms. The school library, as well as the classroom libraries, is limited. Many of the titles in the library are old. Because the library is used for many other purposes, it is not accessible to students for use as a media center.

Parents value education, support the teachers, and appreciate all of their efforts. All school staff welcomes parental participation within the classrooms and the school.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2002 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *talking with students and teachers*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *posted student work*
- ◆ *student portfolios*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *Everyday Mathematics student journals*

Conclusions

Agnes B. Hennessey School students demonstrate proficiency in decoding, word identification, and fluency. Students frequently engage in oral reading across all areas of the curriculum. In language arts students predominately read from the anthology series. Whether reading with grade level partners or across grade level partners, students are engaged with one another and helpful. Students keep reading logs to record their progress in meeting the standard of reading 25 books per year. Students answer literal level questions and locate factual information in texts. They seldom participate in discussions and activities that foster the development of critical comprehension skills and strategies. This limits their ability to develop higher level thinking skills or to discuss their reading beyond the literal level. Students are infrequently engaged in silent reading, either for their own enjoyment or to practice their skills and strategies; this hinders their development of lifelong reading habits. *(talking with students and teachers, following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios, posted student work)*

Many students state that they enjoy writing. Some writers are proficient; many are developing their craft. All students write often, across the curricula, and for various purposes—letter writing and story retellings, writing in narrative and informative styles, and procedural writing. Students often respond to teacher prompts. They have little choice in selecting their own topics to write about and few opportunities to bring writing about self-selected topics to publication. This lack of choice limits their perception of themselves as writers. Students use the writing process of brainstorming, revising, editing, and producing final copy. Drafts indicate some revision, but most students edit for conventions. Student writing shows strong beginnings and endings. Students use teacher and student generated criteria to construct and check their writing, both individually and with their peers. Additionally, students use teacher feedback to improve their work. Some express an understanding of the components of the WriteTraits Program and work consistently to incorporate these traits in their writing. Efforts in writing are evident in the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination results. Sixty-one percent of the students met or exceeded the standard in writing effectiveness, and 41% met or exceeded the standard in writing conventions.

(observing classes, student portfolios, meetings with students, school and district administrators, school improvement team, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, posted student work, talking with students and teachers, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)

Students are motivated, competent, and challenged in mathematics. They see themselves as problem solvers, capable of applying their knowledge of mathematical skills and concepts successfully. They effectively use tools and numerous strategies to solve problems. They work cooperatively and use a variety of ways to solve problems. Using criteria and teacher feedback, students are confident and comfortable in revising their work to meet the standard. Many students communicate how they arrived at their answer to a problem, but they are not able to articulate the logic of their reasoning. *(following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios, Everyday Mathematics student journals, posted student work, meeting with students, school improvement team, school administrator, and teachers, observing classes, talking with students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)*

The students at Agnes B. Hennessey School are proud of themselves, their school, and their community. They recognize each other's uniqueness and individual differences. Students have an innate respect for one another and spontaneously celebrate the accomplishments of their peers. They love their teachers and their school. These enthusiastic learners willingly put forth the effort required to improve their performance levels. They are proud of the products that demonstrate their learning. As active learners involved with hands-on activities and cooperative learning experiences, students report a particular love of mathematics and science. This enthusiasm enhances a positive learning environment. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, school and district administrators, school improvement team, and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Commendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

Students' enthusiasm for learning

Students' perseverance

Students' respect for self, peers, and their school community

Students' as effective mathematical problem solvers

Students' use of criteria and teacher feedback to guide and improve their work

Students' writing across the curriculum

Recommendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

Schedule more time during the school day when students may independently select materials at their own reading levels for silent reading.

Provide students with more opportunities to discuss and respond beyond the literal level to literature.

Provide students with more choices in writing.

Continue to develop criteria with students and involve more students in using rubrics to self-assess their work.

Continue to work with students on solving mathematical problems with a focus on communicating the logic of their reasoning.

FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with teachers and students*
- ◆ *meeting with students, school and district administrators, school improvement team, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ 2001, 2002 Information Works!
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *Agnes B. Hennessey School Professional Development Log*
- ◆ *WriteTraits Program manuals*
- ◆ *student portfolios*
- ◆ *posted student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*

Conclusions

Teachers at Agnes B. Hennessey School demonstrate a high level of professionalism. They are committed to best practice and to standards-based curriculum. They demonstrate an ability to reflect honestly on their craft. A strong sense of collegiality exists among the faculty. Teachers have high and clear expectations for all students. They provide a nurturing environment for their students, allowing them to become risk takers and active participants in the learning process. In science and mathematics, exploration and inquiry are expected. Teachers meet the diverse learning needs and interests of students in these areas. In language arts, however, where instruction is predominately teacher-directed and delivered to the whole group, many students are not engaged, and many of their instructional needs are not met. (*following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, district and school administrators, students, and parents, talking with teachers and students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

All teachers use some elements of the district-adopted *Harcourt Brace Program, Treasury of Literature*, within their classrooms. Many teachers have students read the same anthology selection in large or small groups. Teachers recognize that students have different ranges of ability levels and struggle to meet those needs, realizing that the sole use of Harcourt Brace is not adequate. Therefore, in an effort to meet the literacy needs of individual students many teachers are becoming educated in balanced literacy. Consequently, there is evidence of small-group instructional reading; personal and reading response journals; reading logs; partner reading; *Hampton-Brown Phonics*; and literacy centers. Many teachers do not model or guide students in developing strategies for understanding, and they do not ask students to answer higher level questions or to engage in higher-level discussion about the text. They limit opportunities for students to engage in silent reading and seldom provide guided practice at the instructional levels of their students. Teachers do not use read alouds to model. They do not encourage students to acquire new language, ask them higher-level questions, or expose them to quality literature. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers*)

All teachers effectively use the *Everyday Mathematics Program* to challenge their students. Supplemented by the

Problem Solvers Program, as well as a variety of performance tasks provided by the East Bay Educational Collaborative, students employ a variety of strategies to solve problems. Teachers conference with students and guide them in their application of mathematical skills and concepts. In an effort to meet the standard and improve their work, teachers consistently provide criteria and oral and written feedback to their students. Additionally teachers promote and support students to work cooperatively, and they encourage conversations with and among students that further clarify student understanding. Much teacher feedback focuses student attention on improving communication skills. The results of the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination show that 39% of the students met or exceeded the standard in Mathematics: Concepts, and 22% met or exceeded the standard in Problem Solving. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with school improvement team and students, student portfolios, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, posted student work*)

Although not all teachers have received training in the WriteTraits Program, most embrace the new initiative of that program. Teachers are at varying levels of understanding and implementing this program. Ongoing collaboration at same grade level and cross grade level allows for further refinement of the program and provides continuity throughout the school. While this program emphasizes traits that improve the quality of the student work, some teachers have lost sight of the writing process. Students have few opportunities to choose their own writing topics, select their own written work for publication, or share their writing. The lack of exposure to different author styles limits students' experiences and restricts their understanding of how the traits of writing apply to literature. Therefore, students do not have models for their own writing to develop the connection between reading and writing or to view themselves as authors. (*WriteTraits Program, following students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, Agnes B. Hennessey School Professional Development 2001-2002, student portfolios, posted student work*)

All teachers use a variety of assessment and evaluation tools to determine students' skills and ability levels and to follow student progress. In some curricula areas some teachers even use the collected data to direct or redirect their instruction. Teachers, and sometimes teachers together with their students, develop the criteria for guiding students to successful completion of standards-based tasks. Teachers use program and teacher-adopted rubrics to evaluate, assess, and provide feedback to students for their additional improvement. Students are required to use this feedback to bring their work to standard. This demands student accountability and provides students with clear expectations for their work. (*following students, talking with teachers and students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios, meeting with students, district and school administrators, posted student work*)

Commendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

- Recognition of student learning needs and the action taken to meet those needs
- Beginning initiatives in *WriteTraits*, *Hampton-Brown Phonics*, and balanced literacy
- Efforts of the teacher for student understanding and student enthusiasm for mathematics and science
- High expectation and accountability for all students
- Feedback that guides students to meet the standards
- High level of dedication and professionalism of the teachers

Recommendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

- Continue efforts in *WriteTraits* to improve the quality of student work within the context of process writing.
- Provide more opportunities for students to select their own writing topics.
- Provide more opportunities for students to select their own silent reading materials.

Engage students in discussions that require higher level thinking skills.

Read high quality literature of varying genres to students daily.

Encourage students to select high quality literature at their appropriate reading levels to read independently on a daily basis.

Instruct students at their appropriate instructional levels.

Continue efforts in mathematics and science that involve students in active learning.

Continue efforts to use assessment to determine student levels and progress, and expand the use of these tools to guide and direct instruction.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Continue to support the professional development efforts of the teachers to improve programs.

5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *school improvement plan*
- ◆ *Self Study Binder*
- ◆ *2002 Information Works! data*
- ◆ *Agnes B. Hennessey School Professional Development Log*
- ◆ *East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance*
- ◆ *Outline of Programs and Activities at Agnes B. Hennessey School*

Conclusions

The school climate reflects a strong sense of school community and purpose. The building is clean, bright, and cheerful. The PTA works actively to recruit members. Parents report that they would like the school to serve as a community center for after school activities. They would welcome additional information on instructional programs, specifically the Everyday Mathematics Program. Some parents are not aware of district support for parents of special education students. The friendly, informal atmosphere of the school encourages parents to feel welcome and comfortable when they approach the teachers and the principal. Across the school there is an implied code of conduct that all students follow. The students are exceptionally polite and courteous; they practice social conventions. The mutual respect of the community and school produces an environment with children as the center. *(meeting with parents, school and district administrators, school improvement team, and students, observing classes, following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with staff, teachers, many students and school administrator)*

Special education and ESL services are available to identified students within the school. Services are both inclusive and pull out. Support services in reading are provided through a Reading Recovery and Title I Program in kindergarten through grade three. Students in grades four and five do not receive any direct literacy services. This gap in service severely impacts achievement of students at a critical juncture in their reading development. The Talent Development Program directly serves a small, identified population in grades three through five. ESL, Special Education, and Talent Development are the only services available for grades four and five. Movement toward more inclusive models will enhance learning opportunities for all students. *(Outline of Programs and Activities at Agnes B. Hennessey School, talking with teachers and students, meeting with district and school administrators, school improvement team, observing classes, following students)*

The Agnes B. Hennessey School was involved in a thorough self-study. The School Improvement Team used the results of this study to develop their School Improvement Plan. Goals, objectives, tactics, and attainable activities are clearly defined, however, it is unclear how the progress toward the attainment of the goals will be measured. *(school improvement plan 2001-2002, Self Study Binder, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators)*

The teachers and the principal recognize that this is a school with students who have diverse needs. The lack of

appropriate support and materials is frustrating to teachers and influences the nature of their instruction. The staff acknowledges that the programs, materials, and time allocations do not meet the needs of all learners. In an effort to address some of these concerns and close some of the existing achievement gaps common planning time is provided for same grade level teachers. There is a lack of rich literature, both fiction and nonfiction, in the school library and the classroom libraries. The books that are available in the school library are outdated and in poor condition. The library collection is extremely limited and does not support the reading standards or the curricula. Consequently, student choice is limited. Additionally, the library is staffed on a part-time basis, thereby limiting access to this important resource. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with students, district and school administrators, school improvement team, talking with teachers and students, 2002 Information Works! data*)

The East Providence School Department *Appraisal of Teacher Performance* document is a checklist format that indicates three levels of performance and provides for evaluator comments. This is not aligned with standards and provides limited feedback to teachers. A mentoring program is available, but it is not mandatory. Teachers at Agnes B. Hennessey School seek out and attend a variety of professional development activities to assist them in providing student learning. As a focus school, Agnes B. Hennessey School takes advantage of the many offerings provided by The East Bay Educational Collaborative. (*Agnes B. Hennessey School Professional Development Log, East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance, talking with teachers, meeting with district and school administrators*)

The principal of Agnes B. Hennessey School is both an outstanding instructional leader and an operational manager. She views herself as a learner; she is a visible presence and a positive influence on the school community. She effectively coordinates school reform efforts. She respects the teachers as professionals and values their individual expertise. She empowers teachers and staff and supports them in their efforts to provide expert instruction to all students. (*talking with teachers, students, and staff observing the school, meeting with parents, district administrators, school improvement team*)

Commendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

Commitment of teachers to professional development opportunities and professional growth

Positive school climate

Parental support of the school

Outstanding leadership of the principal

Recommendations for Agnes B. Hennessey School

Make information about the District Advisory Group available to parents of students who receive special education services regularly and frequently.

Expand and offer school-based workshops for parents regarding school instructional programs in order to strengthen the connection between home and school.

Explore community resources to pilot an after school program.

Provide literacy support, direct reading services, and the necessary staffing and materials for students in grades four and five.

Include in the school improvement plan a defining way to measure the school progress toward attaining its goals.

Purchase materials and books that will address the diverse instructional needs of all students.

Update and expand the school library collection to include quality literature for all levels.

Include ESL, Special Education, and Title 1 reading teachers in common planning times.

Explore ways to include the itinerant teachers in common planning time.

Recommendations for East Providence School Department

Work with teachers to develop a teacher evaluation tool that is aligned with teaching standards.

Continue to provide teachers with the necessary professional development to support their programs.

Make information about the District Advisory Group available to parents of students who receive special education services regularly and frequently.

Provide literacy support, direct reading services, and necessary staffing and materials for students in grades four and five.

Allocate the funds necessary to purchase materials and books that will address the diverse instructional needs of all students.

Allocate the funds necessary to update and expand the school library collection to include quality literature for all levels.

Increase the amount of time scheduled for a library media specialist in Agnes B. Hennessey School.

6. Final Advice to the School

You are doing a great job. Your commitment and efforts are evident. You genuinely hold the students at the heart of the learning process. Remain vigilant in your efforts to provide equitable resources at varying instructional levels to help meet the needs of all your learners.

Provide your students with more choice in reading and writing. Continue to utilize your partnership with the East Bay Educational Collaborative as you look at student work, assess student need and progress, and use this information to drive your instruction.

Read high quality literature of varying genres to your students regularly and frequently. Engage your students in high-level literary discussions. Allow your students' time to discuss literature in order to foster their connections to self, text, and the world. This will further develop their lifelong reading habits.

Let your success in mathematics and science direct you as you examine your practice in language arts and reading. Your students thrive on active participation. As you move toward balanced literacy, we are confident that student involvement will enable you to meet students at their appropriate instructional levels and will improve student achievement.

We applaud the literacy focus for students in kindergarten through grade three and understand the scientific evidence that supports programming at that level. However, we are genuinely concerned about the lack of direct reading services and the evident inequity in available materials for students in grades four and five.

This SALT Visit team has been impressed with your reflection and commitment to your practice. We realize that this week of Rhode Island Writing Assessment and State Health testing added extra stress to this process; however, you welcomed us, and we thank you. It is our hope that this report will validate and inform your efforts in improving the quality of teaching and learning at Agnes B. Hennessey School.

The Agnes B. Hennessey School Improvement Team

Patricia Barlow
Principal

Margaret Furtado
Parent

Susan Jordan
Teacher

Elaine Joseph
Parent

Cathy Moore
Community Representative

Jackie Reynolds
PTA Representative

Ruth Reynolds
Non-Teaching Staff

Cheryl Rodrigues
Parent

Debra Souza
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Bath Salzillo
Non-teaching Staff

Debbie Stringfellow
Parent

Barbara Sullivan
Teacher

Maria Tavares
Community Representative

The SALT Visit Team

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SALT Fellow
On leave to the RIDE as a SALT Fellow
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Barrington

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Mary E. Fogarty Elementary School
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Celeste B. Kane
Intensive Resource Teacher
Melville Elementary School
Portsmouth

Maryanne Maclure
Fifth Grade Teacher
Hampden Meadows School
Barrington

We would like also to acknowledge the work of Jeannine Magliocco, Fourth Grade Teacher, Aquidneck School in Middletown. A family medical emergency made it impossible for her to remain on the team for the full visit.

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Agnes B. Hennessey School

May 10, 2002

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began

daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit,

observation of a portion of the visit

discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form,

The findings from the review are:

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 are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
3. The report is legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, Ed.D.
Catalpa Ltd.
June 10, 2002