

Colt-Andrews School

BRISTOL

SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 6, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

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This report is available at www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt

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1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

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

The purpose of the visit to Colt-Andrews School from April 3-6, 2001 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- ◆ Student Learning
- ◆ Teaching
- ◆ *The School*

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

This report is built upon the observations and conclusions of the visit team. The visit team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners and a parent. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report. Colt Andrews School also hosted a school Support Visit during the week of April 2, 2001. The School Support Team and the SALT team shared evidence.

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

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 64 full classroom observations and 41 partial classroom observations which totaled over 89 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. Most classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following six students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
- ◆ *School Improvement Team*
- ◆ *school and district administrators*
- ◆ *students*
- ◆ *parents*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *conversations with the visiting School Support Team*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*
- ◆ *review of district and school policies*
- ◆ *review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments*
- ◆ *review of the following documents:*
- ◆ *School Improvement Plan for Colt-Andrews School*
- ◆ *district strategic plan*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *999 Information Works!*

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *Bristol Warren Regional School District's Professional Assessment and Development System*

The full team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The visit team met for a total of 20 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators. The team sought to develop conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

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

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

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

Following your school’s review of this report, consider what changes to make in your school improvement plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with your district. The Compact’s purpose is to ensure that your school and your district work out an agreement about the most important priorities for your school to work and how to best target district support in reaching them. Your RIDE Field Service Team representative will offer some assistance in facilitating the preparing of the Compact.

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

2. PROFILE OF COLT-ANDREWS SCHOOL

Colt-Andrews School, located in the center of the historic district of Bristol, houses 239 fourth and fifth grade students. It is two separate buildings used as one school. Each building is a work of art dating back to the early 1900's. The Colt building served as Bristol High School until 1966. It presently houses six classrooms, an auditorium, an arts wing located on the third floor, and the cafeteria. Andrews School was built in 1938. The Andrews building houses nine classrooms, the gymnasium, the band room, the principal and nurse's office, and the library media center.

Colt Andrews School is part of the Bristol Warren School District. An elected School Committee of nine members, six Bristol residents, and three Warren residents governs the district. The school committee appoints the superintendent.

Colt-Andrews operates with a staff of 40 individuals. Currently there are six fourth grades and seven fifth grades, including two Special Education Collaborative classrooms, and one intensive service class. Support to the full-time principal and students include: a full-time school psychologist/counselor, part-time nurse, part time social worker, and two full-time secretaries.

In 1999 the Bristol-Warren School District went through a major reorganization of the elementary schools. Prior to this, Colt-Andrews housed all students attending grades 4 and 5 in Bristol. With the reorganization, four 4th grades, and four 5th grades were relocated to other buildings.

A variety of programs are available to improve student learning. C.A.R.E. (Colt Andrews Reads Everywhere) schedules 25 minutes each morning for students to read, respond to reading, or meet in literacy circles. The reading/language arts block has been reorganized to regroup students based on instructional levels. Colt Andrews School, a focus school through the Working Wonders Grant of the East Bay Educational Collaborative, has concentrated on the improvement of mathematics performance. As part of a Principal's Initiative offered by the Rhode Island Foundation, two fifth grade teachers were trained as Model Class Initiative (MCI) sites. They received six computers for their classroom and training to integrate technology. T.R.A.V.I.S. (Taking Responsibility Against Very Inappropriate Situations), a pro-active violence prevention program, gives students the opportunity to report situations and empowers them to solve problems. Also, a variety of after-school programs are provided to enrich the regular curriculum.

Of the 239 students attending Colt Andrews School, approximately 25 percent receive free or reduced priced lunch, 26 percent are identified special education students, six percent as English as a Second Language learners, and 15 percent receive literacy services. Equity gaps, a difference of 15 percent or more are evidenced in all areas of the New Standards Reference Examination results, with general education students scoring higher than special education students. There was little variation in the test scores when comparing the 1999 scores to the 2000 scores. Most notable were the 22 percent increase in writing effectiveness from 40 percent in 1999 to 62 percent in 2000 and the 31 percent decrease from 57 percent in writing conventions in 1999 to 26 percent in 2000. Other scores showed from zero to loss of eight percent on the New Standards Reference Examination. On the Reading subtests on the 2000 scores 79 percent of the students met the standard in 2000 and 12 percent nearly reached the standard. In Reading Analysis and Interpretation, 64 percent of the students met the standard and 27 percent nearly achieved the standard. The scores in mathematics showed Skills highest at 67 percent, Concepts 30 percent and Problem Solving 21 percent.

The team used the test score information found in *Information Works!* and the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam School Summaries to determine the performance and equity gaps discussed in the student learning conclusions. 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Colt-Andrews School is available at www.ridoe.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF COLT-ANDREWS SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Nestled within the historic district of Bristol, Colt Andrews School houses an enthusiastic school community. The dedicated staff, sparked by a dynamic leader, work extremely hard to provide a safe, productive learning environment for their students. Their teachers have enthusiastically embraced the literacy initiatives that the district has focused on this year. Joining teachers are students who are eager, energetic, and willing learners.

Multiple schools feed into Colt Andrews; therefore, it is faced with the challenge of providing for students from different learning environments. The faculty embraces their students as individuals and provides a program that meets the particular learning needs of their students.

The major focus has been on literacy instruction, however, for a balanced learning program, teachers need to provide more instructional time for mathematical experiences and real life problem solving activities.

Parents have invested a great deal of trust in their school and believe that Colt Andrews provides the educational building blocks for the present and future success of their children.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ 1999, 2000 Information Works
- ◆ 1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results
- ◆ examination of student work
- ◆ following students
- ◆ conversation and interviews with students, teachers, and parents
- ◆ Colt Andrews School Improvement Team meeting
- ◆ classroom observations

Conclusions

The Colt Andrews' students love their school and are hungry for knowledge. They show an appreciation for the positive school climate established by the faculty and staff. They feel safe and comfortable. Students are polite, cooperative, and enthusiastic risk-takers. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, and parents, School Improvement Team meeting*)

The students at Colt Andrews are literate and eager learners. Students read a lot and are actively engaged in reading in a variety of genres for a variety of purposes. Some are aware of reading strategies and apply them in independent or cooperative reading activities. Students discuss and write about their reading. Students read in a variety of ways: silent reading, round robin reading, literature circles, and partner reading. Students are aware of the reading standard and show evidence of meeting the 25 book standard by tracking reading, charting different genres, and responding eagerly to the school incentives. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with students, New Standards Reference Examination, examination of student work, following students*)

All students at Colt Andrews write for a variety of purposes in many of the content areas. Students demonstrate editing and revision at various competency levels. Students share their writing with peers but do not consistently engage in effective dialogue to improve their product. This fragmented use of the writing process accounts for the lack of achievement in the area of Writing Conventions on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. (*classroom observations, New Standards Reference Examination, following students, examination of student work*)

Most students struggle in their understanding of mathematics. They lack basic understanding of mathematical skills and concepts; therefore, they are unable to communicate solutions to problems in both oral and written form. Some students are working at a basic computational level, frustrated with their level of performance. Few students are able to apply strategies to solve authentic problems. This is reflected in the static New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination results. (*New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination, classroom observations, following students, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with students*)

Competency in the use of criteria by students is in its infancy or emergent stage. Some students use criteria to drive their performance and chart their progress. Too few students know how to use criteria to evaluate and revise their work. Many students are confused about what the standards mean, the difference between rubrics and criteria, and the difference between rubrics and standards. This results in the inability of students to evaluate and improve the quality of their work. (*conversations and interviews with students, following students, classroom observations*)

Commendations for Colt-Andrews School

Eager and enthusiastic learners

Recommendations for Colt-Andrews School

Fully implement the Everyday Mathematics Program.

Clarify for students the difference between standards, criteria, and rubrics.

Continue the literacy program based on student needs.

Strengthen students' abilities to peer/self-edit and revise their writing.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ *1999 Information Works!*
- ◆ *SALT Survey 1999*
- ◆ *New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination*
- ◆ *Examination of student work*

Conclusions

Although teachers at Colt Andrews School use Everyday Mathematics in the classroom, each teacher implements it differently. The teachers do not use the total program as designed. Due to the inadequate amount of time scheduled for mathematics and limited use of all program components, student growth in mathematics is stagnant. (*New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination, classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with building and district administration, interviews with teachers*)

Teachers are at various levels of understanding and implementing standards driven instruction. The literacy program and English/Language Arts portfolios reflect the hard work teachers are investing to embrace the standards movement. However, student confusion about what the standards mean is reflected in the inconsistent quality of their work. (*examination of student work, following students, classroom observations*)

All teachers at Colt Andrews School embrace the literacy initiative. The enthusiasm they generate through their teaching positively influences the students' joy of reading. Students are assessed and instructed at both their instructional level and grade level, read across content areas, and relate reading to real life. These practices will favorably impact student achievement in all areas, as well as their performance on the New Standards Reference Examination. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with students, building and district administration, following students, observations of the school*)

Teachers work diligently to encourage writing in all areas. Writing is pertinent to what is taught and is standards driven. The majority of writing is focused on showing evidence of reading comprehension. Although teachers support self-selected reading, they do not regularly provide opportunities for unprompted writing. Many students use the writing process, often concluding with computer generated final drafts. Although some teachers promote self and peer editing, teacher editing stresses mechanics rather than improvement of content. (*following students, examination at student work, conversation and interviews with students, classroom observations*)

Commendations for Colt-Andrews School

Enthusiasm of the faculty to embrace literacy and influence learning

Recommendations for Colt-Andrews School

Continue the professional development and implementation of a complete literacy program.

Provide students with the opportunity to do self-selected writing.

Continue the professional development for the Everyday Mathematics program.

Continue the professional development in standards-based instruction.

Recommendations for Bristol Warren Regional School District

Support professional development in the areas of standards-based instruction, Everyday Mathematics, and literacy.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students*
- ◆ *Following students*
- ◆ *School Improvement Plan*
- ◆ *classroom observation*
- ◆ *Bristol Warren Regional School District's Professional Assessment and Development System*
- ◆ *Bristol-Warren Regional School District Strategic Plan and Article 31 Component of the Consolidated Resource Plan 2000-2001*
- ◆ *New Standards Reference Examination results*

Conclusions

Colt Andrews School thrives under the dynamic leadership of their principal. Her vision for the school, creative utilization of time to provide learning opportunities for staff, and dedication to the school's "all kids" agenda has created an energetic school climate. She leads by example and is undaunted in setting high goals to meet high standards. Her energy is infectious and mirrored by the faculty, staff, and students. (*conversations and interviews with students, staff, parents, school and district administration, school observations*)

Colt Andrews School has made a strong commitment to meet the literacy needs of all students. Students are assessed and placed within instructional reading groups that reflect individual needs. This use of data to drive instruction not only addresses equity gaps between special and regular education students but provides opportunities for all students to maximize their learning. Mathematics is not receiving the same focus as literacy; therefore, student performance and test scores remain static. (*2000 Infoworks! Data, New Standards Reference Examination, conversation and interviews with school and district administration and teachers, classroom observations*)

Colt Andrews School recognizes their students' need for a playground. The playground is combined with the staff parking area. This arrangement creates a potentially hazardous situation. Vehicles enter and exit the playground while students play outside. This places students at risk. (*observations of the school, following students, interviews and conversations with students, staff and school improvement team*)

The development of a standards-based English/Language Arts portfolio and report card has been facilitated by the district and developed by teachers. These reporting systems link instructional practices to assessment, student achievement, and an awareness and understanding of standards for teachers and parents. (*examination of student work, conversations and interviews with parents, school and district administration, and teachers*)

Colt Andrews' School Improvement Plan reflects a thorough self-study, which is aligned with the district strategic plan. The plan has been used to focus the school initiatives in the area of literacy. The action steps needed are addressed and recognized, however the lack of completion dates and timelines allow some goals to be left unattained. (*School Improvement Plan, Meeting with School Improvement Team, SALT Survey Data 1999-2000, Bristol-Warren Regional School District Strategic Plan and Article 31 Component of the Consolidated Resource Plan 2000-2001*)

The Professional Competencies Evaluation tool of the Bristol Warren Regional School District's Professional Assessment and Development System is antiquated and does not reflect the current teaching practices and district initiatives. On the other hand, the Professional Goal Setting Model within this plan allows for teacher choice and meets the professional needs of individual teachers to satisfy the school and district goals. (*Professional Assessment and Development System, Conversations and interviews with district and building administration and teachers*)

Although the action plan for a district mentoring program has been developed, most teachers are unaware of its existence and components. Colt Andrews teachers use an informal collegial process to assist teachers new to their school. (*Bristol-Warren Regional School District Strategic Plan and Article 31 Component of the Consolidated Resource Plan 2000-2001, conversations and interviews with school, district administration, and teachers*)

Commendations for Colt-Andrews School

Standards-based English/Language Arts portfolio and report card

Strong leadership

Recommendations for Colt-Andrews School

Create a schedule that reflects the necessary time to fully implement the Everyday Mathematics Program.

Evaluate and address playground/parking arrangements.

Review School Improvement Plan to complete action steps in a timely manner.

Provide professional development in the use of standards in the classroom.

Recommendations for Bristol-Warren School District

Work with Colt-Andrews School to evaluate the playground/parking arrangement.

Provide professional development in the areas of standards-based instruction and Everyday Mathematics and support their implementation.

Formalize, inform faculty of, and implement the mentoring program.

Create a new standards-based teacher evaluation model.

Recommendations for the Town of Bristol

Work with the Bristol-Warren Regional School District and Colt-Andrews School to evaluate and address playground/parking arrangements.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Colt-Andrews is a fine school that is well on its way to becoming a total learning environment. Your positive school environment has the support of parents and district administrators. Your dedication and enthusiasm is reflected in your students.

Keep pushing yourself and your students toward standards based learning. You have started on your journey toward academic excellence with your literacy initiative. Continue this path.

You have in place a mathematics program, embrace it and totally implement it as you have your literacy program. Your children's success will be your greatest reward.

We hope that the recommendations will help you to build an even stronger learning community. Celebrate your successes for you have much to be proud of.

COLT-ANDREWS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Marilyn Piette
Chairperson

Donna Glavin
Administrator

Teachers:

Joseph Gallo
Grade 5

Laurie Heyden
School Psychologist/Guidance Counselor

Lois Kemp
Literacy Specialist

Susan Weigand
Grade 4

Sonya Whipp
Grade 5

Rick Williams
Grade 5

Georgia Wood
Grade 5

Parents:

Karen Augustus
Parent

Ruth Maille
Parent

John Patton
Parent

Community Members:

Larry Doores
Good Books

John Prescott
Rogers Free Library

Janet Wolfe
Good Books

THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Donna H. Reinalda
Multi-age Teacher
Sowams Elementary School
Barrington, Rhode Island
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as a SALT Fellow)
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Gail L. Abromitis
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**NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATION AND RI WRITING
ASSESSMENT RESULTS (2000)**

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Colt-Andrews School

April 6, 2001

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

1. 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.
2. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

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



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
May 9, 2001