



Providence Street School

West Warwick

The SALT Visit Team Report

October 11, 2002



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

The findings of this report are those of this SALT visit team. The names and affiliations of the members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs on Conducting a SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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

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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Providence Street School from October 7 through October 11, 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 Providence Street 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 Providence Street School.

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

- *observing a total of 96 complete classes and 40 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 110 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited at least once, and 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*
- *discussing student work with teachers*

- *analyzing four years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- *reviewing the following documents:*

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

classroom assessments

school improvement plan for Providence Street School

district strategic plan

2002 SALT Survey report

classroom textbooks

evidence folders

1998, 1999, 2000 2001 2002 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results

1999, 2000, and 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary

2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 25 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 Providence Street School

Background

Providence Street Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in the West Warwick Public School System. Presently it services students in grades one through five in the town of West Warwick.

Providence Street School was built in the Natick section of the town in 1914. In 1968, overcrowding forced the district to lease the Annex from Sacred Heart Church. While greatly increasing the school capacity, it divided the school into two separate buildings. The gym is the third building in the Providence Street School complex. In January 2003 Providence Street School will move into a new building and be given a new name, Wakefield Hills.

Of the 310 students attending Providence Street School, 35% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; 89% are white; six percent Hispanic; three percent are black; one percent is Asia/Pacific Islander; and one percent is Native American. Twenty-one percent of the students receive resource special education services, and four percent receive self-contained special education services.

A professional staff of one administrator, 19 full and 11 part-time faculty, eight aides and support personnel, and two custodians serve the students of Providence Street School.

The new Dell computers in the computer room enable every student to have a computer during computer class. Each teacher has at least one computer in her classroom. Many teachers are RITTI or MCI graduates, therefore, they have multiple computers and monitors in their classrooms. A district-wide mathematics specialist provides support and training for staff and parents. Community and staff members participate in a well-trained adult mentor program to build a social rapport with individual students.

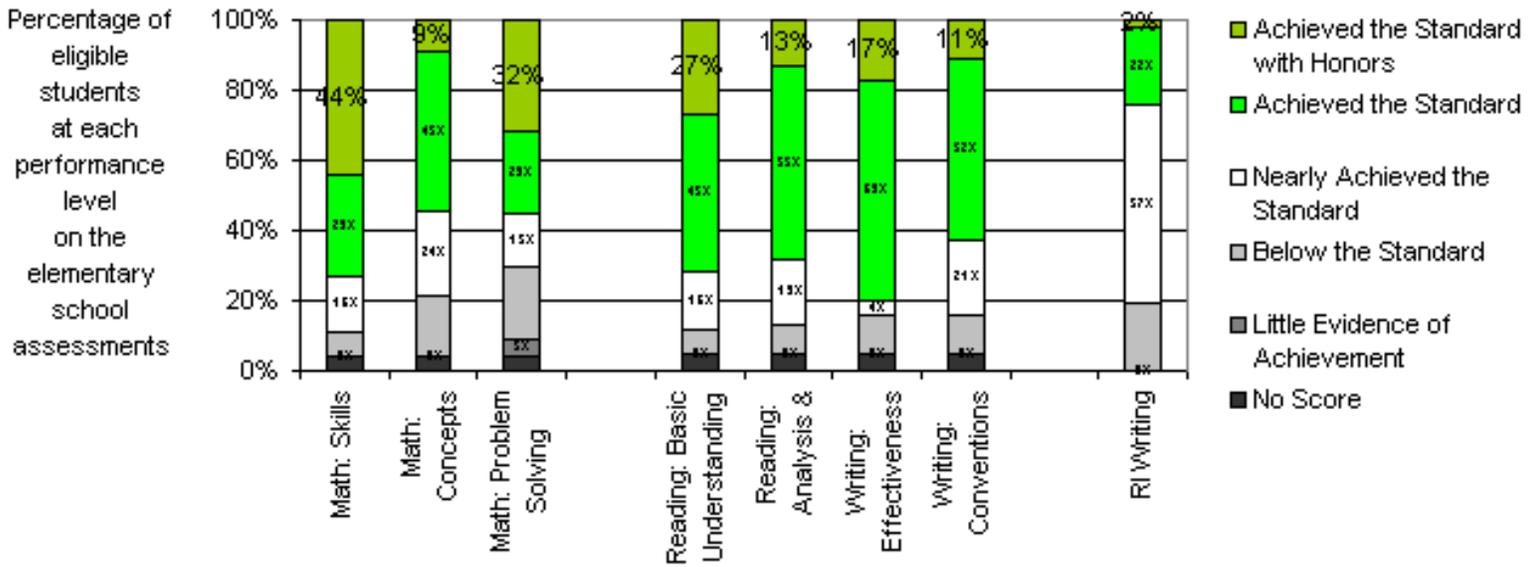
State Assessment Results for Providence Street School

This section of the school profile shows results from the state assessment program four different ways: against performance standards; compared to similar students in the state; across student groups within the school; and over time. Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

Results in relation to performance standards

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

Table 1. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

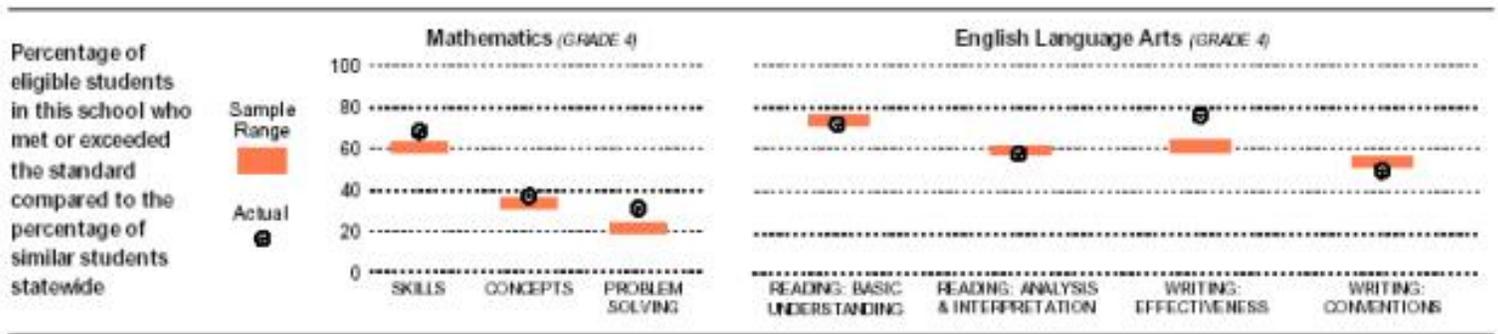


On every subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination more than half of the students met or exceeded the standard. In addition, students achieved the standard with honors in all subtests. An impressive number of students met or exceeded the standard in the problem solving and writing effectiveness subtests

Results compared to similar students in the state

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

Table 2. 2000-2001 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



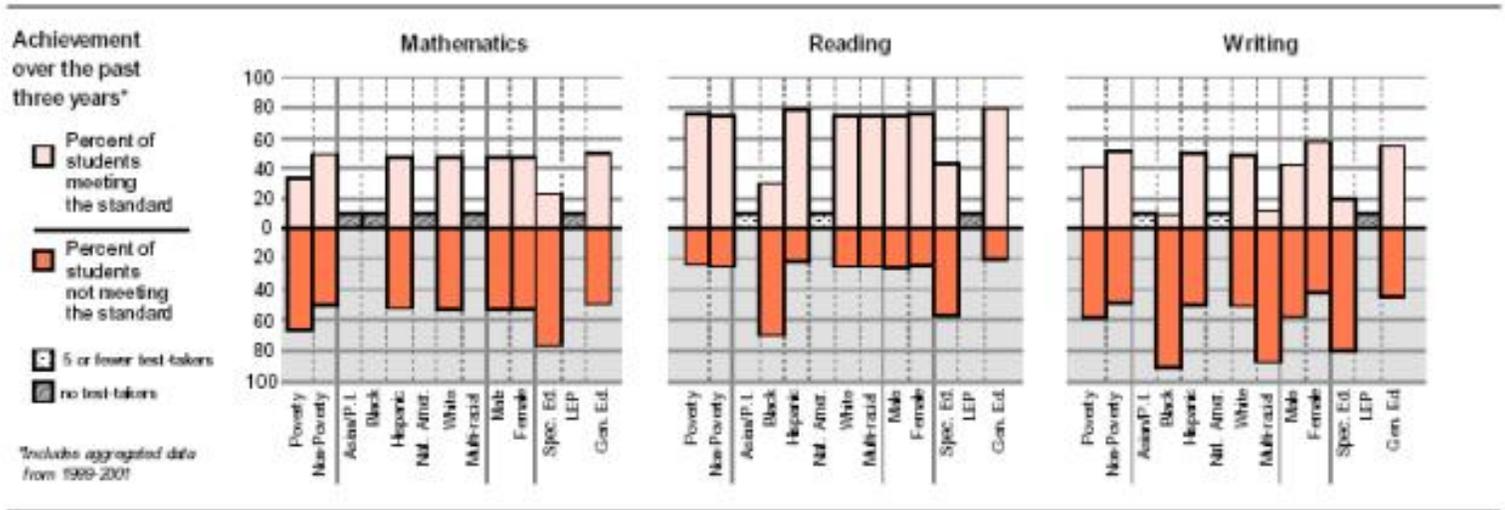
Providence Street School students scored above similar students statewide on the Mathematics: Problem Solving subtest and the Writing: Effectiveness subtest.

Results across student groups within the school

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Unfortunately, breaking results into smaller groups can result in groups that are so small it is hard to get good information about them. To create better information, the results from three years are used

in this display.

Table 3. 2000-2001 Equity Gaps (Differences of Greater Than 15% Proficient) across Student Groups in the School



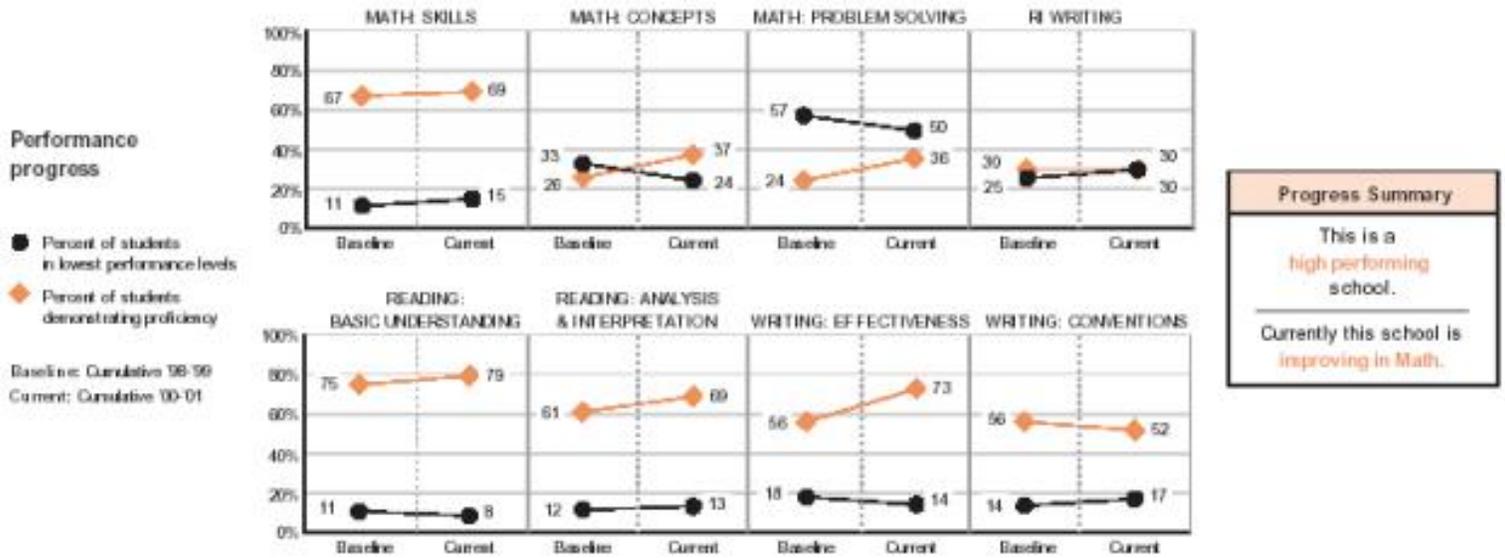
Equity gaps exist for black students, students in poverty and students participating in special education programs.

Results over time

Now that the state assessment program has been functioning for five years, it is possible to show results over meaningful periods of time. This display shows changes in the percentage of students at or above standard and the percentage of students in the lowest performance categories. These displays correspond to the targets the Department of Education asked schools to set four years ago and are the basis for the department categorizing schools as improving or non-improving.

Table 4. 2000-2001 Student Results Showing Change Over Time

Did this school DECREASE low-level performance and INCREASE student proficiency?



The number of students in the lowest performance level for several subtests is so low that it may be extremely difficult for this school to meet the target of three percent reduction. Student current performance in writing effectiveness was above standard.

Information Works! data for Providence Street School is available at <<http://www.ride.net>>.

3. PORTRAIT OF Providence Street School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

A vibrant energy flows throughout the halls of the Providence Street Elementary School. The hum of voices echo as both teachers and students reach toward the same goal: learning. Two independently functioning buildings, staffed by creative, enthusiastic teachers, house these actively, engaged students. Everyone has high expectations.

Within this positive professional climate, teachers demonstrate mutual respect for one another and each one's expertise. Due to the design of the physical plant, teachers feel disconnected from one another and find it a challenge to communicate consistently. However, teachers are supportive and open to collaboration within their respective buildings. Teachers analyze student work to develop consistency in grade level expectations and to improve student performance. Students are developing in their understanding and use of rubrics and criteria to improve their work. Teachers provide a safe and nurturing environment. Their instruction is varied and creative. Classrooms are print-rich with emphasis on thematic curriculum that integrates literacy and numeracy into all content areas. Teachers consider themselves life-long learners and model this for their students.

Students love their teachers. Students are respectful of adults and peers and care for those in their school community. Students feel safe and nurtured.

Although classrooms consistently support the regular education students, they often are excluded from their peers in the areas of the core curricula. This predominate practice isolates and often virtually excludes special education students.

The awareness of a need to include parents in the Providence Street School community is evident. Both staff and parents view this as an area of needed growth.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- *2002 Information Works!*
- *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- *following students*
- *observing classes*
- *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- *discussing student work with teachers*

Conclusions

The majority of students at the Providence Street School are excellent problem solvers. Their active involvement in mathematics fosters competence, understanding, and confidence. Students hold themselves accountable for their learning, and they have clear, high expectations for their performance. Their understanding of numeracy allows students successfully to apply their knowledge in a variety of areas. Many students communicate effectively using mathematical vocabulary. The high level of student performance is substantiated by the 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, looking at student work, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, New Standards Reference Examination results, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers*)

Students at the Providence Street School are avid, fluent readers and effective writers, reading and writing daily for authentic purposes. In all curriculum areas, students practice reading by writing and writing by reading. Students analyze and interpret text through quality written and oral responses. Their immersion in print encourages them to become effective readers and writers. Students understand the relationship between reading and writing and the purpose of doing both. They read like writers and write like readers. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed an ongoing student work, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, and staff, discussing student work with teachers*)

Students love learning. Their active participation demonstrates their high level of accountability and the

responsibility they assume for their learning. As risk takers, they are open to new ideas and often willing to share. Students are tolerant of different learning styles; they are patient, and respectful of adults and their peers. These qualities enable them to work effectively within cooperative groups, as well as within their learning community. These behaviors enhance academic growth. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students and staff*)

Commendations for Providence Street School

Effective readers and writers

Outstanding math problem solvers

Active, enthusiastic learners

Recommendations for Providence Street School

Continue your work in mathematics.

Continue connecting reading and writing.

Teach students strategies to determine appropriate books on their independent reading level to read during silent reading.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- *observing classes*
- *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- *talking with students, teachers, school administrator, and staff*
- *discussing student work with teachers*
- *meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- *following students*
- 2002 Information Works!
- *evidence folders*
- *reviewing classroom assessments*
- *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- *2002 New Standards Reference Examination school summary*

Conclusions

Teachers at Providence Street School work exceptionally hard to effectively meet the needs of their students. It is common practice for teachers to share resources, plan curriculum, integrate subject matter, and provide time and materials for student practice. Teachers consistently encourage students to take risks, manage their time, and improve their learning. Teachers show respect and hold high expectations for themselves, as well as their students. Teachers enhance student achievement, increase motivation, and provide meaningful learning experiences by integrating social studies and science into literacy and numeracy instruction. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Teachers at Providence Street School use a variety of assessment procedures and techniques. All teachers are using the district-mandated English Language Arts Reading Evidences. Teachers within each grade level use rubrics to assess and evaluate student work. During the weekly grade level planning meetings, teachers are beginning to develop benchmark papers to evaluate student work and standardize student expectations. Some teachers even use this information to direct their instruction. Thematic units provide authentic opportunities for teachers to motivate students and assess their progress. The continued emphasis of high expectations for all students and the consistency of instruction within grade levels will narrow the equity gaps among students. The lack of support services for third, fourth and fifth grade students in the area of reading is not equitable.

(observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with teachers, students, school administrator, following students, 2002 Information Works!, evidence folders)

Teachers successfully and consistently use the components of the Everyday Mathematics Program. In language arts, teachers use the Silver Burdett Program, as well as leveled books. They creatively supplement these with additional materials that support and enrich student learning. Teachers effectively use a variety of strategies and approaches to help their students meet the standards. By pacing their instruction and breaking down student learning into small manageable chunks, teachers meet the needs of their academically diverse population. Most students thrive in this learning environment. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, staff and school administrators, and students, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2002 Information Works!)*

Commendations for Providence Street School

Hard working, dedicated teachers

Effective use of teaching strategies

Support of peers and students

Recommendations for Providence Street School

Continue to expand teacher knowledge and use of rubrics and standards.

Expand student involvement in the process of self-assessment.

Continue to use thematic instruction to support reading and writing.

Provide equitable reading support for students in grades three, four and five.

Recommendations for West Warwick School District:

Support the school in its efforts to provide equitable reading support services for students in grades three, four and five.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- *observing classes*
- *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- *talking with students, school administrator, teachers*
- *meeting with students, school and district administrators, teachers, parents*
- *following students*
- *School Improvement Plan*
- *2002 SALT Survey Report*
- *reviewing West Warwick Teachers' Contract*
- *2002 Information Works!*
- *Professional Development Academy Manual*
- *classroom textbooks*
- *reviewing district strategic plan*

Conclusions

Special education students are located within two settings at Providence Street School. Resource students receive services primarily in a pull-out model. Some special education students receive services in a self-contained classroom with integration primarily in special subject areas. Students receive quality education in both settings. However, both of these settings limit their learning opportunities, disrupt the continuity of their involvement in the regular education program, and reduce their involvement with their peers. In addition, many classroom teachers do not assume enough responsibility for the learning of special education students. This limits the opportunities all students have from which to benefit from teacher collaboration and teaming. Conflicting interpretations of the clauses within the teachers' contract regarding distribution of special education students hinders teachers from developing a more inclusionary model. (*observing classes, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, parents, following students, talking with students, school administrator, teachers, reviewing teachers contract, 2002 Information Works!*)

A Professional Development Academy provides professional development support in West Warwick. Teachers

are allowed to use their professional judgment and expertise to make curriculum decisions. Providence Street School provides common planning and preparation time and informal mentoring for their teachers. While given many opportunities to improve their practice, teachers often are frustrated by the lack of supporting materials in their classrooms and the insufficient follow-up training they receive. (*Professional Development Academy Manual, talking with teachers, classroom textbooks, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators*)

Providence Street School is housed in two separate buildings under the guise of one school. Each school functions well independently. A collegial environment is evident within the individual buildings, but not between the buildings. Constrained by time limitations and separated by building, primary and intermediate teachers do not engage in professional dialogue. Some staff members are becoming anxious as they approach the transition to a one-building facility. Although the school improvement plan acknowledges this concern, it does not provide specific action plans. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents, Providence Street School Improvement Plan*)

The school presently sends a variety of newsletters to parents/guardians, including The Providence Street School Newsletter, Cliff Notes, weekly PTO Newsletter, and various teacher communications. Some parents voice their concern about the level of communication between school and home, as well as the level of parental involvement in the school. The school improvement plan addresses communication in Objective Three: Family and Community Involvement. While the plan contains action plans that address social interactions, they do not specifically address the concerns voiced by the parents. (*meeting with the school improvement team, school administrator, parents, talking with school administrators and staff, 2002 SALT Survey Report, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan*)

Commendations for Providence Street School

Common planning time

Recommendations for Providence Street School

Provide opportunities for common planning time that includes special education teachers and specialists.

Provide opportunities for teachers to communicate across-grades.

Investigate ways to provide job-embedded professional development.

Investigate the implementation of a model for including special education students in regular classrooms.

Improve the level of communication within the entire school community.

Review your school improvement plan to ensure that it reflects the concerns parents have about home/school communication and parental involvement in the school.

Continue your work to unify the staff, as they move to the new facility.

Commendations for West Warwick School District:

Variety of choice in teacher professional development

Recommendations for West Warwick School District:

Provide the necessary support and personnel for an inclusionary model.

Support common planning time that includes special education teachers and specialists.

7. Final Advice to the School

Celebrate your success. As you tell your students when they succeed, “Kiss your brain.” You are doing an outstanding job providing high quality education for your students.

As you journey through this “Year of Change,” explore ways to include and support all students within Providence Street School. Investigate inclusionary models that will enhance the learning for all students. Open opportunities for team teaching and collaboration. Work to develop cross-grade learning opportunities for all.

Work to open the lines of communication. Trust one another and work closely together to become a unified team. Parents are a critical component. Strive to include them in your learning community.

Our wish is for your continued success as you move forward.

The Providence Street School Improvement Team

Pat Andruchow, Co-Chairman
Grade 3 Teacher

Pat Ribeiro, Co-chairman
Grade 2 Teacher

Helene Arbor
Resource Teacher

Linda Cliff
Principal

Kelly Cote
Special Education Teacher

Ray Doyle
Resource Teacher

Sue Emerson
Grade 3 Teacher

Lorie Levesque
Speech and Language Teacher

Kevin Lovett
Parent

Judy Ouellette
Grade 1 Teacher

Beverly Pastore
Secretary

Joanne Pigott
Grade 1 Teacher

Kathy Priest
Reading Specialist

Chris Ruzzo
Parent

Josephine Sassi
Grade 5 Teacher

Beverly Townsend
Parent

The SALT Visit Team

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Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Providence Street School

October 11, 2002

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

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

observation of a portion of the visit

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

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. 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.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
November 24, 2002