



Archie R. Cole Junior High School

East Greenwich

The SALT Visit Team Report

January 17, 2003



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 Archie R. Cole Junior High School from January 13 through January 17, 2003. 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 Archie R. Cole Junior High 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 Archie R. Cole Junior High School.

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

◆ *observing a total of 70 complete classes and 60 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 92 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*

◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*

◆ *following eight 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 Archie R. Cole Junior High 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

K-12 Language Arts Task Force

East Greenwich Public Schools English Language Arts Curriculum

East Greenwich Public Schools Mathematics Curriculum

Teacher's schedules

district professional development activities

student portfolios

Cole Junior High School Survival Manual

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 31 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.

2. PROFILE OF Archie R. Cole Junior High School

Background

Archie R. Cole Junior High School is a suburban junior high school that serves all students in seventh and eighth grades in the East Greenwich, Rhode Island, School District. The forty-seven-year-old school was built in 1956, as a high school, with an addition constructed in 1961. Maximum capacity for the building is 420.

The current enrollment is 417, with 222 students in grade 7 and 195 in grade eight. Less than one percent of the students are black or Hispanic, and fewer than two percent are of Asian decent. Five percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. A principal and an assistant principal administer the school. The assistant principal is a new full-time position created in 2002. There are 46 faculty members, and nine of these are part-time. This includes two full-time guidance counselors, one full-time library media specialist, and a part-time psychologist and social worker. There are seven educational assistants on staff.

Because of the growing enrollment and added curriculum initiatives over the years, providing adequate physical space for programs is a challenge. The school is working on a comprehensive plan to become a middle school in scope and philosophy, and there are many professional development activities and committees in place to ensure a smooth transition.

Archie R. Cole Junior High received recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1989 and an award for National Excellence in Drug Prevention in 1993. Based on its high overall test scores, it was named the best middle level school in Rhode Island in 2001 by Rhode Island Monthly Magazine. Both the principal and the science department head have received Milken Awards, which recognize exemplary educators on a national level. Archie Cole teachers are frequent presenters at local and regional conferences. Two teachers were Model Classroom Participants in 1999. Archie Cole students consistently won recognition over the years in many areas, including Scholastic Art Awards, National Foreign Language Exams, and Math Counts.

In addition, the school offers an array of diverse programs and activities for students including: community service opportunities, a variety of sports (both varsity and intramural), drama, school newspaper, yearbook, outdoor club, technology education, Mock Trial, Co-Leader, homework club, ski club, student council and a chapter of the National Junior Honor Society.

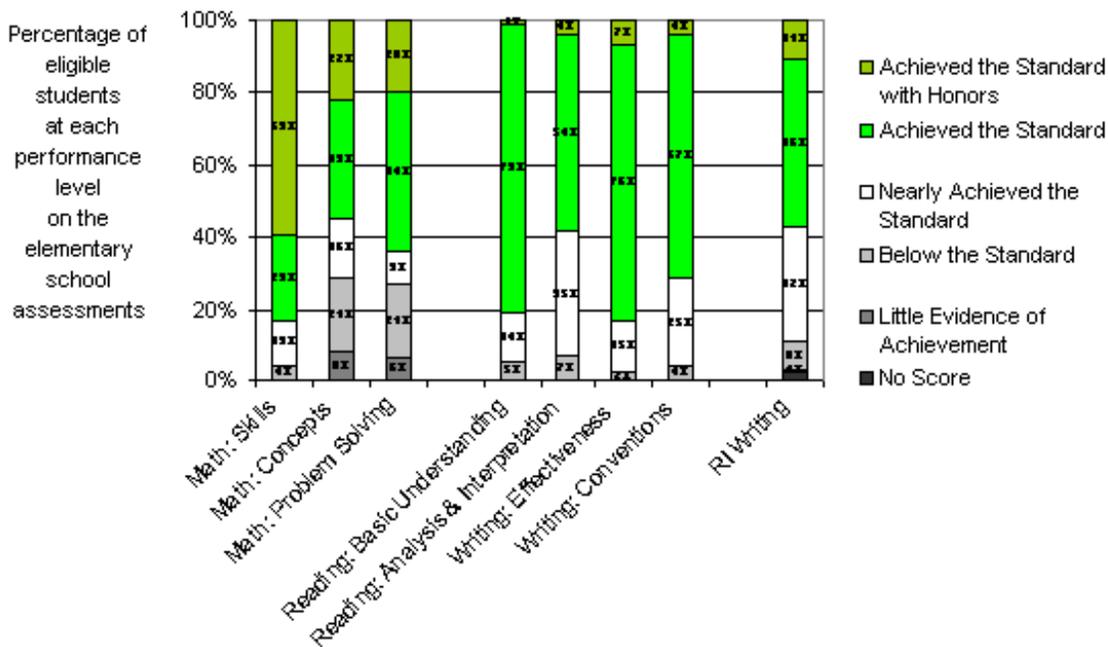
State Assessment Results for Archie R. Cole Junior High School

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*.

Table1. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

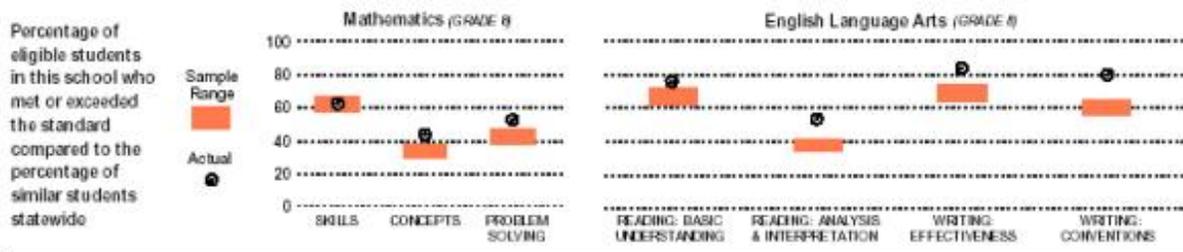


More than eighty percent of the students achieved the standard on Reading: Basic Understanding, Reading: Writing Effectiveness, and on Math Skills. More than fifty percent achieved the standard on all the other subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination and on the Rhode Island Writing assessment. In addition, an unusually high number of students achieved the “standard with honors” – 59% on basic skills and above 20% on the other math subtests. This high performance did not carry over to the English tests where the range is 1-10%.

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



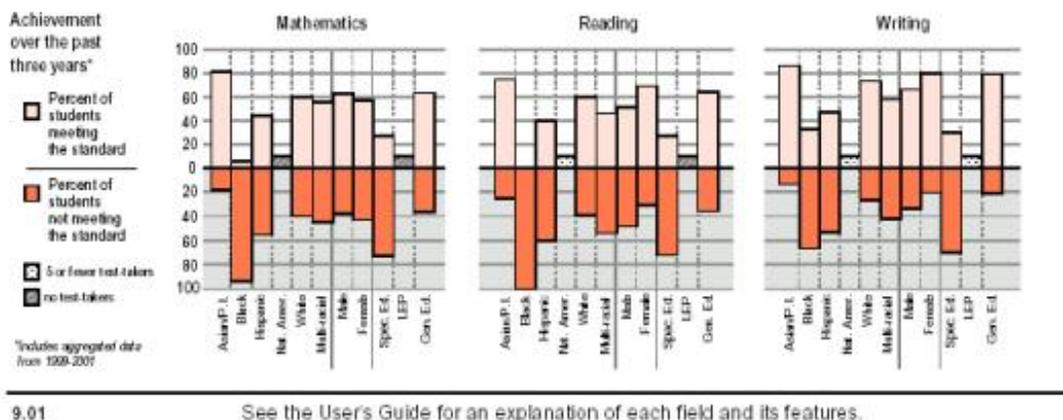
On all the subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination and two out of three of the mathematics subtests, students and at Archie Cole scored above the performance range of similar students statewide.

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



Large equity gaps exist for special education, black, and Hispanic students in all areas of the New Standards Reference Examination. In reading and writing there is a gender gap.

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 Archie Cole School has been categorized as a high performing, not improving school on the basis of its assessment results from 1998 to 2002. The following tables show if the school improved or not in each area that defines improvement (Yes denotes improvement and No denotes no improvement.)

Mathematics: Skills		Mathematics: Concepts		Mathematics: Problem Solving	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
No	No	No	No	No	No

Reading: Basic Understanding		Reading: Analysis and Interpretation	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
No	No	No	Yes

Writing: Effectiveness		Writing: Conventions		Rhode Island Writing	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>	<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Evidence shows that student performance in mathematics has not improved. Student performance at the lower achievement levels in some language arts areas are improving. The Rhode Island Writing assessment shows evidence of improvement.

Information Works! data for Archie R. Cole Junior High School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

3. PORTRAIT OF Archie R. Cole Junior High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Upon entering Archie R. Cole Junior High School, one finds a community of adolescents who are comfortable in their surroundings. They are respectful, confident learners. The students score remarkably well on statewide testing. However, this high level of overall performance is not matched by improving scores over time in math and reading.

The administration, teachers, and staff provide a welcoming environment for their students. The principal, respected by all, is supportive of teachers, staff, parents, and students. Together, this community is committed to the development of responsible and high performing students.

The school has an array of extra and co-curricula activities, including an excellent band. The parent teacher organization supports the students, staff, administration, and programs at the school.

There is room for improvement.

Students are grouped by ability at Cole. Academic and behavioral expectations vary depending on student academic placement levels, thus creating inequities in teaching and learning. The teaching schedule and present grouping practices force many teachers to work in isolation. The lack of connection between interdisciplinary areas fragments student learning.

The building is too small and inadequate by today's educational standards. The staff cooperates to make the best of this substandard facility. Teachers bounce between classrooms and share space and, in some cases, are required to use closets as makeshift classrooms. Archie Cole has outgrown and outlived its present facility.

Archie Cole's past and current successes have brought considerable high recognition. However, there are a number of issues that this school must address for it to continue its progress. The central issue is the difficult job of improving student performance in the lower levels, thereby reducing equity gaps. This school is slowly embarking on a journey to accomplish the transition from a junior high school to a middle school. The entire school community wants to maintain the high-level music and foreign language programs. Cole's challenge is to become an improving school with a rigorous curriculum and high standards for all students.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2001-2002 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *meeting with the students, staff, parents*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *student portfolios*
- ◆ *Cole Junior High School Survival Manual*

Conclusions

Eighty percent of students at Archie Cole Junior High School achieved the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding on the 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. However, few students achieved this standard with honors. Students in higher-level classes more frequently demonstrate higher order thinking than students in lower level classes. When responding to literature, some students discuss, reflect, and write; however, too often too many students often fill-in-the-blanks, complete multiple-choice questions, and provide short written responses to literal questions. This may explain why 42 percent of students scored below the standard in analysis and interpretation on the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination subtest. Student writing and reading revolves mainly around curriculum requirements. While some students enjoy literature, many do not read for pleasure or discuss books with their peers or teachers. Students are aware of the standard of reading twenty-five-books, and many read solely to meet this standard. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, staff, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with parents and students, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing district and school policies and practices, student portfolios*)

On the mathematics skills subtest of the 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination, an impressive 82% of the students achieved the standard; and even more impressive, 59% of them exceeded the standard with honors. In mathematics, as in other content areas, some students effectively use basic and higher level mathematical skills, concepts, and problem solving

strategies to make real life connections. Some students effectively explain their mathematical thinking in writing. However, many students report that they do not write in mathematics, and few students use mathematical tools, calculators or manipulatives to develop their conceptual understanding and to demonstrate mathematical operations. This may contribute to the lower number of students who achieve the standard in mathematics concepts and problem solving. (*observing classes, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002 SALT Survey report*)

Archie Cole students are comfortable, relaxed, and confident within their school. They are respectful and supportive of their peers. They enjoy school, and many report that they are involved in a variety of co-curricular activities and events available at Cole. Many students report project overload and desire manageable spacing of their assignments. Some students report that they are not challenged in their classrooms. Many students voluntarily participate in their classes, while others are disengaged. Students state that individual class content does not connect to their other classes. This results in fragmented learning. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, following students, Cole Junior High School Survival Manual*)

Although students are aware of the standards posted in their classrooms, they are not consistently aware of how to apply these standards in their learning. Students primarily use rubrics as a checklist to guide them to complete their assignments successfully rather than to achieve a level of proficiency. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district and school policies and practices, student portfolios*)

Commendations for Archie R. Cole Junior High School

Respectful attitude of students toward teachers, administrators, and peers

High student performance on standardized tests

Recommendations for Archie R. Cole Junior High School

Foster a passion for reading by allowing students to select their own reading materials, and provide time for students to discuss their reading in school.

Provide students with a variety of experiences to use mathematical tools, calculators, and manipulatives to develop a conceptual understanding of mathematics.

Require students to explain their mathematical thinking orally and in writing.

Coordinate project assignments to avoid student overload.

Define the purpose of their learning activities for students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students and teachers*
- ◆ *meeting with school improvement team, parents, teachers, students, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ 2002 Information Works!
- ◆ 2002 SALT Survey report
- ◆ reviewing completed and ongoing student work
- ◆ discussing student work with teachers
- ◆ reviewing classroom assessments
- ◆ 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results
- ◆ K-12 Language Arts Task Force, East Greenwich Public Schools English Language Arts Curriculum
- ◆ 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary
- ◆ 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary
- ◆ *student portfolios*
- ◆ *teachers schedules*
- ◆ *district professional development activities*
- ◆ *East Greenwich Public Schools Mathematics Curriculum*

Conclusions

Archie Cole teachers are caring and respectful of their students. They are available and accessible before and after school, and many teachers provide students with a variety of ways to contact them beyond the school day. Most teachers deliver their lessons in a clear, concise manner. Lessons are primarily teacher-directed with teachers taking the lead role in directing student conversations and involvement. Some teachers use instructional strategies to connect with all students, while others do not. Student silence is viewed as confirmation of student understanding. Teacher expectations within groups are too often based on the defined grouping, with higher academic and behavioral expectations for the higher-level groups and lower expectations for the lower-level groups. Inconsistencies between levels are evident in instruction, class work, and the amount and type of homework assignments. Activities requiring critical thinking are the norm in higher-level classes, but seen less often in lower-level classes. This inequity in instruction and the lack of a rigorous curriculum results in equity gaps for students. (*observing classes, following students, 2002 SALT Survey report, 2002 Information Works!, talking with students and teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom*

assessments, 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results)

Many teachers are at an emergent level in their use and understanding of standards and rubrics. They generally use rubrics as an evaluation tool, rather than as a tool to assess student work or to guide their instruction. Some teacher comments do not provide substantive feedback to students. Teachers report that they have limited time to conference with individual students to guide them and help them improve their work. This restricts students' opportunities to improve their work and bring it to a higher standard. In addition, teachers often evaluate student learning by asking questions that require basic recall or low-level comprehension. The current schedule limits the opportunities teachers have to collaborate in order to standardize and coordinate their programs, assessment tools, and instruction. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students and teachers, 2002 SALT Survey report, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, teacher schedules, district professional development activities)*

English teachers frequently require a whole class to read the same novel or text. In the upper level groups, teachers provide their students with opportunities to interpret, analyze, and draw conclusions; however, the predominate follow-up activity required for lower level students is the recall of basic facts. Teachers require students to read at home for curriculum related information and to meet the standard of reading 25 books independently. Students seldom have the opportunity to discuss the materials they have read in small groups, with their teachers or their peers. Teachers assign reading in other subject areas, primarily as homework, which frequently requires students to summarize, take notes, or answer specific questions. During the school day, students seldom are given the opportunity to read for pleasure. *(observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, K-12 Language Arts Task Force, East Greenwich Public Schools English Language Arts Curriculum, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 2002 Information Works!)*

Teachers require students to write primarily in response to assignments on specific topics, thus giving students few opportunities to choose their own writing genre or topic. Students only partially execute the writing process, which involves brainstorming, draft, conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing. As a prewriting activity teachers have students brainstorm. While most teachers require peer editing, there is no evidence that students follow standardized procedures or formats. Inconsistencies exist amongst the teachers regarding how they expect students to revise what they have written. The lack of formalized instruction in the writing process may account for the decrease over the past three years on the scores for the Rhode Island Writing assessments, as well as the decrease in the writing convention subtest on the 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. *(observing classes, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with teachers and students, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 Information Works!, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, following students, 2002 SALT Survey report)*

Students are placed at different levels in mathematics. Teachers deliver their instruction based upon these levels. The level defines the content of the instruction and what the teacher expects of the student. Teachers stress the acquisition of mathematics skills. This focus is reflected in the exceptional scores on the skills subtest of the 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination. Some teachers vocalize the need to incorporate more problem solving activities in their curriculum. While there is a standardized curriculum, there are not standardized support materials. Thus, implementing the district mathematics curriculum is a challenge for teachers. Adopting a standards-based math program will develop consistency in instruction and promote growth in student performance. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, talking with teachers and students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessment, student portfolios, 2002 SALT Survey report, East Greenwich Mathematics Curriculum)*

Commendations for Archie R. Cole Junior High School

High student scores on the standardized performance assessments

Accessibility of teachers for students

Recommendations for Archie R. Cole Junior High School

Move the focus of instruction from teacher-directed to student-centered.

Use exemplar papers.

Participate in professional development activities on how to implement standards-based instruction throughout the school.

Adopt a standards-based mathematics program.

Ensure high expectations for all students.

Continue to participate in professional development that is centered on differentiating instruction, balanced literacy, and learning styles.

Immerse students in literacy.

Recommendations for the East Greenwich School Department

Provide professional development in how to implement standards-based instruction throughout the school.

Provide teachers at Cole the necessary professional development in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

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*
- ◆ *meeting with students, parents, school improvement team, district and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *school improvement plan for Archie R. Cole Junior High School*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

Conclusions

Archie R. Cole Junior High School groups its students in homogeneous ability levels by defined criteria. The entire school community is adversely affected by this practice. This configuration confines and labels students within groups; it fragments student learning; it prevents all students from reaching their full potential; and it stigmatizes students. (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, school and district administrators, parents, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Archie R. Cole Jr. High School lacks the necessary space to meet the needs of its students and staff. Teachers routinely share instructional space. This makes it difficult for them to support student learning with the necessary materials, to display student work effectively and to involve students in long-term projects, which are required in order for them to meet the standards. Teachers are forced to hold music classes on a small stage in the school cafeteria. Some rooms are overcrowded, and some classes, such as Special Education, are even housed in closets. These conditions negatively impact both teachers and learners. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with staff, students, teachers, following students*)

The Archie Cole Jr. High School Improvement Plan is an image of the District Strategic Plan. Although the school engaged in a self-study, it did not include the results in its plan. There is an evident lack of action steps, timelines, and outcomes. This plan is not a working document to implement effective change at this school. (*school improvement plan for Archie R. Cole Junior High School, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators*)

Teachers, students, parents, and administrators work hard to create a welcoming community, steeped with tradition. The school is frequently used for school and community functions and activities. There are several avenues of communication between school and home. Some parents report that academic problems are not always communicated in a timely manner. Parent Teacher Group meetings and parent teacher conferences are confined to the daytime, thus excluding some parents from participation. (*2002 SALT Survey report, meeting with the parents, students, district and school administrators, following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with teachers, school and staff*)

Commendations

- Flexibility of teachers working in inadequate facilities
- Respectful attitude within the school community

Recommendations for Archie Cole School

- Pursue a referendum for a new school building.
- Change from homogeneous to heterogeneous grouping practices.
- Use the 2002-3 SALT Survey report to assess the needs for parent communication.

Continue professional development to support teachers in the transition from a junior high school toward a middle school model.

Recommendations for the East Greenwich School Department

Pursue a referendum for a new school building.

Continue professional development to support teachers in the transition from a junior high school toward a middle school model.

Recommendations for the Town of East Greenwich

Support the referendum for a new building.

7. Final Advice to the School

You all work very hard for your students. As you implement flexible organization structures and schedules, student learning will connect within disciplines.

Discard homogeneous grouping practices. Embrace high standards for all students. Provide them with rigorous, student-centered learning. This will further raise your already impressive student performance.

Look at your self-study and your school improvement plan, and develop workable action steps in your school plan that will assist you in your transition.

Coordinate the work of the school, district and the town of East Greenwich, as you plan a referendum to support the needed physical changes necessary to prepare your students for the 21st century.

Let your mission statement be your guide. You are a capable and caring school community. Your greatest challenge is to take the first step on this journey, set the course, and go.

The Archie R. Cole Junior High School Improvement Team

Suzanne Baird, Parent

Paula Bednarcik, Parent

Donna Cancel, Teacher

Deborah Devine, Parent

John Goggin, Parent

George Cravelin, Department Chair

Datherine Hall, Parent

Barbara Horan, Parent

Joanne Leach, Parent

Peter McLaren, Department Chair

Alexis Meyer, Teacher

Joseph Militello, Principal

Donna Pallister, Parent

Patty Paoella, Parent

Elizabeth Peirce, Teacher

Nina Reiner, Teacher

Mary Lou Schoettler, Parent

Patty Streich, Parent

Caroline Vogel, Parent

Michael Zajac, Assistant Principal

Advisory Members

Ray Alfano, English Department Chair

Teddy Davis, Health/Physical Education Department Chair

Bonnie Di Meo, Special Education Department Chair

Lyn Hostetler, Guidance Department Department Chair

Ray Pouliot, Social Studies Department Chair

Mary Quadrini, Mathematics Department Chair

The SALT Visit Team

Donna H. Reinalda
Chair
On leave to RIDE as a SALT Fellow
Sowams School
Barrington

Susan Caputo
Principal
William Winsor School
Smithfield

Michelle Fitzgerald
Special Education Teacher
DelSesto Middle School
Providence

Theresa Fogerty
Parent
Middletown

Deborah Furness
Grade 7/8 Teacher
Winman Junior High School
Warwick

Beth Lefebvre
Teacher
Pocasset Elementary School
Tiverton

Susan Pfeil
Aspiring Principal
Davisville Middle School
North Kingstown

Kevin Smith
Social Studies Teacher
Edward Martin Junior High School
East Providence

Natalie Stein
Guidance Counselor
Barrington Middle School
Barrington

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Archie R. Cole Junior High School

January 17, 2003

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 only notable exception was a problem developed with the chair's computer. While this could have derailed the accepted procedures for writing the report, the chair's and the team's diligence (including everyone staying until 10:00 pm to finish within procedures) overcame the difficulties and assured that the quality of the report did not suffer.

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
- two observations of a portion of the visit, (including the time the computer problem was resolved)
- 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, Ed.D.
Catalpa Ltd.
DATE: February 19, 2003