



# Aldrich Junior High School

Warwick

## The SALT Visit Team Report

May 2, 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 Aldrich Junior High School from April 28 to May 2, 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 Aldrich 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 Aldrich Junior High School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 120 complete classes and 66 partial classes. The team spent a total of over 120 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 10 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*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Aldrich Junior High School*
  - SIT minutes and binders*
  - agreement between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - Aldrich Junior High School school improvement team minutes and presentations*
  - Aldrich Junior High School action plan*
  - Aldrich web page*
  - Aldrich self-study*
  - faculty advisory committee binder*
  - rubrics developed by departments*
  - curriculum documents*
  - faculty bulletins*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2002/2003 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*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 27 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 representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

## 2. PROFILE OF Aldrich Junior High School

### Background

Aldrich Junior High School, located on Post Road in Warwick, Rhode Island, is named for the state's famous senator, Nelson W. Aldrich. Built in 1935, it originally functioned as one of two high schools in Warwick. In 1955, Aldrich was converted into a junior high school. A new wing added in 2002 provided additional classroom and office space. Recently the library was renovated to provide additional areas for books, computers, and tables.

Two administrators and 80 faculty and other staff serve a community of 680 seventh and eighth graders. Of these students, 93 percent are white, three percent are Hispanic, two percent are black, and two percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Eighteen percent of the students receive special education services.

The professional staff has begun to phase in some features of a middle school system. Eight teams of core teachers are each responsible for a shared group of students. All teachers completed the SALT survey, and all are active members of various SALT committees.

An unusual feature of this school is that 26 percent of the faculty participates in a year-long Johnson and Wales graduate course, which provides the school with a driving force to implement school improvement. Weekly meetings promote the action research process, data analysis, the design of assessment tools, teacher leadership, self-study, change efforts, and a stronger learning community.

Aldrich is affiliated with the surrounding community and is a proud advocate of community service. The school has a close association with House of Hope, a local shelter, and the YMCA, through NYPUM, a motorcycle program for at risk students. Aldrich sponsors a community staffed mentoring program. Students also participate in the Feinstein Hunger Campaign, raise money for local charities, and provide phone cards for deployed servicemen and women.

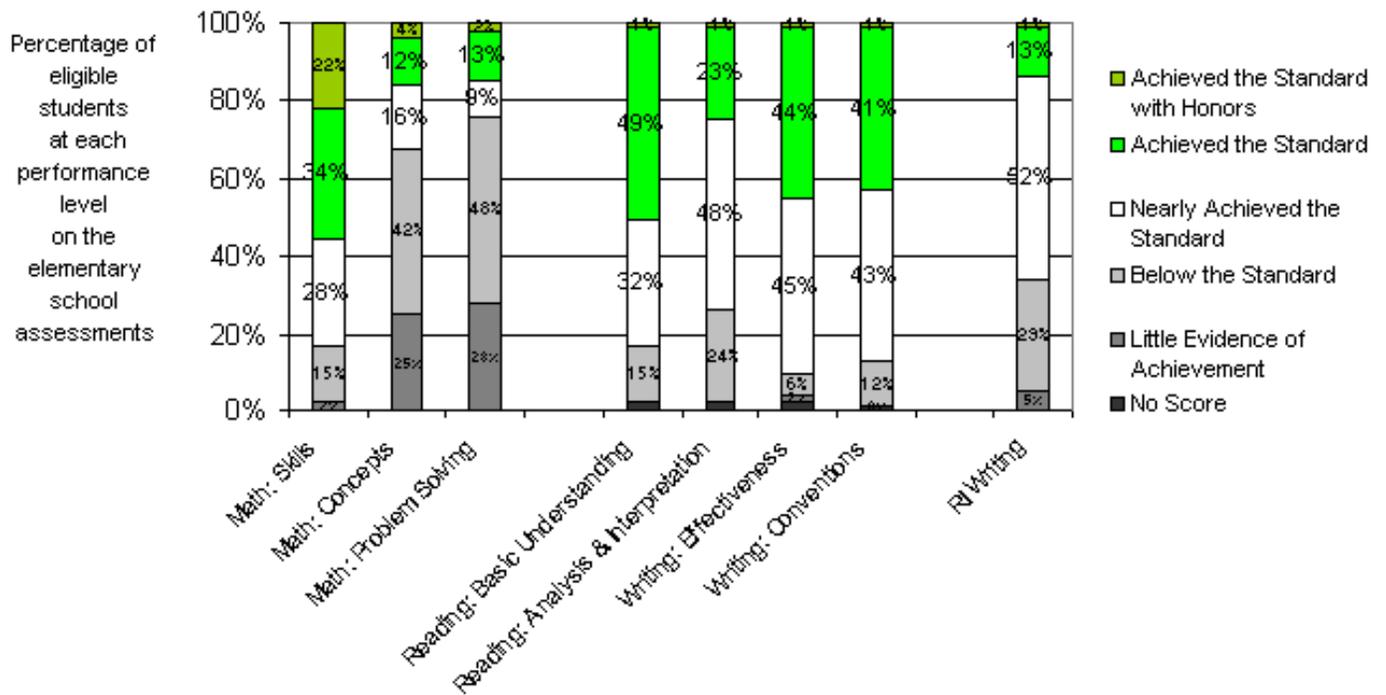
### State Assessment Results for Aldrich Junior High School

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***

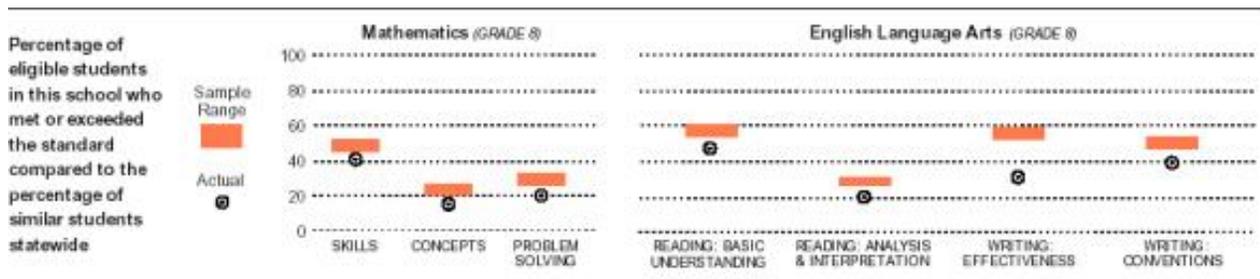


Fifty percent of eighth graders met the standard on the basic understanding subtest of the 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. On the other three subtests, however, fewer than 50 percent of students achieved the standard. On the Rhode Island Writing Tests, only 14 percent of seventh graders achieved the standard. Although 56 percent of eighth graders met the standard on the skills subtest of the 2002 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination, only 16 percent of students met the standard on the concepts subtest and only 15 percent met the standard on the problem-solving subtest. Teachers at Aldrich Junior High School are painfully aware that student performance on state tests is poor. They are taking steps to remedy this.

**Results compared to similar students in the state**

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

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



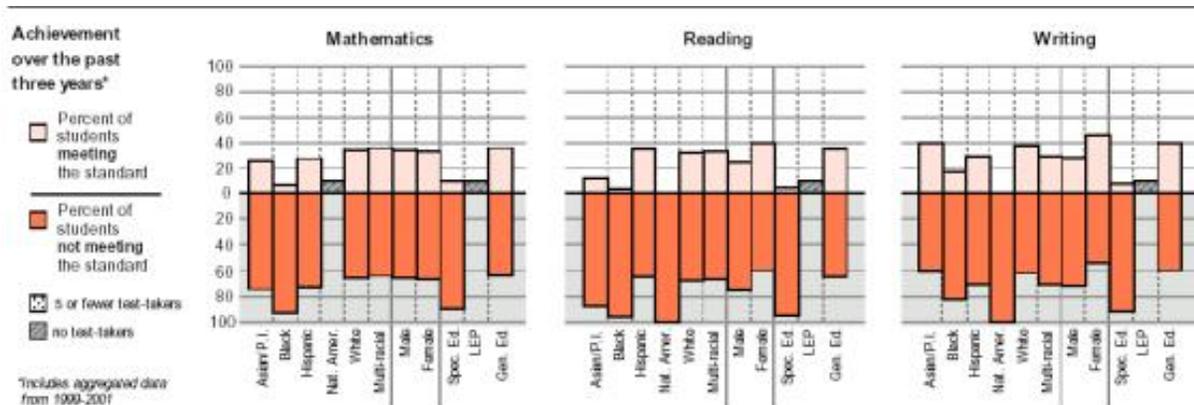
On the 2001 New Standards Reference Exam Aldrich Junior High School students scored below similar students statewide on all seven subtests.

**Results across student groups within the school**

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the

school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

**Table 3. . 2000-2001 Student Results across Subgroups**



Equity gaps in reading, math, and writing exist for students participating in special education and for black students. Equity gaps in reading and writing exist between male and female students.

**Results over time**

Now that the state assessment program has been functioning for five years, it is possible to show results over meaningful periods of time. This display shows changes in the percentage of students at or above standard and the percentage of students in the lowest performance categories. These displays correspond to the targets the Department of Education asked schools to set four years ago and are the basis for the department categorizing schools as improving or non-improving.

**Table 4. 2002 Student Results Showing Change Over Time**

The Aldrich Junior High 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.)

<b>Mathematics: Skills</b>		<b>Mathematics: Concepts</b>		<b>Mathematics: Problem Solving</b>	
<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>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Reading: Basic Understanding</b>		<b>Reading: Analysis and Interpretation</b>	
<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>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>

<b>Writing: Effectiveness</b>	<b>Writing: Conventions</b>	<b>Rhode Island Writing</b>
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<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>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

This chart indicates that performance at Aldrich Junior High School has shown almost no improvement over four years of testing. Aldrich Junior High School has shown improvement only by decreasing in percent the lowest performance levels in the reading analysis and interpretation subtest of the 2002 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination.

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

### 3. PORTRAIT OF Aldrich Junior High School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Aldrich Junior High School is a vibrant mix of old and new. Built in 1935, huge windows allow pools of light to enter the well maintained classrooms. The natural wood grain that frames the windows adds to the stateliness of this old building.

In a dramatic response to its disappointing test scores, this grand old school has reinvented itself. More than the windows casts a bright light on learning here! Aldrich is blessed with a visionary staff that is open to and ready for change. They passionately accept the challenge of improving student performance. They share their knowledge and expertise with uncommon generosity.

The teachers at Aldrich Junior High School are deeply committed to ensuring that each of their students learns. The relationship between special and general education teachers is based on mutual respect and support so that together they can meet the needs of students with special needs. The Aldrich School family forms a support system for the young adolescents under its care, as they grow through difficult and exciting years.

The school improvement team expertly assumes responsibility for teaching and learning here. It researches options, examines data, reports to the faculty, and develops and monitors action plans.

There is a sense of synergy here. The investment made by this staff to promote concrete improvement in student performance, while maintaining a safe, nurturing environment, is impressive. Incredible strides have been made, but no one considers the work complete. It is the responsibility of the Warwick School District and the community to support the blueprint for change being developed in this special place.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *Aldrich Junior High School action plan 1 binder*
- ◆ *2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

### Conclusions

Students show enthusiasm for reading. Students read daily in all subject areas. In English classes, they regularly respond to literature by discussing or writing about what they read. They make predictions and connections to their lives and to other books. They recognize literary devices such as similes, metaphors, and hyperbole. They are able to support their opinions with details from fiction. However, some students experience difficulty reading non-fiction text. They struggle to locate and identify the relevant information. This is especially evident when students approach research tasks. Students share their reading with their parents through homework assignments designed to foster parent involvement in their reading. Although students report that they would prefer sustained silent reading (SSR) in the afternoon, most participate willingly in the daily activity every morning and use that time to read for pleasure. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, action plan 1 binder*)

Students like math. Many students enjoy playing thinking games in their classrooms to reinforce their understanding of math concepts. Students in the honors classes enjoy collaborating in small groups to solve problems. They work together to solve the problem of the week and use a rubric to assess their work. They are successfully working in an algebra program. They show an enthusiasm for math and ask intelligent questions that demonstrate their higher level thinking skills. Students in the middle and upper levels understand that there are many ways to solve a problem, and they enjoy debating which one is the best. In math classes students report that they can make real life connections. Some students in the lower level classes struggle without hands-on opportunities and are less engaged in classroom tasks such as sharing their work, asking questions, or requesting clarification. They correct their papers and record their grades. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Students are learning to express their ideas and to become effective communicators through writing. Students write daily in all subject areas. They write in a variety of ways: in journals and warm-ups. They write to explain their work and to respond to what they have read and to teachers' prompts. They also write letters, poetry, persuasive essays, and research reports. In many writing activities, the student voice comes through clearly. Although scores on the seventh grade writing test have not been good, much of the student writing is very impressive. Students use the common writing rubric to edit their work and to understand what is expected of them. They regularly edit and evaluate their work with their peers. Many provide excellent commentary. Students revise their work in response to peer or teacher commentary. Students enthusiastically use computers in the media center and in the computer lab to publish a final product. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*)

### Recommendations for Aldrich Junior High School

Provide instruction in extracting information from non-fiction texts.

Use a standards-based approach to teach math to all students.

Provide challenging math activities for students at all levels.

Continue to emphasize writing across the curriculum.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

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

### Conclusions

Teachers at Aldrich Junior High School are invested in their school and support it with their time and energy. They support and respect their students and their colleagues. Twenty-six members actively serve on the school improvement team (SIT). Thirteen additional teachers participate on the SIT action teams. Other teachers serve on a faculty advisory committee and various SALT committees. There is an impressive 100 percent faculty participation in school improvement initiatives. The teachers are determined to improve student learning and performance together. They reflect on their work, conduct self-study, identify needs, and seek out professional development to improve their practice. They have established a supportive learning community, where they encourage one another and share their efforts and expertise within their teams and their departments. In addition to their emphasis on professional growth, the staff has created a warm, caring, and accepting environment for all members of the school community. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing records of professional development activities, SIT binders*)

Both new and veteran teachers share a passion to improve learning and teaching. To this end, they have moved toward the adoption of the middle school model. Their first step, the creation of teams among core area teachers (math, English, social studies, science), does promote common expectations for student work. Teachers report that they share strategies and work across the disciplines more frequently by using this model. Teachers believe teaming fosters improved communication with parents, facilitates the scheduling of assignments, and enables them to know their students better. Teachers on some teams are working toward developing interdisciplinary lessons and projects. The lack of team planning time makes this difficult. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers*)

Teachers use a broad range of methods and approaches to teach math at Aldrich Junior High School: modeling, guided

practice, coaching, skills review, and inquiry. Teachers regularly use a warm-up activity at the beginning of each class to review skills and start students thinking. They also challenge students to solve a problem of the week and to write an explanation using a school wide rubric. Algebra is taught in honors classes. Teachers use a standards-based program, Connected Math, in many other math classes. However, a skills-based approach is often used in the lower level classes. The goals and objectives of Individualized Education Plans (IEP), as written, sometimes make this necessary. Teachers using standards-based methods expose their students to a broader range of skills, strategies, and activities. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing classroom textbooks)*

Reading and writing across the curriculum is a major initiative of the Aldrich school improvement plan. Teachers have accepted responsibility for improving students' reading and writing throughout the school. Sustained silent reading (SSR) is a daily practice for all students and teachers. Many teachers read aloud to their students. Literary devices and comprehension strategies are regularly taught in English classes -- however, the teaching of comprehension strategies is largely limited to fiction. Some teachers recognize that students have difficulty reading textbooks and are beginning to demonstrate and teach how to read and understand non-fiction text. Teachers require students to respond to literature regularly through different writing genres. Many use writing as a warm-up activity in content areas at the beginning of their classes. Teachers expect students to use graphic organizers and other pre-writing techniques. They encourage students to improve their writing by conferencing and editing with their peers. Teachers allow students to go to the computer lab and media center during class time to publish their writing. Time is provided in many classrooms for students to share their writing. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team and students, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan)*

## Commendations for Aldrich Junior High School

- Teacher leadership
- Professional collegiality of staff
- Creation of a supportive learning community
- Commitment to data driven decisions about teaching and learning
- Voluntary job-embedded professional development

## Recommendations for Aldrich Junior High School

- Move ahead with the middle school model.
- Assure a challenging curriculum for students at all levels.
- Continue to monitor student learning through data driven research.
- Use student work to assess and evaluate newly implemented practices at Aldrich Junior High School.
- Seek professional development in differentiated instruction.
- Include more non-fiction reading instruction in all classes.

## Recommendations for Warwick School District

- Support the efforts of the Aldrich Junior High School teachers to develop their own middle school plan.
- Provide team planning time in addition to individual planning time.

Allow Aldrich teachers to plan and continue job-embedded professional development, especially in the area of differentiated instruction.

#### Recommendations for the Warwick Teachers' Union

Support the efforts of the Aldrich Junior High School teachers to develop their own middle school plan.

Endorse team planning time for Aldrich Junior High School teachers.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *Aldrich self-study*
- ◆ *SIT minutes and binders*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *Aldrich web page*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *2002-03 SALT Survey report*

### Conclusions

The leadership role taken by the school improvement team at Aldrich Junior High School is the driving force in school improvement. Their work has moved the school forward and changed the school culture. Increased faculty accord, awareness, and pride in this school are palpable. It is impressive that twenty-six teachers and parents are active and effective members of the school improvement team. Every teacher is part of a school improvement initiative and takes that work seriously. All school improvement team decisions are taken to faculty meetings for approval. This ensures faculty support for new initiatives. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, Aldrich self-study, SIT minutes and binders*)

Teachers on the school improvement team designed and supported a year-long, six credit graduate course focused on creating a stronger learning community at Aldrich Junior High School. Seventeen school improvement team members participate in this course. They analyze school data, promote action research, and design assessment tools. The course participants provide essential information to the school improvement team for self-study and action planning. Some immediate results of this course are tremendous action team involvement, rubrics training, a reading and writing assessment pilot program that will generate data, and faculty-driven faculty meetings. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, Aldrich self-study, SIT minutes and binders*)

The concept of teaming is in its first year of implementation at Aldrich Junior High School. Although some teachers were at first resistant, all teachers now recognize its benefits. The staff believes that teaming allows teachers to know and understand their students better and to improve communication with parents. They see that positive teacher student relationships develop

in this model. Teachers feel they are better able to monitor student performance and behavior. Unfortunately, the present schedule infringes on individual preparation time and does not provide sufficient time for team meetings. Teachers express disappointment that team meeting time is unlikely to be scheduled next year. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, Aldrich self-study, SIT binders*)

Families and teachers report problems with home/school communications. The school improvement team has begun to address this problem by establishing a school web page. All teachers have a schoolnotes.com Internet address where they may post assignments and notices. The administration has developed a listserv, where parents can receive email notification of school events. Teams often forfeit individual planning time to meet together with parents. However, teachers and parents both report that calls or requests for meetings often are not handled in a timely manner. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, Aldrich Web Page, reviewing school improvement plan, 2002-03 SALT Survey report*)

Aldrich Junior High School provides a variety of indoor and outdoor after-school activities for students including concerts and plays, Mock Trial, newspaper, chess club, and intramural sports. The student council promotes school spirit by planning dances, the faculty appreciation breakfast, and spirit week. Project ACE (Aldrich Cares for the Environment) has prepared gardens, planted flowers around the school, and sold bulbs to raise funds for school activities. Students generously reach out to the surrounding community through many public service projects and fund raising activities. (*following students, observing the school of outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Aldrich Junior High School has a newly renovated library/media center, which welcomes the serious researcher or the student looking for a comfortable place to read. Collaborative lessons between classroom teachers and the media specialist take place daily. Many resources are provided to classrooms for specific projects. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers*)

Although teaming builds a support system at Aldrich Junior High School, new teachers are not afforded the opportunity to participate in Warwick's formal mentoring program due to the shortage of trained mentors. This deprives them of opportunities for growth. (*observing the school of outside the classroom, meeting with the school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices*)

The present teacher evaluation is not aligned with standards-based practice. It does not facilitate personal growth or recognize exceptional performance. (*meeting with the school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices*)

## Commendations for Aldrich Junior High School

- Willingness to change
- Staff involvement in school improvement
- School improvement process and accomplishments

## Recommendations for Aldrich Junior High School

- Participate in the formal mentoring training offered in Warwick and support that training.
- Take advantage of the research instruction provided in the media center.
- Address families' questions and concerns in a timely manner.

## Recommendations for the Warwick School District

- Make personal contact with veteran teachers to increase the pool of trained mentors.
- Form a joint evaluation committee between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union to revise the teacher evaluation tool.

## Recommendations for the Warwick Teachers' Union

- Promote recruitment of teachers for the mentoring program.

Form a joint evaluation committee between the Warwick School Committee and the Warwick Teachers' Union to revise the teacher evaluation tool.

## 7. Final Advice to the School

The work of school improvement here at Aldrich Junior High School is impressive. This SALT team strongly believes that you will soon see improved performance in the work of your students as a direct result of your efforts. Many of you have expressed concern to us that you may not be able to maintain this high level of involvement in the school improvement process. Do not worry about the possibility that new leadership on your team may result in losing the momentum you have built this year. One person did not do this work. You all did, and you all are empowered to continue it. What you have accomplished here is a model of what can happen when teachers take responsibility for learning and teaching in their schools.

The pride you feel in your accomplishments was reflected in your exceptional welcome to an outside team coming to look at your work. Your openness and willingness to reflect on your own practice and experiences provided us a clear look at your school.

As you develop and expand your involvement in the middle school model, do not be content with following another school's lead. Continue to work within your teams, with the school improvement team, and with your department heads to build a middle school plan that fits your goals for your students. Insist that your plan be heard, considered, and adopted here at Aldrich. No one knows this special place better than you do.

## The Aldrich Junior High School Improvement Team

Michael Almeida

Gina Appollonio

Diane Cuddy

Scott Daigle

Veronica Dash

Normand Dubois

Alvaro Goes

Heidi Gregory

Gerry Habershaw

Carolyn Higgens

Dorothy Lutynski

Sean Magee

William Millette

Jeff Miner

Bonnie Morency

Erin Nealon

Debra Pilkington

Pat Pollitelli

Claire Ramieri

Melinda Ratcliffe

Dawn Romans

Cynthia Scheller

Katherine Scott

Brandee Trainer

Richard Tresky

Charlene Wheeler



## The SALT Visit Team

Carol Belair, Chair  
Wilbur and McMahon Schools  
Little Compton, Rhode Island  
On leave to Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as a SALT Fellow

Kathleen Boyajian  
Ferri Middle School, English Teacher  
Johnston, Rhode Island

Erin Escher  
Portsmouth Middle School, Science Teacher  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Rozanne Fuller  
Broad Rock Middle School, Music Teacher  
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Lark P. Goodyear  
Jamestown School, Social Studies Teacher  
Jamestown, Rhode Island

Frederick Hoppe  
Lincoln Middle School, Special Education Teacher  
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Nancy Maddocks  
Barrington Middle School, Computer Applications Teacher  
Barrington, Rhode Island

Kathy Morrissette  
Parent  
Pawtucket, Rhode Isl

Thomas V. Stepka  
Garvin Memorial School, Principal  
Cumberland, Rhode Island

Sabrina T. G. Zirilli  
Deering Middle School, Italian/Spanish Teacher  
West Warwick, Rhode Island

## Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

## Aldrich Junior High School

May 2, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion 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.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

DATE: May 24, 2003