



# Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

West Warwick

## 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.ride.net/schoolimprove/salt/visits.htm>**

1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report..... 1

<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sources of Evidence for This Report.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Using the Report.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. PROFILE OF Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>State Assessment Results for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. PORTRAIT OF Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sources of Evidence.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Sources of Evidence.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Recommendations for West Warwick School District.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Sources of Evidence.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Recommendations for West Warwick School District.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Recommendations for West Warwick Teachers Union.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>7. Final Advice to the School.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>The Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School Improvement Team.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>The SALT Visit Team.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2001).....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report.....</i>	<i>28</i>

# 1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

## Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School from May 6, 2002 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.

## 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 Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team builds its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, the visit allows the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 97 classes. The team spent over 106 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 8 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 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*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - classroom assessments*
  - classroom assignments*
  - student work folders*
  - school improvement plan for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School*
  - SALT Team binder*
  - 2001-2002 SALT Survey report*

*teacher evaluation instrument for West Warwick Public Schools*

*West Warwick Public Schools completed and draft curricula*

*West Warwick School Department Professional Development Academy Catalogs*

*Parent Involvement Report*

*Literature Works Project Knowledge Notebook*

*Reading Excellence Grant binder*

*Mentoring Program Handbook*

*Feinstein Make a Difference Newsletters (01-02)*

*Maisie E. Quinn Garden of Good Deeds Scrapbook*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 29-1/2 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 Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

### Background

Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in the West Warwick Public School System. It serves students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade five in the city of West Warwick, Rhode Island. The present school first opened its doors to students in 1958. It was enlarged in the 1970s to meet the needs of a growing student population.

A five-member elected school board governs the West Warwick Public School District. A five-member city council governs the city. Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, 38 full- and part-time faculty, 25 assistants and support personnel, and two full-time and one half-time custodian

Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School has an attendance rate of 96 percent. Of the 414 students attending this school 95 percent are White, 3 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are Black. One-hundred-twenty-five students totaling 33 percent receive special education services, and 52 percent applied for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

### State Assessment Results for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

On the subtests of the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination (NSRE) approximately one in two of the fourth graders (52%) met or exceeded the standard in Basic Skills; approximately three in 10 of the fourth graders (28%) met or exceeded the standard in Concepts; and approximately one in seven of the fourth graders (13%) met or exceeded the standard in Problem Solving. On the 2000 NSRE students at Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School perform below similar students in the state on Basic Skills and Problem Solving and at the same level on Concepts. Maisie E. Quinn student performance is improving in Mathematics.

On the Reading subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination three in four of the fourth graders (75%) met or exceeded the standard in Basic Understanding, and six in 10 of the fourth graders (60%) met or exceeded the standard in Analysis and Interpretation. From 1998-2000 equity gaps exist in reading for Non-Poverty, Multi-racial, and Special Education students. On the 2000 NSRE students at Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School perform above similar students in the state on Reading: Basic Understanding and on Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Maisie E. Quinn student performance is improving in English Language Arts.

On the writing subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination approximately one in two of the fourth graders (46%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and approximately two in three of the fourth graders (66%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment approximately one in 10 of the third graders (11%) met or exceeded the standard. From 1998-2000 equity gaps exist in writing for Hispanic, Multi-racial, and Special Education students. On the 2000 NSRE students at Maisie E. Quinn School perform at the same level as similar students in the state on Writing: Conventions and above similar students on Writing: Effectiveness. Maisie E. Quinn student performance is improving in English Language Arts.

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

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

When one walks into Maisie E. Quinn School, one is struck by the smiles, the polite door holding, and the helpful and inquisitive children. Though the building may be old and the furniture worn, the population that spends its days here is vibrant and here for one purpose: to learn. This is a school where adults and students learn from each other. Clearly the entire learning community has embraced their motto, “where students achieve their personal best.”

The students clearly like the faculty, staff, and principal. They are excited to come to school, feel safe and supported, and most are eager to learn. The children, whose needs are highly diverse, are respectful and caring. Most are enthusiastic, polite, and proud of their school. Similarly, parents are very satisfied with the school, feel welcome here, and are appreciative of the child-centered learning environment that has been created.

The Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School has a dedicated staff that is committed to the educational needs of all students. The principal, faculty, and staff are dedicated to providing a strong academic and social foundation, as well as to instilling a love of learning in their students. Teachers are conscientiously seeking out and working to adopt research-based practices to meet the needs of their students. They are doing a wonderful job of serving the needs of this diverse community through the education of its children. They exert sincere efforts to help their students grow intellectually and emotionally.

An atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding permeates this school. Students, staff, faculty and the school principal are part of a cohesive learning community in which all work well with one another, value one another, and operate as a tight knit family. Together they have molded a positive school culture where students can grow and learn. This extraordinary atmosphere is a direct result of the open and honest attitudes and conscientious efforts of all who are part of this learning community.

This school has embarked on an educational journey designed to improve the overall quality of instruction. Goals have been established; many have been met; and many are yet to be achieved. Fully realizing the goals of the school will require the ongoing refinement of the reading program K-5, additional emphasis on writing and mathematical problem solving, additional job-embedded professional development, a more explicit focus on standards-based assessments and tasks, and increased attention on higher order thinking skills.

The focus on teaching and learning that contributed to Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School’s accomplishment of improving on all subtests of the New Standards Reference Examination will enable this school to continue to make a positive impact on the lives of children. Essentially, the faculty and staff are moving forward, and their collective commitment to excellence is their greatest strength.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

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

### Conclusions

Most students are eager to learn, actively engaged in their learning, and are happy to be attending this school. Students exhibit a genuine concern and respect for adults and each other. They are proud of what they are learning and are aware of their own accomplishments. Students feel nurtured and safe. They are excited to talk with adults about their work and their school. Many students are beginning to use standards and rubrics to guide the development of their work and to assist them in their own learning processes. Some students are successfully evaluating their own work and are cognizant of their own learning styles. Most students, who are very well behaved and have internalized the school's expectations for behavior, will quietly redirect and self-correct their own behavior. Nevertheless, some students talk out in class, are off task when working in groups, and occasionally disrupt class in other ways. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with students*)

Most students read well and like to read. Students read a variety of texts in multiple genres for a variety of purposes. Most students are able to use several strategies to decode words and build meaning when reading print. Most students enjoy reading and have good word attack skills. Students read independently, and many read for pleasure. As one student said, "Reading books allows me to escape into a different world." They select from a wide variety of reading materials that are based on their own interests and read at their own reading levels. Students report that they enjoy "making words," guided reading, read alouds, and literature circles. Many students are capable of making inferences. Most students read well at a literal level and can effectively identify story elements such as plot, setting, and character. Conversely, students are less adept at deciding between relevant and irrelevant information, determining strategies used by authors, supporting claims with relevant textual evidence, and summarizing. Additionally, some students have difficulty with document literacy—reading charts, graphs, maps, tables, headings, and figures to understand the main ideas in a text and to extract important information from it. (*reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, following students, observing classes, reviewing 2001 NSRE English Language Arts School Summary, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

Students are developing the skills they need to write effectively and are writing across the curriculum. Students are creating sentences, retelling stories, writing in response journals, and creating book reports, biographies, friendly letters, informational writing, and text for oral and multimedia presentations. They also brainstorm and create webs

and other graphic organizers. Many students are aware of elements of the writing process—brainstorming, pre-writing, editing, revising, creating a final draft, and publishing. Some students successfully sequence story elements in a narrative account and develop story ideas. A number of students have difficulty with sentence and paragraph structure and with using the conventions of English—spelling, verb tense, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization—to create high quality writing. They also have difficulty creating an engaging beginning, staying focused on the main topic, establishing a context, excluding irrelevant information, accurately portraying information such as supporting details, and drawing conclusions. While some students can add detail in writing, use descriptive language, craft a good topic sentence, and create a good summary paragraph, many inconsistently embed these skills in their writing. Additionally, a number of students are confused about the difference between revising and editing. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with teachers, reviewing student work folders, reviewing 2001 NSRE English Language Arts School Summary*)

Most students are secure in basic mathematical skills. Many students readily identify math as a subject they love and are connecting the math they are learning to their everyday lives. They are able to appreciate how math is used in a number of authentic contexts. Students are using protractors, compasses, meter sticks, unifix cubes, pattern blocks, centimeter blocks, dice, dominoes, and other manipulatives to develop and reinforce their understanding of mathematical concepts. Nevertheless, students too often complete skills-based worksheets while learning math. When talking and writing about math many students can use the language of mathematics—shapes, composite numbers, and square roots. While many students are frequently communicating their mathematical thinking orally, fewer can effectively explain, defend, and/or rationalize their answers in writing. Similarly, a number of students have difficulty interpreting data from charts and graphs, representing numbers in different forms, and independently selecting and using a variety of strategies and techniques to solve multi-step problems. (*following students, observing classes, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, 2001 NSRE Mathematics School Summary, reviewing classroom assignments*)

Many students are developing skills as cooperative learners and using dialogue to build meaning and understanding. They effectively self-manage and collaborate; they are active learners. They discuss and share ideas and use each other as a resource. Some students use dialogue as a means to develop their individual understanding, as well as to develop the collective understanding of their group or class. A few even refer consistently to written evidence when talking and writing. They often appropriately make suggestions to help their peers learn and solve problems without necessarily giving them the correct answer. Most students effectively use the resources in their classrooms such as word walls, hundreds charts, manipulatives, rubrics, and motivational messages to aide them in the completion of the tasks they are given. Nevertheless, student knowledge and understanding of rubrics, and their effective use of them, as well as of other tools to assist their independent-learning, varies from class to class. Moreover, at the primary level teamwork is evident and all are expected to contribute; this occurs less frequently in some intermediate classes. (*interviewing teachers about the work of their students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, following students*)

## Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

The respectful, friendly students

The school spirit, pride, and sense of community exhibited by students

The students' eagerness to learn

Students' willingness to read independently and for pleasure

Students' love of math

Students' willingness to assist their peers in a variety of ways

## Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

Further develop and increase student's proficiency in deciding between relevant and irrelevant information, determining the author's craft, supporting claims with convincing textual evidence, summarizing, as well as their ability to extract information from multiple types of documents when reading.

Augment student's proficiency in crafting an engaging beginning, using proper sentence and paragraph structures, establishing a context, staying focused on the main topic, excluding irrelevant information, portraying information accurately such as supporting details, and using the conventions of English to craft high quality writing.

Further develop and increase student's understanding and use of revising and editing in the writing process.

Further develop students' ability to write detailed explanations of their mathematical thinking and of the processes they use to solve problems and perform mathematical tasks.

Further develop and increase student's proficiency with independently selecting and using a variety of strategies to solve complex multi-step problems, as well as their ability to interpret data from graphs and charts.

Further develop and increase the ability of students to use rubrics and other self-management tools to guide and shape the quality of the work they produce.

Further develop and increase the ability of students to use dialogue and discussion as a means to develop their individual understanding and the collective understanding of their peers, as well as their proficiency with using evidence when they speak and write.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

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

### Conclusions

The staff, faculty, and principal at Maisie E. Quinn School are a group of kind professionals who are dedicated to the belief that all students can learn and achieve high standards. They are sincerely committed to providing students with a high-quality education, and they are invested in this effort. They speak respectfully to students and nurture them with compassion and understanding. Teachers demonstrate that learning is a life-long process by their eagerness to search out good instructional practices to enhance their students' academic growth. Many teachers work cooperatively in order to build their students' base of knowledge and integrate their learning across the disciplines. These efforts result in the creation of a number of high-quality learning experiences for children. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, following students*)

Improving student literacy skills is a clear focus of the teachers at Maisie E. Quinn. Most teachers adeptly provide high quality reading instruction within a balanced literacy framework. Teachers are using word walls and word banks to teach and reinforce high frequency words that provide an essential foundation for reading. Additionally, within guided reading groups, early literacy strategies are successfully taught, practiced, and often used independently by students. These strategies include using picture clues, context clues, decoding, direct instruction of sight words, and self-corrections. Similarly, teachers knowledgeably use assessment data to assign students to small flexible reading groups and to determine the reading levels of individual students. Some teachers are teaching students to analyze text by making inferences, making text-to-self connections, and comparing and contrasting what they read. These teachers also ask students pointed questions about what they read. They have students make predictions, test their predictions, and refer to specific sections of the text when offering their answers and explanations. In some classes teachers place less emphasis on shared reading, read alouds, and teaching students the structure of stories and text. While literature circles are used as a valuable component of a literacy program, in a number of classes some tenets of this instructional framework are not fully implemented and/or some are implemented improperly. Similarly, in some classes the strategies needed for fluency, comprehension, and the analysis and interpretation of the more sophisticated books in the upper grades are infrequently taught. In essence, in a few classes reading is assigned rather than taught. (*following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing 2001 New Standards English*)

*Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)*

A number of effective writing practices are evident in this school, but these vary among classes. Most teachers are organizing writing instruction around a writing process. Some teachers are using student work as models in their lessons on editing and revising. Journal writing is an integral part of many classrooms and helps students to express themselves using the written word. Many teachers have their students write in a variety of ways including daily journals, fictional retellings, writing to inform, and keeping reading response journals. Some teachers encourage students to use their imagination and write creatively. A few teachers artfully extend these practices by conferencing with students and modeling for them how to revise their writing to add details, use action words, craft a good opening sentence, and create summary paragraphs for new ideas. Nevertheless, in some classes writing receives an inadequate emphasis and often is insufficiently varied and challenging. There is a disproportionate emphasis on report writing to the exclusion of other genres such as creative writing, functional writing, and writing narrative accounts. Moreover, there is not a unified approach to writing instruction throughout the school, which hampers student development of effective writing techniques and their interest in writing. *(following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing student work folders, observing classes)*

Most teachers are consistently combining paper and pencil activities with manipulatives to teach and reinforce mathematics. There is a clear emphasis on computation, estimation, graphing, fractions, ratios, repeating patterns, money, measurement, geometrical forms, and counting in a number of ways. Most teachers use manipulatives to strengthen students' knowledge of skills, concepts, and problem solving. Students report this enhances their interest in math. Many teachers effectively use questioning techniques to help students orally explain their mathematical thinking, however, they place less emphasis on teaching students to justify their solutions and explain their mathematical thinking in writing. Similarly, while many teachers have students solve simple math problems, school wide, too few teachers purposefully teach and model a variety of strategies for effectively solving complex multi-step problems. Moreover, the implementation of Everyday Math is helping most teachers to align their instruction with the standards, yet many communicate varying levels of comfort with their ability to implement the program effectively. Some teachers skillfully augment this program with activities purposefully chosen to build basic skills. Conversely, other teachers replace portions of this program with low-level worksheets and other materials, which thereby impedes the scaffolding of students' mathematical learning from grade to grade. *(following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers and staff, observing classes, reviewing classroom assignments)*

Maisie E. Quinn teachers do an excellent job of providing oral feedback to their students. Some teachers also consistently provide detailed diagnostic comments that students can use to improve their work. Rubrics are used extensively throughout the school. Most teachers are using them to provide clear expectations to their students and to guide the development of student work. Many teachers use them as a powerful diagnostic tool to help both them and their students evaluate and reflect on the students' work. Fewer teachers use them to guide further instruction. Additionally, while rubrics are used extensively by teachers, a number of the rubrics are general and contain criteria that guide the contents and organization of the work rather than criteria that clearly delineates the quality of the work. In essence, few rubrics are task-specific analytical rubrics that assess quality versus quantity. *(reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with the school improvement team and students)*

A number of standards-based instructional practices are apparent in many classrooms. Most teachers are genuinely supportive of teaching to standards. A number of teachers have even re-written the standards in student friendly terms to reflect the learning needs of their students and to build a shared sense of ownership. They have effectively incorporated standards into their teaching to raise the level of expectations, and many report that this has empowered their students and improved the quality of their work. Nevertheless, a number of these tasks are not linked explicitly to the performance indicators (bullets) that describe the learning represented by the standards. While many teachers effectively use rigorous tasks and assignments that foster higher order thinking skills, in some classrooms too many assignments are simple skills-based worksheets. Some teachers effectively differentiate instructional activities to meet the diverse learning needs of their students, most notably in reading. However, on a school wide basis fewer assignments are tailored to challenge students who have already mastered the desired

material or to support those who learn at different rates and in different ways. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing classroom assignments, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with students, school and district administrators*)

## Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

The kind, dedicated, and nurturing professionals

Teachers working cooperatively and sharing ideas

The dedication to the students attending Maisie E. Quinn

The willingness to adopt new instructional practices

Integrating learning across the curriculum

The effective literacy practices evident in the school

## Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

Increase the school wide focus, as books become more sophisticated in the upper grades, on developing the strategies needed for fluency, comprehension, analysis, interpretation, developing an understanding of the structure of text, as well as improving document literacy.

Expand the focus, school wide, on artfully teaching students to revise their writing to add detail, use descriptive language, craft a good opening sentence, embed voice, vary sentences, and create summary paragraphs.

Work to institute a unified approach to writing instruction throughout the school, and expand the amount of conferencing focused on editing, revising, and crafting high-quality writing.

Increase the emphasis placed on creative writing, functional writing, and narrative accounts. Reduce the emphasis placed on report writing.

Expand, school wide, the strategy of purposefully teaching and modeling a variety of strategies for effectively solving complex multi-step problems. Augment the requirement that students orally explain their mathematical thinking with an increased focus on students' justifying their solutions and explaining their mathematical thinking in writing.

Examine the current implementation of the Everyday Mathematics program and the time allocated to teaching math to ensure the effective scaffolding of students' understanding of mathematics from grade to grade

Expand the current use of rigorous tasks and assignments that foster higher order thinking skills. Reduce the use of low-level skills-based worksheets.

Examine the current approach to literature circles to ensure the proper and effective implementation of each tenet of this instructional framework.

Examine the current rubrics and revise them, when necessary, to ensure that they are aligned with the performance indicators of the standards to assess accurately the learning represented by the standards. Reduce the criteria found in rubrics that primarily guide the content and organization of the work, rather than its quality.

Continue and expand the efforts to differentiate instructional activities effectively in order to challenge students who have already mastered the desired material and to support those who learn at different rates and in different ways.

## Recommendations for West Warwick School District

Provide the resources and technical assistance needed to make the changes in professional practices listed above.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *reviewing the school improvement plan for Maisie E. Quinn School*
- ◆ *reviewing the teacher evaluation instrument for West Warwick Public Schools*
- ◆ *reviewing West Warwick Public Schools completed and draft curricula*
- ◆ *reviewing West Warwick School Department Professional Development Academy Catalogs*
- ◆ *reviewing Parent Involvement Report*
- ◆ *reviewing 2001-2002 SALT Survey Report*
- ◆ *reviewing Reading Excellence Grant binder*
- ◆ *reviewing the SALT Team binder*

### Conclusions

At Maisie E. Quinn an overall spirit of camaraderie and collaboration permeates the school. The principal, teachers, and staff keep the whole child in mind and are as committed to the social and emotional well being of their students as they are to their academic development. Teachers have a sincere willingness and desire to improve their professional practices. Many desire and have sought additional professional development. They effectively collaborate with each other, both teaching each other and learning from each other. Additionally, the library media, technology, art, music, and physical education teachers are important and integral to the learning process. They effectively enhance classroom endeavors with integrated lessons and projects. In essence, this school has developed a true learning community, a place where both students and adults learn, as well as advance their own professional practices. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom*)

Maisie E. Quinn provides a variety of resources for students and their families. These include a before school homework club for student support, a mentor program that begins in the early grades, and an after school day care provide by the YMCA. Parents have access to programs and services such as the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), Mega-Skills, and Read to Me programs. Guidance counseling and social work support is also available for parents, as well as their children, to improve the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development of the children. Even though these programs are highly advertised, to date the benefits of these resources have not been fully realized and utilized by parents. Parents report that they really like the principal, teachers, and staff and feel that school is a positive place for their children to learn. They desire additional information about how to help their children with the math, reading, and writing reforms and information about after school and summer programs. Despite the sincere efforts of the school, teachers, and staff, many parents are not active partners in the education of their children for various reasons. (*meeting with the school improvement team, district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers and staff, reviewing Parent Involvement Report, 2001-2002 SALT Survey Report*)

There are a number of effective supports provided at the school and district levels to assist teachers in the delivery of high-quality instruction. The district offers a variety of training for teachers to improve the quality of their

instruction through its Professional Development Academy. Coaches in math and technology standards provide job-embedded professional development and support for teachers. Additionally, the Reading Excellence Act (REA) grant, embraced by the K-3 teachers, is making a positive impact on reading instruction and student learning. To date, comparable training has not been provided for teachers in grades four and five. A formal mentoring program exists for teachers new to the profession, as well as for teachers new to a teaching assignment. The current teacher evaluation instrument is an ineffective tool for improving the professional practices of teachers. It consists of a rudimentary checklist that inadequately addresses the sophisticated standards-based teaching practices emerging at this school, and it lacks clearly delineated levels of performance for each category. *(talking with teachers and staff, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing the SALT Team and Reading Excellence Grant binders, reviewing the teacher evaluation instrument for the West Warwick Public Schools, and the Professional Development Academy Catalogs for the West Warwick School Department)*

The district is in the process of producing standards-based curricula in mathematics and English Language Arts that provide grade level benchmarks, suggested evidence of student learning, and some anchor papers and examples of student work. Conversely, science and social studies currently are not receiving comparable attention. Moreover, the current report card is not aligned to standards. This hinders the school's ability to report accurately the progress students are making toward the learning that is represented by the standards being taught in this school *(meeting with the school improvement team, talking with teachers, reviewing the SALT Team binder, reviewing the West Warwick Public Schools completed and draft curricula)*

Maisie E. Quinn School serves a diverse group of students who have various social, emotional, and academic needs. While this school serves students with intensive special needs very well, it is less successful in supporting moderately struggling learners. A variety of personnel and appropriate resources are being provided for students who learn in different ways or need more time to master the desired content, which is not always organized in an optimal way. For example, the current delivery of services for resource students is organized primarily as a pullout model for students, when a number of them would be better served by an in-class collaborative model with appropriate supports. This pullout model fails to address adequately the needs of all students with special learning needs. Moreover, many teachers report their frustration with the special services referral and identification process and the extent to which it meets students' needs. Some feel that the supports for students who are mainstreams are often insufficient. Finally, there is no formal enrichment program to challenge and build on the academic interests and strengths of high performing students. *(talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, district administrators, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom)*

The current School Improvement Plan is the result of the hard work and commitment of a dedicated group of professionals. The School Improvement Team conducted a thoughtful self-study that took a sincere and skillful look at student learning. This team identified factors that help or hinder learning including facilities, furniture, and equipment. This generated important questions for future study and reflection. This team takes very seriously its responsibility for improving the teaching and learning at Maisie E. Quinn. The team is aware of the importance of seeking the involvement and input of all faculty and staff in the design and implementation of the plan. Although the current School Improvement Plan reflects a thoughtful self-study and includes an array of goals and tactics, presently, the action plans lack measurable criteria and timelines, and they do not designate the personnel responsible for implementation. Furthermore, the current plan requires additional development—specifically in the tactics and action plans relating to writing and mathematics. *(reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team and school and district administrators, talking with teachers)*

Maisie E. Quinn School benefits greatly from the effective leadership of its principal, faculty, and staff. All adults who work or volunteer at this school are part of a cohesive family that is built on mutual respect and dedication to a common goal: the education of children. The school principal is a strong educational leader, who supports his staff and is concerned about the safety, education, and well-being of children. The principal is a visible presence in the school and responds well to the needs of this learning community. He supports and empowers all parties to participate in the decision making process thereby building ownership, commitment, mutual respect, and a shared responsibility to improve the teaching and learning of both adults and students. Moreover, the faculty and staff embrace a shared approach to leadership and are sincerely committed to and invested in efforts to provide students

with a top-notch education. This creates a positive school culture where students can learn and grow. (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom*)

## Commendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

The positive school culture built on mutual respect

The dedication to the social, emotional, and educational well-being of students

The resources the school makes available to families

The effective leadership of the principal, faculty, and staff

The thoughtful identification of student learning needs by the School Improvement Team during self-study

The integration and collaboration among staff

## Recommendations for Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School

Maintain the effective leadership distributed among the principal, faculty, and staff.

Examine the current pullout model for speech/language and resource students and move to an in-class collaborative model in order to be effective in meeting the needs of all students.

Continue and expand your efforts to gain the active involvement of parents in the education of their students, and provide supports for them and their children to improve the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development of children.

Expand your efforts to provide parents with additional information about how to help their children with the math, reading, and writing reforms and after school and summer programs.

Expand the necessary professional development and supports available to the intermediate grades that are needed to improve literacy and numeracy to a level commensurate with those in the primary grades.

Provide additional job-embedded professional development that is focused on the design of task-specific analytical rubrics, strategies for modeling mathematical problem solving, teaching writing, differentiating instruction, as well as organizing instruction around “big ideas” and making connections among concepts and ideas in different content areas.

Use the information contained in this SALT report, coupled with ongoing assessments of student learning and teaching, to inform and revise your School Improvement Plan. Revise the action plans to include measurable criteria, timelines, and personnel responsible for their implementation.

Expand the tactics and action plans in the School Improvement Plan to include a more detailed focus on writing and mathematics.

## Recommendations for West Warwick School District

Continue your efforts to create K-12 standards-based curricula in mathematics and English Language Arts that provide grade level benchmarks, suggested evidence of student learning, anchor papers and examples of student work and, when appropriate, repeat this process with other content areas.

Examine the current referral and identification process—including the steps and procedures before an actual

referral is initiated—in order to ensure the timely availability of services for all students in need.

Negotiate with the West Warwick Teachers union to create a teacher evaluation instrument that is an effective tool for improving the sophisticated standards-based teaching practices that are developing at this school and that includes clearly delineated levels of performance for each category.

Design a report card that is aligned to standards in order to accurately report students' progress toward the standards currently being taught in this district

Expand the offerings of the Professional Development Academy to include a contingent of courses focused on the items listed above, as well as approaches designed to improve the teaching of writing.

## Recommendations for West Warwick Teachers Union

Negotiate with the West Warwick School Committee, or their designee, to create a teacher evaluation instrument that is an effective tool for improving the sophisticated standards-based teaching practices that are developing at this school and that includes clearly delineated levels of performance for each category.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

Maisie E. Quinn's greatest strengths are its students, teachers, staff, and principal. Together you have nurtured and fostered a highly functioning learning community and created a truly cohesive family that is focused on the needs of children. When your school is reorganized in January 2003, make conscious efforts to integrate the new students, faculty, and staff into your culture to ensure that the camaraderie, respect, and love for children and one another remain fundamental components of this noteworthy learning community.

Moving toward becoming a high performing school is a challenging endeavor. However, the desire for learning, teaching, continuous improvement, and the obvious commitment and dedication of the Maisie E. Quinn staff will help make that journey less difficult. Build on your strong sense of camaraderie and the collaborative efforts that exist in this school to continue to move forward in order to meet the present and future needs of your students. You have fashioned a strong foundation on which to build. Your willingness, desire, and efforts to improve your own craft serve as a powerful example for your students, as do your efforts to make students into the life-long learners.

The children at Maisie E. Quinn are unreservedly welcomed by the faculty and staff and are often able to rise above the obstacles to their success. As a result of your hard work, many of the children who attend this school are being well served. Continue to set high expectations for your students and to drive them to excel. Maintain the ideological spirit that has served your students so well, so that the torch of knowledge can be passed on to the next generation of leaders. Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School has established a strong foundation on which to build and is well on its way to providing excellent opportunities for all students to achieve at high levels.

There are significant gifts, talents, and wisdom within the faculty and staff of this school. Continue to teach each other, learn from each other, and grow with each other. Maintain and expand your efforts to adopt and refine standards-based instruction and assessment practices with an emphasis on setting clear expectations, fostering evidence-based dialogue between and among teachers and students, increasing student ownership, cultivating learning that is hands-on and minds-on, and establishing explicit links to the standards performance indicators.

Review existing instructional practices and assignments to ensure they provide a rigorous academic foundation of basic skills and that they foster the development of your students' higher order thinking skills. There are a number of very sound instructional practices in this school that foster student inquiry and higher-order thinking, which, once identified, should be shared school wide. Work to ensure that these practices become an integral part of each classroom. Similarly, expand your efforts to strengthen the home-school connection and involve a broader array of parents in the education of their children. The education children receive is only as good as the collective set of experiences they encounter in and out of school.

Continue to work through your school improvement team to identify and respond to the learning needs of the students and teachers that attend this school. As you continue your efforts to help all children achieve at high levels, your chosen reforms must be systematically implemented and institutionalized from pre-K through grade five. Continue your efforts at improving literacy in the intermediate grades. The sound practices supporting your reading instruction in kindergarten through grade three must be expanded to all classrooms and augmented with a broader repertoire of strategies and techniques that place a commensurate school wide focus on writing conventions, writing effectiveness, solving complex multi-step problems, and applications of knowledge in authentic contexts.

Maintain your efforts at continuous improvement. You are heading in the right direction to help your students achieve at high levels. The passion for teaching and the commitment to children that exists in this school is a foundation that will continue to serve you well. When reading and reflecting upon this report, the school and its community should bear in mind that, by design, this SALT report is not only a celebration of all the wonderful things taking place at Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School. It is also a presentation of those items that, in the visiting team's judgment, must become the school's focus if it is to help all students at all achievement levels perform at higher levels.

As you work with this SALT report, we hope you realize our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations

are designed to assist you in your efforts to create a high-performing school “where students achieve their personal best.” For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

## The Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School Improvement Team

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

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

### **Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School**

May 10, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 27, 2002