



Guiteras School

BRISTOL WARREN

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

February 1, 2002



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

The findings of this report are those of this SALT visit team. The names and affiliations of the members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs on Conducting a SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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This report is available at <http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/visits.htm>

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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Guiteras School from January 28, 2002 through February 1, 2002. The following features are at the heart of the report:

- ◆ The team seeks to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school presents a unique picture.
- ◆ The team does not compare this school to any other school.
- ◆ When writing the report, the team deliberately chooses the words that best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it has learned about the school dynamics.
- ◆ The team makes its judgment explicit.

The major questions the team addresses are:

- ◆ How well do the students learn at this school?
- ◆ How well does this school teach its students?
- ◆ How well does this school support learning and teaching?

The findings of the SALT report are presented in six report sections:

Profile describes some of the key features of the school and sums up the school's results on state tests.

The team writes *Portrait* as an overview of what it thinks are the most important themes in the conclusions that follow. While *Portrait* precedes the team's conclusions, it is written after they are complete.

The team's conclusions are about how well the team thinks the school is performing in each of the three SALT focus areas: Learning, Teaching and The School.

The team may award commendations in each focus area for aspects of the school that it considers unusual and commendable. The team must make several recommendations to the school for each focus area, drawing on the conclusions for that area. The team may make recommendations to other agencies, e.g. the district.

The team provides the school with some brief comments about how it thinks the school should proceed, in the *Final Advice* section.

The Catalpa Ltd. endorsement of the legitimacy of the report and its conclusions appears on the final page.

The SALT report creates accountability for improvement by connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement directly to the actual work going on in this school at the time of the visit.

The team closely follows the visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit*. The Catalpa endorsement certifies that this team followed the visit protocol and that this report meets all criteria required for a legitimate SALT visit 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.

Sources of Evidence for This Report

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

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 120 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 112 hours in direct classroom observation. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed*

more than once.

- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 7 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 1998, 1999, 2000 2001 Information Works!*
 - 1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - 1999, 2000, and 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
 - 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
 - student portfolios*
 - classroom assignments*
 - classroom assessments*
 - 1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - 2001 Rhode Island Department of Education School Support System Report and Support Plan for Bristol Warren School District*
 - Guiteras records of professional development activities*
 - school improvement plan for Guiteras School*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School District Strategic Plan 2001-2006*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School District Budget Requests 2001-2002*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School District English as a Second Language Handbook 1998-1999*
 - Guiteras School History Portfolio Books 1 and 2*
 - student math journals*
 - Guiteras self-study documents*
 - Guiteras School SALT Portfolio*
 - 5th Quarter Summer Program documentation*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School Reading /Language Arts Draft Curriculum revised 2001*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School District report card*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School Professional Assessment and Development System Document*
 - Bristol Warren Regional School District Benchmarks grades 2-5 October 2000 Retellings and Summaries*
 - East Bay Educational Collaborative Math Outcomes K-4*

*Guiteras Newsletters Binder**Bristol Warren Regional School District K-12 Curriculum Guide*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 30-1/2 hours in six separate meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team must agree that every conclusion in this report:

- ◆ *is important enough to include in the report.*
- ◆ *is supported by the evidence the team has gathered during the visit.*
- ◆ *is set in the present.*
- ◆ *contains the judgment of the team.*

Using the Report

The team deliberately chose the words, phrases, and sentences it used in its conclusions, as well as in the *Portrait* and *Final Advice*. Thus, this report is the team's best attempt to encourage and support the school's continued improvement in strengthening the learning of its students.

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

It is important to note that this report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report does not cover what the school plans to do or what it has done in the past.

This report is not prescriptive. The value of this report will be determined by its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. By considering how important it considers what the team has said and why, the school will take its first step in becoming accountable in a way that actually improves learning.

It is important to read this report and consider it as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in relation to the conclusions they follow.

After the school improvement team considers this report, it should make changes in the school improvement plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with the school district. The purpose of the Compact is to ensure that the school and its district work out an agreement about the best way to improve the school and the best way to target district support for the school. A RIDE Field Service Team representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

2. PROFILE OF GUITERAS SCHOOL

Background

Guiteras School is one of seven elementary schools in the Bristol Warren Regional Public School System. It serves students in Kindergarten through grade five in Bristol, Rhode Island, which has a population of approximately 23,000. Guiteras School was built in 1915 as a junior high school. After extensive remodeling and renovation and with the addition of faculty from three other schools it re-opened its doors to students in November 1999. This renovation was part of a reorganization of the elementary schools in the towns of Bristol and Warren. The 2000-2001 school year was the first full school year the school operated with a principal and full staff.

Six Bristol residents and three Warren residents comprise the nine-member elected school committee that governs the Bristol Warren Regional Public School District. . A town administrator and a five-member town council govern the town of Bristol. A joint financial committee approves the school budget, which is then brought back to the respective town councils for approval. Guiteras School students are served by a professional staff of one administrator, 35 full-time and part-time faculty, one secretary, two building teacher assistants, four special education teacher assistants, and two full-time and one half-time custodians.

Guiteras Elementary School has an attendance rate of 94 percent. Of the 285 students attending this school 95 percent are White, one percent are Hispanic, and two percent are Black. Sixty-four students totaling 22 percent receive special education services, 35 students totaling 12 percent are Limited English Proficiency, and 34 percent applied for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

State Assessment Results for Guiteras School

On the subtests of the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination (NSRE) approximately one in two of the fourth graders (49%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in five of the fourth graders (20%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and approximately one in 16 of the fourth graders (7%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist in mathematics for the following groups of students: Poverty and Special Education. On the 2000 NSRE students at Guiteras School perform below similar students in the state on the subtests: Basic Skills, Concepts, and Problem Solving.

On the reading subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination approximately seven in 10 of the fourth graders (71%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and approximately one in two of the fourth graders (51%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. Equity gaps exist in reading for the following groups of students: Male and Special Education. On the 2000 NSRE students at Guiteras School perform below similar students in the state on the Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests.

On the writing subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination approximately six in 10 of the fourth graders (58%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions, and approximately two in five of the fourth graders (38%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness. On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in four of the third graders (25%) met or exceeded the standard. Equity gaps exist in writing for the following groups of students: Poverty, Special Education, and Limited English Proficient. On the 2000 NSRE students at Guiteras School perform below similar students in the state on the Writing: Effectiveness and Writing: Conventions subtests.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. Information Works! data for Guiteras School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

3. PORTRAIT OF GUI TERAS SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Situated on the water in the heart of historic Bristol, scenic Guiteras School, which overlooks Narragansett Bay, proudly labels itself as “the school with a view.” While one could easily attribute that moniker to the panoramic backdrop provided by the sea, marsh, and geese, the real view provided by Guiteras is one of a highly functioning learning community striving to meet the needs of the students it serves.

Teachers, staff, parents, and the principal are all justifiably proud of the school they have created together in the three short years since its inception. This is a place that they have made and shaped into a learning community.

Under the strong and effective leadership of the principal, who is respected by both staff and parents, this school has come to embody shared leadership. There is a genuine love of children here. This has fostered a spirit of cooperation among the members of this school, who focus on the academic and social development of their students.

The students are enthusiastic, inquisitive, and eager to learn. They willingly participate in engaging tasks and activities. They are proud of their school, their teachers, and their accomplishments. Interactions among and between the students reflect a respect and appreciation for each individual. These positive interactions are modeled, taught, and nurtured by the caring staff.

This safe, clean, and well-maintained school is a welcoming environment to the diverse population of students and families it serves. It welcomes parent participation in a number of ways. The school is supported by a community of parents, who are very proud of this school and who respect and support the principal and teachers. They are willing to help, want the best for their children, and have made substantive contributions to the co-curricular and outdoor facilities of the school.

Like the sea, progress at Guiteras comes in reliable, consistent waves. The school is comprised of a dedicated faculty, staff, and principal, who exhibit a willingness to grow and work together. They effectively capitalize on the existing strengths and expertise that exist among the faculty. They willingly seek out and incorporate new educational strategies and strive to improve the overall educational program. The principal, teachers, and staff are conscientiously implementing a broad array of changes designed to more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of the students attending this school.

Many of these reforms are still in the beginning stages. Achieving the desired goal of improving professional practice will require continued attempts to implement these reforms more effectively on a school wide basis. These ongoing efforts must focus on job embedded professional development; increasing the consistency between and among grades; fully implementing, schoolwide, the tenets of the Balanced Literacy, Write Traits, and the Everyday Math programs; developing more student ownership; and expanding standards-based teaching and assessment practices.

In essence Guiteras is a school with a strong foundation on which to build. It has clearly begun the hard work of raising student performance with the educationally sound instructional strategies and assessment techniques that are emerging at this school. Guiteras must maintain and sustain its efforts to change. Like the sea it overlooks, movement cannot always be seen. It is sometimes silent below the surface, but strong and moving toward its intended destination.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *reviewing student portfolios*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *reviewing student math journals*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Mathematics Examination School Summary*

Conclusions

Guiteras School students are very polite and well behaved. They are friendly, enjoy working together, and like sharing their work with each other and with adults. They enjoy learning and take pride in their school. They are comfortable with and have confidence in their teachers. They like, trust, and respect the staff, teachers, and principal. Students are accepting of differences in others. They are eager to contribute in class and report that they prefer hands-on, inquiry-based learning opportunities in which they are actively involved. (*following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school administrator, talking with students, teachers, and staff*)

Students are writing everyday and writing across the curriculum in a number of genres. They are mastering common forms of writing, which include: reports, journals, narrative procedures, poetry, responses to literature, and persuasive essays. They often respond to writing prompts, frequently keep journals, and occasionally self-select writing topics. They actively use a common writing process—brainstorming, pre-writing, editing, revising, and publishing—to guide and shape their writing. Most are proficient at using criteria to guide the form and content, handwriting, and conventions of their writing. Students are proud to share their writing, and many believe they write well. Most students successfully edit their own work for spelling, length, appearance, conventions, and grammar. Students are less adept at revising their work for word choice, sentence fluency, content, and organization in order to improve the quality and flow of their writing. A number are diligently using word walls to assist in their spelling and others to guide their word choice. While some students are able to use the language of six traits—voice, word choice, sentence fluency, organization, conventions, and ideas—to describe the writing they produce, as well as the writing of others, fewer students consistently and competently embed these traits in their own writing. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers, reviewing student portfolios, interviewing teachers about the work of their students*)

Students effectively use manipulatives and solve problems daily. Most are secure with basic skills such as computation. They use a variety of strategies when solving mathematical problems—work backwards, draw a picture, make a list, use logical reasoning, and guess and check, among others. Many students can successfully tally, skip count, rote count, use pattern blocks, create multisided geometric figures, create graphs, use geoboards, compare numbers, and convert among different forms of number representation. Conversely, many students have not internalized the language and concepts of mathematics. They have difficulty explaining how they arrived at answers and struggle when they try independently to select and use different strategies to solve problems. These findings are supported by student performance on the New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination where 49 percent met or exceeded the standards in skills, 20 percent in concepts, and seven percent in problem solving. (*following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing student portfolios, reviewing student math journals, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*)

Students are reading a variety of genres, and most read well at a literal level. They are reading in small groups at their instructional levels and as a whole class at their grade levels. Students report that they like to read, and most report that they are good readers. To develop their reading proficiency students are reading trade books, anthologies, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and informational texts in different content areas. They use an accelerated reader computer program to improve their reading comprehension and chart their reading progress. While most students can extract information from

text and comprehend at a literal level, fewer students can effectively analyze, predict, interpret, and make text-to-text and text-to-life connections. Most students are able successfully to use a number of word attack strategies to decode words accurately like sounding out words, picture clues, context clues, and chunking. While students are accurate decoders, some have difficulty integrating strategies to read fluently, as well as successfully analyzing text. (*interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing student portfolios, talking with students and teachers, observing classes, following students*)

Students are confident learners, who willingly complete tasks and enthusiastically offer their thoughts and viewpoints. When working together students are accepting of other points of view. They effectively collaborate and share responsibilities for assigned tasks. Most students are adept at answering literal questions and often search for the one correct answer. In general students are less proficient at being divergent thinkers and pursuing open-ended tasks and assignments with more than one possible solution or answer. Students are willing and able to take more ownership of their learning and desire additional opportunities to do so. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff*)

Commendations for Guiteras School

The exceptional positive attitude and respect students show their peers and adults

Students' genuine eagerness for learning

The pride students have in their work

Students' patience, tolerance, and acceptance of others

Students' desire to be more actively involved in their own learning

Recommendations for Guiteras School

Increase students' proficiency with revising their work so that the writing engages the reader's interest because students have used varied sentence structures and rich language to describe their ideas vividly.

Provide additional opportunities for students to free write and to make independent choices when completing assigned writing.

Improve students' knowledge of mathematical concepts and problem solving strategies. Expand efforts to help children independently select and use different strategies to solve problems, communicate mathematically, and see the relationships among mathematical concepts.

Increase students' proficiency in analyzing and interpreting text, using text to support written and oral claims, and using contextual and syntactical cues to decode text.

Provide additional times for students to read independently.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing student portfolios*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assignments*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing student math journals*

Conclusions

Guiteras teachers set high expectations for themselves as practitioners and are continuously striving to learn and grow in their profession. Enthusiastic teacher leaders are providing a foundation for moving the school forward in instructional leadership. Teachers take pride in their efforts to expand student knowledge. Overall, there is a genuine joy and enthusiasm for teaching and a love and respect for students. Teachers have a warm and positive attitude toward the diverse population of students and families they serve. Considerable effort and time beyond the school day is exerted by teachers to prepare instructional plans and materials for their classrooms. They serve as positive role models for children and have established positive relationships with parents, who are seen as valued members of this community. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, following students*)

There is a schoolwide focus on problem solving at Guiteras School. Most teachers have students solve a “problem of the day” that is designed to teach and reinforce a variety of different problem solving strategies. With varying degrees of emphasis teachers are working to develop students’ acquisition of basic math skills, concepts, problem-solving techniques, and real world applications. Mathematics explorations, games, and manipulatives are used to introduce, reinforce, practice, and assess important mathematics concepts and skills with students. A few teachers are even deconstructing math problems to model for students different meta-cognitive approaches to solving a problem. Less emphasis is placed on helping children make purposeful connections among mathematical ideas and concepts. Despite these approaches, in some classrooms mathematics is too often taught as whole-group, teacher-directed instruction that is focused on mathematical skills. Additionally, many teachers have not fully embraced the current mathematics program, which is designed to spiral students’ understanding of math from grade-to-grade. This inconsistent implementation impedes students’ mastery of mathematical skills, concepts, and problem solving. (*following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing student math journals*)

Guiteras teachers are using a number of effective strategies and exerting considerable effort to teach children to read well. Most are purposefully developing instructional aides to teach children to use webs, graphic organizers, and story maps to improve their ability to compare and contrast, to summarize, to retell stories, and to develop other reading proficiencies. Many teachers are effectively providing students with multiple strategies which they need to decode words successfully. Most teachers collect a variety of data to determine the learning needs of their students, and many are effectively using this information to establish flexible groups, scaffold instruction, integrate reading and writing, and develop mini-lessons targeted to the learning needs of individual students. Additionally, teachers are conferencing with students with leveled books to guide and support their development of specific reading strategies, as well as to improve their comprehension and analysis. They are willingly and conscientiously adopting new practices designed to teach reading within a balanced literacy framework—guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and read alouds. While all teachers are conscientiously and effectively implementing this framework, some components such as read alouds and independent reading receive insufficient time and emphasis. (*following students, reviewing student portfolios, observing classes, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, meeting with the students, school and district administrators,*

talking with students and teachers, reviewing classroom assignments, reviewing classroom assessments)

Improving students' proficiency in writing is a schoolwide focus. Considerable time and emphasis is placed on improving students' knowledge and understanding of writing conventions and grammar. Teachers are effectively explaining and using the writing process from grade-to-grade, and some even maintain journals along with their students. They are using word walls, word banks, and rubrics to guide, shape, and improve the work of students. They effectively break down the writing process into manageable chunks, extensively model different processes for students, and provide appropriate scaffolding for emergent and struggling writers. Many teachers have enthusiastically embraced the Write Traits program, as an approach to teach effective writing, but school wide the implementation of these practices varies widely. To reinforce the desired concepts of this program they encourage students to identify effective traits of writing when reading the work of others and during oral presentations by their classmates. Many teachers consistently provide written and oral feedback that students can use to improve the quality of their work. Although a few teachers use computers in the writing process, this occurs infrequently schoolwide. While teachers are competently and purposefully designing and selecting writing prompts to expose children to different genres and improve their writing proficiency, many teachers provide fewer opportunities for students to select topics of personal interest within different genres and to free write. Similarly, some classes place less emphasis on revising, creating engaging hooks, and targeting writing to a particular audience. *(interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing student portfolios, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Teachers are working conscientiously to incorporate standards-based instructional practices and to design tasks and assessments aligned with standards. They are establishing clear expectations and extensively modeling strategies and techniques designed to produce work that meets the standards. Teachers and students are using universal rubrics in English Language Arts and mathematics across grade levels. Teachers use these rubrics to assess the quality of the work, as well as to help students produce work that meets the standards. To develop learning represented by the standards a number of teachers effectively use open-ended questioning techniques. These practices foster higher order thinking skills and promote the analysis and synthesis of information by allowing students to elaborate on their thinking, share strategies, and talk about their learning. Conversely, some teachers commonly ask close-ended questions that curtail student dialogue and exploration of the desired content and processes. In a few classes the tasks and activities are of insufficient rigor for the grade level. Similarly, some teachers are placing less emphasis on helping students make connections among different ideas, themselves, and the real world. Some powerful examples of instructional approaches that allow students to work cooperatively, to be producers rather than consumers of knowledge, and to take an active role in their own learning are evident, but they inconsistently occur school wide. *(following students, observing classes, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing student portfolios, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Commendations for Guiteras School

The exceedingly dedicated and caring teachers

The extremely hard working and enthusiastic teachers

The sincere efforts to incorporate balanced literacy

The steadfast desire to improve student performance

Teachers' considerable efforts to improve their instructional skills through extensive professional development

Recommendations for Guiteras School

Review the existing implementation of the Balanced Literacy Program to ensure the consistent and full implementation of each component in each grade. Increase in all subjects the emphasis placed on reading analysis and interpretation.

Create more opportunities for students to work cooperatively, to engage in inquiry and analysis, and to produce original work that demonstrates their basic knowledge and higher order thinking expertise in all subjects.

Continue to work toward full implementation of the current mathematics program, and ensure that all teacher-selected supplementary materials augment the secure skills identified for each grade level. Intensify the emphases placed on making connections among mathematical ideas and concepts, modeling problem solving, and communicating mathematically.

Expand the current use of open-ended questions and standards-based tasks that promote higher order thinking skills and the analysis and synthesis of information. Foster additional dialogue among students that enables them to elaborate on their thinking, share strategies, talk about their learning, and build meaning.

Continue the efforts to develop a consistent approach to teaching of writing in each grade. Expand the efforts to have students revise and embed the traits of writing in their work.

Provide additional opportunities for students to be producers, rather than consumers, of knowledge, and to take an active role in their own learning.

Recommendations for Bristol Warren School District

Provide Guiteras School with the resources and technical assistance needed to implement the recommendations of this report.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *reviewing district strategic plan*
- ◆ *reviewing student portfolios*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan for Guiteras School*
- ◆ *reviewing Guiteras self-study documents*
- ◆ *reviewing Guiteras School SALT Binder 2001-2002*
- ◆ *reviewing 5th Quarter Summer Program documentation*
- ◆ *reviewing Bristol Warren Regional School Reading/Language Arts Draft Curriculum revised 2001*
- ◆ *reviewing district report card*
- ◆ *reviewing Bristol Warren Regional School Professional Assessment and Development System Document*
- ◆ *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *2001 Rhode Island Department of Education School Support System Report and Support Plan for Bristol Warren School District*

Conclusions

A spirit of enthusiasm, cooperation, and respect, as well as a desire to improve and move forward, are hallmarks of the staff and students at Guiteras School. The members of this faculty willingly share with and learn from one another. This spirit has contributed to an exceptionally strong feeling of community among the parents, students, faculty, and principal. All take pride in the linguistic and cultural diversity of this school. Many teachers are actively working to foster high academic and social expectations for students, which have been supported by their implementation of the Second Step program. The strong parent network supports the initiatives of social, academic, and enrichment endeavors of the school. Examples include improving outdoor safety, family activities, taking part in the Marine Studies program, and enriching the atmosphere of the school. Parents are extremely pleased with the principal and teachers and emphatically praise them for their personal approach to teaching and learning. They have faith in the teachers' ability to educate their children. Parents feel that they are part of a team in which families are an integral part of the educational process. Parents strongly believe that the school has a will and desire to improve and that their concerns about inconsistencies in expectations, curriculum, and the use of technology are recognized. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, following students, 1999-2000 SALT Survey report*)

Guiteras is a school that embodies shared leadership. It is led by a dynamic and compassionate instructional leader with a gentle, but guiding, hand. She is an effective, articulate facilitator, who is knowledgeable about educational reforms in general and district initiatives in particular. Correspondingly, teachers and staff willingly take an active role in shared decision-making. They accept responsibility for shaping both the school and their own practices in order to meet the needs of their students. There are a number of teacher leaders in this school. Furthermore, parents are empowered by the principal and staff to play important roles in guiding and shaping the strategic direction of this school. (*meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers and staff, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes*)

There are some exemplary examples of coordinated integrated teaching at Guiteras School. The teaching collaboratives include regular and special educator teachers and related support personnel who are educating children in an integrated model that differentiates the core curriculum. Likewise, reading support personnel serve as valuable literacy coaches, who model and co-teach with classroom teachers. English Language Learners receive support provided by the ESL teachers both within the classroom and through a pullout model. The ESL teachers collaborate with classroom and special education teachers to facilitate students' transitions into the classroom to promote student success. The school also has an active teacher support team (TST) that meets weekly to address the needs of students who are experiencing academic,

social, and behavioral problems. All this collaboration lowers the teacher/student ratio and more effectively meets the needs of children who need additional instruction, services, and time. Occasionally during co-teaching experiences, there are missed opportunities by teachers and teaching assistants to work with small groups and individual students to support fully the learning needs of children. These efforts are augmented by the 5th Quarter Summer Program, which is designed to improve literacy skills in the summer. Less emphasis is placed on the needs of the high achieving learner. [TAW1] (*observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with school and district administrators and parents, 2001 Rhode Island Department of Education School Support System Report and Support Plan for Bristol Warren School District, 1999-2000 SALT Survey report*)

Teachers take tremendous pride in their teaching, and most willingly seek out professional development opportunities in order to more effectively meet the learning needs of their students. They frequently attend a variety of high quality professional development experiences offered by the district and the East Bay Educational Collaborative, consistently collaborate with and share new skills with one another, and desire more time to engage in professional development. Although teachers collaborate effectively and support one another in a number of ways, the newly developed formal mentoring program is not effectively implemented to assist teachers. Similarly, the current teacher evaluation instrument is an inefficient [TAW2] tool for improving the standards-based teaching practices that are occurring in this school. The deficiencies in these mentoring and teacher evaluation systems, coupled with the absence of formal professional development days in the teachers contract, is hindering the school's progress toward continuous school improvement. (*meeting with parents and school and district administrators, reviewing Bristol Warren Regional School Professional Assessment and Development System Document, talking with teachers and staff, observing classes, SALT Survey 1999-2000, reviewing district strategic plan*)

Guiteras School is collecting data about students in a standards-based portfolio system. This system, which is well aligned with the standards established by the National Center on Education and the Economy, assembles evidence of student learning in four broad categories—reading, writing, mathematics, and print sound code. The portfolio system is closely aligned with the report card recently designed by the district. Presently, the opportunities for students to have a voice in the selection of the portfolio entries are limited. Teachers report that these new systems, although requiring considerable work, are valuable ways to ascertain student growth during the course of the year and also serve as effective vehicles for sharing information about student performance with parents and Teacher Support Teams. Additionally, to further support the implementation of standards the district is in the process of creating a K-12 Reading / Language Arts curriculum with grade-level benchmarks for performance. In contrast, standards-based curricula for mathematics and other content areas have not been developed but are part of the district strategic plan. (*reviewing student portfolios, reviewing district report card, reviewing Bristol Warren Regional School Reading /Language Arts Draft Curriculum revised 2001, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meetings with school and district administrators, reviewing district strategic plan*)

Guiteras School has an active and involved School Improvement Team—comprised of a broad array of parents, teachers, and staff—who share a common vision for the school. This group has been instrumental in creating a school improvement plan with three broad goals that target 1) student improvement in reading, writing, and math, 2) involving all parents as active participants in the school, and 3) creating a safe environment for all members of the learning community. The school is actively working to implement these plans, as well as to document and to reflect on its progress. The current school improvement plan was generated when the school first opened its doors. Subsequent self-study and review have not taken full advantage of a deep and thorough assessment of student learning that encompasses both state test scores and classroom assessments. (*reviewing Guiteras School SALT Binder 2001-2002, meeting with the school improvement team and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan for Guiteras School*)

Commendations for Guiteras School

- The exemplary school climate
- The effective educational leadership of the principal
- The collaborative integrated special education model
- The active, involved, and cohesive school improvement team

Recommendations for Guiteras School

- Examine current practices in order to maximize the opportunities for adults to work with small groups and individual children that occur when two or more adults are in the room.
- Continue to foster the shared decision making that exists in this school.
- Provide additional opportunities for students to have a voice in the selection of the entries that are included in the portfolio

system.

Increase the use of computers and technology, as an instructional tool for teachers and as a tool to expand and enhance the learning opportunities of students.

Continue and expand the current efforts to involve parents, particularly linguistically diverse parents.

Coordinate the considerable pursuits of professional development in a formal plan that targets job-embedded experiences to the learning needs of students, teachers, and staff.

Conduct a thorough assessment of student learning, using both state testing results and the information available from portfolios and classroom assessments. Use this information in conjunction with the information contained in this SALT report to update and revise the action plans in the current School Improvement Plan.

Recommendations for Bristol Warren School District

Negotiate with the Bristol Warren Teachers Union to add additional days to the academic calendar to provide teachers more effectively with the professional development they desire.

Negotiate with the Bristol Warren Teachers Union to devise a standards-based teacher evaluation system based on the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards.

Continue to work toward further revision and full implementation of a mentoring program designed to support new teachers in the Bristol Warren Public Schools, as outlined in the district strategic plan.

Develop standards-based curricula in mathematics and other content areas, as outlined in the district strategic plan.

Consider expanding the collaborative integrated special education model to other schools in the district.

Recommendations for Bristol Warren Teachers Union

Negotiate with the designee of the Bristol Warren School Committee to add additional days to the academic calendar to provide teachers more effectively with the professional development they desire.

Negotiate with the designee of the Bristol Warren School Committee to devise a standards-based teacher evaluation system based on the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards

7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL

Guiteras School has immersed itself in a cycle of continuous improvement. You have established a strong foundation on which to build, and you have implemented many of the components of learning community.

In three years the distinct personalities and strengths of all parties have coalesced into a mutually supportive team that has transformed a building into a school. Build on the solid foundation of community, enthusiasm, dedication, and respect you have created. Expand your efforts to involve parents and broaden the circle of involvement—with a special emphasis on the linguistically diverse parents. When many strive together toward a common goal, the collective support and efforts of others lessen the overall work.

Most of the essential building blocks Guiteras needs to sustain its chosen path of reform and improvement are currently being implemented. Stay on course for you are clearly moving in the right direction. Continue your efforts to ensure that effective practices are consistently occurring schoolwide and that each grade level effectively builds on the prior knowledge of students and increases the rigor of classroom tasks and assessments. Approach new ideas and strategies with the same level of energy as you have in the past. Maintain the high standards and expectations you have for children. Encourage them to think in different ways and to ask why. Facilitate opportunities for students to guide their own learning and inquiry.

Trust your own professional judgement as you engage in self-study, revise strategic plans, and continue to refine your instructional practices and the organization of this school to better meet the needs of the children you serve. A number of teachers have established classroom routines and practices to foster student ownership and high quality teaching and learning. Continue to collaborate and work with each other for you have much that is worthy to share. There are a number of practices that can and should be expanded schoolwide.

As you work with this SALT report, we hope you realize that our conclusions, commendations, and recommendations are designed to assist you in your efforts to meet the needs of your students. For that is, unquestionably, the intent of our team.

THE GUITERAS SCHOOL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

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Principal

Peggy Perrotto
Head Teacher

Sharon Reynolds
Teacher

Susan Donovan
Teacher

Jane Farnsworth
Teacher

Gary Dion
Teacher

Shelly Tavares
Teacher

Charlotte Josephs
Teacher

Debbie Costa
Teacher

Adam Floor
Parent

Sheila Sardinha
Parent

Trisha Cloutier
Parent

John Cloutier
Parent

Kris Carlone
Parent

Lisa Guercia
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Wendy Securo
Parent

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Parent

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**NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATION AND RI WRITING
ASSESSMENT RESULTS (2001)**

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Guiteras School

February 8, 2002

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, 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.
February 20, 2002