



# Hampden Meadows School

BARRINGTON

## SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

February 9, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

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This report is available at [www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt](http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt)

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## 1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) is Rhode Island's comprehensive school accountability system. SALT is based on using information to improve learning and teaching so that the learning of all students in the state dramatically improves. The SALT visit and other major SALT components are designed to aid schools in their ongoing development and implementation of effective School Improvement Plans.

The purpose of the visit to Hampden Meadows School from February 6 to February 9, 2001, was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- ◆ Student Learning
- ◆ Teaching
- ◆ The School

The design of the SALT visit ensures that accountability supports improvement of schools by directly connecting judgments of quality and recommendations for improvement to the actual life and work of a school.

This report is built upon the observations and conclusions of the visit team. The visit team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners and a parent. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

The School Improvement Plan for Hampden Meadows School was the touchstone document for the team. However informative written reports may be, there is simply no substitute for being at the school while it is in session - in the classroom, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The specific information generated by a team visit is about how the students, staff and administrators go about their day. Thus, this visit allowed professional colleagues and stakeholders to build informed judgments about the teaching and learning that actually takes place at Hampden Meadows School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 75 classroom observations which totaled over 88 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. Most classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following 9 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
  - *School Improvement Team*
  - *school and district administrators*
  - *students*
  - *parents*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*
- ◆ *review of district and school policies*
- ◆ *review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments.*
- ◆ *review of the following documents:*
  - *Hampden Meadows School Action Plans 2000-2001*
  - *district strategic plan*
  - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
  - *classroom textbooks*
  - *1998 Information Works!*
  - *1999 Information Works!*
  - *2000 Information Works!*
  - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*

- *1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- *Hampden Meadows' Working Wonders Focus School Portfolio*
- *Hampden Meadows School Student Learning Portfolio*
- *Barrington Public Schools Teacher Appraisal Manual*
- *Hampden Meadows School Multi-Age Progress Report*

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The visit team met for a total of 21 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators. The team sought to develop conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

**The team reached consensus agreement for each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

It is important to note that this report reflects a “moment” in the life of the school. The conclusions here are different from those that can be made from statewide assessment data or from information collected and analyzed by members of the school. This report is not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, it is a different lens, one not clouded by the daily life of the school. This new lens is one through which the school can look to help focus on important issues resulting in the development of strategies for overall improvement in the teaching and learning process.

The value of this report is not determined by the hard work of the Team. The value will be determined by how Hampden Meadows School responds to the report. At first, the critical criteria will be the thoughtfulness of that response and later it will be its actual effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. The response of the faculty and staff will be most critical early on but later there is a shared responsibility to support the school in making progress. The School Department, the citizens of Barrington, and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in context with the conclusions. That is the way they were written.

## 2. PROFILE OF HAMPDEN MEADOWS SCHOOL

Hampden Meadows School serves students in grades four and five for the town of Barrington, Rhode Island and is part of the Barrington School System. Barrington is a suburban town with a population of approximately 17,000 people. The present school first opened its doors to students in 1956. Additions were added in 1992 and two classrooms were recently added in 2000.

A five-member school committee whose members are elected to four-year terms governs the Barrington Public Schools. A Town Administrator and a five-member Town Council govern the town. A Superintendent and a district staff of three administer the school system. A professional staff of one administrator, 43 full and part-time faculty, five aides and two support personnel, and two and one-half custodians serves Hampden Meadows School students.

Of the 505 students attending Hampden Meadows, 99% are white, with the remaining 1% comprised of: Asian, Hispanic, black, and Native American. 76 students totaling 15% receive special education services and 4% are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Hampden Meadows houses the entire town's fourth and fifth graders. This presents a unique opportunity to offer students a wide range of age-appropriate activities. In addition to weekly classes, the music program offers recorders for fourth grade students, instruments for fifth grade students, and several choruses for both grades. Hampden Meadows has added strings to instrument instruction this year.

Hampden Meadows offers parent choice of three programs for students: a traditional classroom, a team program consisting of two teachers at the same grade level, and the multi-age program consisting of two teachers sharing grades four and five together. All programs use the district graduation outcomes and frameworks to guide instruction.

Hampden Meadows also offers an enrichment program before, during, and after school hours. Students successfully participate in many competitions, including spelling, geography, current events, and others.

A review of the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam School Summary indicates that the percentages of students tested at Hampden Meadows who met or exceeded the standard are substantially higher than the percentages of students who met or exceeded the standard statewide in all subtests. According to the results of the 1999 New Standards Reference Exam *Information Works!* equity gaps ( a difference of 15% or better) exist between special education and general education students on all subtests. Also, on the 1999 Writing Effectiveness subtest of the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, female students performed more than 15% better than male students.

The team used the test score information found in *Information Works!* and the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam School Summaries to determine the performance and equity gaps discussed in the student learning conclusions. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Hampden Meadows School is available at [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net).

### **3. PORTRAIT OF HAMPDEN MEADOWS SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Hampden Meadows School is a vibrant learning community. Classrooms radiate purposeful learning and teaching. Students benefit from a school that exclusively services students in grades four and five. There is a strong emphasis on student achievement and students here are ready to learn. A wide range of programs and activities are focused on their particular needs, and the result is one of remarkable success.

The positive learning environment at Hampden Meadows School is the result of the hard work and dedication of all stakeholders. In the short time she has been here, the principal has successfully reached out and established a solid rapport with her staff, the students and their parents. Her competent and calm manner inspires confidence.

Teachers at Hampden Meadows School are dedicated and hard-working professionals. A School-wide effort towards standards-based instruction and performance-based assessment has resulted in positive change. Combined with the opportunity for parent choice of the educational program best suited to meet their child's needs, these initiatives will further enhance student achievement.

Students at Hampden Meadows School are active and responsible learners. Visitors to this School are likely to hear them engaged in discussions about literature, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts, demonstrating a true appreciation for their learning.

With high expectations for all, it is not surprising that district and building administrators, faculty, and staff are not content to maintain the status quo. Their goals and objectives reflect their desire to offer the best possible education for all students.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *Hampden Meadows' Working Wonders Focus School Portfolio*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey Results*
- ◆ *Classroom observations*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the School administrator, students and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with teachers and support staff*
- ◆ *observations of the School*

### Conclusions

Students at Hampden Meadows School are generally well-behaved and respectful to adults and to each other. Most come to School prepared to learn and are active participants. They are highly motivated, want to achieve high standards, and enjoy challenges. Students take their roles as learners seriously and not only take responsibility for their own learning but demonstrate a willingness to help others. These positive attitudes allow for an academically rigorous environment. *(Classroom observations, scheduled meetings with the School administrator, students and parents, following students, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and support staff, observations of the School)*

Most students at Hampden Meadows School write very well. Students write daily. Most students organize their ideas using graphic organizers and writing process forms. Students know that writing is a process requiring editing and revision. They edit their own work and that of their peers. Most students use the criteria and rubrics provided to guide them through the writing process. Many communicate effectively when writing for a variety of purposes, using different formats across the content areas. As a result, students are developing a strong foundation of authentic writing skills. This finding is consistent with high scores on the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam where 75% of fourth grade students tested achieved or exceeded the standard in Writing Effectiveness and 61% achieved or exceeded the standard in Writing Conventions. *(2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, 1998, 1999, 2000 Information Works!, classroom observations, examination of student work, scheduled meeting with parents, conversations and interviews with students.)*

Students at Hampden Meadows School are very proficient in the use of mathematical skills. Most are able to apply mathematical concepts to solve problems and explain those concepts to others in different ways. Many solve problems employing a variety of strategies and justify their conclusions using the language of mathematics both orally and in written form. As a result many students demonstrate knowledge of higher level mathematical thinking. This finding is consistent with the scores on the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam where 84% of students tested met or exceeded the standard in Mathematical Skills, 52% met or exceeded the standard in Mathematical Concepts, and 39% met or exceeded the standard in Problem Solving. *(Classroom observations, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary, 1998, 1999, 2000 Information Works!, examination of student work, Hampden Meadows' Working Wonders Focus School Portfolio)*

Students at Hampden Meadows School read very well. Most students read a variety of literature and read in all of the content areas. Many students read for pleasure. These findings are consistent with the results on the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam where 95% of students met or exceeded the standard on Reading, Basic Understanding subtest, and 80% of the students met or exceeded the standard in Reading, Analysis and Interpretation. *(Classroom observations, scheduled meetings with the School administrator, students and parents, following students, observations of the School, 1999-2000 SALT Survey Results, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary, 1998, 1999, 2000 Information Works!)*

### Commendations for Hampden Meadows School

The highly-motivated, respectful students

The high quality of student work

**Recommendations for Hampden Meadows School**

Continue to encourage and celebrate the high quality of your students' work

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ 2000 Information Works!
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey Results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *Hampden Meadows School Multi-Age Progress Report*

### Conclusions

The teachers at Hampden Meadows School are hard-working, dedicated, skilled professionals. Most teachers effectively engage in a variety of instructional practices to maximize student involvement, such as cooperative learning, the use of literature circles, and small group instruction. These teachers act as facilitators and encourage students to lead discussions, formulate questions, share their work and ideas, and make real world connections to their learning. As a result most students are active and engaged learners. *(Scheduled meetings with the school and district administrators, following students, classroom observations, conversations and/or interviews with teachers and students, examination of student work)*

Teachers at Hampden Meadows School encourage their students to be independent learners. They emphasize the development of organizational skills and expect students to be prepared for class. They teach students to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. The development of these important skills will ease the students' transition to middle school and increase student responsibility for their own learning. *(Following students, classroom observations, examination of student work, observations of the school)*

Teachers at Hampden Meadows School work together to bring standards-based instruction into every classroom. School wide rubrics have been developed. Many teachers consistently use them to communicate expectations, evaluate student work, and assist students in self-assessment. Additionally, most teachers use criteria checklists to improve the quality of student work. Some teachers have generated a progress report using a rubric scale to more closely match standards-based classroom assessment practices. Additionally, some teachers use standards-based student portfolios for student-led conferencing. As a result, students have a clear understanding of expectations and produce high quality work. *(Examination of student work, classroom observations, following students, 1999-2000 SALT Survey, scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school administrator, students and parents, Hampden Meadows School Multi-Age Progress Report)*

Some teachers effectively employ flexible grouping and re-grouping practices within their classrooms. However, too many teachers continually maintain the same homogeneous groups for daily classroom instruction. As a result, some students have limited opportunities to be placed in a more challenging learning environment. *(Classroom observations, scheduled meeting with school administrator and parents, conversations and interviews with teachers and students)*

Some teachers at Hampden Meadows School effectively integrate the use of technology into their classroom instruction. Their students have been given the opportunity to regularly use tools such as computers and video equipment to enhance their learning. Some students produce PowerPoint presentations, use the Internet for research, and publish their work. However, there are many teachers who have not fully integrated technology into their classroom instruction. As a result, not all students have the same opportunity to become proficient in the use of technology or use technology to enhance the quality of their work. *(Classroom observations, following students, scheduled meetings with students, school and district administrators, conversations and/or interviews with teachers.)*

### Commendations for Hampden Meadows School

The hardworking, dedicated, and skilled teachers

The development of school-wide rubrics

**Recommendations for Hampden Meadows School**

Participate in professional development activities in standards-based instruction and assessment.

Align reporting tools and practices to more closely reflect classroom assessments.

Examine classroom grouping practices.

Integrate technology into meaningful classroom instruction and participate in professional development activities to further this goal.

**Recommendations for the Barrington School District**

Upgrade current technology resources, encourage participation in professional development, and provide classroom and technical support.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school and district administrators, students, and parents*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *review of Hampden Meadows School master schedule*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *Barrington Public Schools Teacher Appraisal Manual*
- ◆ *Hampden Meadows School Student Learning Portfolio*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey Results*

### Conclusions

The principal of Hampden Meadows School provides strong educational leadership. She has a clear vision for the future of this school and sincerely values each and every student. She works diligently to retain the elementary school focus and atmosphere in this unique grade 4/5 setting. The importance she places on home/school communication is evident in her weekly newsletters. The principal has the full support of the district administration, as well as the respect and admiration of her staff. This respect and admiration is completely mutual. She has the utmost confidence in her professional staff. The principal's open door policy for teachers, parents, and students encourages involvement and participation. This results in the creation of positive academic climate where all stakeholders are valued. (*Conversations and/or interviews with teachers, scheduled meetings with the School Improvement Team, school and district administrators, students and parents, observations of the school*)

Time is well managed at Hampden Meadows School. The current schedule allows for double "blocks" of time for language arts and mathematics instruction. All teachers have the same scheduled lunch period that allows time for grade level and team planning, and the sharing of ideas and resources. Instructional time is well used and student time on task is maximized. This results in the effective delivery of instruction and the high level of student achievement. (*Following students, observations of the school, review of Hampden Meadows School master schedule, conversations and/or interviews with teachers, scheduled meeting with the School Improvement Team and school administrator.*)

The opportunity for parents to choose their child's educational setting is laudable. However, the current structure of the traditional, team, and multi-age programs creates an imbalance in the distribution of students across these three programs. As a result, some teachers, parents, and students perceive that this imbalance creates inequities. (*Conversations and/or interviews with teachers, scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school administrator, and parents*)

The current teacher evaluation tool is not adequate to support professional growth and reflection. The "checklist" method used to evaluate teachers is deficient, especially for non-tenured teachers. As a result, the process loses efficacy and credibility. (*Barrington Public Schools Teacher Appraisal Manual, conversations and interviews with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators.*)

Parental involvement at Hampden Meadows School is highly evident. Parent volunteerism and fundraising efforts provide support for the school's enrichment programs, the library, and the School Improvement Team among others. While some parents have expressed a desire to have more information and opportunities to participate in classroom activities, careful attention must be paid to ensure that this involvement is appropriate. Some want more information about their child's learning, and especially want designated parent conference days with their child's teachers, which currently occurs in some programs. This results in some parents' perceptions that they are not fully informed. (*Scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, school administrator, and parents, conversations and interviews with teachers.*)

Hampden Meadows School provides numerous enrichment activities before, during, and after school. The instructional programs offered in music, and the wide range of interests that are served by extended day programs, allows for the education of the whole child. (*Following students, classroom observations, observations of the school, scheduled meetings with School Improvement Team, and parents, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, Hampden Meadows School Student Learning Portfolio, 1999-2000 SALT Survey Results*)

**Commendations for Hampden Meadows School**

The strong educational leadership provided by the principal

The master schedule that provides opportunities for the entire faculty to meet during the school day

Parent volunteerism and fundraising efforts

A multitude of diverse enrichment activities

**Recommendations for Hampden Meadows School**

Reexamine your traditional, team, and multi-age program options.

Provide for scheduled parent-teacher conference days.

**Recommendations for the Barrington School District**

Reexamine the current teacher evaluation tool.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL**

After spending many hours at Hampden Meadows School, this SALT visit team wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of this professional staff. We are grateful for the intense preparations you made for this visit, and your cordial, cooperative response to this process.

Now it is time for you to reflect on the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations that we have made with the consensus of all team members. While we have suggested your attention be directed in the areas of program choice, classroom grouping practices, reporting tools, and technology, the final decisions are yours. Your School Improvement Team should provide direction and facilitate the implementation of those recommendations that you deem appropriate to improve student learning at Hampden Meadows School.





## **HAMPDEN MEADOWS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Gloria Rego  
Facilitator, Head Teacher, Special Services

Jane Austin  
Librarian

Mieke Bailey  
Teacher, Multi-age

Diana Baxter  
Parent

Eleanor Macfarlane  
Teacher, Grade 4 Traditional

Arlene Miguel  
Principal

MaryLou Slicker  
Community Member

Nancy Springthorpe  
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Helen Tjader  
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Kate Weymouth  
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## **THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

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**NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATION AND RI WRITING  
ASSESSMENT RESULTS (2000)**

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## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Hampden Meadows School

February 9, 2001

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, I observed a portion of the visit and I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge derived from these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*), I conclude that:

1. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair
2. One member of the original team voluntarily resigned from the team, when confronted with the fact that he had violated the team's Code of Conduct by making inappropriate comments about the school to members of the school community. His name was deleted from the team's roster.

The principal and faculty of the school; the chair and the visit team; and the team member himself handled this incident in a professional and open manner. As a result it had no important impact on the veracity of the report's conclusions.

3. In all other regards the visit was conducted in accord with the visit protocol.
4. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report as a legitimate SALT Visit Report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
March 1, 2001