



# Ashton School

Cumberland

## The SALT Visit Team Report

December 6, 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 of the 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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For information about SALT, please contact Rick Richards at 401-222-4600, x 2246 or salt@ridee.net.

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# 1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

## Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Ashton School from December 2-6, 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.

The Team would like to acknowledge Karen Tellier, an Ashton School parent, for providing wonderful home-cooked meals for us during our visit.

## 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 Ashton 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 Ashton School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 139 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 115 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*

- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*

- ◆ *following 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*

- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*

- ◆ *analyzing five 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 Ashton School*

  - district strategic plan*

  - 2002 SALT Survey report*

  - classroom textbooks*

  - 2002 Information Works!*

  - 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*

  - 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

  - 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*

  - 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*

  - Y.E.S. Gifted Program binder*

  - Music, Art and Pre-School Curriculum binder*

  - K-8 Curriculum binder*

  - Language Arts Curriculum binders*

*Health Curriculum binder*

*P.T.O Information binder*

*Teacher Evaluation binder*

*Mentoring binder*

*Budget binder*

*Student Handbook binder*

*SIT 2002-2003 binder*

*Professional Development binder*

*Self-study Activities binder*

*SALT Initiative binder*

*2002-2003 Agreement between the Cumberland Teachers' Association and Cumberland School Committee*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 33 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 Ashton School

### Background

Constructed in 1959, Ashton Elementary School is a suburban neighborhood school located in Cumberland, Rhode Island. After the addition of new space in 1966, Ashton served the educational needs of children in grades one through eight. In the early 1970's, the town of Cumberland built two middle schools; Ashton currently serves students in kindergarten through grade five.

Ashton School has a professional staff of one administrator, 19 classroom teachers, as well as 16 full-time and part-time itinerants and support staff. In addition, nine teacher assistants; three custodians—two full-time and one-part time—and a school secretary service the school community. A reading specialist serves the Title I students, as well as provides reading services to children in grades one and two. A part-time reading specialist serves students in grades two through five.

The student population for the school year 2002-2003 is 365 students. Of these, 96 percent are white, two percent are Hispanic, and one percent is black. Twenty-two percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Six percent of the students participate in the gifted program, and 21 percent receive special education services.

At Ashton School there is an unwritten philosophy: "work hard and have fun." Within this context, Ashton offers a number of special activities and programs for its students. These include: Polite is Right, Just Friends, Homework Club, The Effort Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, The Feinsein Good Deeds Program, Operation Christmas Child and the Student Council. A Teacher Support Team and a Crisis Intervention Team are also available to support student needs. An active Ashton Parent Teacher Organization provides students with many opportunities outside the classroom, such as field trips, guest speakers, community-building family events and a Thanksgiving food drive. The PTO spearheaded the fundraising and for the construction of a new playground that provides students with appropriate equipment for physical education, as well as the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge outside of the classroom.

### State Assessment Results for Ashton School

#### **Results in relation to performance standards**

This section of the school profile shows results from the latest available 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.

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*.

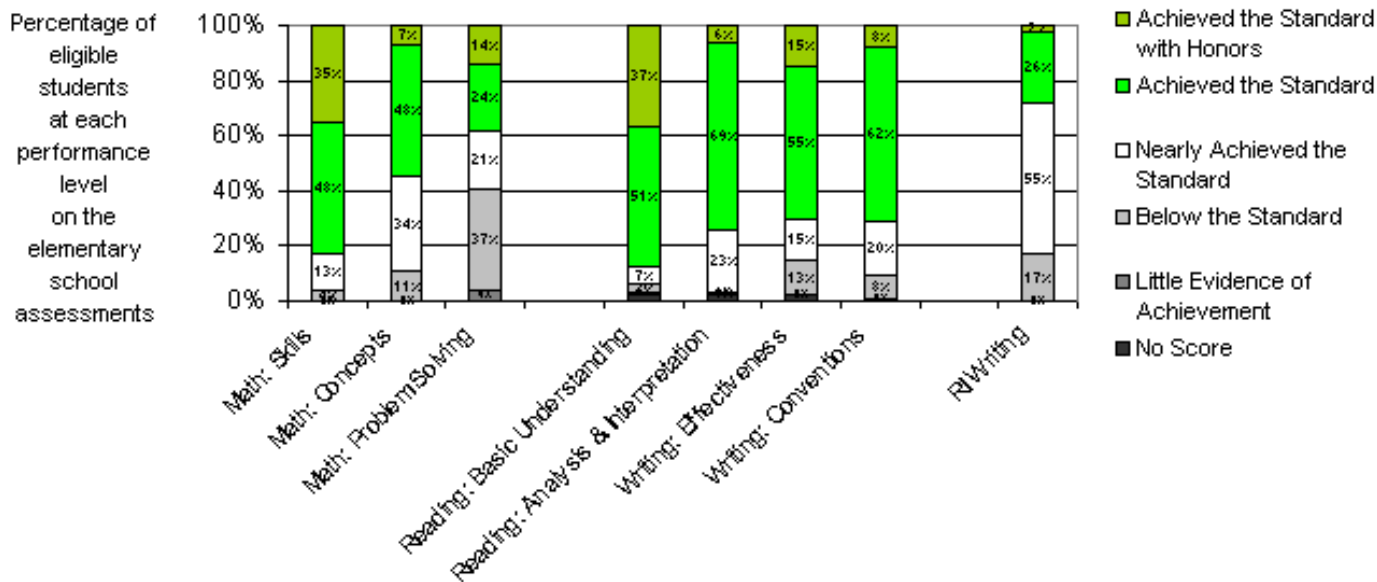


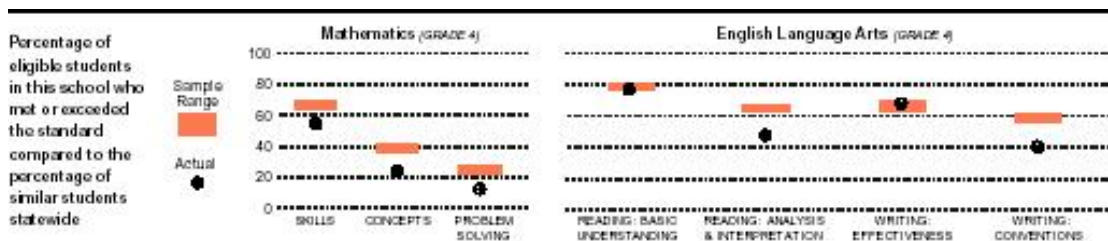
Table 1. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessment

An impressive percentage of students either met or exceeded the standard in every subtest of the 2002 English Language Arts Reference Examination. Much lower percentages of students either met or exceeded the standard on the problem solving subtest and on the 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment.

**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



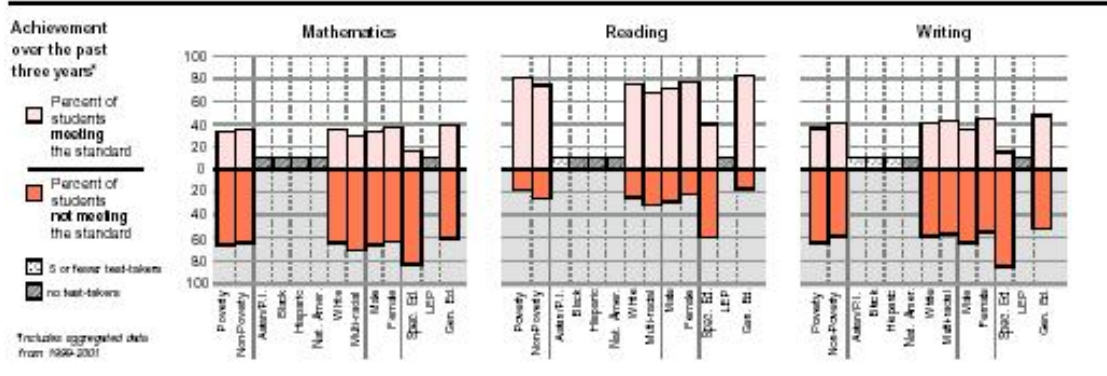
In every subtest in Mathematics, student performance was below similar students statewide.

**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. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

Table 3. 2000-2001 Student Results across Subgroups



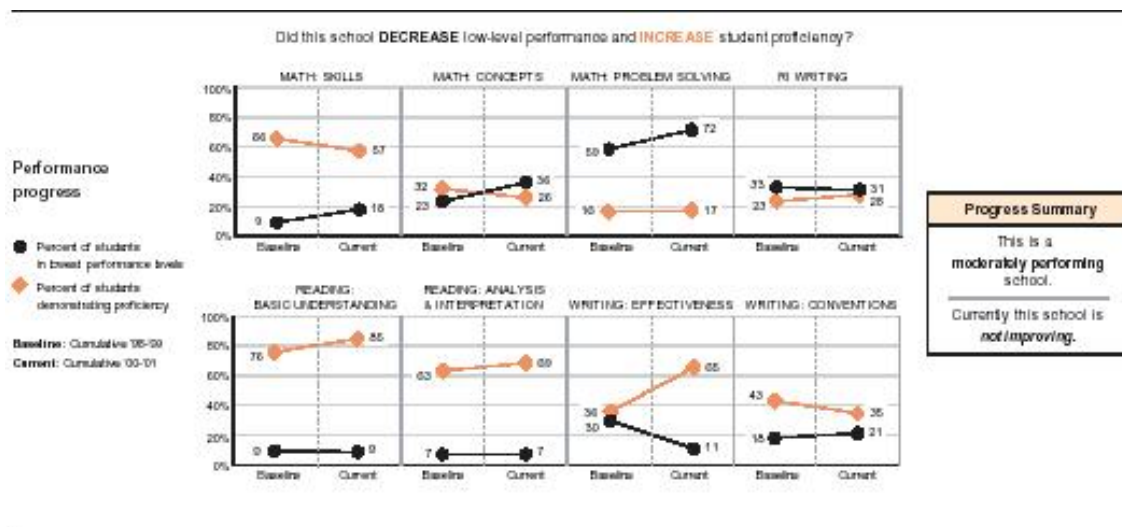


The percentage of general education students who meet the standard is more than twice the percentage of special education students who meet the standard. This equity gap appears in math, reading and writing.

**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*



The number of students demonstrating proficiency on the Writing Effectiveness subtest increased by more than three percent and the number of students in the lowest performing levels decreased by more than three percent on this same subtest. However, in all the other subtests students did not achieve a three percent difference in both performance categories.

Information Works! data for Ashton School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Ashton School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Ashton School, located in Cumberland, Rhode Island, is a small neighborhood school that serves an economically diverse population. A prominent sign at the entrance reads, "Through these doors pass the greatest children." This message sets the tone for the learning community inside. Within these walls students thrive in a safe, nurturing environment created by all who work here. Volunteers are welcomed and are actively involved in all aspects of school life. It is not surprising that everyone often refers to this learning community as "The Ashton Family."

Faculty and parents, as well as the students, have embraced their newly appointed principal. She is a true visionary and an educational leader. She is personable and approachable and has set high expectations for herself and her staff. She genuinely cares about the social and emotional well being of "The Ashton Family." Working together, this learning community has embarked on a journey of change and growth to improve student learning.

Despite the lack of updated technology and an antiquated physical plant, dedicated teachers persevere to provide their students with the tools they need to succeed. Teachers encourage their students to be effective learners and productive community members. To achieve this goal, they willingly participate in professional development and share their expertise with one another. They act as role models for their students as they assist each other in becoming more effective instructional leaders. Although more training is needed, there are many new initiatives underway that will help teachers achieve their goal.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

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

### Conclusions

Students at Ashton School write frequently and are eager to share their work. Writing permeates their day. Some students utilize rubrics and criteria charts to guide, self-assess and improve their writing. Children write across the curricula areas. They develop their writing skills by responding to literature and explaining their solutions to problems, as well as by writing in creative, narrative, reflective, and expository styles. As a result of this variety of opportunities, many students can compose coherent writing samples. However, students do not use the appropriate writing conventions consistently. The 2002 New Reference Examination results support this finding. (*observing classes, following students, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, discussing student work with teachers*)

Students are learning that math is a way of reasoning and communicating, not only a method of mechanically producing solutions. Working individually and collaboratively, they successfully investigate various ways to solve problems. Students are comfortable using manipulatives and other math resources to explore and solve problems. They are learning to relate math to their real life situations and to communicate their findings orally, pictorially and in written form. Students enjoy math and enthusiastically participate in solving math problems. Their active engagement helps them build a strong foundation for higher order reasoning skills that will enable them to become more effective and efficient problem solvers. (*observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, teachers, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing classroom textbooks*)

Students at Ashton School are avid readers. Whenever they have free time, they read for pleasure. They eagerly participate in literature circles, partner reading, guided reading and read alouds. Using a variety of reading strategies, students explore many different genres. Through guided reading and literature circles, they are learning to become critical readers, who connect what they have read to their own lives, to another text and/or to the world. The lack of functional Internet access within the classrooms impedes the opportunities students have to explore beyond the text. In responding to literature, students are demonstrating their understanding of what they read and frequently are able to use their reading as a model for improving their own writing. Students are able to comprehend at the literal level, which provides a foundation upon which they can build more

advanced comprehension skills. Consequently, Ashton students are becoming competent readers. At-risk students are making gains, but they have not yet met the same level of success as their peers. Due to the inadequate inventory of books in the school library, especially in the area of multiculturalism, students have a limited choice of books to read. (*observing classes, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, following students*)

Students love Ashton School. They are happy, accepting, caring and enthusiastic learners. They are responsible and noticeably well-behaved. All students in both the general education and inclusionary classrooms are positive, contributing members of the school family, who willingly assist and guide one another in classroom activities, as well as in social situations throughout the day. In turn, students take pride in giving back to their school by opening a school store to fund books and supplies for needy students, as well as to buy a class gift for the school. Students show compassion for others by participating wholeheartedly in community service activities. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with students and parents*)

## Commendations for Ashton School

Students' love of reading

Polite, well-behaved students

Enthusiastic, cooperative learners

## Recommendations for Ashton School

Increase what is expected of students both in the content of their writing and their use of writing conventions.

Increase student awareness of cultural differences.

Continue to engage students in mathematical explorations and problem solving activities.

Provide more critical reading opportunities for students.

Provide additional support for at-risk learners.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *following students*

### Conclusions

Ashton teachers love what they do and where they do it. They genuinely care about the well being and academic development of their students, which they demonstrate by habitually going “above and beyond” what is required. They provide nurturing, risk-free classroom environments in which students eagerly participate. The collaboration between the regular and special education teachers effectively services the special education students. The inclusion models at Ashton School foster tolerance of individual differences. The teachers support one another; they rely on the experience of their colleagues in developing effective teaching practices. Many take advantage of district-wide and job-embedded professional development opportunities. Teachers encourage a love of learning. As a result, their students are on the road to becoming life-long learners. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, following students*)

The teachers at Ashton Elementary School are taking the first steps toward implementing many new initiatives. They are eager to adopt the use of technology to improve student achievement, but they are frustrated with out-dated and non-functioning equipment. They are beginning to use standards and rubrics in their classroom instruction, thereby providing students with clear expectations and purposefully designed lessons. Few are using portfolios to guide their instruction. While there is some implementation of “best practices,” more consistent application throughout the school will help all students reach the performance goals as outlined in the School Improvement Plan. (*talking with students, teachers and school administrator, observing classes, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Teachers emphasize problem solving in a variety of settings across the curricula. Many teachers consistently model strategies and encourage students to explore alternate methods for solving problems. Manipulatives are effectively used to increase student understanding and to address their different learning styles. Teachers encourage students to apply math to authentic situations, such as when they planned and designed the extension of a playground. At every grade level teachers are working hard to implement concepts and strategies of *Investigations*, a pilot math program. They emphasize the process of problem-solving, as well as the solution, and expect students to explain their thinking in writing. It is necessary for all teachers to use these practices and expand them if students are to demonstrate improvement on the state assessments. (*observing*

*classes, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments)*

## Commendations for Ashton School

Collegial faculty who “go the extra mile”

Teachers who embrace professional development opportunities

## Strong teacher leaders

Nurturing faculty and staff

## Recommendations for Ashton School

Increase the consistent use of rubrics and standards-based instruction.

Participate in professional development in the effective use of student portfolios to guide instruction.

Continue to share job-embedded professional development.

Participate in Reading Recovery Training.

Continue the momentum of teachers in implementing the initiatives that are already underway

## Recommendations for Cumberland School District

Allocate additional funding for professional development, especially in Reading Recovery.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing district strategic plan*
- ◆ *2002 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *following students*

### Conclusions

The newly appointed principal of Ashton Elementary is a leader among leaders; she is modeling new teaching practices for her school and the district. District administrators report that she advocates and supports a movement towards standards-based instruction and effective teaching practices. Parents, students, faculty and staff all report that she is highly visible in the school, takes pride in her school, and puts student learning and welfare above all else. The principal encourages her staff to participate in many professional development activities. She embraces educational initiatives and learns along with her staff. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan, 2002 SALT Survey report, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*)

Ashton School provides a pleasant, inviting atmosphere for learning. Despite teachers' creative efforts, there is inadequate storage for students and staff. The lack of space limits the opportunities for students to learn. The school, although clean, has not been updated with the essential modern amenities. The heating system, which is regulated through the central office, unevenly distributes heat throughout the building. In addition, drafty, single-pane, windows exacerbate the heating situation. Equity concerns are noted regarding space, materials, and technology for itinerant and special education teachers. Most specialists store materials on portable carts, which are transported to the classrooms. There is inadequate and poorly designed space for physical education. Classes are held in the cafetorium, sometimes during the lunch periods, which has a negative impact on student learning. At this time, there are no immediate plans to rectify these situations. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, following students*)

The school improvement plan is a realistic document that sets attainable goals and is aligned with the Cumberland School District Strategic Plan. Because the school improvement team involved all members of the school community in developing this plan, everyone shares a responsibility and commitment for its implementation. Because everyone has "bought-in" to the plan, student learning is positively affected. An extensive self-study enabled the school improvement team to focus its vision and create clear action steps, which easily can be implemented within a reasonable timeline. The goals are clearly designed

with the intention of raising test scores and closing the equity gaps identified in the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results. Although the professional development plan reflects the goals of the school improvement plan in reading, writing and math, teachers need more training in these areas to meet the stated objectives. *(reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team, reviewing records of professional development activities, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrator, 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district strategic plan)*

There are generally four computers in each classroom at Ashton School. The majority of these, however, are slow and outdated. Some are inoperable and require technical support. All of this hampers teachers from effectively using this technology in their classrooms to enhance their delivery of services to their students. The library is not automated. Overall, the school lacks District support in this area, which hinders it from attaining the technology-related objectives as stated in Goal Five of the Cumberland School Department Strategic Action Plan. *(observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing district strategic plan, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, following students)*

The relationship between parents and Ashton School personnel is key to the success of this school. Parents praise Ashton School and feel they are an integral part of the school family. Teachers and parents consider themselves to be working partners in the education of the students. Parents are highly visible and volunteer in the classrooms regularly. They are a driving force in fundraising, most notably in the effort to build a new playground. Communication between parents and the school is commendable. Parents value the intimacy that is fostered in this small, neighborhood school. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan, 2002 SALT Survey report)*

## Commendations for Ashton School

Innovative leader and effective communicator

Strong parental involvement

## Recommendations for Ashton School

Establish a Technology Committee to draft and implement a Technology Plan.

Explore funding to purchase updated computers.

Provide professional development in technology.

## Recommendations for the Cumberland School District

Allocate resources to improve the physical plant, and add a gymnasium.

Provide adequate teaching and storage space.

Create a coordinated technology plan for both the district and the school.

Provide funding for technology and updated audio-visual equipment.

Provide greater technical support.



## 7. Final Advice to the School

Ashton School is a warm environment filled with happy, well-behaved children. It is a place where children are excited about their learning. They are actively involved in their education and thrive in the hands of competent and compassionate teachers. The principal is a supportive facilitator, effective communicator and an outstanding leader. Caring parents, faculty and staff, and principal promote a strong home-school connection.

You are to be congratulated for your educational programs in spite of the deficiencies of the physical plant. You are dedicated to your students and supportive of one another. Your inclusion models are student centered, which reflects your efforts and willingness to work together for the children. By embracing opportunities for professional development, you ensure the continued success of all students.

Celebrate your successes and continue to strive for excellence. Remember, “through these doors pass the greatest children in the world.”

## The Ashton School Improvement Team

Jim Field  
Special Education Teacher

Mary ReCasino  
School Librarian

Doreen Howe  
Grade 2 Teacher  
SIT Co-Chair

Jill Giarrusso  
Kindergarten Teacher

Tanya Rao  
Second Grade Teacher

Karen Egan  
Independent Cumberland School Employee  
School Secretary

William Gasbarro  
Parent/Recording Secretary

Elise Geddes  
Parent/PTO Liason

Nidia Karbonik  
Principal/SIT Co-Chair

Megan Bolliah  
Business Partner

Karen Tellier  
Parent

Jackie Martinelli  
Parent

## The SALT Visit Team

Ruth S. Haynsworth  
Grade 5 Teacher  
Stony Lane School  
North Kingstown, Rhode Island  
on leave to the Department of Education to serve as a  
Regents SALT Fellow  
Team Chair

Susan Davis  
Reading Consultant  
Charlestown School  
Charlestown, Rhode Island

Tracy Farraher  
Administrative Intern  
Providence College  
Providence, Rhode Island

Tony Fox  
Parent  
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

Ann Lavoie  
Reading Specialist  
Hamilton Elementary School  
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Raymond Pandozzi  
Grade 5 Teacher  
Anthony Carnevale Elementary School  
Providence, Rhode Island

Brenda E. Robertson  
Special Education  
Oak Haven Elementary School  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Jim Zanfini  
Administrative Intern  
Providence College  
Grade 6 Teacher  
Northern Lincoln Elementary  
Lincoln, Rhode Island

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

## Ashton School

December 6, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 three portions 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.  
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