



Flora Curtis Memorial school

Pawtucket

The SALT Visit Team Report

January 31, 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

Sources of Evidence for This Report

Using the Report

2. PROFILE OF Flora Curtis Memorial School

State Assessment Results for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Results in relation to performance standards

Results compared to similar students in the state

Results across student groups within the school

Results over time

3. PORTRAIT OF Flora Curtis Memorial School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

Conclusions

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

Develop curricula for music, art, and enrichment, based upon the content standards. Provide guidance and professional development for its implementation.

Final Advice to the School

4. The School Improvement Team

The SALT Visit Team

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS of this report

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Flora Curtis Memorial School from January 27-31, 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 Flora Curtis Memorial 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 Flora Curtis Memorial School.

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

- ◆ *The team spent a total of over 123 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 7 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 Flora S. Curtis Memorial 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*

 - Balanced Literacy Training model*

 - Kid Writing*

 - curriculum guides*

 - Support System Report for the City of Pawtucket*

Self-study: Flora S. Curtis School

Contract between the School Committee of the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance

*Contract between the School Committee of the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Non-certified staff
teacher evaluation instrument*

mentor program

report cards

newsletters

common planning time

profile for Floral Curtis Memorial School

2002 Rhode Island Health Assessment

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32.5 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 Flora Curtis Memorial School

Constructed in 1955-1956 in the Pinecrest neighborhood of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Flora Curtis Memorial School opened its doors in the fall of 1956. The school was named for a highly regarded teacher, Miss Flora S. Curtis, the dean of students at Pawtucket High School. An addition to the school was built in 1965. Presently, Curtis serves students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6.

Of the 401 students attending Flora Curtis Memorial School, 300 are white, four are Asian/Pacific Islanders, 31 are black and 50 are Hispanic. Curtis serves special education students with severe/profound or moderate learning disabilities, as well as emotionally disturbed children in grades 4-6. Seventy students receive special educational services, and 164 students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

A professional staff of one administrator, 22 classroom teachers, nine teacher assistants, as well as seven full-time and part-time itinerants and enrichment teachers serve the students of Flora Curtis Memorial School. Two resource teachers, a school psychologist, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a DPT teacher, and one full-time and one part-time speech therapist service the needs of the special education students. Flora Curtis Memorial also has a school nurse, a social worker, a secretary and three custodians.

The pre-school classroom model is a unique program entitled "Together We Grow." One half of the children in each class session are developmentally delayed. Neighborhood pre-school children, acting as positive role models, comprise the remaining half of each classroom. This population mix encourages high academic and social standards.

Curtis School is very proud of its school community and its dedication to serving the unique needs of its children. The surrounding neighborhood provides a strong family environment. Children from many second-generation American families attend the school. The Parent Teacher Organization is a very active and valued resource. Parents routinely assist with numerous after-school programs. The staff demonstrates a strong compassion for the school community by repeatedly assisting families in need, including donating food, clothing, and furniture, as well as by preparing meals and providing transportation. They also have provided a "swimming with the dolphins" experience for those children within the school community who face life-threatening diseases.

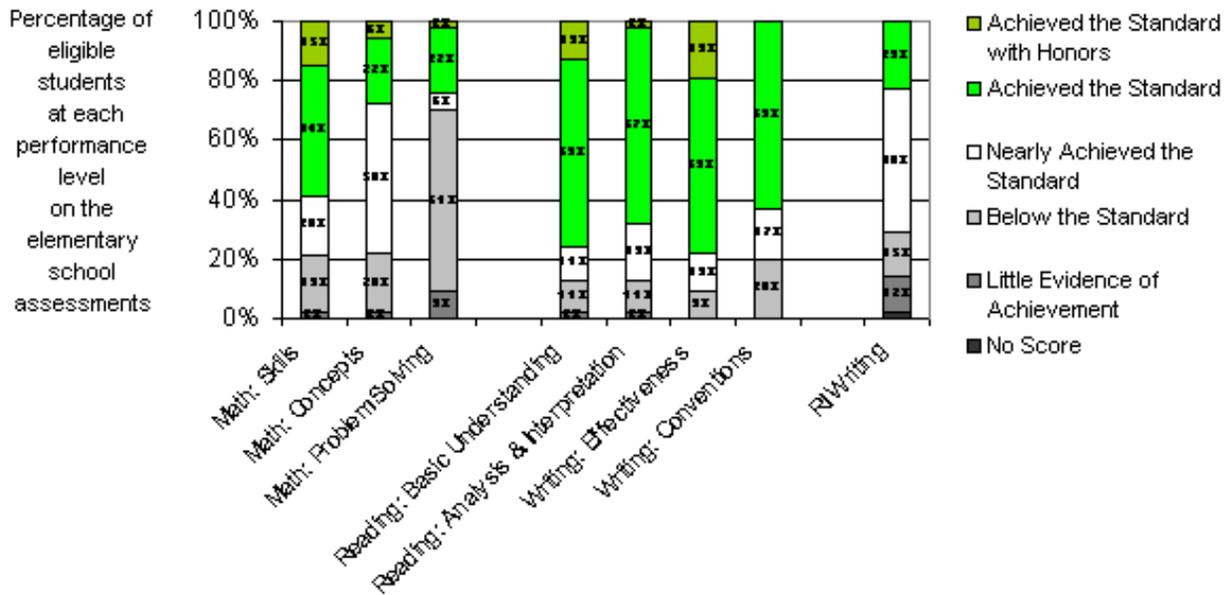
State Assessment Results for Flora Curtis Memorial School

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*.

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

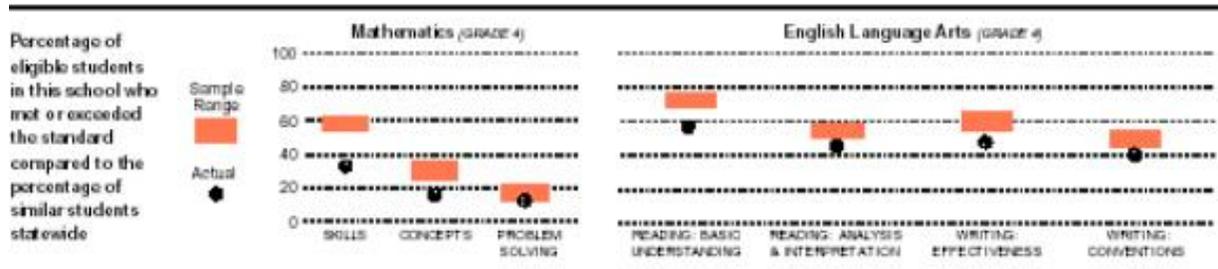


Between 2001 and 2002, Flora Curtis School made substantial gains on all 2002 New Standards Reference Examination subtests. The gains in English Language Arts were somewhat larger than the gains in math, but nonetheless the smallest gains (12%) were in the more difficult mathematics subtests of problem solving and concepts. According to the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results, a majority of students are at or above proficiency on every subtest with the exception of math problem solving and concepts

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

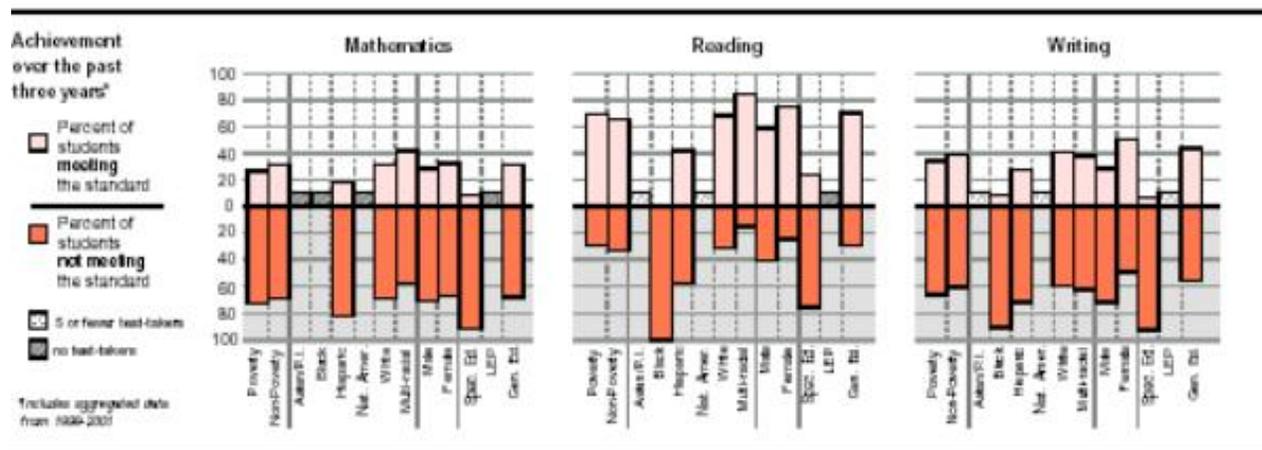


Students at Flora Curtis School performed below similar students statewide on every subtest of the 2001 New Standards Reference Examination except math problem solving. Given the data of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results in the first chart, the school can reasonably expect improvement in all areas of math and English language arts.

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 exist in math, reading, and writing for special education students. Gender equity gaps exist in the areas of reading and writing and racial/ethnicity equity gaps exist in all three subjects.

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 Flora Curtis Memorial School has been categorized as a low performing, non-improving on the basis of its assessment results from 1998 to 2002. The following tables show the areas in which student performance improved.

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	No

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>
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Given the data of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results in the first chart, the school can reasonably expect improvement in all areas of math and English language arts.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Flora Curtis Memorial School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Flora Curtis Memorial School is tucked away in a far corner of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The principal greets students and visitors by name as they enter the school and often has a friendly chat with them. A productive calm marks this school. The weekend before the visit, a car drove into the building. In spite of this incident, the school stayed open. Teachers and students adjusted well and did not allow the accident to distract them from going about their day. Student work adorns the hallways, where plans for the new playground also are proudly displayed. Classrooms are welcoming, and the principal's door is always open. Flora Curtis is a warm, nurturing place, where students feel safe. Students are proud of their work and their school. Parents feel welcomed and actively support the school and the teachers. There is a definite feeling of community spirit.

Curtis School, as well as the entire Pawtucket School District, is involved in many new initiatives. All are committed to developing truly literate students and proficient problem solvers. While inconsistency slows the implementation of these initiatives, many creative, innovative and dynamic changes are underway to meet the needs of all students. Key personnel are available within classrooms to aid in the delivery of these programs. Teachers are working hard to implement a Balanced Literacy model, despite a minimal amount of professional development and a limited supply of resources and materials. Some teachers are fully implementing standards-based instruction, while others are just at the beginning stages. Many knowledgeable teacher-leaders are on staff, but they are not being used to their full potential. Although teachers are obviously committed to their jobs and their students, few are involved in the school improvement team and in school decision-making. Much guidance and leadership is needed to open the lines of communication so that resources and staff expertise are utilized to their maximum potential.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

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

Conclusions

Students at Flora Curtis School are excellent writers. Throughout the day, they write in a variety of genres for many purposes. Most students compose cohesive writing samples guided by the consistent use of a writing process across grade levels. Through the use of graphic organizers, they are able to organize their ideas in a meaningful manner and to cite evidence in support of their topics. Many students effectively use rubrics to strengthen their writing and to self-evaluate their work. They frequently revise and edit their work. Students report that they feel they are successful writers. They enjoy sharing their work and receiving constructive feedback from both their peers and teachers to improve their writing. The strength of the student writing at Flora Curtis School is supported by the impressive percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the standard on the 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. (*observing classes, talking with students, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 2002 SALT Survey report*)

Students are working diligently to improve their problem solving skills. They solve problems on a daily basis, using a variety of strategies. They are learning to explain their mathematical thinking both orally and in writing. Students effectively use manipulatives, when available, to solve word problems and to develop computation skills. Some students, particularly those involved in the *Connected Math Program*, competently solve math problems using different strategies. Others lack basic skills and rely on teacher-directed solutions. Few students participate in challenging problem solving activities that require them to apply their math skills or to reason mathematically. This practice lowers student performance in applying math concepts and problem solving. (*observing classes, following students, discussing student work with teachers, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers and school administrators*)

Students at Flora Curtis School love to read. They enthusiastically take advantage of free time during the day to read leveled books for their own pleasure. Students eagerly participate in the Accelerated Reader program. They appreciate the challenge of higher goals, and they do a good job of taking responsibility for their reading progress. Primary students enthusiastically participate in read alouds, as well as peer and choral reading. They proficiently use decoding skills that increase their fluency and strengthen their reading comprehension. Through the use of Literature Circles, intermediate students articulately lead

student-centered discussions and make meaningful connections between text and life experiences. By participating in these activities, students are well on their way to becoming critical readers, as substantiated by their scores on 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. (*observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, and parents, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers*)

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Effective readers and writers, who take pride and ownership in their work

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Continue to model and use a structured writing process. Expand student choice for writing topics and ideas, and continue to provide opportunities for students to share and showcase their work.

Expand student use of task specific rubrics and criteria.

Increase use of manipulatives at all grade levels.

Continue to expand opportunities for students to engage in solving challenging problems that require basic skills and that connect their learning to the real world. Expand opportunities for students to communicate their mathematical thinking and reasoning.

4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

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 classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing common planning time*

Conclusions

Teachers utilize a variety of strategies, programs and resources in their math instruction. A small percentage of teachers consistently use standards and rubrics to facilitate projects that set clear and high expectations for student achievement. These assignments challenge students to apply their knowledge and make meaningful connections to the real world. Some teachers encourage students to explain their mathematical thinking, while many do not incorporate this skill into their daily practice. The instruction of problem solving in some classes often does not allow students to explore varied solutions to problems. The limited and inconsistent use of manipulatives reduces their effectiveness as tools to teach students how to explore math concepts. Over reliance on teacher-directed lessons prevents students from becoming effective problem solvers. (*observing classes, reviewing classroom textbooks, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*)

Teachers teach reading throughout the day. Most successfully use various components of a balanced literacy model to stimulate and motivate students to read. Through the use of literature circles, guided reading, read alouds, flexible grouping and other effective reading practices, teachers encourage students to discuss the text in meaningful ways. Teachers foster student awareness of independent reading levels and challenge students to progress. They encourage and reward the use of the Accelerated Reader program that empowers students to reach higher reading levels. Despite the limited literacy materials, teachers inspire students to become critical readers. Although additional support staff and teachers are present within the classroom during reading instruction, some teachers do not effectively manage the classroom to take advantage of this staff in a way that best meets the needs of all students. (*observing classes, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, following students*)

The teachers of Flora Curtis School work hard and care about their students. Teachers are respectful of one another and are knowledgeable about their students' developmental levels. Not all teachers take the initiative to come together as a faculty. The ineffective use of common planning time reduces collaboration and isolates teachers. Too many do not share their skills or what they know with their colleagues. Even though some teachers say they want to share their expertise and teacher resources, it is difficult to find an avenue to share with the entire learning community. Teachers are frustrated because they do not have an adequate voice in school decision-making. (*talking with teachers and staff, meeting with the school improvement team, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices, observing common planning time*)

Special education teachers at Flora Curtis School appropriately challenge their students through individualized instruction. They clearly communicate high expectations, especially in literacy. These teachers encourage students with a variety of special needs to meet high standards and to monitor their own progress through the use of rubrics. Standards, written in developmentally appropriate language, are clearly posted in some special education rooms. Teachers encourage students to utilize classroom resources and to work independently. As an integral part of classrooms, support staff, including a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist and a DPT teacher, work collaboratively with teachers to promote student success. The special education teachers create learning environments conducive to individualized instruction and achievement. (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, following students*)

Teachers at all grade levels have high expectations for student writing. They integrate writing across all academic areas. While some teachers consistently and effectively use rubrics, graphic organizers and criteria charts to guide the writing process, others are at the beginning stages of implementation. Teachers encourage students to share their writing and celebrate what they write. They build student pride by displaying student work throughout the school. Some teachers rely on teacher-developed prompts and topics without giving students an equal opportunity to choose their own topics. Word walls are used effectively in most classrooms. In some classrooms, however, the list of words is over abundant or hard to read, making it difficult for students to use. The 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination scores reflect the effective teaching of writing at Flora Curtis School. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, observing the school outside of the classroom, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Developing critical readers and writers

Hard working, dedicated, caring faculty and staff

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Expand the consistent use of manipulatives, rubrics and standards across grade levels. Incorporate student-driven inquiry learning.

Expand the consistent practice of communicating mathematical thinking, both orally and in writing.

Utilize additional staff and support services more effectively.

Make more effective use of common planning time so teachers can share their ideas and coordinate the use of best teaching practices and make them consistent.

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

Provide adequate materials to implement the balanced literacy program fully.

5. 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 the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ reviewing school improvement plan
- ◆ reviewing contract between the School Committee of the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance
- ◆ reviewing profile information for Flora Curtis School
- ◆ 2002 SALT Survey Report
- ◆ 2002 Rhode Island Health Assessment
- ◆ reviewing records of professional development activities

Conclusions

The Parent Teacher Organization is actively involved at Curtis School. This group organizes and participates in school-wide social and extra-curricular events, provides additional classroom resources, and conducts fund-raisers to assist in school initiatives, most notably the effort to build a fully handicapped accessible playground. A strong outreach program connects the school to the community. Parents praise Curtis School and feel they are an integral part of the school family. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrator, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan, 2002 SALT Survey report, profile information for Flora S. Curtis School*)

Although teachers are receiving professional development in balanced literacy, they have few opportunities for professional development in other areas. Teachers report the need for additional professional development in the areas of co-teaching, special support services, and mathematics. Inadequate opportunities exist for school-based coaches to model effective teaching practices and to mentor colleagues. Instruction in special subjects areas is not based on specific content standards. Music, art and enrichment programs are lacking curricula and guidance from the district. Health instruction is inconsistent, as evidenced by student performance on the state health assessment. Currently, these programs are not reaching their full potential. (*observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, 2002 Rhode Island Health Assessment, reviewing records of professional development activities*)

The school administrator is visible and accessible. Parents and students report that he actively participates in school events and that they have a positive, cooperative working relationship with him. New teachers report that he has been instrumental in helping them learn the policies and procedures of the school. However, day-to-day occurrences and managerial tasks consume the greater part of his time, leaving little time for him to be an educational leader. As a result, programs are not consistently implemented. Teacher leaders are not used effectively, and staff is not involved in school-wide-decision making. (*talking with teachers, and staff, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with the school improvement team, students and parents*)

The school improvement plan, as written, is inadequate to move the school forward in its efforts to improve student learning. Although a self-study was completed in December 2002, this plan does not address many of its findings. The strategies and action steps do not outline the detailed specifics of what the school will do to accomplish its goals. The school improvement

team is composed of a commendable number of parents and few teachers, resulting in an unbalanced representation of the school community. Teachers report that they contributed little to the development of the plan; as a result, they have only a limited understanding of its content. *(contract between the School Committee of the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance, meeting with the school improvement team and school administrator, talking with teachers and staff, and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing self-study for Flora Curtis School)*

Commendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Strong parent involvement

Caring principal

Recommendations for Flora Curtis Memorial School

Provide professional development in the areas of co-teaching, special support services, and mathematics.

Explore different ways to fund and utilize job-embedded professional development.

Include more staff in school decision-making and school improvement planning.

Open lines of communication and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and articulate among grade levels.

Revise the school improvement plan to include specific action steps that address the identified needs of your school in order to raise the level of student achievement.

Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District

Develop curricula for music, art, and enrichment, based upon the content standards. Provide guidance and professional development for its implementation.

Provide professional development in the areas of co-teaching, special support services, and mathematics.

Support the school in its efforts to develop and implement an effective school improvement plan.

Provide professional development for distributive leadership.

6. Final Advice to the School

Flora S. Curtis Memorial School is a welcoming, safe and caring place where children can grow. You truly stress the importance of each and every child as you accept and celebrate your diversity. Your parent involvement is commendable, and it is a great asset to your school.

Continue to challenge your students. Take advantage of district and school professional development activities, common planning time and job-embedded professional development. Do not rely on your district to move you forward. Investigate innovative ways to fulfill your goals.

Open the lines of communication to develop a common vision. Work together to become a unified team. Take advantage of the opportunities you have to collaborate, and strive to find more. You have what it takes to move your students forward.

The School Improvement Team

Kathy Morrissette
Parent
Co-chair

Christine Hands
Teacher
Co-chair

John McCabe
Principal

Ellen Silvia
Parent
PTO President

Lynn Moran
Parent
PTO Vice-President

Wendy J'Zen
Teacher

Dawn Olander
Teacher/Parent

Cathy Fraettarelli
Parent

Tanya Richardson
Parent

Jennifer Agin
Parent

Melissa Gray
Parent

The SALT Visit Team

Ruth S. Haynsworth
Grade 5 Teacher
Stony Lane Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island
on leave to the
Office of School Improvement and Accountability
Rhode Island Department of Education
as a SALT Fellow
SALT Visit Team Chair

Bryan Byerlee
Grade 4 Teacher
North Smithfield Elementary School
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Brian Flynn
National Board Certified Teacher of Music
Warwick Public Schools
Warwick, Rhode Island

Michelle Fortes
Parent
Vartan Gregorian School at Fox Point
Providence, Rhode Island

Nidia Karbonik
Principal
Ashton Elementary School
Cumberland, Rhode Island

Michelle Mekhael
Special Education Teacher
Blackrock Elementary School
Coventry, Rhode Island

Debra Tyree
Kindergarten Teacher
Oak Haven Elementary School
Coventry, Rhode Island

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Flora Curtis Memorial School

January 31, 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 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: February 27, 2003