



Nathanael Greene Middle School

Providence

The SALT Visit Team Report

April 11, 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 Nathanael Greene Middle School from April 7 through April 11, 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.

One team member was unable to attend the last two days of the visit because of illness. He was dropped from the official team list.

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 Nathanael Greene Middle 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 Nathanael Greene Middle School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 110 complete classes and 82 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 130 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 ten 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 Nathanael Greene Middle 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*

 - English Language Arts Scope and Sequence*

 - The Institute for Learning materials*

 - Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study document*

 - Greene Middle School pamphlet*

 - After School Club literacy component*

SchoolMatters

Welcome to Nathanael Greene Middle School pamphlet

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 28 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 Nathanael Greene Middle School

Background

Nathanael Greene Middle School is part of the Providence, Rhode Island Public School System. Built in 1929 as a state-of-the-art junior high school, it has maintained its proud tradition over the years. For example, while many of its students come from across Providence, the school has a rich connection with its neighborhood community. Many former students are now the parents or grandparents of current Greene students.

Nathanael Greene now serves 866 students in grades six through eight from academically and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The diverse population represents students who come from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and who have a variety of academic needs. Thirty-three percent of the students are white, 33% are Hispanic, 22% are African-American, 11% are Asian, and 1% is Native American. Seventy percent of the students receive free and reduced-price lunch. One-hundred-twenty-seven students receive special education services. No students are in either the ESL or the Bilingual Program.

In addition, 275 students (32%) are in the Advanced Academic Program. All middle school students in Providence are eligible to take a qualifying test for admission to this program. The other students are placed in either a special education or a general education program. Each of these three programs has distinct teams. Some special education students are included in the regular education program. Resource teachers provide in-class support to both teachers and students. An intensive resource program provides students with a combination of resource and self-contained services. Special education students are mainstreamed for electives and physical education.

The faculty is organized into 11 academic teams within the three programs described above. Twelve teachers teach in the Advanced Academic Program, 20 in the general program, 10 special education teachers, three part time special education support staff, one instructional facilitator, ten elective/physical education teachers, one librarian, one nurse, four guidance counselors, two assistant principals, one principal comprise the staff of Nathanael Greene School. Some teachers have overlapping assignments and teach on more than one team.

The school maintains associations with the New England League of Middle Schools, Rhode Island Middle Level Educators Association, Rhode Island Legal Educational Partnership, Providence College, Rhode Island College and Brown University. Faculty professional development is largely based upon the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning. Volunteers in Providence School (VIPS) are active at Greene. Some arts students attend a weekly class at the Rhode Island School of Design. This complements Greene's existing art curriculum.

The Lead Team concentrates the school's professional development efforts with a strong focus upon literacy and disciplinary writing within the content areas.

Students consistently exhibit their academic prowess in various national, state, and local competitions. Nathanael Greene has been the statewide Science Olympiad champion in eight of the past nine years and, during those years, represented Rhode Island at the National Science Olympiad competition. Students have earned a first place in the region in the annual New England Math League Competition and have gone to the National Math Counts Competition in Washington, D.C. Students participate in Mock Trial. Students have won the Citywide Spelling Bee for four years in a row. Greene students have placed first, second or both in the state National History competition. The Nathanael Greene Middle School Performing Arts Company has established itself across the city as a premium program with productions seen by over 3000 people each year.

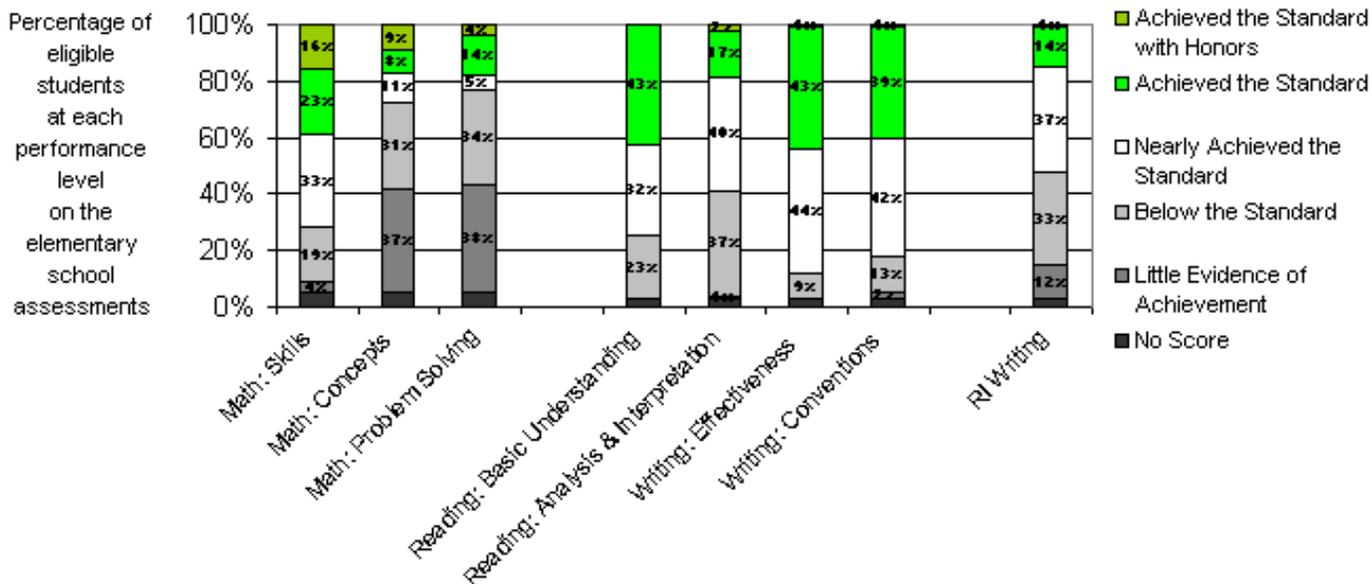
State Assessment Results for Nathanael Greene Middle School

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

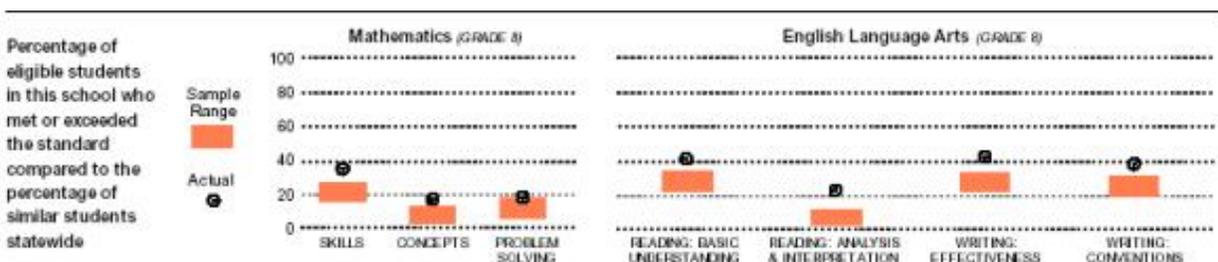


In general, students at Nathanael Greene Middle School scored higher on the reading and writing subtests of the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination than they did on the mathematics subtests. The high percentages of students who are nearly achieving the standard in all the language arts subtests and the mathematics basic skills subtest gives this school a good base for improving scores next year. There are students who achieve honors in the three mathematics subtests and in reading analysis and interpretation. Student performance is weakest in the most difficult area of mathematics: concepts and problem solving.

Results compared to similar students in the state

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

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

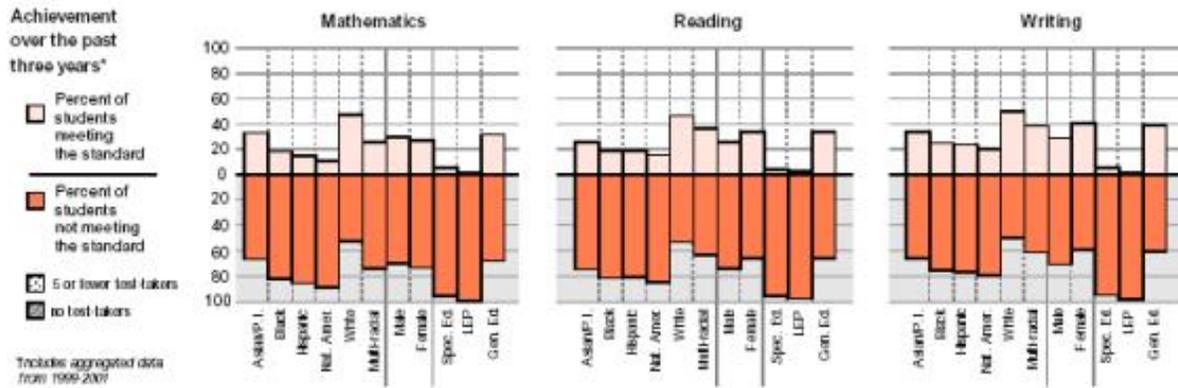


In all subtests of the English Language Arts examination, students at Nathanael Greene outperform their peers across the state. This is also true in the basic skills subtest of mathematics.

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 Asian, Black, Hispanic, and special education students in mathematics, reading and writing. There are no limited English proficient students attending Nathanael Greene Middle School this year.

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. 2002 Student Results Showing Change Over Time

The Nathanael Greene Middle School has been categorized as a low 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	Yes	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>
Yes	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>
No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

All in all student improvement over time on scores was not strong. (only in four of the 16 areas). No sub-test scores matched the

goal of showing both an increase in proficiency and a decrease in percentage of students in the lowest level of proficiency.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Nathanael Greene Middle School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Nathanael Greene Middle School is in the throes of positive change. This school community is asking questions and addressing issues necessary to push this school to higher levels of performance.

Within the friendly and relaxed environment the professional, caring staff members accept their responsibility to make changes that will improve the learning of their students. Students are eager to learn, and teachers are eager to teach them.

The Lead Team and the administrators proactively provide professional development for all teachers. Teachers in all programs work hard. Some teachers collaboratively examine student work to improve their teaching practice. Lack of scheduled common planning time hinders the widespread use of these practices.

Many students perform well throughout all programs. There is clear evidence of student academic excellence within the Advanced Academic Program. In an effort to build a more inclusive program for special education students the school has begun to change the levels of support and programming available for them.

Parents trust and support this school. They highly regard the staff members and believe that they are meeting the needs of their children. They feel their children are safe at the school during the school day.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *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, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *English Language Arts Scope and Sequence*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing the school improvement plan*

Conclusions

With few exceptions, students at Nathanael Greene Middle School are receptive to learning, respond positively when their efforts are recognized, and enjoy school. Students are creative, when they are challenged. When the expectations for their behavior are consistent and clear, they respond with good behavior and positive classroom participation. When expectations in the classroom are not clear or discipline is not enforced consistently, student behavior can deteriorate significantly enough to have an adverse effect on learning. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the students, school administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices*)

At Nathanael Greene Middle School students write often in all curricula areas. The quality of student writing ranges from poor to exemplary. Within the general education English classes much of the student writing is very good. However, in other content areas the quality of student writing is not so good, because students are not as attentive to idea development, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Students in the Advanced Academic Program consistently produce higher quality writing

than their grade level peers. Advanced students write to capture the reader's attention; their work is highly organized; they use examples to support their statements; and they conclude their work with final points and summaries. There are clear expectations for the written products of students in all programs. Students use established criteria on a regular basis to complete their assignments, revise their work, and express their ideas clearly. Although students understand the assignments they are expected to complete, they too often see each individual assignment in isolation, not as a step in their growth to become better writers. Students have limited choice in writing; therefore, their writing is not always personally meaningful to them. *(following students, talking with students, teachers, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Students are not actively engaged in reading instruction, because there is no clearly defined reading program. Some students attend a daily literacy/skills class. These classes are not formalized or consistent, and they do not provide quality-reading instruction. Reading in the classroom is primarily utilitarian. Students do not read much literature during the school day. Students read on a limited basis to cover the content in a particular area, to present their findings on that content, and to answer literal questions and participate in classroom discussion about it. There is little evidence that students analyze, interpret, or use higher order reasoning skills when they are reading. Students do not engage in sustained silent reading in their classrooms and, they generally do not have much choice of what they read. Students do make extensive use of the school library and report that they enjoy reading. *(observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing records of professional development activities, English Language Arts Scope and Sequence)*

Most students at Nathanael Greene Middle School are immersed in the newly mandated district Connected Mathematics Program. Students typically are frustrated when they are required to conceptualize and analyze to arrive at solutions to problems. Others enjoy the challenge. Students working in groups are less frustrated and more involved. Students explain their mathematical thinking, share their problem solving strategies, and effectively use mathematical tools. This forces them to become more active problem solvers and apply mathematics to everyday situations and problems. *(observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, 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 classroom assessments, following students, reviewing district and school policies and practices, classroom textbooks)*

Commendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

Students frequently write in all content areas

Students are eager to learn

Recommendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

Give students more choice of writing topics and reading materials.

Provide students time during the school day to select what they read.

Integrate and collaborate multiple disciplines within single writing assignments.

Investigate ways to incorporate reading instruction through a disciplinary literacy approach or through a mandatory reading program.

Develop a curriculum for the literacy program to address the individual learning needs of the students.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*
- ◆ 2002 Information Works!
- ◆ 2002 SALT Survey report
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *The Institute for Learning materials*
- ◆ *Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study document*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*

Conclusions

Students and parents report that teachers care about their students and know their students can succeed. The vast majority of teachers at Nathanael Greene Middle School want to improve their instructional practice. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism and build strong relationships with their students. The Lead Team works hard to provide professional development for all teachers to improve teaching and learning. These teacher qualities and school initiatives support a positive and comfortable learning environment in the school, which makes improvement in learning and teaching possible. (*following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, discussing student work with teachers, 2002 Salt Survey report*)

Teachers consistently provide clear expectations for their students by posting criteria and rubrics. Many teachers use rubrics only to grade student work, rather than to direct their instruction or to give student feedback to improve their learning. Teachers give higher scores than the student work merits. This does not provide students with an accurate measure of how well their work meets the standard, nor does it motivate students to perform at higher levels. (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, following students, The Institute for Learning materials, Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study document*)

Teachers read to students or have students read aloud to ensure that content is covered. However, little formal reading instruction is provided to students to improve their reading. Most teachers ask literal questions about what students read, rather than provide

opportunities for higher order thinking. Not all teachers enforce the twenty-five-book standard. These practices do not promote student literacy. (*observing classes, meeting with, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, following students, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, following students, 2002 Salt Survey report*)

A variety of teaching styles and practices exist within Nathanael Greene Middle School. Some teachers hold students to high standards and create varied ways for them to demonstrate and reflect on their learning. Most students thrive in these environments. However, most classroom instruction is teacher directed and predominately whole group. Teachers direct questions to individual students, rather than facilitate discussions that involve all students in their classrooms. Many classroom interactions are teacher-to-student rather than student-to-student. Students answer the questions that teachers ask, while other students are uninvolved. This does not give students the opportunity to build on one another's ideas. This common teaching practice creates an environment that overlooks the learning needs and behaviors of many students. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, 2002 Salt Survey report, Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study document, reviewing classroom assessments*)

In mathematics teachers strive to challenge students, both individually and collectively, to draw from their own knowledge and math experience to conceptualize and strategize. Teachers using the Connected Math Program successfully restrain themselves from providing answers to students, when students problem solve. When students are overwhelmed, some teachers interject open-ended leading questions to encourage and rejuvenate their learning. This student-based learning technique promotes higher-level thinking and learning for Nathanael Greene Middle School students. Many teachers augment the program with skills activities. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, classroom textbooks*)

Teachers at Nathanael Greene Middle School recognize the importance of writing and incorporate it in all core content areas. Teaching the five-paragraph essay as a way to organize writing is a priority. Although many teachers encourage writing drafts and then editing them, the written feedback from teachers is primarily concerned with grammatical editing and does not focus much on how students develop their ideas. Teachers frequently assign student writing topics and do not give students opportunities to choose. The quality and the frequency of student writing differs considerably among teachers and programs. The highest quality of writing instruction occurs in classrooms, where teachers model good writing, thoroughly discuss the assignments, convey clear expectations, develop criteria with their students, and guide the students in revising their own work for style and ideas. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, 2002 Information Works!*)

Commendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

- Highly dedicated and professional staff
- Comfortable and supportive learning environment
- Efforts of the teachers to provide clear expectations for the students
- Work of the Lead Team
- Good student writing

Recommendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

- Collaboratively look at student work to develop consistency in the use of rubrics.
- Take advantage of all professional development opportunities concerned with implementing all of the components and tools of the Connected Mathematics Program.
- Give students a choice in writing topics and reading materials.
- Provide professional development in reading and writing instruction.
- Investigate ways to differentiate instruction for your students.
- Vary instructional styles to engage more students in active learning.

Recommendations for Providence School District

Provide teachers with professional development opportunities, as they work to implement all of the components and tools of Connected Mathematics Program.

Provide professional development for reading and writing instruction.

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 the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *Welcome to Nathanael Greene Middle School pamphlet*
- ◆ *Greene Middle School pamphlet*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing the school improvement plan*
- ◆ *Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study*
- ◆ *2002 New Standards Reference Examination*
- ◆ *After School Club literacy component*
- ◆ *SchoolMatters*
- ◆ *2002 Salt Survey report*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom schedules*

Conclusions

There are three distinct programs within Nathanael Greene Middle School: the Advanced Academic Program, the general education program, and the special education program. The school openly labels students within these programs. The expectations and behavior of students are different among these three programs. Separating these programs does little to foster an environment of educational or social equality. The Advanced Academic Program maintains an elite status within the school. The advanced course of study is seen as being rigorous and demanding; however, all students within this program are not challenged. The general education program is seen as supporting students in meeting the standards. The special education teams and self-contained classrooms isolate special education students, both, socially and academically. This isolation greatly hinders the school's capacity to provide special education students with the learning experiences or expectations that will help them meet the standards. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, Welcome to Nathanael Greene Middle School pamphlet, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, Greene*

Middle School pamphlet, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing school improvement plan)

The present school schedule does not provide common planning time for team members to collaborate. This limits opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching. Interdisciplinary coordination would provide students with the opportunity to see the connections between the content areas. Team teachers are not provided with time to discuss or evaluate student learning, work, and behavior. This limits teachers' opportunities to develop coordinated strategies and expectations to improve the emotional, social, and educational growth of their students. *(following students, reviewing classroom schedules, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study document, 2002 Salt Survey report)*

In the present English Language Arts Scope and Sequence, the core texts address the interest levels of most students, but these texts are not at the instructional reading level of many students. These texts do not challenge many of the students within the Advanced Academic Program, and they are too difficult for some of the other students. *(English Language Arts Scope and Sequence, following students, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The Nathanael Greene Middle School Providence One Plan (POP) addresses the needs of the student learners, teachers and the school community. While addressing the needs of many learners, its focus is limited to equity gaps in gender and special education. It does not take into account the large gaps in ethnicity and poverty, as indicated in the 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results. The recently completed self-study is clear; it identifies many of the school's current needs. *(Nathanael Greene Middle School POP, meeting with the school improvement team, 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results, Nathanael Greene Middle School Self Study)*

A variety of community associations and groups and several local colleges and universities support and enhance the school. Parents report feeling that their children are safe and cared for within the school. The school offers a variety of after school programs; only one is athletic. Since all of these programs have a reading component, not many students, who are interested only in athletics, attend. Students report that they would like more athletic activities after school. Parents also report that they would welcome more after school programs for their children. *(talking with students, teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, parents, Welcome to Nathanael Greene Middle School pamphlet, After School Club literacy component, SchoolMatters)*

The Nathanael Greene Middle School administrative team provides proactive instructional leadership for the faculty and is a visible, positive presence within the school. Teachers feel the principal supports them in their instruction. Parents report being exceptionally satisfied with the school leadership. Parents appreciate the timely communication and resolution of student issues. The leadership creates a positive learning environment and encourages and supports the staff to change its instructional practices. *(meeting with the school improvement team, district administrators, parents, 2002 Salt Survey report, talking with students, teachers, staff, observing the school outside of the classroom)*

Commendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

- Credit Recovery Program is proactive to student needs
- Instructional leadership provided by the school administrators
- Variety of community connections within the school

Recommendations for Nathanael Greene Middle School

- Move away from a self-contained special education model to one that is more inclusive.
- Decrease the emphasis on student labels.
- Differentiate instruction in all programs for all students.
- Provide in your schedule common planning time for all teachers.
- Review the English Language Arts Scope and Sequence for additional reading material to support all learners.
- Review your school plan to focus on gaps and to incorporate the self- study findings.

Recommendations for Providence School Department

Continue to support the Nathanael Greene Middle School staff in necessary professional development.

Work with the school to develop an inclusionary model to support the needs of the special education population.

Review the English Language Arts Scope and Sequence for additional reading material to support all learners.

7. Final Advice to the School

Students are learning, teachers are working hard, and administrators support the learning and teaching in this school. You are making great strides in bringing all students up to the standards. Look at all of your students and programs to ensure that all students are being adequately challenged.

Ensure that all members of the staff engage in professional development activities that will decrease the discrepancy between their expectations and student performance. Encourage more student voice and student choice. Vary your instructional styles and be aware of different ways that students learn. As you look at your own practice, focus on the connections with the other disciplines. Work within your teams to provide real connections for your students.

The Nathanael Greene Middle School Improvement Team

Anna Saccoccio, Chair
Science Teacher

Barbara Badio
English Teacher

Konah Ballah
Math Teacher

Maribeth Calabro
Union Representative

Mary Kate Carbone
Principal

Catherine DiPietro
Science Teacher

Ellen Dwyer
Parent

Richard Geldard
Social Studies Teacher

Patricia Maia
Mathematics Teacher

Kathy McDonough
Special Education Teacher

Sarah Morenon
Library/Media Specialist

Diane Mullican
Science Teacher

Maria Ortiz-Cruz
Foreign Language Teacher

Geraldine Pirri
Assistant Principal

Richard Santurri
Mathematics Teacher

Nicole Thomas
Assistant Principal

Mary Whittaker
Science Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

Donna H. Reinalda

Chair

SALT Fellow

On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education

Certified in Special Education

Sowams School

Barrington, RI

Emily Bell

7th grade English Language Arts

Davisville Middle School

North Kingstown, RI

Daureen K. Clyde

6th grade Science & Language Arts

John F. Deering Middle School

West Warwick, RI

Jennifer J. Dorman

Assistant Principal

Chariho Middle School

Wood River Junction, RI

Christopher J. Greene

8th grade English teacher

Samuel Slater Junior High School

Pawtucket, RI

Donna L. Lancaster

7th grade Reading

Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle School

Central Falls, RI

James M. Korney

7th grade Mathematics

Tiverton Middle School

Tiverton, RI

Barry W. Spadea

Reading teacher 8th grade

Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

Johnston, RI

Keith Swist

6th grade, Language Arts

Kickemuit Middle School

Warren, RI

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Nathanael Greene Middle School

April 11, 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 not routine. On the final day of the visit (Friday), the teachers and principal raised a number of concerns about the conduct of the visit that required a Catalpa response. Catalpa has submitted an endorsement issues memo to RIDE regarding these concerns.

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 (Wednesday and Friday). This included discussion with the team on Friday regarding the school's concerns.

several in depth discussions with the principal regarding the visit as a whole and the concerns that had been raised in particular

several in depth discussions with the Chair regarding the concerns

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. The concerns raised by the school resulted in several recommendations to RIDE for revisions in visit procedures. The astute management by the Principal and also the Chair ameliorated possible damage to the school's perceptions of the legitimacy of the report.

None of these concerns breached the Visit protocol for either the team or the school. None of them are significant challenges to either the conduct of the visit, or to the legitimacy of the team's conclusions.

3. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair.
4. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
5. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



CATALPA LTD.

Thomas A. Wilson, Ed.D.

Catalpa Ltd.

DATE: May 20, 2003