



Bradford School

Westerly

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).

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

James A. DiPrete, Chairman

Jo Eva Gaines, Vice Chair

Colleen Callahan, Secretary

Representative Paul W. Crowley

Sue P. Duff

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

Gary E. Grove

Patrick A. Guida

Mario A. Mancieri

Vidal P. Perez

-

-

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Peter McWalters, Commissioner

The Board of Regents does not discriminate
on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

For information about SALT, please contact Ken Fish at 401-222-4600, x 2200 or salt@ridoe.net.

This report is available at <http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/visits.htm>

1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report.....	1
Overview.....	1
Sources of Evidence for This Report.....	2
Using the Report.....	4
2. PROFILE OF Bradford School.....	5
Background.....	5
State Assessment Results for Bradford School.....	5
3. PORTRAIT OF Bradford School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT.....	7
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING.....	8
Sources of Evidence.....	8
Conclusions.....	8
Commendations for Bradford School.....	10
Recommendations for Bradford School.....	10
5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING.....	11
Sources of Evidence.....	11
Conclusions.....	11
Commendations for Bradford School.....	13
Recommendations for Bradford School.....	13
Recommendations for Westerly School District.....	13
6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL.....	14
Sources of Evidence.....	14
Conclusions.....	14
Commendations for Bradford School.....	17
Recommendations for Bradford School.....	17
Recommendations for Westerly School District.....	17
7. Final Advice to the School.....	18
<i>The Bradford School Improvement Team.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The SALT Visit Team.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2001).....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report.....</i>	<i>22</i>

1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Bradford School from May 6 to 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.

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 Bradford 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 Bradford School.

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

observing a total of 97 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 90 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 seven students for a full day

observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day

meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:

teachers

school improvement team

school and district administrators

students

parents

talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators

- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing four years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

Westerly Public Schools Strategic Plan

Westerly School District Special Education Handbook and Resource Manual

Westerly Public Schools Student Expectation Handbook

Westerly Public Schools Reading, Writing and Math Curriculum

Westerly Public Schools K-5 Classroom Reading Assessments

Westerly Public School Employee Handbook

Westerly Public Schools Talent Development

Westerly School District Crisis Response Guidelines

Contract between Westerly School Committee and the Westerly Teachers' Association, 2000-2003

School Report Night, Bradford Elementary School, 2001-2002

Bradford Elementary School Professional Development Plan, 2001-2002 School Year

2001-2002 SALT Survey report

Bradford School self study

Bradford Elementary School SALT Visit Team binder

Report Cards, Grades K-5

The Grape Vine binder

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

classroom assessments

school improvement plan for Bradford School

district strategic plan

classroom textbooks

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 InformationWorks!

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

1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

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 Bradford School

Background

Bradford Elementary School, the smallest of five elementary schools in the Westerly School District in Westerly, Rhode Island, serves students in kindergarten through grade five. Located in the village of Bradford, the school was built in 1925 and closed in 1981 due to a decrease in enrollment. The town considered demolishing the entire building after it suffered significant damage in a 1983 fire. Due to a grass roots effort by the citizens of Bradford, the school was rebuilt and re-opened with two classrooms in 1987. It eventually was expanded to include fourteen classrooms, an art/music room, a multi-purpose room, three smaller instructional areas, and a cafeteria/gym.

For many years a teacher-facilitator was head of the school, but beginning this year, a full-time principal leads the school. A professional staff of 19 full- and nine part-time faculty, eight teaching assistants, a half-time literacy intern, a secretary, a building aide, three lunch/recess aides, two cafeteria workers, and two custodians service the Bradford School. Grades one through five include two classes each, and kindergarten consists of two full-day classes. The school also houses a district wide program for students who have severe behavioral disorders. Bradford is a Title I school.

Of the 235 students at Bradford School 93% are white, 2% are Black, 2% are Native American, 2% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Forty-six students receive special education services, 7% are self-contained, and 12% receive resource room support. Ninety-nine students (44%) are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Community and parent involvement is extensive at Bradford School. Among the many examples of this participation are the following: Before and After School Program offering topics in athletics, academics, technology, and music; Reading Buddies literacy volunteers, who read together with various students; an Arts and Enrichment Committee, a parent volunteer group that coordinates puppet shows, musical performances, author visits, and holiday celebrations; Family Library Nights, which occur one evening a month when families may listen to stories, work on computers, or browse through the school's book collection; and Westerly High School Community Service Initiatives, in which students act as literacy tutors, recess assistants, and before and after school instructors to fulfill their community service requirement.

State Assessment Results for Bradford School

On the subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination one in two of the fourth graders (56%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; two in five of the fourth graders (44%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one in six of the fourth graders (16%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for males and special education students. On the subtests in Mathematics students at the Bradford School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Basic Skills and Problem Solving and better than similar students statewide on Concepts. There is an upward trend in the percentage of students achieving the standard or achieving the standard with honors in Concepts (16%-44%) during the four years of collecting test data.

On the reading subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination eight in 10 of the fourth graders (80%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and one in two of the fourth graders (55%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in reading for poverty and special education students. In the Reading subtests students at the Bradford School perform above the level of similar students in the state on Basic Understanding and at the same level as similar students in the state on Analysis and Interpretation.

On the writing subtests of the 2000-2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination seven in 10 of the fourth graders (68%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness, and six in 10 of the fourth graders (57%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment two in five of the third graders (38%) met or exceeded the standard. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist

in writing for special education students. Students at the Bradford 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 Bradford School is available at <http://www.rido.net>>www.rido.net.

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

A strong sense of community begins to unfold as you approach Bradford School. The yard is well groomed and shiny playground equipment waits for youngsters to play. The entrance to the school is welcoming with student-painted murals for visitors to enjoy. Student work is proudly displayed throughout the building. The students are friendly, respectful, and motivated. They are eager learners and active participants in their education through hands-on activities and collaboration with their peers. They are positive, responsible members of this learning community. Children enjoy coming to school, feel safe here, and report that Bradford School is a “fun place” to be.

The teachers in the school demonstrate a strong ability to adapt, and most work well together. Even through difficult times of change, teachers work collaboratively and contribute in a positive manner to their students’ learning. They make their intentions clear by fostering a love of learning. Through their hard work and professionalism, they raise expectations for their students.

The energetic new principal is determined to increase student achievement at Bradford. He has brought his generosity and kind spirit to the task of leading his school to make the changes that are necessary to reach this goal. He is personable and approachable, and he knows his students by name. The school community admires him and feels that he is someone they can trust. At Bradford the principal, students, parents and staff are truly a team.

Much work is underway this year to move Bradford School forward. Everyone is experiencing a steep learning curve at this time. The faculty is becoming a team that works closely with the new principal in his efforts to bring about positive change. The adoption of a new math series, *Investigations*, is in its initial stages of implementation. Teachers and students work diligently to adjust to the new approach in teaching and learning that this series requires. The use of standards and rubrics to raise the bar for what students know and are able to do is beginning to take hold. Teachers plan to participate in Course One, which will aid them in the implementation of standards in their instruction. Empowering Writers (grades 2-5) and Kid Writing (grades K-1), two new writing programs, are underway in some classrooms. Other teachers plan to receive necessary training this summer to implement these programs school-wide. Even kindergarten students are adjusting to 100% participation in all-day sessions.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 Information Works!*
- ◆ *meeting with students, school administrator, parents*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *Bradford School self study*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*

Conclusions

Students at Bradford School are respectful and supportive of each other. They are kind, caring, and polite, even in the open areas of the school. Students work well in small and large groups. They are on task and actively engaged in their learning. Many students are self-regulating and work independently without prompting or assistance. Students feel they are empowered to be responsible for their own learning. Students are intrinsically aware and proud of their accomplishments. They feel comfortable taking risks and find interactive learning fun. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, school administrator, and parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*)

Students are prolific and confident writers at all grade levels. They write in a variety of genres including expository, narrative, descriptive, and persuasive. Students write book reviews, “how to” pieces, journal entries, science reports, and logs. In math the primary grade students competently state the solutions to problems in sentence form, while the intermediate grades write justifications for their solutions with ease. They are working toward proficiency in the writing process to complete pieces independently. Students publish their writings for a variety of audiences including their peers, families, and teachers. These published pieces are high quality and impressive. Students explore the use of voice in their writings; they are proud, excited and eager to share what they have written. However, students have limited choice in the topics they write about. They write primarily in response to literature and to what they read in their content areas. Student motivation to write, as well as the quality of their writing, would increase if they were given more creative choice in what they can write about. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, Bradford School self study, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

Students are excited about reading and are motivated to read. They adeptly read to their classmates, across grade

levels, and to adults. Students capably participate in independent reading, flexible groups, whole-class read alouds, and literature circles. Students conduct picture walks to construct meaning and make predictions about the stories they are reading. They eagerly take advantage of free time throughout the day to read various leveled books for their own pleasure. The Accelerated Reader program has caught on like “wildfire” with students, motivating them to set even higher goals for themselves. Although students show success in comprehending what they read, they exhibit a need to develop their critical thinking skills further, especially in the areas of analysis and interpretation. *(following students, observing classes, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 Information Works!, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator)*

During math lessons students are comfortable working in pairs and small groups, utilizing a variety of manipulatives and math tools. They complete or solve problems quickly and accurately with the Creative Problem Solver resource. Students express a positive view of math; they are actively engaged in skills, concepts, and problem solving. They competently explain their solutions to problems by using the overhead projector and transparencies. Students enjoy the *Investigations* program because of the wide array of activities, manipulatives, and games it offers. Some use their math skills in real life situations such as measuring their feet and the height of plants, taking their temperatures, gathering data for graphing, and estimating various quantities. However, there is little evidence that students apply math concepts to complex, real-life problem-solving situations. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, Bradford School self study, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom textbooks)*

Students have internalized the expectations and routines of the school environment. Seamless and effortless transitions give them the maximize time on tasks. Lesson changes, snack time, restroom use, and movement throughout the building occur with optimum efficiency. The whole day flows smoothly. Students know what is expected of them and are very responsible about carrying out their tasks. The ease with which the children manage themselves is impressive. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator)*

Commendations for Bradford School

Respectful, kind, and cooperative students

Proud, enthusiastic, and motivated students

Students who clearly understand what behavior and classroom routines are expected of them.

Recommendations for Bradford School

Continue to foster and heighten student awareness of self-reflection, responsibility, and life skills.

Continue to provide a positive, nurturing school environment.

Provide students with a greater choice in their various writing activities. Increase opportunities for them to write reflectively and creatively.

Increase your students’ critical thinking skills through activities that involve asking and answering higher order questions, analyzing, and interpreting.

Explore and use additional ways to tap into the students’ various learning styles.

Allow more opportunities for students to stretch beyond their present levels of performance in math skills, concepts, and problem solving.

Continue to develop the citizenship skills and the social and personal responsibility that you already have instilled in your students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meetings with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ 2002 Information Works!
- ◆ *reviewing 2001-2002 SALT Survey*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

Conclusions

Teachers are dedicated and hardworking; they actively advocate for their students. A genuine rapport between teachers and students is evident, creating an especially warm, safe learning atmosphere within the classrooms. Despite the many changes that are taking place within the school, the teachers remain focused on the needs of their students—academic, social, and emotional. Teachers throughout the school effectively collaborate across the grades. Teachers demonstrate initiative to broaden their own skills and knowledge by participating in professional development activities. This dedication to life-long learning gives teachers a variety of tools to better accommodate the diverse needs of their students. Students feel important and understood, which empowers them to thrive in a nurturing environment. (*following students, reviewing records of professional development activities, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meetings with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing 2001-2002 SALT Survey*)

Teachers promote and highly value writing for all students. They allow substantial time for students to produce various pieces. They encourage students to produce high quality published and shared works. Writing processes and skills are comprehensively taught through the use of effective modeling. Teachers provide varied prompts, topics, and cues for writing. Although teachers provide their students with ample opportunities to write, students are limited in their personal selection of genres and topics. Students have limited opportunities to write creatively. (*observing classes, following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Dedication to reading is apparent in the number of opportunities teachers provide their students throughout each day. Teachers employ many instructional vehicles to encourage student reading. These include literature circles, flexible grouping, reading buddies, and read alouds. Teachers foster student awareness of their own reading levels, thereby facilitating their selection of appropriate reading materials. The teachers' choice to implement the Accelerated Reading Program in all classrooms further stimulates students to achieve at higher reading levels. While teachers model numerous reading strategies for decoding and comprehension, students are not consistently and independently applying them, especially in the areas of analysis and interpretation. This may help to explain the discrepancy between the percentages of students meeting the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding (80%) and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation (55%) on the 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results. Teachers report that they would like additional professional development to increase their skills in teaching reading. Presently, there is a limited emphasis on teaching higher order thinking skills in reading. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, 2002 Information Works!, 2001-2002 SALT Survey Report)*

Teachers encourage a positive attitude toward math instruction. They utilize a variety of techniques to organize student learning. Teachers are working hard to learn concepts, content, and instructional strategies of the newly implemented and challenging math program, *Investigations*, in order to teach their students well. However, they require students to work together and at the same pace. Although the use of Creative Problem Solvers has established common language in the area of problem-solving strategies, limited evidence exists that teachers assign multi-step, authentic, and meaningful problem-solving tasks to extend student critical thinking skills. Some teachers emphasize how to use one strategy to solve a problem, while most teachers are working toward teaching the use of multiple strategies to solve a problem. The scores on the Math subtests of the New Standards Reference Examination show a discrepancy in the percentages of students who meet the standard in Skills and Concepts and those who meet the standard in Problem Solving. Furthermore, teachers have limited opportunities to help students see the connections between computer technology and the teaching of math and science. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers, reviewing 2001-2002 SALT Survey, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results)*

Commendations for Bradford School

- Dedication to students
- Commitment to professional development
- Impressive collaboration among staff and faculty

Recommendations for Bradford School

- Provide more students with a greater number of opportunities to choose what they write.
- Develop a more intentional high-level questioning technique to develop student comprehension and the skills of analysis and interpretation. Provide students with ample opportunities to practice these skills.
- Strengthen student ability to apply complex problem-solving strategies to real life situations. Increase the opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, multi-step problem-solving tasks.
- Increase differentiated instruction throughout the curriculum so that students can work at their individual paces.
- Further integrate technology into classroom instruction.

Recommendations for Westerly School District

- Support teachers in their valiant efforts to improve student learning at Bradford School.

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 and district administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing Bradford School self study*
- ◆ *reviewing 2001-2002 Salt Survey*
- ◆ *meeting with school improvement team, students, teachers, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

Conclusions

Bradford Elementary School is a warm and welcoming place! There is a strong sense of family and community, as teachers and staff continually build relationships with students and their families. Rapport is enhanced as a result of the small class size. The children enjoy school and feel safe and supported here. Even though some teachers struggle with the many changes that are underway here, there is a genuine commitment by the entire faculty and the principal and staff to meet the needs of all children. This commitment can be seen in the many examples of teamwork, dedication, and professionalism of the staff. The positive atmosphere is conducive to learning—truly everyone learns together! (*following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing 2001-2002 Salt Survey, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*)

All staff, teachers, and the school administrator are highly involved in professional development. Teachers initiate, share, and implement their new learning to enhance their classroom practice. The principal models by example, as well as provides supports for teachers and staff in their pursuit of increasing student achievement. Furthermore, he encourages embedded professional development by scheduling common planning time for teachers and utilizing faculty meetings for this purpose. Teachers participate in a wide variety of conferences, workshops, and focus groups offered by the district. The principal, teachers, and staff are dedicated, life-long learners. (*observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing Bradford School self study, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing records of professional development activities*)

Both the number and caliber of the support staff at Bradford School are remarkable. A pervasive feeling among staff members is that they belong to a warm extended family. There is a sense of equality among the staff in

general, and as a result, they exude their dedication and caring. Overall, the support staff performs its job in an effective and professional manner, even though some members work only part-time. For example, the half-time nurse is not adequate to address the students' medical needs. A viable health education program for students is not yet fully developed. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents)*

The STAR program for identified students is comprehensive in addressing their social, emotional, and educational needs. The effective behavior management techniques used by the STAR staff allow for academics to be the primary emphasis. This program also benefits the entire school by offering support, safe space, and resources to many other students and teachers. The full-time social worker is valuable in supporting students, in general, and those in the STAR program, in particular. The social worker is instrumental in bridging the gap between the school and the community. A similar behavior management style and academic program also exists in the self-contained special education classroom. This is admirable. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator)*

The school improvement plan, as written, is a comprehensive and clearly written document for informing school improvement efforts at Bradford. Timelines, target dates, and personnel responsibility are specified in the document. The school improvement team meets on a regular basis to review and update the work it needs to do to complete the plan this year. Although the team is competently carrying out its mission, a few teachers report that team building is needed to develop a more effective, cohesive school improvement team to continue to move the school forward in its reform efforts. *(meeting with school improvement team and parents, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with teachers)*

Technology at Bradford School is at an emergent stage. Faculty and staff participate in technology training as opportunities arise. Last fall many participated in intense instruction, led by the fourth grade Intel leader, in the use of computers in the classroom. However, not all classrooms have equal access to technology, which impedes teachers from integrating it into the curriculum areas. Teachers, families, and students have expressed concerns that the Bradford students will fall behind in technology literacy. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, school and district administrators, reviewing Bradford School self study, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents)*

The "standards movement" is taking hold at Bradford School. The use of rubrics is prevalent across the grades. Most teachers, under the guidance of the principal, are starting to implement standards-based instruction prior to the district's adoption of the standards initiative. Teachers recognize the need for more professional development to enhance their understanding and to help them effectively use standards in their classroom. They report that they will participate in Course One training this summer. Teachers willingly do what is needed to improve their craft and their students' learning. *(meeting with students, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, observing classes, reviewing Bradford School self study, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator)*

A perception that the school is not treated equitably, compared to other schools in the district, permeates the Bradford learning community. Due to its enrollment size, the resources allocated may be equal, but they are not equitable in meeting the needs of all students. The district understands the difference between equity and equality and is taking steps to "close the gap" between and among the schools. Recently, both kindergarten classes became all-day classes to meet the educational needs of the students here. *(talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents)*

The newly appointed principal is a compassionate innovative leader. Mr. Romeo is highly visible and generates enthusiasm throughout the school. His presence is a positive influence on the entire school community. Students, parents, and staff report that their principal is an asset to Bradford School and that he is just what is needed. The district states that he is "masterful" at handling difficult situations. While some are slow to accept the role of "principal" in school leadership, most staff members feel that this principal is an approachable team leader, who is genuinely receptive to their ideas. Recognizing the need for improvement, he takes the initiative to implement the necessary changes. Mr. Romeo has a clear vision and direction for the school, his staff, and the community. He

motivates and empowers his staff to strive for excellence in all aspects of teaching and learning. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and staff*)

Commendations for Bradford School

Pursuit of life-long learning

Strong sense of community

Compassionate, innovative leader

The STAR program

Effective use of community services

Recommendations for Bradford School

Continue to support your principal in his efforts to lead your school.

Continue your education regarding the effective use of standards and rubrics. Carry through on your plans to complete Course One.

Continue with your professionalism and your dedication to students and their families.

Embed technology into your everyday school routines and instruction.

Provide the school improvement team with professional development to enable team building. Use these team-building techniques with the entire faculty.

Maintain your fine sense of community and continue to work together for the benefit of your students.

Recommendations for Westerly School District

Continue to support the principal in his efforts to lead Bradford School.

Increase the number of working computers that are available to students in each classroom.

Celebrate and publicize Bradford School's successes to increase community pride in the school and to improve the public perception of the school.

Maintain the all-day kindergarten classes at Bradford School.

Provide adequate medical and health education services.

7. Final Advice to the School

When Bradford School comes to mind, so do thoughts of happy children, dedicated teachers, and a generous, caring leader. Another theme prevalent at Bradford is “*new beginnings*”; this includes *new* principal, *new* standards-based instruction, *new* curriculum, and *new* ideas. Change comes with new beginnings. We commend the staff on its professionalism and willingness to grow educationally. Your students are eager, responsible learners, who report they love coming to school. A sense of pride permeates the building. The school is to be applauded for its attention to detail, open lines of communication, and parent involvement. Bradford School is a remarkable learning community.

This report summarizes a great deal of what is going well at Bradford. Appreciate your numerous achievements, but consider carefully our recommendations in reference to critical thinking in math and reading. Assess your students and provide differentiated instruction wherever appropriate. Continue your efforts to implement standards and rubrics effectively in your lessons so that you raise the bar for all students. Persist in expressing your community spirit and pride for your school; this will break through or realign long-standing perceptions.

Most importantly, you have placed your students and their achievement higher than any interpersonal conflicts or obstacles you face as a staff. This is an excellent beginning. Be patient and support each other through your new beginnings. Let your dedication to your students be a unifying force. With your vision of excellence and team spirit the Bradford community will glide through the changes, and you will thrive as you “learn together”. There is no doubt that Bradford is “a place where learning has no limits.” Good luck to you in your quest for excellence.

The Bradford School Improvement Team

Stephanie Blackburn
Grade 4 Teacher

Lisa Connelly
Grade 1 Teacher

Sally Cuda
Parent

Gina Gervasini
Parent

Mark Doescher
Parent

Linda Lavoie
Grade 5 Teacher

Michael Ober
School Committee

Jon Romeo
Principal

Jennifer Sinotte
Resource Teacher

Patty Shippee
Parent

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
serving as a Regent SALT Fellow
Visit Team Chair

Monique J. Bruno
School Psychologist
Charlestown Elementary School/Chariho Middle School
Charlestown, Rhode Island

Holly Eaves
Parent
School Improvement Team
Charlestown Elementary School
Charlestown, Rhode Island

Jennifer Jendzejec
Grade 3 Teacher
Washington Oak Elementary School
Coventry, Rhode Island

Judith A. Lundsten
Aspiring Principal
Garden City School
Cranston, Rhode Island

Kim St. Clair
Grade 2 Teacher
Richmond Elementary School
Richmond, Rhode Island

Susan Sangster
Grade 5 Teacher
Wickford Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Bradford 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 www.Catalpa.org). 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 not completely routine. A team member left the team during the visit because of misunderstandings about that member's professional role on the team.

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 protocol and procedures. When the misunderstandings about the team member were clear, they were handled extremely well by the team member, the chair and the principal. As a result, it had no negative effect on the visit's conduct.
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 4, 2002