



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

# Francis J. Varieur School

PAWTUCKET

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

January 30, 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 FRANCIS J. VARIEUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS J. VARIEUR 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 FRANCIS J. VARIEUR .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRANCIS J. VARIEUR .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PAWTUCKET SCHOOL DISTRICT .....</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 FRANCIS J. VARIEUR .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRANCIS J. VARIEUR .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PAWTUCKET SCHOOL DISTRICT .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>7. FINAL ADVICE TO FRANCIS J. VARIEUR.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>REPORT APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR FRANCIS J. VARIEUR .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>THE FRANCIS J. VARIEUR IMPROVEMENT TEAM.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>22</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Francis J. Varieur from January 26-30, 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 Francis J. Varieur?

How well does the teaching at Francis J. Varieur affect learning?

How well does Francis J. Varieur 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 Francis J. Varieur 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 136 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 33.5 hours in team meetings spanning the four 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 Francis J. Varieur 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 Pawtucket 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 Pawtucket School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Francis J. Varieur 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 FRANCIS J. VARIEUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Francis J. Varieur School, located in the Oakhill section of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, opened its doors in 1972. Originally constructed as an open classroom setting, the open learning centers were partitioned into individual classrooms in 1988. Varieur serves students from kindergarten through grade 6.

Students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds attend Varieur School. Of the 454 students, 48% are white, 28% are Hispanic, 20% are black, 3% are Asian and less than 1% are Native American. Sixty-four percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Six percent of the students receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services, and 16% receive special education services.

The faculty and staff consist of one administrator, 24 classroom teachers, four part-time itinerants, two part-time enrichment teachers, one full-time school nurse, one part-time social worker and one part-time psychologist. A full-time speech therapist, a part-time occupational therapist assistant, a part-time Diagnostic Prescriptive teacher, five teacher assistants, a school secretary and three custodians complete the staff.

Both the math and English Language Arts programs are standards-based. As part of the English Language Arts program, Varieur follows the *Readers-Writers Workshop* from kindergarten through second grade and the Balanced Literacy model in grades three through six. *Write Traits* currently is being incorporated into the English Language Arts program. Teachers are also using the Accelerated Reader Program to motivate and encourage students to read independently. A writing consultant, who has worked with the teachers for the past three years, is available for in-class support to teachers on an as-needed basis. Varieur School is currently using the *Growing with Mathematics* program in grades one through five and the *Connected Math Program* in grades five and six. Both programs place a strong emphasis on problem solving. In addition, math coaches provide support for ongoing implementation of the programs and train the classroom teachers.

The Varieur faculty participates in many professional development activities provided by the Pawtucket School District and the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance. They also participate in the Elementary School Standards and Assessment Network. As a result, teachers have developed a school-wide math rubric for all grade levels, standards-based performance tasks and math portfolios.

At Varieur School there is a range of inclusion models. These include minimal to full-time support from a special educator. The inclusion of special needs students is flexible; it constantly changes based on the special needs of each child.

Varieur offers several clubs and after-school programs to address and enrich the academic needs and special talents of its student population. A literacy and numeracy ramp-up program is offered to students who need extra support. This program is available after school, as well as during the summer months. Membership in clubs, such as chorus, drama, cooking, sports and chess, is available at different times throughout the year.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS J. VARIEUR AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Francis J. Varieur School is an urban school located in the Oakhill section of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Students and staff proudly welcome visitors. The sparkling halls display evidence of student accomplishments and their close ties to the community. Although the students have a wide range of abilities, experiences and backgrounds, all of them are respectful and enthusiastic learners. Reciprocal respect and dedication is evident throughout the school. Varieur is definitely a school where all members of the learning community strive constantly to improve.

Teachers at Varieur are reflective professionals, who strive for excellence. They view their principal as a master teacher, who empowers them to participate in the decision-making process. With support and encouragement from the principal, the faculty works together continually to improve its instruction practices. It is not unusual to find the teachers and the principal working well beyond the end of the school day, tutoring students, meeting with colleagues, attending workshops—always with the best interests of their students in mind.

Many creative and innovative changes in instruction are underway. However, inconsistencies in teaching practices and expectations exist. Teachers willingly accept the challenge of new programs, but they struggle to fit all of the components into their instruction and request guidance from the district about which programs best address the needs of their students. Teacher schedules include common planning time, but not all teachers consistently use this time to collaborate with one another and to coordinate their lessons. While a full-inclusion teaching model enhances the learning of all students, the enrichment program is limited.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students are enthusiastic, highly motivated, independent readers, who are developing a love of reading. They are readily able to select appropriate books at their independent reading levels, and they eagerly take the Accelerated Reader program comprehension tests. They understand that reading is a tool for gathering information, and they connect their reading to a variety of content areas. They are able to decode words, find literal facts and answer basic comprehension questions. However, they use a limited number of strategies to figure out the meaning of words they do not know. Most student work reflects little evidence of critical thinking skills. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team and parents, reviewing school improvement plan, Varieur School self-study, classroom assessments, completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios)*

Most students write in response to teacher prompts following a prescribed format. Their writing includes a main idea sentence and basic supporting details, but it rarely includes voice, rich details or the creative elements that individualize writing. Students are just beginning to apply effective writing skills to their own writing. While they say they enjoy writing, they have little choice in their writing topics. They know how to write short sentences with appropriate capitalization and punctuation and proper spelling of frequently used words. While most students know how to organize their ideas effectively, few clearly understand the need to reread what they have written and rewrite it to include the elements of good writing. Students write for short periods of time each day. They have a limited time to develop and share what they have written. Forty-two percent of the students scored in the “nearly achieved category” on the 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers reviewing completed and ongoing student work, , classroom assessments, Varieur School self-study)*

Students at Varieur School are just beginning to acquire the skills they need to become competent mathematicians. They say they like math, because they enjoy figuring out answers to problems and they enjoy finding new ways to solve them. They practice basic computation skills and are beginning to understand that math problems can be solved in numerous ways. However, many students struggle independently to apply their problem-solving strategies and clearly communicate their mathematical reasoning. Whether working independently, with partners or in cooperative groups, they enthusiastically participate in math activities that require the use of manipulatives and math games. In some classrooms students use these as tools to solve problems and to make abstract concepts more meaningful, but in many classrooms they do not. Students report that they don’t always understand what they have done wrong or how to improve their work the next time. While only eight percent of the students scored below the standard on the mathematics skills portion of the 2003 New Standards Reference Examination, seventy-four percent scored below the standard in problem solving. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, , discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments and 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students at Varieur School are happy, respectful learners. They conscientiously use binders to organize their work. They clearly understand how to behave both inside the classroom and out. Teachers say that students like to be at Varieur all the time, even on Saturdays. They eagerly participate in after school clubs and school events. They have a strong commitment to their school community. Older students patiently work with younger students, as buddies, to reinforce their learning, to build their self-confidence and to serve as role models. Their positive attitude is infectious. The younger students welcome the challenges the older students present, and they want more. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrator*)

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

Students:

- ◆ *Students are positive, organized, motivated learners.*
- ◆ *Students use a limited number of reading, writing and math strategies to deepen their understanding.*
- ◆ *Students have strong basic skills, but they need to develop their critical thinking skills.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Teachers at Varieur School are very special. Their dedication and commitment to their students is commendable. The thorough self-study completed by the staff verifies their willingness to reflect on their teaching practices and confirms their desire to grow as professionals. Parents report that the teachers are accessible, communicate frequently and strive to meet the individual needs of their students. Students say that the teachers willingly explain things again and again, conveying the message that they care about their students and that “no one person knows everything.” Parents and district administrators firmly believe that the teachers are the driving force behind the success of this school. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, 2003 SALT Survey report, letters from parents to the SALT team)*

Teachers say they are just beginning to implement all of the components of their recently adopted writing programs effectively. They use *Kid Writing* and the *Six Traits Writing* program to instruct students in writing. Using rubrics and checklists, they emphasize organization of ideas, spelling and the writing conventions. However, teachers are just beginning to address the use of voice, the importance of rich details, mood and other creative elements that would improve student writing. A few teachers use rubrics that allow students to self-assess, helping them to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Inconsistencies in instruction practices and expectations of writing quality vary from class to class. Not enough teachers provide extended periods of time for students to write or use student conferencing to provide meaningful feedback. As a result, students have limited knowledge about how to improve their work. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, meeting with the school improvement team and school administrator, Varieur School self-study, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Math instruction at Varieur School focuses on basic skills, as well as problem solving. However, teaching practices and what teachers expect of their students are not consistent throughout the grades. While all teachers spend almost an hour per day teaching math, all teachers do not consistently provide time for students to explore or discuss their math thinking. Some teachers ask open-ended questions that require students to show evidence of their thinking, encouraging them to deepen their understanding of math concepts and to develop multiple ways to solve problems. Many teachers use teacher-designed performance tasks along with rubrics to evaluate student progress and inform their instruction. However, these rubrics do not allow students to self-evaluate. Consequently, students do not understand what they did wrong or how to improve. Teachers say they have had professional development in problem solving but that they need more guidance about combining programs to determine a focus and to identify important concepts. This evidence aligns with the needs stated in the school improvement plan, as well as in the self-study. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, talking with teachers and math district coordinator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, school improvement plan, classroom assessments, Varieur School self-study, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities)*

Teachers are struggling to implement all components of the new reading programs fully into their instruction. Most teachers emphasize independent reading by using the *Accelerated Reader* program, rather than by emphasizing guided reading at the student's instructional level. This deters students from learning multiple strategies to decode unfamiliar words and from understanding text at an inferential level. Not enough teachers emphasize the direct instruction of complex higher order thinking skills. Teachers report that they have difficulty balancing all of the reading components so that every student receives adequate instruction in the reading process. A limited number of leveled books, as well as a limited number of books for the Accelerated Reader program, limits the reading choices students have and reduces support for the independent and guided reading portions of the reading program. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrator, talking with students, teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, school improvement plan, Varieur School self-study, classroom assessments, classroom textbooks)*

Teachers are just beginning to use portfolios to monitor and evaluate student progress. Portfolios, which include a math, reading and writing component, each contain pre-determined assessment tasks. Although teachers currently use portfolios as assessments, they are just beginning to use them as tools to improve their instruction. Students have no input into the selection process. Portfolios in their present form do not allow students to evaluate their own work or to reflect on their own progress. This limits their usefulness to improve teaching practices and student learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, completed and ongoing student work, meeting with school administrator)*

**Commendations for Francis J. Varieur**

Supportive, collaborative teachers, who consistently strive to improve

**Recommendations for Francis J. Varieur**

Increase consistency in what teachers expect and in their instruction practices for writing, reading and math. Increase teacher modeling of writing and the direct teaching of revision strategies.

Provide longer blocks of uninterrupted time for students to write.

Increase instruction time for guided reading at each student's instruction level. Focus questions to deepen their critical thinking skills.

Provide more opportunities for students to explore and discuss multiple problem solving strategies.

Expand portfolios to include student-selected work. Revise rubrics to support student self-evaluation and reflection.

Increase the number of leveled texts and books for the Accelerated Reader program.

**Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District**

Provide funds for Accelerated Reader books and leveled texts to support guided reading.

Provide more professional development on differentiated instruction in reading comprehension and problem solving.

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

### Conclusions

Teachers, students, parents, district administrators and the SALT team agree that the principal of Varieur School is a highly qualified instructional leader, who sets high expectations for herself and her faculty. Teachers respect her as a colleague and as a mentor. Her vision continually pushes the school forward, challenging teachers to improve their teaching practices. Her sound instructional decisions are research-based and align with the school improvement plan. She clearly understands the importance of building capacity among the staff, and she continually encourages her teachers to assume leadership roles. Teachers, students and parents are part of the decision-making process. Parents say that she knows their children on a personal level, as evidenced by her numerous phone calls, notes, and home visits and her personal comments on report cards. As a result, they trust her judgment. Her shared leadership style definitely promotes a belief that all stakeholders are an integral part of the “Varieur family.” *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, 2003 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan)*

The design of the new full inclusion special education model helps teachers effectively meet the needs of all students. Designed to address an identified equity gap for special education students, both special educators and regular education teachers co-teach lessons and instruct small groups, as well as monitor and evaluate student progress. Teachers modify their instruction, as needed, for all students. Parents and teachers report that students view both classroom educators as “their teachers.” While these inclusion classrooms are highly effective, teachers in non-inclusion classrooms express frustration regarding adequate support for struggling students within the regular education setting. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, Varieur School self-study, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Numerous programs and clubs exist at Varieur School that address and enrich the diverse academic needs and talents of the students. An after-school literacy and numeracy “ramp up” program provides extra support for struggling students. Clubs, such as chorus and cooking, encourage students to develop and explore their varied interests. Some teachers voluntarily tutor students after school. However, the current enrichment model lacks an organized curriculum and pulls students out of the regular classroom for extended periods of time. Parents report that this program does not challenge their students. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers)*

The library is the focal point of the school. This warm, inviting space bustles with activity throughout the school day. It provides a center for student displays, student research, multi-grade level projects and teacher and parent resource centers. The librarian willingly attends grade level planning meetings to coordinate and integrate her instruction effectively with the classroom curriculum. However, the inadequate selection of both fiction and non-fiction books on different reading levels restricts the number of successful connections that can be made to the classroom curriculum and limits student choice. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, meeting with the school improvement team and students*)

### **Commendations for Francis J. Varieur**

Effective, inspiring instructional leader

Successful full-inclusion model

### **Recommendations for Francis J. Varieur**

Move toward a more inclusive model for academic enrichment for all students.

Expand the library collection to include more fiction and non-fiction books and other reading materials at multiple reading levels.

### **Recommendations for the Pawtucket School District**

Provide funds to expand the library collection.

Develop a curriculum for the enrichment program that aligns with classroom curriculum.  
Move toward a more inclusive model for academic enrichment for all students.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO FRANCIS J. VARIEUR**

Francis J. Varieur School is a remarkable learning community. You are a dedicated, collaborative teaching staff, committed to finding ways to meet the needs of your diverse students. Your principal is a consummate professional, who sets the tone for the entire school. With your commitment and her encouragement you are well positioned to improve student learning.

Continue to focus and refine the excellent teaching practices you have begun to implement. Use the expertise of your colleagues to address inconsistencies. Continue to use parents as a valuable resource, and involve them in their children's education. This will have a positive impact on improving student learning and on your professional growth as teachers.

Your students show exceptional pride in their school, in their work and in themselves. The reciprocal respect among teachers and students has created an environment that is the envy of many other schools.

The SALT team wishes to acknowledge your hard work and thorough preparation for your SALT visit. Your self-study shows your ability to be honest, open and reflective about your teaching practices. Continue actively to seek opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.



## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Francis J. Varieur

January 30, 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 3, 2003

## 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 Francis J. Varieur 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 Francis J. Varieur.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 9 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 Francis J. Varieur*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2003 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2003 Information Works!*
  - 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
  - 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
  - School and District Report Cards*

*Pawtucket Literacy Handbook K-6 Binder*  
*Pawtucket School Department Curriculum Guides*  
*Writing Syllabus Guides*  
*Pawtucket School Department Teacher Evaluations*  
*Best Practices Folders*  
*Contract Between School Committee of Pawtucket and Pawtucket Teacher's Alliance*  
*Agreement between RI Council 94 AFSCME, AFL-CIO Local 1352 and Pawtucket RI School Committee*  
*Crisis Management Manual*  
*Grade Level Meeting Notes*  
*Home Correspondence*  
*Math Rubrics*  
*Mentor Program*  
*Policy Handbook of the Pawtucket School Department 2003-2004*  
*Report Cards*  
*Varieur School Self-Study*  
*Student portfolios*  
*School Improvement Team notes*  
*Teacher Memos*  
*Teacher Evaluations*  
*Letters from Parents to the SALT team*  
*Talking with District Math Coordinator*

### **State Assessment Results for Francis J. Varieur**

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.

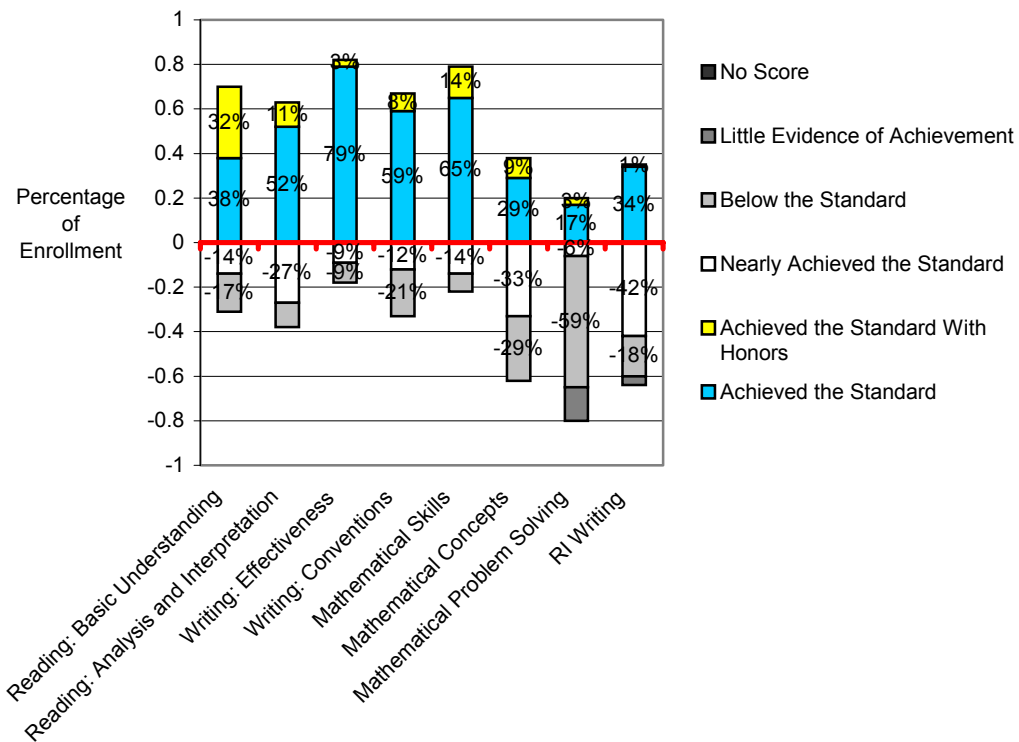
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *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*.

*Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments*



## RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

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

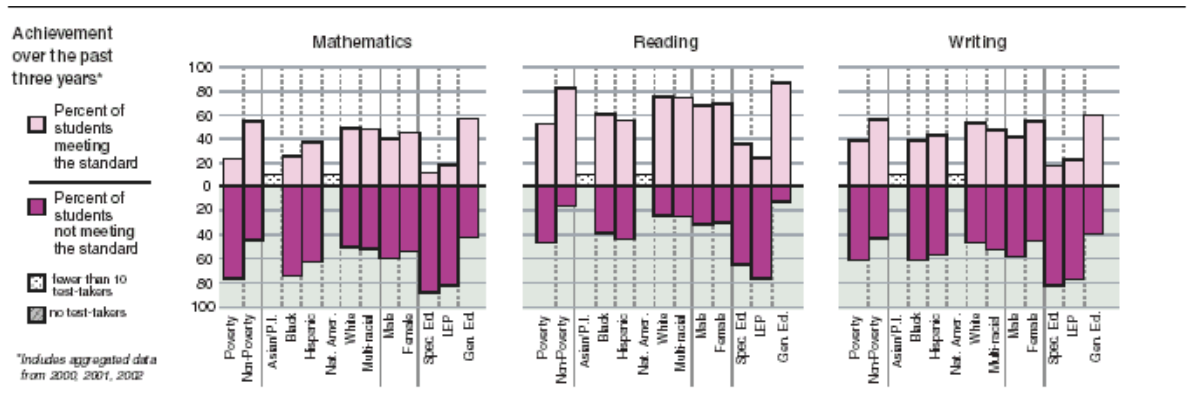
Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

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

Table 3. 2001-2002 Student Results across Subgroups



SCHOOL REPORT CARD

The Francis J. Varieur has been categorized as a moderately performing sustaining school on the basis of its assessment results from 2000 to 2003. The following is the school report card that shows the schools performance in relation to the 2004 annual measurable objectives. (AMO)

Information Works! data for Francis J. Varieur is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**THE FRANCIS J. VARIEUR IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Joyce Avedisian  
Grade2 Teacher

Zita Butler  
Kindergarten Teacher

Renee Collins  
Grade 6 Teacher

Sharyn Farley  
Librarian

Meggan Grassinni  
Special Education Teacher

Malcolm Itkin  
Parent

Christina Keiser  
Grade 4 Teacher

Cheryle McBurney  
Grade 6 Teacher/Parent

Amy Thompson  
Grade 3 Teacher  
Chairperson

Mary Jane Staples  
Special Education Teacher

Carol Howard  
Parent

Kathleen Suriani  
Principal

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Ruth S. Haynsworth  
Grade 5 Teacher  
Stony Lane Elementary School  
North Kingstown, Rhode Island  
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as SALT Fellow  
Team Chair

Linda Ardit  
K-5 Special Education/Resource Teacher  
Laurel Hill Avenue School  
Providence, Rhode Island

JoAnn Gilbert  
K-5 Literacy Coach  
Sgt. Cornell Young School  
Providence, Rhode Island

Erin Jolicoeur  
Grade 1 Teacher  
Pothier Elementary School  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Diana LaChance  
Grade 3 Teacher  
Blackrock Elementary School  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Nancy Switzer  
K-3 Physical Education/Health Teacher  
No. Smithfield Elementary School  
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Jose Valerio  
Principal  
Laurel Hill Elementary School  
Providence, Rhode Island

Kristen Vito  
Grade 1 Teacher  
Fairlawn Early Learning Center  
Lincoln, Rhode Island