



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
www.ridoe.net

# Sowams School

BARRINGTON

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

March 5, 2004



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**James A. DiPrete, Chairman**

**Jo Eva Gaines, Vice Chair**

**Colleen Callahan, Secretary**

**Frank Caprio**

**Representative Paul W. Crowley**

**Sue P. Duff**

**Senator Hanna M. Gallo**

**Gary E. Grove**

**Patrick A. Guida**

**Mario A. Mancieri**

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

**Peter McWalters, Commissioner**

**The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.**

**For information about SALT, please contact:**

**Rick Richards**

**401-222-4600, x 2194**

**or**

**[salt@ridoe.net](mailto:salt@ridoe.net).**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT .....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>USING THE REPORT .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>2. PROFILE OF SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. PORTRAIT OF SOWAMS SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR BARRINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR BARRINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BARRINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<b>7. FINAL ADVICE TO SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>REPORT APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR SOWAMS SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<b>THE SOWAMS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>21</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Purpose and Limits of This Report**

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Sowams School from March 1 through March 5, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Sowams School?

How well does the teaching at Sowams School affect learning?

How well does Sowams School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the 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.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Sowams School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

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

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

### **Sources of Evidence**

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 126 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 24 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report
- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit
- Set in the present, and
- Contains the judgment of the team

### **Using the Report**

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Sowams School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Barrington School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Barrington School District, RIDE, and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Sowams School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## 2. PROFILE OF SOWAMS SCHOOL

Sowams School is one of four elementary schools in the Town of Barrington, Rhode Island. The smallest, it is one of three schools that host students in kindergarten through grade three.

Sowams School opened its doors in 1964. Because of a decrease in enrollment in Barrington in about 1982, Sowams closed for approximately ten years. Prior to that, the school served students in kindergarten through grade four. Sowams reopened in 1992 with a new addition and handicapped access. Since then, this neighborhood school has remained a primary school.

Sowams School has 249 students. Of these, 92 percent are white, five percent are Asian, two percent are black, and about one percent are Hispanic or an unspecified ethnicity. Seventeen percent of the students receive special education services that include a self-contained classroom; resource, speech and language, occupational and physical therapies; and adaptive physical education. Two-and-a-half percent of the students receive free/reduced price lunch.

The faculty and staff of Sowams School are made up of 43 full- and part-time employees including the principal, secretary, teacher assistants, student teachers, and custodians.

Sowams School offers two choices for kindergarten. There is the traditional half-day program with a morning and an afternoon session. There is also a K-1 program that offers an extended day kindergarten (one hour longer) and a full day for students who are developmentally, socially, and academically not ready to enter grade one but have already completed one year in kindergarten. All first grade classrooms are “traditional” classes taught by the same teacher all year. Sowams School offers program choices for parents of students in grades two and three. When a student enters second grade, parents may choose either a looping program or a 2/3 multi-age classroom.

This year the focus for professional development is reading comprehension. A literacy coach facilitates monthly training. Teachers share their knowledge and leadership at follow-up meetings. A professional book club that meets weekly is also focused on reading comprehension. In addition, the Barrington Public Schools are working with the Principles of Learning. Teachers at Sowams School have participated in three learning walks<sup>sm</sup> this year.

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) provides additional funding for Sowams School. In addition, Sowams has received grants from the Barrington Educational Foundation (BEF) this school year. Grants from the BEF and the PTO help to fund the art enrichment focus, Author/Illustrator as Artist. Over the years, BEF has supported the school library and classrooms with funding for books, videos, and technology equipment.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF SOWAMS SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Children are the center of what goes on at Sowams School. Colorful displays of student artwork line every corridor, and faculty, staff, and volunteers make everyone feel welcome. Children pass through these corridors feeling safe and important. They take responsibility for their learning and behavior not only in the classroom, but also on the playground and at student run assemblies.

Every moment at Sowams School is an educational moment. The members of the Sowams School Community demonstrate a thorough understanding of the basic tenets inherent in quality learning and teaching. The faculty, staff, and principal are dedicated to providing an environment that is rich in opportunities for student growth. The exceptional collegiality and inviting atmosphere establish an environment conducive to student learning. Teachers are open to new learning opportunities and work hard to maintain their professional edge. They have skillfully and enthusiastically spearheaded initiatives in reading, writing, and problem solving. Strategies of instruction are embedded across the curriculum, and collaborative teaching models serve as effective designs to support student learning.

The principal is well liked by teachers and parents. His door is always open, and he regularly visits the school classrooms. Everyone in the school community feels supported by his leadership. On the other hand, teachers want more information about district decisions that directly affect their instruction and more say in these decisions.

The school enjoys a cadre of dedicated parents who support the school initiatives with their time and their participation. Their commitment to extending learning through enrichment-based activities is evidenced by their support of these programs.

Everyone here holds high expectations for themselves and for the students.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students at Sowams School are respectful and caring toward one another. They are enthusiastic learners who are ready for any challenge. They are conscientious and responsible. They demonstrate accountable talk<sup>sm</sup> in conversations with their teachers and in conferences with their peers. They listen attentively, build on one another's ideas, clarify their positions, and make connections. They ask questions, synthesize information, make inferences, and evaluate their own work. Students use a common language, locate evidence in text, and try hard to solve problems. They work together well and celebrate one another's successes. Students take responsibility for their own behaviors in the classrooms, at recess, at lunch, and at student run assemblies. These kindergarten through grade three students make meaningful choices about both their learning and their behaviors. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Students at Sowams School love to read. They use and explain the learning strategies they have been taught. They determine importance, make inferences, ask questions, and visualize to construct meaning from text. They read on, use pictures, and think about what makes sense to decode words. They can identify their favorite books and authors, locate evidence in a text, and respond to literature, both orally and in writing, using different techniques. Students say they like words because words take you into the books, and they say it is fun to discuss what you think about books. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Students at Sowams School are effective and successful writers. They write often in different genres—fantasy, poetry, narratives, procedures, responses to literature, and folktales. They are accomplished in the use of the Six Traits (organization, ideas, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions) in their writing. They apply or incorporate many strategies as they write, i.e., they conference with peers, select and use appropriate graphic organizers, and evaluate and revise their work. Student performance on the Rhode Island Writing Assessment tests improved dramatically in 2003. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Students say they like math and wish they spent more time on math in school. At all grade levels they successfully solve problems using multiple strategies. They work alone or cooperatively—helping one another, explaining their strategies, and proving their work by using another strategy. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

## **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

Students:

- ◆ *Display a genuine interest in learning.*
- ◆ *Use accountable talk<sup>sm</sup> at all grade levels.*
- ◆ *Use learning strategies effectively.*
- ◆ *Are active participants in the learning process.*
- ◆ *Take responsibility for their behavior.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

The exceptional collegiality and professionalism of the teachers and support staff at Sowams School is evident in every classroom. There is an unusual level of collaboration between and among grade level peers, the literacy coach, and the enrichment coordinator. Teachers regularly and comfortably model strategies for one another. They present well-prepared, well-executed lessons, and they provide individual attention to students by conferencing with children regularly. Teachers say they work as a team for the benefit of their students. A common lunch/recess period allows for an unusual amount of shared time. Teachers use this time for weekly Building Assistance Team (BAT) meetings and monthly meetings to share professional literature and as a social time to build a sense of community. They use monthly faculty meetings to discuss their reading strategies and to share their lessons and the ideas they use in their classrooms. At grade level meetings, teachers look at student work and plan and discuss their grade level expectations. In addition, they see themselves as learners and willingly seek out professional development opportunities which they share with their colleagues. Several teachers meet monthly outside of school in a Critical Friends Group (CFG) to look at student work and provide feedback to one another. District leaders identify Sowams's teachers as the forerunners of several district initiatives including the Six Traits writing program. Teachers effectively use teaching assistants and parent volunteers to enhance learning. Together they have created an environment where learning and teaching are valued. *(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, 2003 SALT Survey report)*

Teachers at Sowams School use criteria effectively to set clear, consistent expectations that students understand. Transitions are seamless, and no time is wasted. Teachers, in concert with specialists, often make interdisciplinary connections that give children many opportunities to practice their learning. Children showcase their individual and group accomplishments at a bimonthly Town Meeting run by students and attended by parents. *(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)*

A balanced approach to teaching literacy is at the heart of instruction at Sowams School. The teaching of reading is integrated into all areas and throughout the students' day. Teachers give direct instruction in reading strategies and allow students many opportunities to practice. A common language for reading strategies is posted in all classrooms, and all teachers use and model that language. Teachers encourage students to share and respond to their reading in various ways—orally and in writing. They model *think aloud* strategies as they read to students. Teachers teach children how to select appropriate books for their independent reading. They offer constructive feedback on sticky notes and in conferences and meetings. Teachers are confident about their teaching but identify phonemic awareness and phonics as weaknesses in the present program. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, school improvement plan, classroom textbooks)*

Teachers have students write for a variety of purposes in a variety of genres. Journal writing reflects ongoing instruction in math, science, and reading. All teachers model and instruct students in the use of the writing process and the Six Traits of writing. Students have many opportunities across the curriculum to practice what they have learned. Teachers conference with students about their writing and provide commentary to help them improve it. Although word walls are displayed in all classrooms, they are not used consistently by teachers or students to check or improve spelling. Student performance on the Rhode Island Writing Assessment tests improved dramatically in the 2003. *(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, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Teachers teach math effectively using a variety of approaches including the Everyday Math Program and Exemplars. Multiple resources including manipulatives, geoboards, and calculators are incorporated into daily lessons. Teachers use a common language to teach problem solving, and they require students at all grade levels to explain their thinking. To exceed the standard, students are expected to prove their answers using a different strategy. Teachers make games available so students can practice their skills and develop their concepts. Some teachers ask themselves whether they spend enough time on mathematics instruction. Although most teachers teach math every day, they spend far less time on numeracy activities than on literacy. The Math performance of Barrington fourth graders on the statewide testing is not as good as it is on the English language arts subtests. *(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, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, 2003 Information Works!)*

**Commendations for Sowams School**

Students who are self-directed and enthusiastic learners

Collegiality and professionalism of faculty and staff

Collaboration and teamwork

Clear expectations and common language

Fostering student responsibility

Examination of student work to drive instruction

Use of teacher assistants for instruction

**Commendations for Barrington School District**

Excellent professional development opportunities for teachers and teacher assistants

**Recommendations for Sowams School**

Spend more time on math instruction.

Develop consistent expectations for spelling.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

The climate at Sowams School sets it apart from other schools and embodies the philosophy that students are at the center of everything that happens here. The conflict-free environment strongly reflects the values of respect and responsibility. Parents, teachers, staff, and the school administrator work together to achieve a positive environment for student learning. Even these very young students make appropriate choices about their learning and behaviors. They are encouraged to be independent and to assume leadership roles. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school leaders, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators)*

Collaborative teaching is embedded into daily practice at Sowams School. A literacy coach works directly with teachers and students modeling strategies and providing instruction. The enrichment teacher provides direct service, models lessons for teachers, and supports regular education through differentiation of instruction. These instructional leaders are highly regarded by their colleagues. They provide professional development in and out of the classrooms and contribute to the success of students. *(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)*

Teachers at Sowams School express considerable frustration with the district's decision to implement a new reading/language arts program. They say the district made this decision without consulting or seeking sufficient input from the classroom teachers who will use it. Because Sowams' teachers were interested only in investigating a program that would address identified needs in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness, they were troubled by the district's decision to pilot two complete language arts programs. Teachers now feel they are not receiving enough information about the pilots. They are concerned that they have no any idea how they will be required to use the program next year. In addition, they are worried about the effect on their multi-age classrooms if a complete grade-leveled program is adopted. District leaders, on the other hand, say that the new program will ensure consistency of instruction throughout the district. They promise delivery of materials this spring followed by summer training. District leaders say the teachers can marry the requirements of the program to their existing practices that are successful. The lack of communication between the district and the school contributes to discord which impedes good program development. *(following students, observing classes, 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, classroom textbooks)*

Teacher assistants, an intern, and parent volunteers are immersed in education and work hand-in-hand with teachers to provide individual instruction to students. They are treated as professionals. Teacher assistants and the intern have access to the same professional development as the faculty. The high caliber of their work provides greater opportunities for instructing students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers)*

The Barrington School District is piloting a new teacher evaluation process. The evaluation of tenured professionals is on a four-year cycle. The first year includes formal appraisals, years two and three require the design and implementation of a professional growth plan, and year four allows for self-reflection. Several teachers at Sowams School have volunteered to be part of this piloting process. The principal says that the new process leads to a better dialogue by opening up a conversation and that it promotes self-reflection. Although some teachers express anxiety about this, others feel the four-year process keeps everyone current. *(meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, Proposal for Teacher Appraisal Program/October 2003)*

Instruction in the classroom reflects the goals of the school improvement plan. The plan is succinct and manageable. Sowams School identifies its weaknesses, establishes action plans, and carries through in practice. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan)*

**Commendations for Sowams School**

- Child-centered environment
- Embedded professional development
- Integration of teacher assistants for instruction

**Commendations for Barrington School District**

- Proposal for Teacher Appraisal Program/October 2003

**Recommendations for Sowams School**

- Insist on participation in the district decision-making about the required components of any program that is adopted by the Barrington Public Schools.

**Recommendations for Barrington School District**

- Develop curricula guides with benchmarks to provide a framework for teachers.
- Communicate curricular initiatives at all stages of planning and implementation.
- Include classroom teachers in shared decision-making with the district.



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

This SALT visit team has enjoyed its week at Sowams School. We hope your own self-study and this report will give you some ideas for school improvement. Celebrate and continue the fine work you do here.

It is time to embrace mathematics instruction with the same enthusiasm that you have demonstrated in the area of literacy. Your students want more.

We share your concerns about the new language arts program. We have, however, heard from you that you will make the best of whatever decision the district makes. We are confident that is so.

The support you enjoy from school staff and parents is a wonderful resource. Continue to use it in effective and creative ways.

There are many leaders in this school. Their voices should be shared and heard in your district. We challenge you to find more ways to become leaders in your district.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Sowams School

March 5, 2004

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.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
March 19, 2004

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Sowams 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 built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Sowams School.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 7 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *talking with teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - Proposal for Teacher Appraisal Program/October 2003*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Sowams School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2003 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2004 Information Works!*
  - 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
  - 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*School and District Report Cards*

**State Assessment Results for Sowams School**

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.

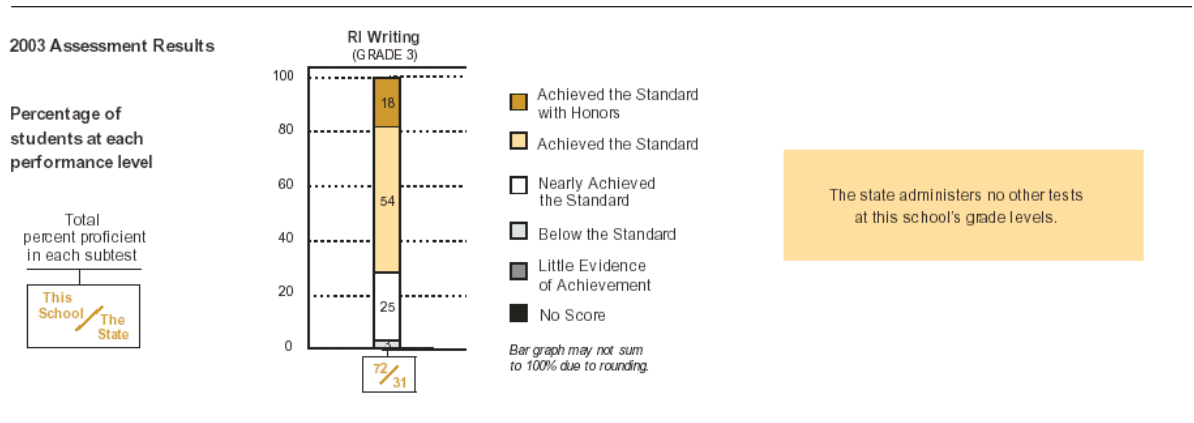
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

**RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in writing. 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. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**



Information Works! data for Sowams School is available at [3 Rhode Island](#) .

**THE SOWAMS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

James H. Callahan  
Principal

Martha Johnston  
Grade Two/Three Loop Teacher

Cheryl Palumbo  
Community Representative

Maribeth Plourde  
Multiage Teacher

Wanda Mullen  
Special Education Resource Teacher

Andy Nowak  
Parent Representative

Lori Vastano  
Parent Representative

Suzanne Rudnicki  
Parent Representative

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Carol A. Belair  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Wilbur and McMahon Schools  
Little Compton, Rhode Island  
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as a SALT Fellow

Lianne Bartlett  
Parent  
East Providence, Rhode Island

Nancy Fraser  
Grade 1 Teacher  
Clayville School  
Scituate, Rhode Island

Patricia Gablinske  
Special Education Resource Teacher  
Guiteras School  
Bristol/Warren, Rhode Island

Andrea McKay  
Art Teacher PK-3  
North Smithfield Elementary School  
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Karen Sorrentine  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Nathanael Greene Elementary School  
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Joan Sousa  
Principal  
George R. Hanaford School  
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM**

INSERT HERE