



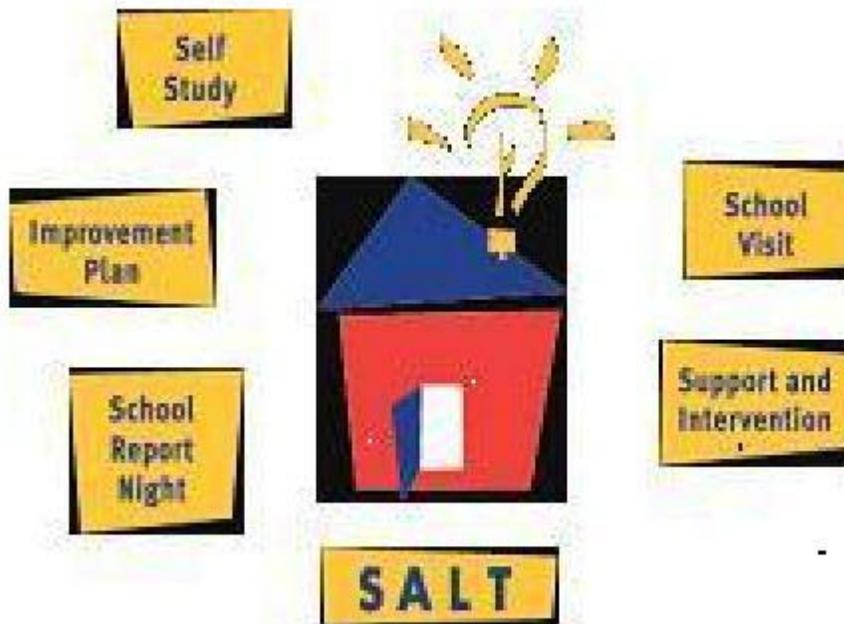
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
www.ridoe.net

Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

JOHNSTON

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

January 14, 2005



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School from January 10 through 14, 2005.

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 Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School?*
- ◆ *How well does the teaching at Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School affect learning?*
- ◆ *How well does Nicholas A. Ferri Middle 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 Nicholas A. Ferri Middle 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.

In October 1999 Ferri Middle School hosted a SALT visit team. Neither the chair nor any members of this visiting team read that team's report before or during this visit.

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, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

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 119 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. Team members had conversations with various teachers and staff for a total of 50 hours.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 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 Nicholas A. Ferri Middle 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 Johnston Public Schools 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 Johnston Public Schools, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Nicholas A. Ferri Middle 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 NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL

Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School is the only middle school located in Johnston, Rhode Island, and it serves students in sixth through eighth grade. The building opened in 1960 as a high school. In 1968, after a new high school was built in Johnston, it was renamed Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School. Construction in 1990 added 33% more space, including 14 classrooms, a library, and the district's administrative offices. In September 2000, another addition was built as a temporary space for the Early Childhood Center.

Ferri students are divided into teams; the classrooms for each team occupy a specific area of the school. There are three sixth grade, two seventh grade, one split seventh and eighth grade, and two eighth grade teams. Health/Physical Education, Unified Arts, and special education are also teamed. Each team consists of four or more teachers. Teams have the ability to block their schedules as their needs require, and every team has two levels per week for sustained silent reading. Further, team teachers have two common planning periods per week in addition to their daily preparation periods.

A professional staff of one principal, two assistant principals, and seventy-five faculty members currently service Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School. The faculty includes two guidance counselors, a social worker, a psychologist, a speech and language pathologist, and a substance abuse counselor. A literacy coach is assigned to every grade level.

Of the 852 students in attendance, four percent are from various ethnic backgrounds other than white. Two percent of students receive English as a Second Language services, 18% receive free or reduced priced lunch, and 215 (25%) receive special education services.

The arts are a major component of the Ferri Middle School curriculum. Over one third of the student body participates in the band or chorus. The Drama Club boasts significant student participation, as well. Chorus, band, and drama productions regularly sell out. Students also compete in Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, History Day, and Science Fair competitions. Additionally, Ferri offers students academic support through the Academic Support Center, a pull-out program for at-risk regular education students.

The School Improvement Team regularly revises Ferri's Strategic Plan to meet the ongoing needs of the school. The Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) holds family events throughout the school year, contributing to the *Ferri Family* focus on community service and family involvement.

3. PORTRAIT OF NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Ferri Middle School is an enormous multi level building located in Johnston, Rhode Island. Upon entering the school, one immediately notices the bright hallways and colorful displays. The “Ferri Family” greets visitors warmly. A strong sense of community permeates the school.

Students have made great progress in all areas of learning at Ferri Middle School. They write effectively and read well for comprehension, but they still need to develop additional skills to problem solve and interpret text effectively. Students are polite and hard working. They want to please their teachers and are willing to work hard, even when they find their work challenging.

Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students. They strive to provide interesting learning opportunities, and the students work responsibly within all classes. These teachers are working hard to improve their students’ reading, writing, and problem solving skills - with notable success. They are dedicated to their profession and love working at Ferri.

Under the direction of its current administrators, Ferri implements a finely tuned system of discipline throughout the school. The vast majority of its pupils follow the discipline policy without hesitation. The principal maintains an open door policy and is available at any time to students, parents, and teachers. She has provided Ferri with a strong sense of direction in discipline and academics.

The school works conscientiously to implement several programs that support the learning of all students, such as the focus room and the Academic Support Center. Ferri Middle School succeeds in meeting the needs of its students. Recent restructuring of reading instruction, however, has caused many class sizes to swell to unsatisfactory levels. This interferes with the individualization of student learning. The flexible scheduling does allow teams to tailor the school day to their requirements.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Students at Ferri Middle School perceive themselves as good readers, and they say they are good readers because they read at least twenty-five books per year. These adolescents do read often, and they read a variety of materials, including magazines, newspapers, novels, and non-fiction books. When reading text of interest to them and to which they relate, they are enthusiastic and successful readers. Students read for pleasure, to comprehend and explore new topics, to solve problems, and to perform other educational tasks, such as science experiments. They discuss a variety of texts with their teachers and peers to clarify meaning, and the great majority of students can answer basic comprehension questions well. Those who struggle with comprehension regularly practice extracting information from their reading. While comprehension is a strength, far too few students know how to analyze and interpret text. Those who do know how connect their reading to their experiences, make reasonable predictions, and explore thematic issues. Reading test results show a tremendous improvement, yet reflect students' struggles with critical thinking skills. Sixty seven percent of the students achieved or achieved the standard with honors on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination on the Reading: Basic Understanding subtest, while only 38% did so on the Analysis and Interpretation subtest. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, school report cards, 2004 New Standards Reference Examinations School Summaries)*

Ferri Middle School students are extremely effective and prolific writers, as demonstrated by the 85% who achieved or exceeded the standard on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination: Writing Effectiveness subtest. They write frequently, and they write in almost all of their classes. Students know how to write summaries of their free choice books, persuasive essays, and position papers, as well as high quality procedures and conclusions about scientific laboratory experiments. Students say they most enjoy writing when they can choose the topic, such as writing in their journals in English class. When writing, students commendably focus on expressing their messages and effectively communicating their thoughts. Yet, too many students do not firmly grasp the common conventions of writing. They are therefore overly dependent on teacher feedback to correct their grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Students are beginning to gain the skills of competent problem solvers. They recognize that there are multiple ways to solve problems. While they explain and justify their solutions to problems, however, they struggle to make their oral and written explanations clear. Students report that the problem solving process is difficult for them to understand, and they often do not know where to begin when solving problems. Insufficient mastery of basic mathematical skills hinders some students. Often, students do not even recognize they are problem solving outside of math class. They do enthusiastically solve problems, however, when they recognize that the problems they are trying to solve have real-world connections. Examples of problems that generate their enthusiasm include producing drawings to scale, figuring the tax and appropriate tip for a restaurant bill, designing Rube Goldberg machines, and settling arguments with their peers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Students at Ferri Middle School are confident and eager learners who feel safe at school. They show their dedication and willingness to learn by participating actively in their education. They enthusiastically respond to the questions their teachers ask, give effective oral presentations, and work cooperatively with their peers. Students respect themselves, the school community, and their teachers. These adolescents understand the importance of learning and know what is expected of them both academically and behaviorally. They consistently strive to meet these expectations. Students report that they love Ferri and that it is academically challenging. These positive attitudes and behaviors lead to a strong sense of community and contribute to an environment that optimizes the learning of all students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Are confident and eager learners*
- ◆ *Strive to meet behavioral and academic expectations*
- ◆ *Read and write across subject areas*
- ◆ *Struggle to think critically and to solve problems effectively*
- ◆ *Communicate effectively in writing*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Teachers have succeeded in improving the ability of their students to read. They require students to read from a variety of genres across content areas, and their students do so willingly. Teachers foster their students' love of reading by allowing them to choose books of interest to them and by modeling their own love of reading during silent reading time. All teachers assist students' understanding of text by asking basic comprehension questions. Struggling readers receive direct instruction in strategies to help them become more competent readers. Some teachers help students analyze and interpret their reading by asking them to relate the texts they are reading to their own experiences and to make predictions about their reading. Many teachers, however, neglect to encourage students to analyze and interpret text. Hence, not enough students have acquired the skills necessary to read critically. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Teachers have succeeded in teaching their students how to write well. They emphasize the importance of students' expressing their thoughts and getting their points across. In almost every class, they require their students to write frequently and for a variety of purposes. Teachers effectively instruct brainstorming, drafting, and revising to their students, who use these skills well. Teachers help students improve their work by reading their assignments carefully and providing them with thorough feedback about the content and quality of their writing. Teachers say they know their students do not always use appropriate writing conventions, and their concern is well placed. Many teachers address this need through thoughtful commentary on students' writing and direct instruction of appropriate grammar. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, talking with students and teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Teachers work hard to help their students become competent problem solvers, and students' test scores are improving as a consequence. Instruction of problem solving regularly includes strategies such as making an organized list and guessing and checking an answer, but the overall quality of problem solving instruction varies from adequate to excellent. Excellent instruction at Ferri ensures that students identify the problem they are solving and effectively encourages productive student discussion to solve problems. Most importantly, it emphasizes students' application of their strategies outside of the specific problem they are trying to solve at the time. Math teachers are learning to use the Connected Math Program to help their students. They say they are learning as they go, and they need additional professional development and feedback to use the program effectively. In other subjects, many teachers select activities that teach problem solving strategies, but they do not always identify to the students that they are solving problems. Consequently, students struggle to transfer their skills and apply their learning from one situation to another. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, parents, and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, classroom textbooks, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

The teachers at Ferri Middle School create an environment where learning is the number one priority. This cohesive staff shows dedication to their profession by attending numerous hours of professional development. Further, they collaborate effectively with their colleagues to improve instruction and teach interdisciplinary units. They also reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practices and make changes to improve their effectiveness. The principal recognizes that the entire staff goes above and beyond 100% in everything they do. Students say that their teachers, when asked, always willingly stay late to help them succeed. Parents report that there is an open line of communication with teachers and that the teachers immediately address their concerns either by email or telephone. Teachers show their concern for the well-being of their students, including their emotional and personal needs. These teachers push their students to achieve more by holding all students to high behavioral and academic expectations. Through these actions, the teachers have created an optimal environment for student learning. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Commendations for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

Hardworking, dedicated professionals concerned with their students' well being
Willingness to try new instructional practices
High expectations for all students, academically and behaviorally
Improving students' performance in reading, writing, and problem solving
Reading and writing across all disciplines

Recommendations for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

Address and instruct problem solving explicitly in all classes, not only mathematics.
Continue to emphasize writing effectiveness. Develop student awareness and the appropriate use of standard writing conventions and effective editing.
Continue to hold all students to high expectations, both academically and behaviorally.
Continue to read and write across the curriculum.
Model and explicitly instruct strategies to analyze and interpret text in all classes.
Pursue additional professional development in effective problem solving instruction, particularly in the area of the Connected Math Program.
Inform students when they are solving problems outside of math class, and require them to use appropriate problem solving strategies.

Recommendations for Johnston Public Schools

Provide additional quality district level professional development in the Connected Math Program and problem solving across the curriculum.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

The flexible scheduling afforded to teams allows teachers to tailor the school day to their lessons. Recent schedule restructuring, however, has dramatically increased class size. Some teachers report that it is often impossible for them to personalize their instruction because they have so many students at once. A significant amount of potential instructional time is sacrificed daily to allow for excessive homeroom time. Further, not enough time during the school day is available for all students to participate fully in physical education/health and unified arts. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school policies and practices)*

The retention policy in place at Ferri Middle School is effective. Students must pass English, mathematics, social studies, and science to be promoted to the next grade level. If necessary, they can attend summer school to earn credit for up to two classes. This policy holds all students to high expectations and, as a consequence, students understand their responsibility for their own learning. *(meeting with school administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing school policies and practices)*

The principal has a strong vision for FMS, and she is actively working to achieve that vision. She has established an effective administrative team that clearly and consistently enforces fair expectations for behavior, as outlined in the student handbook. Discipline at Ferri supports learning by eliminating constant classroom disruptions and encouraging a supportive environment throughout the school. Parents and teachers say the principal is a guiding force for positive change in student learning and behavior. She maintains an open door policy and meets with students, parents, and teachers at any time, even after the school day ends. The dedicated principal makes student learning her number one priority. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing school policies and practices)*

The “Ferri Family” encourages a culture that cultivates a true learning community. Mutual respect among parents, administrators, teachers, staff, and students permeates all facets of the school. Parents feel welcomed and included, and their needs are met through workshops such as, “You’re the Parent, You’re in Charge,” the middle school transition, and the Connected Math Program. The high morale of teachers and staff contributes to an atmosphere that is nurturing to students. Students feel safe at Ferri, and everyone works together to maximize their learning. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Expectations for all students at Ferri are high, and the school provides the support necessary so all students can meet them. Classroom teachers work after school and in the classroom to provide individual help for students. When staff members recognize that a student has academic or emotional struggles, they quickly intervene with the appropriate assistance. The focus room provides students with a behavioral “time out” from classes, but not from their learning responsibilities and assignments. “At-risk” students receive additional educational assistance through the Academic Support Center. Special education students are placed according to their needs, and Ferri is moving towards a more inclusive model. Ongoing social support services successfully address the emotional issues that would otherwise interfere with the learning of some students. Literacy coaches, resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers work together to improve student learning. Ferri Middle School works to help all students reach their full potential. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Commendations for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

- Strong school leadership dedicated to improving student learning
- Support for all students to achieve high standards in both behavior and academics
- True learning community of the “Ferri Family”

Recommendations for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

- Continue to implement your retention policy fully.
- Maintain effective discipline and open door policies.
- Continue to move toward more inclusive special education.
- Reduce significantly the time students spend in homeroom.
- Extend the length of the school day to provide additional instructional time.
- Provide all students with the opportunity to participate fully in physical education/health and unified arts classes.
- Continue to allow teams flexibility in scheduling their class times.
- Continue to provide support services so all students can reach their full potential.

Recommendations for Johnston Public Schools

- Reduce class sizes at Ferri Middle School.
- Extend the length of the school day to provide additional instructional time.
- Continue to implement the retention policy currently in place.
- Continue to fund and provide support services so all students at Ferri Middle School can reach their full potential.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ferri Middle School is a strong, holistic learning environment. Together, you have formed a strong “Ferri Family.” You have created a school culture of trust, respect, pride, competent instruction, and a love of learning.

This school is exemplary in its ability to offer high quality education to all students. We commend you for your progress and the improvements you have made in student learning. Your test scores are rising, and the school is a safe and productive learning environment for all students. Clearly, students, parents, and staff alike give this school their unified support.

Continue to emphasize reading, writing, and problem solving across the disciplines, as these are the most important academic skills you can impart to your students. Continue to cultivate respect and responsibility with your firm yet caring disciplinary style. As a school community, persist in striving for excellence across the curriculum. Do not rest on the achievements you have already made, but continue actively to do your best to achieve even higher learning goals.

Keep in mind that not everything is perfect: problem solving skills need to improve, classes are too large, and some days can be exhausting. But, do not forget that Ferri is an excellent school! We congratulate you and your students for your many accomplishments, and we wish you success in your future endeavors.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

January 14, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*.

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

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

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

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of two portions of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
February 14, 2005

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 Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team 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 Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *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*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2003-2004 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 2003 Information Works!*
 - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
 - School and District Report Cards*
 - Contractual Agreement Between the Johnston School Committee and the*

Johnston Federation of Teachers

School yearbooks

Agreement Between The Johnston Public School Committee and Rhode Island Judicial, Profession and Technical Employees' Local Union 808

Post Field Review Tri-State New England Grade Level Expectations for Reading and Writing

TSNE Mathematics Grade-Level Expectations – Post WestEd Review

Faculty Self Study Survey

Proposed Evaluation Plan: Meeting the Emotional and Behavioral Needs of Students

Parent Correspondence Binder

Jaguar Journals Binder

Reading Week: Ferri Middle School Binder

Ferri Middle School Organizations and Events Binder

The Problem Solver 8: Activities for Learning Problem-Solving Strategies Binder

Johnston Public Schools Professional Development Institute Course Bulletins

Budget records

Johnston Mentor Teacher Program pamphlet

Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook 2004-2005

N.A. Ferri Middle School Literacy Program Binder

Photo albums

State Assessment Results for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle 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.

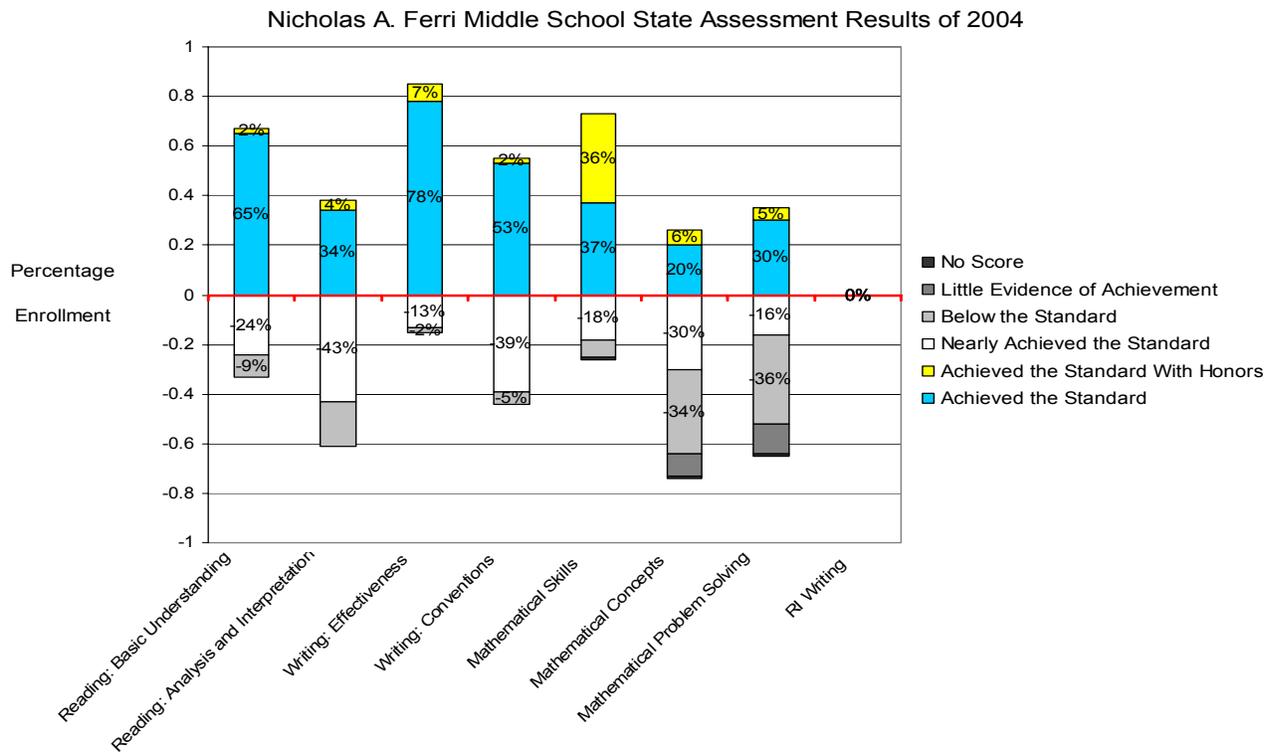
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *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 first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

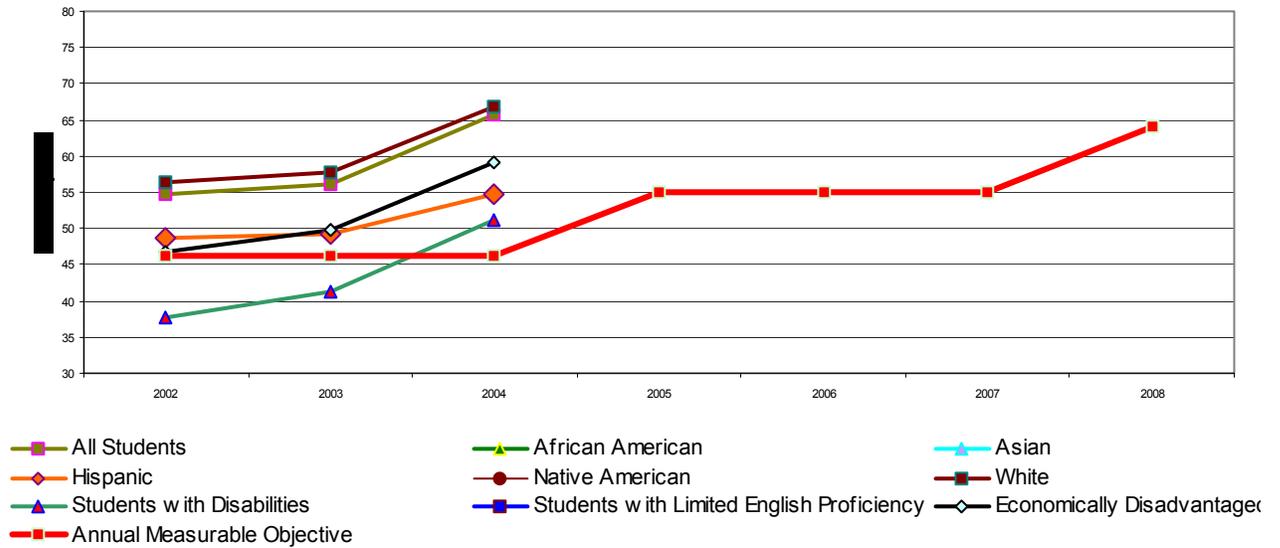


RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

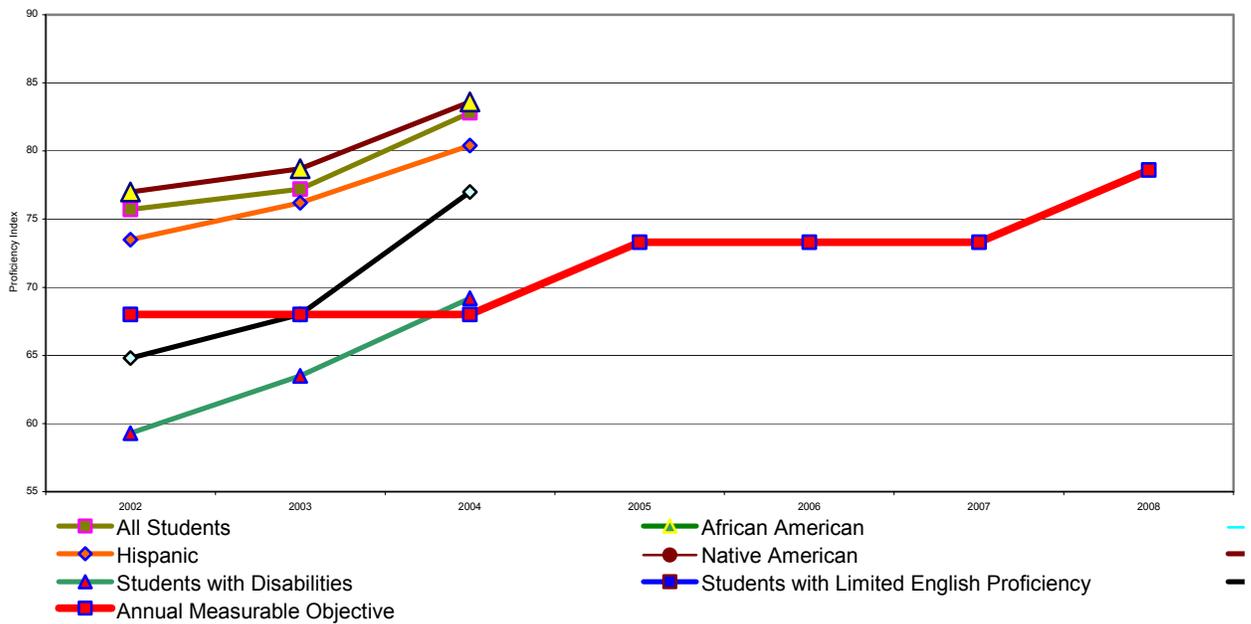
An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display showing targets and index scores, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation creates information about how well the school meets the 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. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gap.

Table 2. 2003-2004 Student Results across Subgroups

Annual Proficiency, Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School, Gr. 8 Math



Annual Proficiency, Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School, ELA, Gr. 8



REPORT CARD FOR NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL

This Report Card shows the performance of Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School compared to the school’s annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School as high performing and improving.

Table 3. Report Card for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School

2004 Rhode Island School Report Card

RI SCHOOL: **NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL**
 RI DISTRICT: **JOHNSTON**
 GRADE: **08**

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE: 68				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 46.1			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
All Students	82.8	YES	82.6	80.3	65.6	YES	65.3	66.5
African Americans	*	YES	*	71.2	*	YES	*	49.5
Asian	*	YES	*	79.3	*	YES	*	64.9
Hispanic	*	YES	*	69.5	*	YES	*	48.8
Native Americans	*	YES	*	76.7	*	YES	*	58.6
White	83.6	YES	83.3	84.4	66.9	YES	66.7	72.8
Students with Disabilities	69.2	YES	68.5	63.3	51.1	YES	50.4	46.8
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	*	61	*	YES	*	43.3
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	77	YES	75.8	70.8	59.2	YES	58.1	50.9

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	99.6	YES	99.7	98.6
Mathematics	99.8	YES	99.8	98.8

ATTENDANCE RATE	Target: 90%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
	91.7	YES	91.7	93.6

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	9	0
Mathematics Index Score	9	0
Percent Tested	2	0
Attendance Rate	1	0

THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:

High Performing and Improving

KEY: * Student group has too few students to calculate results.
 † "Safe Harbor" - Student group has fallen short of the target but has made sufficient improvement over last year's score.
 †† Student group has met the target based only on the most recent year of test results.

Information Works! data for Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

THE NICHOLAS A. FERRI MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Tenesa Azar, Student

Jenn Bonin, Student

Kellyl Centazzo, Student

Pat Dawson, Parent

Patti DelVecchio, Teacher

Dr. Joan Fagnoli, Principal

Stephanie Florio, Teacher

Lisa Hersey, Parent

Michelle Jackson, PTSO President

Scott Leonard, Teacher

Rita Maron, Business Partner

Barbara O'Rourke, Parent

Bruce O'Rourke, Parent

Susan Pagliaro, Teacher

Donna Reilly, Parent

Raechel Robidoux, Teacher, SIT Chair

Amanda Soave, Teacher

Linda Stanley, Teacher

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Catherine E. C. Hutz
English Language Arts Teacher
North Smithfield Junior-Senior High School
on leave to the
Office of School Improvement and Support Services
Rhode Island Department of Education
Regents SALT Fellow
Team Chair

George Blais
Special Education Teacher
Westerly High School
Westerly, Rhode Island

Christopher Lapointe
Mathematics Teacher
Winman Junior High School
Warwick, Rhode Island

Laurie Cadman
Physical Education and Health
Teacher
Kickemuit Middle School
Warren, Rhode Island

Dinah A. Larbi
Principal
Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School
Providence, Rhode Island

Scott Gray
Science Teacher
Woonsocket Middle School
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Victoria LePree
Music Teacher
Scituate Middle School
Scituate, Rhode Island

Jacqueline Haynes
Family and Consumer Science
Teacher
Joseph Jenks Junior High School
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Gale O'Keefe
Science Teacher, Team Leader
North Smithfield Junior/Senior High
School
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Darcy Heintz
English Language Arts Teacher
Lincoln Middle School
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Jason Simmons
Special Education Teacher
Babcock Middle School
Westerly, Rhode Island