



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

Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

WOONSOCKET, RHODE ISLAND

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.

1. INTRODUCTION	1
<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>
2. PROFILE OF ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....	4
3. PORTRAIT OF ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT.....	6
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING	7
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING</i>	<i>8</i>
5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING	9
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOONSOCKET SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.....</i>	<i>11</i>
6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING	12
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR WOONSOCKET SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOONSOCKET SCHOOL DISTRICT</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF WOONSOCKET</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WOONSOCKET TEACHERS UNION</i>	<i>14</i>
7. FINAL ADVICE TO ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	15
ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT.....	16
REPORT APPENDIX	18
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT.....</i>	<i>18</i>
THE ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM.....	20
MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM.....	21
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM	22

1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at 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 90 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 26 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 Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 Woonsocket 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 Woonsocket Education Department, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 GOVERNOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On August 28, 2002 kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 classes from three Woonsocket schools, Citizens' Memorial Elementary, Kendrick Avenue and Pothier, merged into Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School. Teachers and paraprofessionals from these schools came together to form the staff at Pothier.

There are presently 75 faculty and staff members at Governor Pothier. These include 34 teachers, one permanent building substitute, two full time and one part-time speech pathologist, one part time occupational therapist, a part time physical therapist, one full-time social worker and one nurse. There are 20 teacher assistants. Of the total faculty, three teacher/specialists are shared with other schools. There are three custodians, four lunchroom aides and three food service servers.

Governor Pothier serves 441 students. Fifty percent of the students are white, 30% are Hispanic, 12% are black, seven percent are Asian/Pacific Islander and one percent is Alaskan/Native American. Seventy-two percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. Twenty-seven percent of the students receive special education services in a self-contained, inclusive or resource based setting. Eighteen percent of the students receive ESL services in a self-contained or resource setting.

There is a half-day pre kindergarten class for special needs students, a half-day kindergarten class for special needs, a full day integrated kindergarten, two sessions of half-day ESL kindergarten, two full day kindergarten classrooms and two half-day sessions of a regular kindergarten. There are four full day special needs classrooms. Governor Pothier has six grade one classrooms, three grade two classrooms and a grade one/two classroom for ESL students.

Governor Aram J. Pothier houses the northern Rhode Island Reading Recovery Center, which is the teacher training site for the initial certification in Reading Recovery and also for continued professional development of trained teachers. Reading Recovery is one of Pothier's early intervention components for its comprehensive literacy plan. The three full-time and one part-time reading specialist at Governor Pothier are trained in Reading Recovery, and they provide this early intervention during half of their classes every day. Additionally, these reading specialists provide a half-day Title 1 literacy service for the entire student population every day.

A literacy coach works two days each week to provide job-embedded professional development to teachers. The literacy coach offers after-school study groups that focus on the five essential elements of comprehensive literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension), and she leads a writing workshop.

A Child Outreach office and screening area are located at Governor Pothier Elementary School. Child Outreach provides screening procedures for children between the ages of three and five years old. Child Outreach gives participating families information about their children's development and offers resources that are available in the community, if a child is found to need professional assistance during the preschool years.

Governor Pothier's library is open to students before and after school for literacy activities. A computer lab is located within the library.

Governor Pothier has a grant to provide healthy snacks for students. Other programs for students and families include reading night, fall fest, field day, spaghetti night, math night and open house. Two students from each classroom are chosen as students of the month.

Professional development for teachers has been targeted to implement a reading workshop. This is enhanced by the work in the Principles of Learningsm through the University of Pittsburgh. Learning Walks, focusing on these principles, occur within the school.

3. PORTRAIT OF GOVERNOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

The Governor Pothier Elementary School building is impressive. A beautiful foyer greets you when you enter. Sun streams down from its domed roof. On your left you see the state-of-the-art library, full of good books for the young students. While the interior of the building is designed for young students, the minimal amount of outdoor playground space and the lack of playground equipment are surprising.

Teachers and staff are hardworking and dedicated. They provide good education for young children. They put their students first, and, as a result, they often feel in conflict with the demands of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation that leaves little time in their day for activities that are developmentally appropriate.

The number of students in each classroom stretches teachers too far in dealing with the emotional, social and educational needs of their students. The high level of poverty and the variety of needs of Pothier's students create many challenges. Students are nurtured here. They feel safe, and they love their school. They take learning seriously and show pride in their accomplishments.

Teachers spend a majority of the day in literacy activities. Materials for literacy are abundant. The literacy support services that the school provides are critical to improved student learning in this diverse community. Paraprofessionals work seamlessly with the classroom teachers to enhance student learning. While teachers receive professional development, the lack of common planning time makes it difficult for them to develop consistency in their instruction.

Parents feel that the principal and the teachers care for and meet the needs of their children. While parents do attend programs for parents at the school, they do not play a significant role in their children's education. There are few parent volunteers in the school.

Students thrive on the praise and the positive reinforcement they receive from the staff. They love their school, feel smart and are not afraid to take risks. Governor Pothier is a nice place for young students.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Students read well at Governor Pothier. In addition they feel very good about how well they read. They enjoy reading, are eager to read and understand why it is important to read. When reading unfamiliar text, they do not apply consistent use of a variety of reading strategies to figure out unknown words. Their primary strategy is to sound out the word. Students read fluently when independently reading level text. At literacy centers they move smoothly between the centers, and they work well. They are patient, cooperative and helpful. Students do not write or talk enough about what they have read or have heard read to them. Therefore, they have limited opportunities to understand the text and to transfer the skills they are learning to other reading materials. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, meeting with students, teachers, school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks)*

Students are becoming competent and confident writers. Students write daily, either in journals or at centers. When students are given a choice of what to write about, their interest in learning to write increases. Some students follow the writing processes of brain storming, drafting, revising, editing, conferencing and publishing. Most kindergarten students enthusiastically participate in interactive writing and apply what they have learned to their own writing. Students use the conventions of capitals, periods and spacing. When writing independently, most students refer to word walls, personal dictionaries and classroom lists and charts as resources to help them write. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Students do not do a lot of math during the school day. They primarily practice basis skills and concepts by completing consumable work sheets with little extension and application to their real world experiences. This limited exposure is insufficient to help them develop an understanding of mathematics. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing teacher schedules, classroom textbooks, classroom assessments, student portfolios and classroom assignments)*

Students are able to explain the numerical value of the “General Rubric.” Most say that they must get a score of 3 to meet the standard and to get a 4, they need to do more. Most say that 3 is what they are expected to get. But they do not know what the criteria are to achieve a particular score on a rubric. They say that they do not know how to go back and make their work better. This level of understanding is not sufficient for them to be able to improve the quality of their work independently and to perform at a higher level. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff and building administrator, meeting with students, school improvement team, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments and student portfolios)*

Students at Governor Pothier respect and accept all members of their diverse community. They are outgoing, friendly, polite and cooperative, as they interact with both adults and peers. They want to please their teachers. Students are happy and feel safe and nurtured within this school. They thrive on all of the positive reinforcement they receive from the staff; they are motivated to learn. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, meeting with students, school improvement team, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*)

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Want to learn and love their school.*
- ◆ *Understand the importance of reading and learning.*
- ◆ *Have a limited understanding of mathematics and its applications.*
- ◆ *Lack an understanding of the purposes for writing.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

How well teachers understand and implement the comprehensive literacy components varies. In those classes where the components are used well, teachers say that this literacy model improves student learning and reduces negative student behaviors. Most teachers use literacy centers during guided reading. When expectations for students are clear and when the literacy centers are meaningful and organized, students learn better. The use of read alouds, sustained silent reading and shared reading is limited. This does not expose students to quality literature, provide a model for their reading and writing or give students time to practice what they are learning. Teachers are working well to assess and evaluate their students. All teachers assess students' reading levels three times a year using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). They use these results to place students in guided reading groups. A few teachers use running records to monitor their students' progress and to change how students are grouped to better meet their needs. As teachers continue to strengthen their assessment practices and to include the components of the literacy model, they will be better able to match their instruction to their student needs. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, student portfolios, school and district report cards, and district and school policies and practices)*

Teachers ask students to write in journals during most of the daily time scheduled for writing. There is a lack of consistency in writing instruction, time allotted for writing and the variety of genres taught. There is little connection between reading and writing instruction. When teachers read quality literature aloud and teach a process approach to writing, students actively write. When teachers discuss their work with them, students know how to improve their writing, are motivated to write and know the purposes for their writing. This course, which some teachers have set to improve student writing, is a good one, and they will be able to build from the initial steps they have taken to develop a comprehensive and consistent writing process. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios, classroom assignments)*

With the intense school focus on teaching literacy, mathematics is given low priority. The amount of time devoted to mathematics instruction is not sufficient. Some teachers report that they do not like the mathematics program because it does not meet the needs of their students. Therefore, they feel it is necessary to supplement the program with additional materials. The present program is not standards-based; it does not effectively serve these students; and it lacks rigor. Most teachers teach mathematics in a whole group. There is limited use of manipulatives to develop or reinforce student understanding of skills and concepts. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom textbooks, student portfolios)*

Within a short period of time, teachers at Governor Pothier have successfully created a cohesive learning community. They are receptive and willing to incorporate new teaching initiatives to benefit their students. Even without scheduled common planning time, they make time to talk and share with one another. While this sets the stage for consistency in their instruction, this informal time is not really sufficient for a dialogue that will have a positive effect on their teaching. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers)*

Teachers accept and respect each of their students as an individual who has different cognitive and affective needs. While teachers know and accept the personal circumstances of individual students, they never allow that knowledge to lower their expectations for what each student can learn. Teachers praise and positively reinforce their students in a genuine and sincere way. This builds their students' self-esteem, makes them feel smart and encourages them to take risks. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, discussing student work with teachers)*

Most teachers are beginning to understand and use standards based teaching practices. Criteria charts are evident in most classrooms. Many students are taught that all they need to do to meet the standard is to complete the criteria. All teachers use a "General Rubric" to evaluate student work. While the use of this rubric provides consistency, both teachers and students are unclear about how to use it to bring student work to a higher level. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff parents, meeting with students, teachers, school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, school and district report cards, student portfolios)*

Commendations for Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

Beginning implementation of comprehensive literacy

Use of the DRA for assessment

Receptiveness to incorporate new teaching initiatives

Love of teaching and genuine caring for all of their students

Development of a learning community at Pothier

Understanding and acceptance of Pothiers students

Willingness to share and work together

Recommendations for Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

Use quality literature for read alouds and for shared reading each day.

Provide students time to read at their independent levels each day.

Integrate instruction of reading and writing.

Participate in ongoing and embedded professional development in comprehensive literacy, and incorporate all components in your classrooms.

Participate in ongoing and embedded professional development of a process for writing that is consistent in all grades and classes.

Review the school schedule to provide common planning time for teachers, and use this time to share and communicate.

Recommendations for Woonsocket School Department

Research and implement a standards based mathematics program.

Continue to provide teachers the necessary professional development in literacy, and continue to support embedded professional development.

Provide the necessary supports for common planning time.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

Governor Pothier, as well as the Woonsocket School Department, is focused on improving the literacy of its students. Literacy materials are abundant and readily available to support this initiative. Teachers spend the majority of their instruction teaching their students literacy. Three classrooms are demonstration classrooms, where the literacy coach works directly with the teacher and the students. Reading teachers support students through reading recovery and literacy groups. Resource teachers support students through inclusion and pull out models. These supports are excellent. The lack of scheduled common planning time for teachers, beyond the required monthly grade level meeting, does not allow for regular and continuous communication about the effectiveness of these supports and programs. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers and staff, reviewing district and school policies and practices, classroom textbooks, records of professional development activities, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

While the Governor Pothier Improvement Plan is aligned with the district plan, it does not provide a clear focus or direction for this school. It is not clear how Governor Pothier is going to use this plan to improve student learning. The lack of clarity in the plan does not provide a guide for the specific needs of this school. *(meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, district improvement plan)*

All kindergarten through grade two teachers use the electronic district mandated standards-based progress report that is aligned with grade level performances. Teachers are challenged in using the progress report. Both teachers and parents are confused about the use and appropriateness of this tool to report on ESL and special education students accurately. Portfolios, while in all classrooms, are merely collections of student work and assessments, rather than evidence of student progress over time. Although teachers use the "General Rubric," the interpretation of the performance expectations and criteria on assignments differ from teacher to teacher. Therefore, the same assignment may be scored differently in different classrooms. These inconsistencies make it difficult for teachers to support the proficiency levels indicated on the progress report. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers and staff, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, student portfolios, school and district report cards)*

Governor Pothier is a large school with young children, who have diverse and immediate needs. The present office staff is not sufficient to meet these needs. The lack of an assistant principal puts an additional burden on the principal, limiting her ability to be an effective instructional leader. Furthermore, the lack of a social service agency in this neighborhood places extra responsibilities on the school to provide immediate and necessary support for the students, parents and the community. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with teachers, staff and administrator, observing classes)*

The Governor Pothier staff works as a cohesive unit. There is a high level of support for students among the staff. Teachers and paraprofessionals work seamlessly to support student learning and to meet students' many needs. In this positive environment, students clearly come first. While teachers voice their concern about a lack of a consistent school wide behavior program for students, their classrooms are managed efficiently with few interruptions due to negative behaviors. Student behaviors in the classrooms are dealt with appropriately and quickly. However, the management of behavior is not always consistent among teachers or between a teacher and the principal. The principal is skilled at working with the student to get to the underlying reason for the exhibited behavior, rather than on just punishing the behavior. This often frustrates teachers, who interpret her approach as being too lenient and lacking appropriate consequences. This creates a tension within the school. *(following students, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff and building administrator, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes)*

Parents say that the teachers and the principal are supportive and available. They say that the lack of a suitable playground and the necessary play equipment does not allow their children time to socialize or just play. Parents and teachers are concerned about class size and its effect on student learning. The excessively large class size prevents teachers from meeting the needs of individual students effectively. *(following students, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff and building administrator, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes)*

Commendations for Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

- Availability of literacy materials in the literacy room
- Quality of resource personnel available to support literacy
- Use of the electronic standards based progress report
- Work of all staff to develop a cohesive learning community
- Quality of the involvement of paraprofessionals in the classroom
- Principal and teachers support of students and parents

Commendations for Woonsocket School Department

- District developed standards based electronic report card
- Support of literacy with personnel and materials
- Resource personnel available

Recommendations for Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

Review all school schedules in order to provide common planning time for teachers to share student work and develop consistency of instruction.

Review and revise the school improvement plan to make it more specific to Pothier's needs and achievable within a short period of time.

Provide mandated professional development to further develop teacher understanding of standards based assessments.

Involve all members of the staff in discussion about the behavior of students and the appropriateness of consequences, and develop a school wide behavior plan that meets the needs of the school.

Investigate alternative ways to use the playground to support gross motor development.

Routinely look at student work to develop consistency in criteria and scoring.

Recommendations for Woonsocket School District

Provide the necessary supports to provide common planning time for Governor Pothier teachers.

Continue to provide the support resources and services for the implementation of literacy.

Support a full time literacy coach for Pothier.

Continue and expand the number of paraprofessionals in the classrooms.

Seek ways to reduce the class size at Pothier.

Recommendations for the City of Woonsocket

Investigate community resources to support the needs of the Governor Pothier neighborhood.

Recommendations for the Woonsocket Teachers Union

Negotiate within the contract for smaller class sizes in the primary grades.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO GOVERNOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students here clearly come first. In less than two years you have been very successful in working together to build a learning community at Governor Pothier. Your doors are open, and you respect and value one another and your students.

Comprehensive literacy is becoming a reality. While the components of writing instruction are evident, they are not consistent in all classes. Reading and writing are taught separately, making it difficult for students to understand how they are related. Work to bring them together.

Your efforts are hindered by your lack of regular common planning time to share what you are doing in your classrooms and to look at student work. As a school, review your schedule to see what time you can set as common time to work together. Use this time to develop consistency. Use benchmark papers to develop consistency. Use literature as a foundation for your literacy program. Read quality literature to your students each day to provide them with models for reading and writing.

Review your school improvement plan to make it work for your school. Sharpen its focus, and put the goals in reasonable time frames. Talk together to see if there are ways that students can be outside more and ways that the play areas can be used more effectively. Openly discuss and develop a school wide behavior plan that meets the needs of the staff and the students. Work with your union and the district to see if there are ways that the class size in the primary grades can be reduced.

Continue your professional development to build your understanding of criteria and rubrics. Use them to help students make their work better, as well as to understand what they are expected to do.

You are doing a great job. As you learn and change your teaching practices you are modeling the importance of learning for your students. We applaud all of your efforts and your many accomplishments. We hope that this SALT visit report will help you, as you continue to strive for excellence in your school.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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, 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 steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



CATALPA LTD.

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

March 25, 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 Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary 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 Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following six 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*
- ◆ *student assignments*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2003 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - student portfolios*

School and District Report Cards

The Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School has not been categorized according to the state targets due to lack of data.

Information Works! data for Woonsocket Schools is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**THE GOVERNOR ARAM J. POTHIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
TEAM**

Jill Badeau
Grade 1 Teacher

Donna Barrette
Reading Teacher

Laurie Campfield
Kindergarten Teacher

Mary Ann Grintchenko, Chair
ESL Teacher

Pamela Johnston
Kindergarten Teacher

Erin Jolicoeur
Grade 1 Teacher

Renee McCutcheon
Grade 1 Teacher

Linda Morgenstern
Music Teacher

Pamela Moulico
Special Education Teacher

Sylvia Natale
Principal

Cheryl Sexton
Special Education Teacher

Maureen Stetson
Reading Teacher

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Donna H. Reinalda, Chair
SALT Regents Fellow
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education
Sowams School
Barrington, Rhode Island

Andrea M. Dubois
Grade 3 Resource Teacher
North Smithfield Elementary
North Smithfield

Jacqueline Ezovski
Grade 3 Teacher
Ashton School
Cumberland

Joyce P. Krabach
Principal
Northern Early Learning Center
Lincoln

Brenda Leclerc
Grade 2 Teacher
Saylesville School
Lincoln

Patricia Winters
Grades 1-3
Reading Recovery/Literacy Coach
North Smithfield Elementary School
North Smithfield