



Melville Elementary School

Portsmouth

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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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Melville Elementary School from December 2-December 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.

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 Melville 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 Melville Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *The team spent a total of over 84 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 6 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, school staff, regional special education 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 Melville Elementary 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*
 - Portsmouth Curriculum Guide*
 - Melville School Self-Study 2002-03*
 - Melville Article 31 and Training Binder*
 - Contracts and Evaluation Instruments (Portsmouth)*
 - Portsmouth School Department Strategic Plan 1998-2003*
 - Melville Elementary School Handbook 2002-2003*
 - Goal Setting Plan 2000-03, Curriculum Department, Portsmouth School Department*

*2001-2002 Article 31 Professional Development Investment Fund, Report of Expenditures, Melville School
Melville Elementary School Pledge
Melville Elementary School Mission Statement*

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 Melville Elementary School

Background

Melville School is on the northwest side of Aquidneck Island in the town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Originally built for Navy children on land that the Department of Defense donated to the town, it is adjacent to military housing and Melville Pond. The present school first opened its doors in November 1965. Since then, there have been two major additions to the building. In 1990 two kindergarten classrooms with restrooms, a music room, an art room, a gym, a guidance office, and an adult restroom were added to the school. Completed in January 2001, the latest addition consists of four full-sized classrooms, two with interior moveable walls. These half classroom spaces are used for speech, special education resource, occupational therapy, and a conference room. The remaining two full-sized rooms house a special education intensive resource class for grades one and two and a self-contained special education class.

A professional staff of one school administrator, one guidance counselor, 31 full- and part-time faculty, 17 aides, three clerks, seven part-time special education support staff (social worker, psychologist, OT, PT., etc.) and two custodians service Melville Elementary School. Of the 335 students attending Melville, 93 percent are white, one percent is Hispanic, two percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and four percent are black. Six percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Because Melville is the only single story elementary school in town, it has attracted a more physically needy population than the other schools in the area. Sixty-seven students (20 percent) receive special education services, and 45 students (13 percent) receive remedial reading services. Portsmouth Schools are part of the Newport County Regional Special Education Department. Approximately one-fourth of the Melville Elementary School staff is employed by this regional program.

The population of students from military families is currently 20 percent with periodic rotation throughout the school year. Within the past few years, many new homes have been built in the Melville community, and the community perception that Melville is primarily a military school has shifted. However, military growth is anticipated due to the revitalization of housing in the immediate area.

The Melville school improvement plan targeted the outside facilities available to the students as a significant problem. The school launched numerous fund raising activities and sought and received numerous grants, donations, and in-kind gifts. Now in the final phases of construction on land that was donated to the school, there is an improvement to the site, which is valued at more than \$150,000. The organized volunteer efforts of the Melville Parent and Teacher Group are responsible for the purchase and construction of all playground equipment.

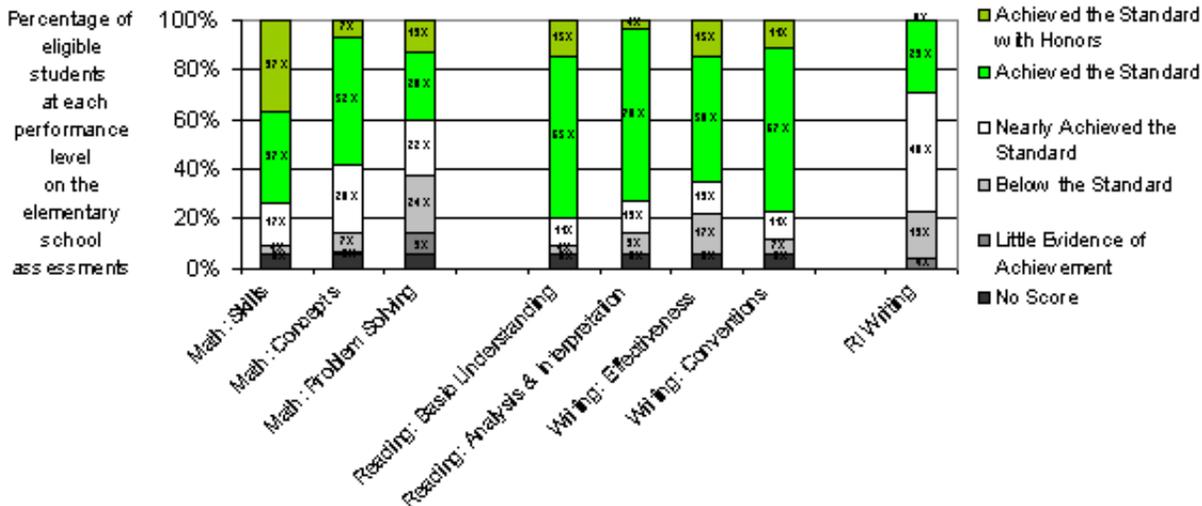
State Assessment Results for Melville Elementary School

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.

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

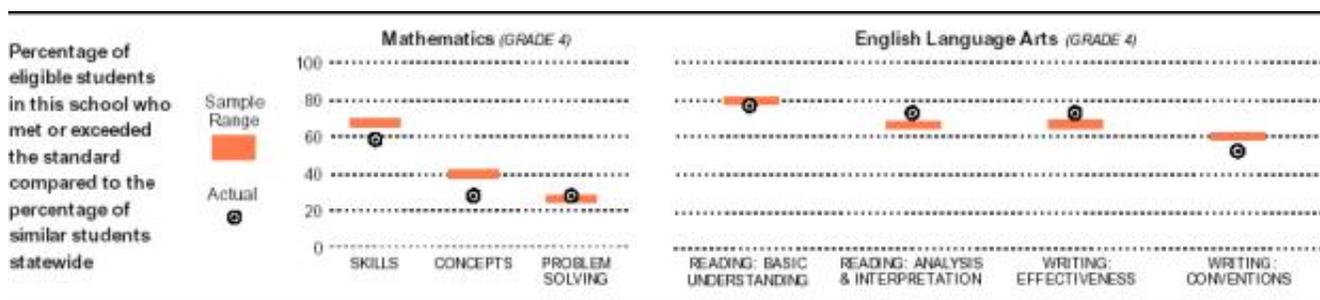


Fourth graders at the Melville Elementary School scored very well on all subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Exam. Although the school is not reported as improving (December 2002), there is significant improvement from 2001 testing in all math subtests. The greatest gaps to standard were in writing effectiveness and problem solving. Only twenty-nine percent of third graders met the standard on the 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

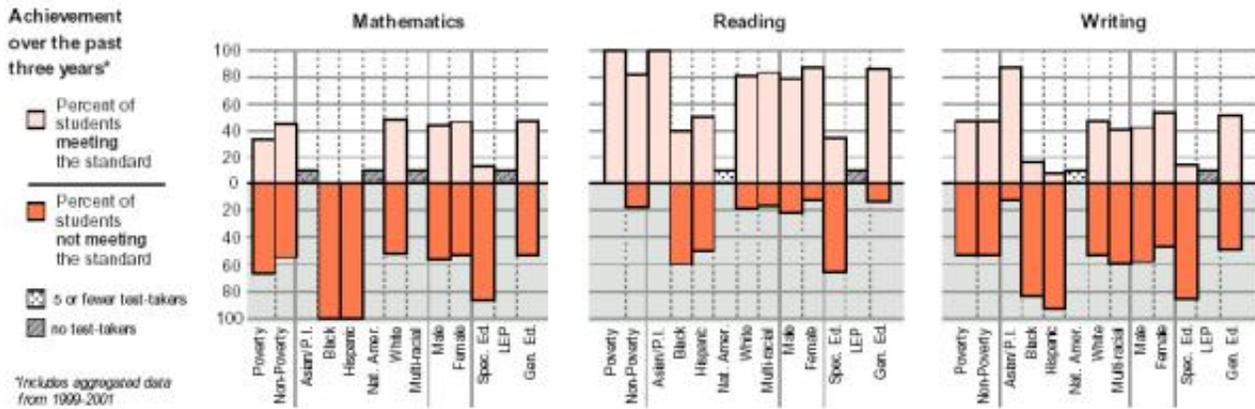


On the 2001 state assessments Melville Elementary school students scored below similar students statewide in math skills and concepts and in writing conventions. They scored slightly above similar students on the reading: analysis and interpretation subtest. In all other subtests Melville students scored the same as 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

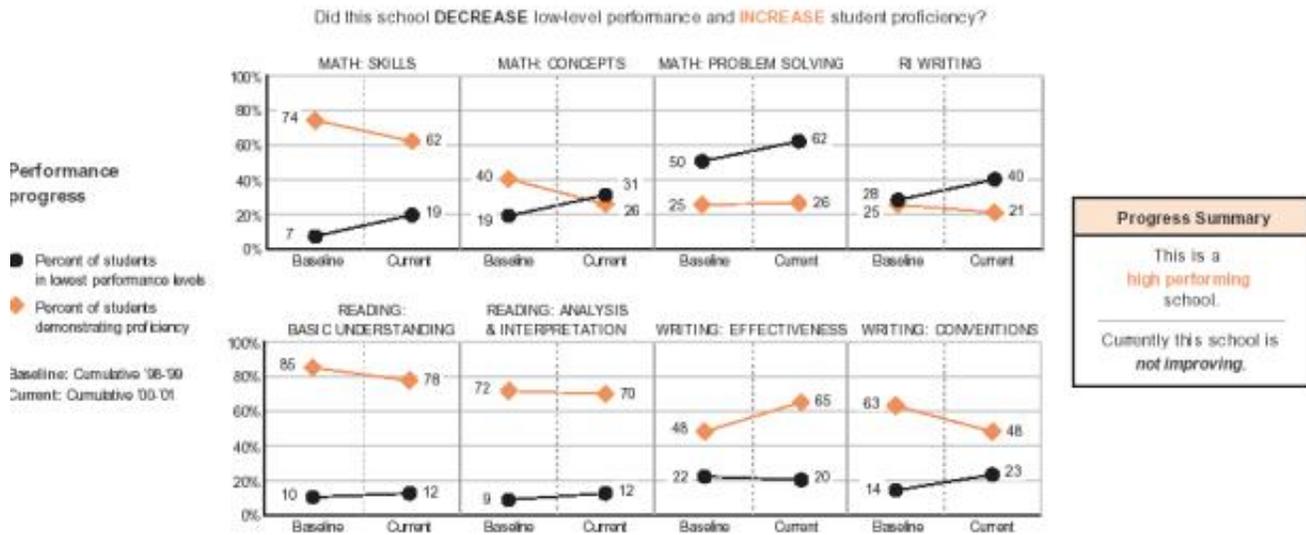


Equity gaps in mathematics, reading, and writing exist for black students, Hispanic students, and students participating in special education. An unusual equity gap also exists in reading where poverty students outperform non-poverty students.

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



Melville results show increased student proficiency by 3 percent or more only in writing effectiveness. The percentage of students in the lowest performance levels increased on every subtest but writing effectiveness.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Melville Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Visitors to Melville School are greeted by a garden, planted in honor of one of the school's former principals. When one enters the bright, clean building, one sees evidence that staff and students take pride in their school. Colorful artwork, park benches, cheerful greetings, and many smiles make visitors feel welcome and important.

Students are eager to share their work, show off their classrooms, and welcome any visitor. Students and teachers leave their marks behind, when they move on to new classrooms. Their colorful handprints and footprints line the walls of the long hallways. A beautiful tile mosaic created by Melville students adorns the main hallway and invites the visitor to pause and enjoy. We were fortunate to see some culminating

science projects in the classrooms.

Through the doorways of every classroom, visitors see students actively engaged in learning. This is a high performing school, where students are eager to learn, explore, and share. In many classrooms students are busy figuring out math problems. Test scores in math demonstrate an impressive improvement in all math areas. Writing scores, on the other hand, indicate a need for improvement. Teachers have responded by looking for a variety of strategies to

improve writing in the classroom. All kinds of writing is practiced and celebrated here.

The faculty at Melville Elementary School is a mix of veteran and new teachers. Most have an excellent grasp of traditional teaching methods, which they use quite effectively. Many have successfully begun to implement new, research-based practices in their classrooms. The transition to standards-based practice here and district wide has been carefully considered. Teachers have been allowed opportunities to experiment with new ideas and to incorporate them gradually into their daily practice. Eventually, many of these practices should be used consistently in all classrooms.

Adults are warm and nurturing in their interactions with students. The principal, whose presence is visible throughout the school, nourishes the student-centered school culture, supports her teachers, and encourages parents to be part of the school family.

Even with a significant special needs population, discipline is almost invisible here. Each morning children and staff recite the Melville Pledge. More than words, the pledge is clearly part of the school culture. All children are valued, respected, and treated with kindness and understanding, and they respond in kind. Do not be fooled, however, by the sense of calm and order you may feel. This is an exciting, energetic place to be!

Parents are an integral part of the school population. Their hard work is seen clearly in the beautiful, new playground tucked safely behind the school. Parents also run the publishing center for the school, serve as registered volunteers in the classrooms, and support their children's education in numerous ways.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom,*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *talking with students and teachers*
- ◆ *meeting with students and parents*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *2002 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *Melville School Pledge*

Conclusions

Most Melville Elementary School students are independent learners. They know what is expected of them, both behaviorally and academically. They have high expectations for themselves, take responsibility for their work, and are usually on task in the classroom. Students demonstrate their respect for adults and peers throughout the school, accept and understand the diversity of others, help one another, and encourage their classmates to be the best they can be. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, meeting with parents, Melville School Pledge*)

Melville Elementary School students love to read, and they read well. All students have a book readily at hand, and most are actively engaged in independent reading when an opportunity arises. Students accept the challenge of meeting the standard of reading 25 books independently. They readily share their reading through book talks, response journals, reports, and conferences. Many students use the computer to find information for their writing. Students make real life connections and generate topics for writing in all genres, based on what they have read. In the lower grades they use the print rich environment to read around the room. Most students successfully use the print in the room as a resource for their reading. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the students, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, 2002 SALT Survey Report*)

Students at Melville Elementary School enthusiastically share their writing. They use the print posted on the walls to find effective words, correct their spelling, and generate their ideas. They successfully peer edit by using props (Kid Writing), word walls, visuals, dictionaries, suggestions for improvement, and compliments. During group share or circle time, students brainstorm, role play, and suggest revisions to their peers. Student writers welcome most suggestions, consider them and act upon them. Children gravitate toward classroom centers that offer writing activities. Children use models of previously published student work to improve their own writing, which they publish and share regularly. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Many students regularly use manipulatives to solve math, as well as real life, problems. They can identify and communicate strategies by using words, pictures, and numbers. They regularly refer to math word walls when writing about their math. Younger students are actively engaged in calendar math and morning circle time, where they review a variety of math concepts

and facts through multiple modalities. Older students enjoy reviewing facts by playing games and engaging in other activities. Some students experience math instruction that relies too heavily on worksheets. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Commendations for Melville Elementary School

Students' respect for themselves, their peers, and adults

Students' acceptance and understanding of diversity

Students' encouragement of their classmates and peers to be the best that they can be

Students' work ethic and their respect for education

Recommendations for Melville Elementary School

Take advantage of opportunities for professional development in differentiated instruction to better meet the needs of your students.

Continue to explore and supplement your math instruction with activities that enhance inquiry-based learning.

Continue to explore Kid Writing in the lower grades and balanced literacy throughout the school.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, school and regional staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom textbooks*
- ◆ 2002 Information Works!
- ◆ *Melville School Mission Statement*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *Melville School Self-Study 2002*

Conclusions

Most Melville Elementary School teachers maintain a safe, nurturing classroom environment that “enables students to achieve their greatest potential while developing self-confidence, respect, responsibility, compassion, and a love of learning.” Through their enthusiasm, kindness, and use of humor, many teachers create an atmosphere of trust that encourages students to take risks. Classroom routines are consistent and well organized. The use of daily schedules, timers, planners, music, and visual and verbal cues prepares children for smooth transitions, promotes their independence, sets clear expectations, and provides a sense of calm throughout the day. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, teachers, school and regional staff, and school administrators, Melville School Mission Statement*)

Most teachers welcome special needs students in their classrooms. Teachers are working diligently to meet the very diverse needs of their students. Some characteristics of differentiated instruction are evident in many classrooms. Some teachers express their willingness to receive training in differentiated instruction, and the district is providing this for both administrators and teachers. As teachers become more proficient in providing differentiated instruction to meet specific needs, all students will benefit. Integration of special needs students at Melville Elementary School works well because of a team effort, which includes faculty and paraprofessionals. All school staff support this effort. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, Melville*)

School Self-Study 2002)

Melville teachers use a variety of methods to teach reading. Phonemic awareness, independent reading, reading groups, guided reading, response journals, read alouds, running records, literature circles, shared reading, partner and choral reading, listening centers, and teacher conferencing are seen in many classrooms. However, the approach to teaching reading is not consistent throughout the school. Teachers actively are exploring multiple strategies and taking advantage of professional development opportunities inside and outside of the school. Although teachers lack a common understanding of guided reading, they recognize their need for more training and more leveled materials to support this undertaking. Students have performed well on the state assessments. However, to demonstrate improvement, they would benefit from a greater emphasis on guided reading with flexible grouping to address comprehension strategies. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary)*

Teachers at Melville Elementary School are successful in their teaching of writing. They provide many and varied opportunities for students to write. Students keep journals and write across the curriculum; they write responses to literature, narratives, reports, poetry, and quick writes. They do both functional and informational writing. Many teachers have attended training for the Six Traits and have begun to implement this writing model, which provides a common language for writing throughout the district. Other primary teachers use some strategies from Kid Writing and share their information and the work of their students with one another. In addition, teachers effectively use the writing process, writing rubrics, writing centers, walls that teach, peer/teacher conferencing, graphic organizers, and visiting authors. Children are encouraged to revise and improve their work using rubrics and feedback from their classmates and teachers. Many do so willingly. Teachers encourage students to write books, to publish them, and to share their stories often from a special author chair. They provide students with opportunities to reflect on their work. With these new initiatives Melville students should improve their performance on state tests. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers have successfully responded to state testing results by supplementing their basic math programs with activities that support students in developing math concepts and problem solving strategies without sacrificing their mastery of math skill

s. This is evident from the significant improvement noted in all three math subtests of the 2002 state assessments. Inquiry-based strategies are evident in many classrooms. Teachers use manipulatives, conferencing, music, hand movements, calculators, skill review games, math response journals, and any available materials to aid their instruction. They regularly provide math word walls, think alouds, and rubrics, and they give students opportunities to revisit their completed work. Children solve problems and explain their work orally and in writing through the use of pictures, numbers, and words. Use of these standards-based practices is essential to the improvement of math performance. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, review of classroom textbooks, 2002 Information Works!, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary)*

Commendations for Melville Elementary School

Respect for children

Creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning

Willingness to learn and experiment with new strategies

Inclusion kindergarten program

Recommendations for Melville Elementary School

Increase the use of differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Develop a consistent approach to teach reading.

Continue to supplement the Houghton Mifflin math program to provide students more opportunities for inquiry-based instruction and a greater understanding of math concepts.

Access professional development to continue the development of standards-based instruction.

Recommendations for Portsmouth School Department

Provide continued professional development in standards-based instruction to Melville Elementary School.

Provide training for guided reading instruction.

Provide leveled books for guided reading instruction.

Recommendations for the Newport County Regional Special Education Program

Ensure that regular education teachers receive sufficient paraprofessional support as children make transitions to different levels.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ 2002 SALT Survey report

Conclusions

Melville Elementary School is a clean, spacious, and well-maintained building. Classrooms are bright, cheery, and cozy with adequate space for rug areas, centers, and conference areas. Nevertheless, there are issues of concern. The public address system works well in some rooms, but not in others. Because this is such a large building, communication is imperative to ensure the safety of both students and adults in the building. Classroom temperature is not consistent throughout the building. The principal has instructed students to dress in layers, because the temperature in the building drastically fluctuates as they move about throughout the day. In addition, clocks are not synchronized, causing confusion about schedules and the loss of instruction time. This also can affect the use of the classroom clock as a tool for teaching students how to tell time. Entering and exiting school property from both the main entrance and the teachers' parking area pose great risks for all. The reduced speed limit on West Main Road does not offer sufficient protection

(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators)

Daily procedures and practices set clear expectations for student behaviors in all aspects of their daily routine. Discipline is consistent, fair, respectful, and considerate. Expectations are communicated in multiple ways. Children understand and can articulate the reasons for the rules. An example of this is evident in the cafeteria, where children calmly eat in silence while music plays. After the silent time, students may talk or sing along with the music. It is impossible to pass by the cafeteria without joining in the song. Children in grades 2-4 use daily planners to record their homework and to communicate with their parents. Most students understand the importance of these planners and assume responsibility for them. Procedures and rituals, such as these, allow teachers to make maximum use of instruction time; they reduce both off task behavior and interruptions due to confusion and/or discipline matters. Learning is enhanced when students are in this positive and predictable environment. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students,*

parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators)

Melville Elementary School has an extraordinary group of registered parent volunteers. Each has a permanent, personalized nametag. Volunteers run the publishing center, make copies, laminate, and assist in the classrooms. Several are trained by teachers to perform specific classroom tasks. They raise a significant amount of money for school functions, classroom materials, cultural arts programs, and field trips. In addition, parents were instrumental in raising funds for the new playground. The school recognizes parents as partners in the education of their children. A sincere, mutual respect between staff and parents permeates the school. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, 2002 SALT Survey report)*

Melville Elementary School has several innovative and successful programs. A kindergarten class has been accredited by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) since 1998. In addition, an impressive inclusion kindergarten is in its third year. A special education pre-school program for children aged three and four is new in the school

this year. Two looping classes, both in grades 1-2 and grades 3-4, allow students to stay with the same teacher for two years. These programs provide alternative choices regarding instruction programming for teachers, parents, and students. (*observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Melville Elementary School conducted a comprehensive self-study in spring 2002. This informed the school improvement plan and helped the school prepare for the SALT visit. In its draft stage, the school improvement plan provides only a skeletal framework for the future. It does not state clear targets nor does it clearly define responsibility for action plans. More specificity is required to assure that goals are prioritized and met in a timely manner. The objectives stated in the plan do not address the need to move all students forward. Members of the school improvement team are committed to the task of school improvement, and they spend a considerable amount of time on the process. (*reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team, and the school administrator, talking with teachers, staff, and the school administrators*)

Commendations for Melville Elementary School

Clear expectations for behavior and routines throughout the school

Paraprofessional's level of professionalism in classrooms, on the playground, and in the cafeteria

Parents' participation as volunteers, fundraisers, and partners in education

Construction of a state-of-the-art, multi-faceted playground

Recommendations for Melville Elementary School

Establish specific and clear short-term action plans to meet your school improvement goals.

Make professional development for differentiated instruction a clear priority in your school improvement plan.

Recommendations for Portsmouth School District

Adjust, replace, or repair the PA system to ensure that all messages are heard in all classrooms.

Repair the heating system to maintain a consistent, comfortable temperature throughout the school building.

Repair clocks.

Recommendations for RIDOT

Install a traffic light on West Main Road at the entrance to Melville School, like you did at the Dunkin' Donuts.

7. Final Advice to the School

You have everything in place here at Melville Elementary School that you need to move your school and its students forward. It is time to do that. Do not wait for the district to set your course. You have many excellent and energetic teachers here who are already practicing standards-based instruction.

You have a lot of trial balloons out there. Come together and decide what is most important to you; then implement practices to support your priorities consistently throughout the grades. Many of you are experimenting with research-based practices that have been successful with your students. Some teachers already are sharing their experiences and learning from the experiences of their colleagues. Continue to share and learn from one another. Use your own self-study and our report, which supports many of your own findings, to develop a school improvement plan that sets priorities and measurable goals.

Be assured that this was a fresh and rigorous look at your school. The graciousness of your welcome and the warmth of your hospitality have made our work comfortable and enjoyable. We hope you will read this report in the spirit in which it was written. There is much to celebrate here, and we hope you will take time to do that. Begin the New Year using this SALT Visit Report to influence your school improvement efforts, as you advance your own learning and move your students forward.

The Melville Elementary School Improvement Team

Joanne Olson
Principal

Cindy Carroll
Grade 1 and 2 Parent

Dr. Larry Evans
Parent, Military, and Special Education Advocate

Karen Heller
Grade3/4 Looping Teacher

Mary Harper
Grade 1 and 2 Parent

Mary Pat Komm
Grade 4 Parent

Suzanne Roklan
Grade 1 Teacher

Denise Webster
Reading Specialist

Bryn Weymouth
Grade 1 Teacher

Brian Smith
Grade 2 Teacher

Celeste Kane
Primary Intensive Resource Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

Carol A. Belair
Grade 4 Teacher
Wilbur and McMahon Schools
Little Compton, Rhode Island
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education
To serve as a SALT Fellow

Lisa Bouchard
Grade 5 Teacher
Oak Haven Elementary School
Coventry, Rhode Island

Judith Calabretta
Inclusion Kindergarten Teacher
Aquidneck School
Middletown, Rhode Island

Lori Anne Longtin
Grade 3 Teacher
Quidnessett Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Doug Pierson
Principal Teacher
Hamilton Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Tricia Turner
Special Education Intensive Resource Teacher
Anthony Carnevale Elementary School
Providence, Rhode Island

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Melville Elementary 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, 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 two 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.
DATE: January 8, 2003