



# Rockwell Elementary School

BRISTOL WARREN

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 11, 2003



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 of the 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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# 1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT

## Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Rockwell Elementary School from April 7 to April 11, 2003. 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 Rockwell 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 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 Rockwell Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *The team spent a total of over 96 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 6 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*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *analyzing five years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - Rockwell Elementary School binder*
  - Rockwell faculty/curriculum meetings binder*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - Agreement between the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee and the Bristol Warren Education Association*
  - Curriculum templates*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Rockwell Elementary School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2002 SALT Survey report*
  - Rockwell SALT BINDER*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2002 Information Works!*
  - 2002 New Standards Reference Examination results*
  - 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
  - Primary Literacy Standards*

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 27 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 representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

## **2. PROFILE OF ROCKWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **Background**

Built in 1951 as a three-room primary school in the northwest section of Bristol, Rhode Island, the Rockwell Elementary School serves children in pre-kindergarten through third grade. In 1991, Rockwell underwent an extensive renovation to modernize the facility and make the building handicapped accessible. The eleven classrooms include a morning and an afternoon special education pre-school, a morning and an afternoon kindergarten, a K-1 intensive language-based special education class, three first grades, two second grades, and two third grades. In addition, the school houses the COZ Program for the Bristol Warren School District. Through this program students have access to before and after school care.

An administrator, 24 full- and part-time faculty, one secretary, two teacher assistants, four special education teacher assistants, and two custodians serve the school. The school's first full-time principal was appointed in 2000. A math coach and a literacy coach work in collaboration with the classroom teachers. Many of the staff is new to this school this year. A morning tutorial program, run by two retired first grade teachers, is offered to 18 first graders who have been identified as needing additional support.

Rockwell Elementary School has an attendance rate of 98 percent. Of the 198 students attending this school, 98 percent are white, one percent are Hispanic, and one percent are black. Thirty-nine students (19%) receive special education services, 81 students (40%) receive literacy services, and 12 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch.

The Accelerated Reader Program is implemented in all classrooms and coordinated by parent volunteers. Parents also run a publishing house in the school library. The goal of the program is for children to publish at least three of their own stories by the end of the year. Parents directly assist teachers by volunteering in classrooms and on the playground. They organize many school events and fund raising activities. A Cultural Arts Committee, made up of parents, writes grants for cultural arts programs.

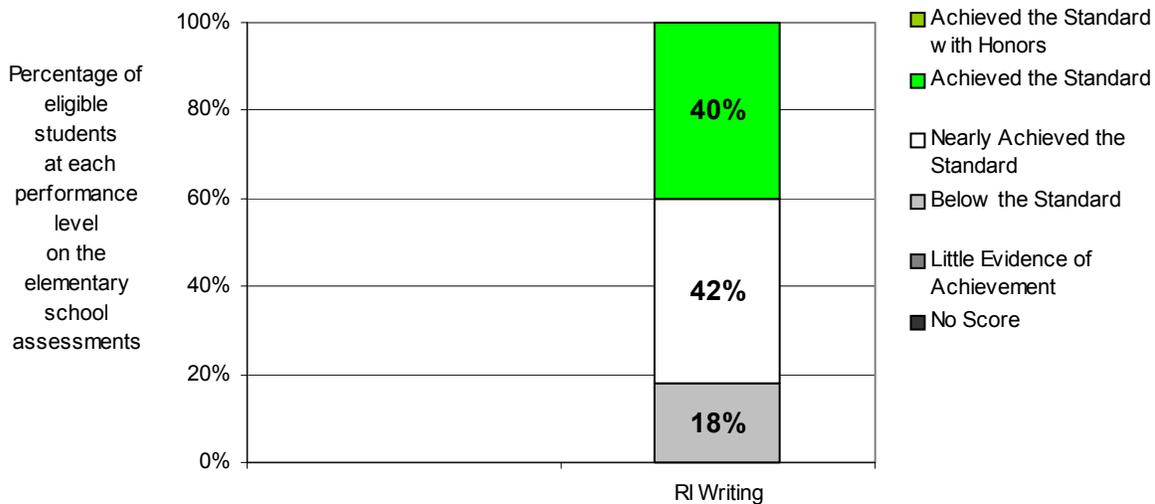
### **State Assessment Results for Rockwell Elementary School**

This section of the school profile shows results from the latest available state assessment program. Because Rockwell Elementary School is a pre-kindergarten through grade three school, the only state assessments come from the Rhode Island Writing Assessment administered to grade three students.

### **RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

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

**Table 1. 2001-02 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**



These results show that in 2002 students performed well with 39 percent of students achieving the standard and 42 percent nearly achieving the standard.

**RESULTS OVER TIME**

Now that the state assessment program has been functioning for five years, it is possible to show results over meaningful periods of time. This display shows changes in the percentage of students at or above standard and the percentage of students in the lowest performance categories. These displays correspond to the targets the Department of Education asked schools to set four years ago and are the basis for the department categorizing schools as improving or non-improving.

**Table 2. 2002 Student Results Showing Change Over Time**

The Rockwell Elementary School has been categorized as a moderate performing, not improving school on the basis of its assessment results from 1998 to 2002. The following tables show if the school improved or not in each area that defines improvement (*Yes* denotes improvement and *No* denotes no improvement.)

<b>Rhode Island Writing</b>	
<i>Increase in Percent Proficient</i>	<i>Decrease in Percent in Lowest Performance Levels</i>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

Rockwell Elementary School has moved from a low-performing school to a moderately performing school.

Information Works! data for Rockwell Elementary School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF ROCKWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Rockwell Elementary School is a small and well-maintained school. The classrooms are neat, organized, and bright. Student writing, artwork, and projects are showcased in classrooms and hallways. The country-like grounds provide a safe play area, complete with playground equipment that was provided through the efforts of parents from the school.

It is the people, however, who make this school special. The new staff has come together and quickly established a thriving learning community for themselves and for their students. The principal cares deeply for the students and encourages and supports the professional development of her staff. Teachers have incorporated many new practices into their daily teaching. They work collaboratively, as they grow together and refine these practices. They approach their work enthusiastically.

The district provides support with literacy and math coaches and sufficient resource help. Teachers have accepted the challenges posed by a district that is determined to improve both its image and the performance of its students. The work of the teachers and their behavior and attitudes all indicate that they are poised to raise their expectations for their students.

Children speak easily with adults and willingly assist their teachers and their classmates. They approach learning tasks enthusiastically. They work diligently doing what is required. The work of the children and their behavior and attitudes all indicate that they are ready to accept the challenges of a more rigorous curriculum.

Parents are an integral part of the school community. They support their children's learning in many ways. They contribute time and expertise by volunteering regularly in the classrooms, supporting teachers, raising money for trips and materials, and serving on various committees.

Students and teachers love this little school. Parents and administrators echo the sentiment. Rockwell Elementary School is blossoming into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century school. It has the potential to bring its future students to new heights.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

### Conclusions

Students at Rockwell Elementary School come to school ready to learn. They are enthusiastic and motivated learners. When given the opportunity, children work well in small groups. In conversations with the other students and the adults around them, they show their understanding of accountable talk<sup>sm</sup>. They listen, respect the contributions of others in the group, and respond to one another's questions. They are ready to learn from one another and need more opportunities to do so. Students respect adults and peers. They are aware of how the school expects them to behave and conduct themselves appropriately in and out of the classroom. This contributes to a whole school environment that is conducive to learning. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Students at Rockwell Elementary School love to read both at school and at home. Many document their reading in reading logs. They know their reading levels and, when given the chance, they are able to select appropriate books. Their selection is limited, unfortunately, by the meager selection of books that is available in their classroom libraries. In guided reading groups all students learn to make predictions, examine vocabulary, make connections to other books and to their lives, do picture walks, identify story elements, use graphic organizers, and discuss the characters in what they read. In the lower grades students lack a variety of strategies for decoding unfamiliar words. Students complete many phonics worksheets, but this takes time away from more authentic word study. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing work, discussing student work with teachers*)

Students at Rockwell Elementary School work well together in small groups or with partners to solve math problems. They understand that there is more than one way to solve a problem. They share strategies and explain their answers. However, students spend too much time on drill and practice sheets that are not part of their district mandated math program. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Students have many opportunities to write. They share their writing by publishing books in the school publishing house, presenting projects in class, and displaying work samples in classrooms and hallways. Students use rubrics to grade what they have written, but they do not use them to go back to strengthen the content of what they have written. Much student writing is formatted for them: it is confined by the space given them to write and focused on meeting criteria that emphasize conventions, rather than content. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Students wish they had more time to read books that they choose themselves and write on topics that interest them. They feel that the prescribed activities do not challenge them. Although students participate in many learning activities throughout the day, they seldom have choices about their learning. Student writing is often limited to pre-selected topics or responses to teacher prompts. Students do not have daily opportunities for self-selected reading in their classrooms unless they have completed all of their other assignments. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing work, reviewing classroom assessments*)

### Commendations for Rockwell Elementary School

Students' enthusiasm for learning

Student behavior

Students' ability to stay on-task

### **Recommendations for Rockwell Elementary School**

Allow students to generate their own topics for some writing tasks.

Give students time daily to engage in self-selected reading.

Provide more opportunities for students to work together.

Give students more opportunities to strengthen the content of what they have written in an effort to meet the standard.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *2002 SALT Survey report*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*

### Conclusions

Teachers at Rockwell Elementary School are, for the most part, new to the school this year. They quickly have developed collegial relationships, and they work well together for the benefit of the children. They use their daily planning time to collaborate with their grade level colleagues. Every classroom has well-established routines that facilitate classroom management and contribute to a productive learning environment. Teachers have very positive ways of redirecting inappropriate behaviors and encouraging students who are experiencing difficulty. They respect their students. Teachers participate in extensive professional development and bring this knowledge to their daily practice. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, 2002-2003 SALT Survey report, reviewing records of professional development activities*)

Classroom teachers prepare lessons that are well organized and beautifully orchestrated. Some specialists focus on standards, plan exceptionally well, and coordinate lessons with the classroom teachers. Co-planning time allows grade level teachers to provide consistent instruction to their students. Every day the classroom teachers and the reading specialists teach together actively and effectively during the language arts periods. Except for guided reading time, teachers typically present information to their students in a whole class setting. Although students may break into groups, they usually work on the same task at the same time. This does not allow children of differing abilities to be challenged at their appropriate levels. Tasks geared to students at the middle of the class frustrate the weaker students and do not challenge the more capable students. Students, who complete work early, often have no choice of activity other than reading or helping other students. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Every teacher devotes a large block of time to balanced literacy each day. They all read aloud to their students; they provide shared reading experiences for the whole class; and they conduct guided reading groups with leveled texts. They assess student progress with running records and basal text progress tests. Reading specialists assist classroom teachers in their classrooms during the balanced literacy periods. Parent volunteers also assist teachers in some classrooms. This extra help makes it possible for more children to benefit from direct contact with their teachers. As a component of the balanced literacy program, self-selected reading is not a daily practice for all children. This deprives some students of opportunities to develop their fluency. Group placement for guided reading is based solely on a child's reading level. Groups are flexible for changes in level, but children are rarely grouped for specific strategy instruction. While guided reading groups are being conducted in some classrooms, the other students spend much of their time completing worksheets, instead of engaging in reading, responding to literature, or participating in center-based literacy activities. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers*)

Writing is a focus of the school improvement plan at Rockwell Elementary School. Teachers provide many opportunities

for students to write in all areas of the curriculum. Students are exposed to a variety of genres and have opportunities to practice writing using those styles. However, writing tasks are regimented and prescribed. They do not allow for student creativity, interest, voice, choice or challenge. Although teachers set the writing criteria with their students, their expectations of students are not challenging. Criteria focus on mechanics, the number of sentences written, and handwriting, rather than on the content of what students write. Although teachers have Six Trait materials, there is little evidence in the classrooms that teachers are emphasizing these traits (organization, ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions). Although the writing portfolios contain many examples of writing that students complete, teacher feedback to students about this work tends to focus only on writing conventions. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan*)

Teachers in all grades consistently use the Everyday Math Program. They regularly use manipulatives, calculators, games, and other materials to enhance their students' understanding of math concepts. Students work well together with partners or in small groups to solve problems. In an effort to improve students' scores in problem solving, teachers use a district supported math supplement. Some teachers also supplement their math instruction with materials that do not support the Everyday Math program. Although this provides practice for students, it deviates from the district's math initiative and can be confusing for students. (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators*)

### **Commendations for Rockwell Elementary School**

Dedicated, hard working staff

Teacher collaboration

Respect for students

### **Recommendations for Rockwell Elementary School**

Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Increase instruction around reading strategies, especially for decoding unfamiliar words.

Designate a specific time daily for all students to participate in self-selected reading.

Conference regularly with students about their self-selected reading.

Provide more direct instruction on the writing process and the traits of writing.

Conference with students about the content of their writing during the writing process.

Allow students more choice in selecting writing topics.

Create more cooperative learning opportunities.

Use common planning time to collaborate across grade levels.

### **Recommendations for Bristol/Warren School District**

Provide professional development in differentiated instruction.

Continue training in the components of a balanced literacy program.

## 6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

### Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ Primary Literacy Standards
- ◆ Rockwell SALT binder

### Conclusions

Parents at Rockwell generously support the school. Teachers report that parents are reliable and readily available and that they are professional volunteers. Parents also run the Accelerated Reader Program and maintain a Publishing House. They support cultural arts by bringing programs to the school. They serve on various committees and raise funds for programs, supplies, and field trips. In addition, they tend the memory garden, organize the school store, and help with playground duties. The parents purchased play equipment and together built the playground. Parents are recognized as an integral part of the Rockwell learning community. (*meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing classes*)

Most teachers at Rockwell Elementary School are new to the school, new to teaching, and/or new to their grade level. They bring to the school and to their classrooms a variety of experiences, skills, and expertise that contributes to student success. Together, in a short time, they have created an active learning community. A mentoring system exists, but it is not formally implemented. Teachers, however, are mentoring each other informally by using their common planning time to share student work and to plan. In some cases this is successful; in others, teachers struggle without appropriate help. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*)

Resource teachers, reading specialists, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers regularly work together to meet the needs of the students. Their effective use of common planning time has made this possible. Transitions and delivery of service are seamless, without any disruption to learning. Some students, however, are pulled from their classrooms for support. This results in lost classroom instruction for the student. It also eliminates opportunities for support staff to model the appropriate strategies teachers need to meet these students' needs. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team and school and district administrators*)

A portfolio system is newly in place to support the district standards-based report card. Teachers use this portfolio as evidence of student progress. Many of the student work samples in these portfolios are not authentic performance-based tasks that are based on appropriate standards. The collected work addresses the broader standards, but it does not focus on specific end of year grade level expectations within each standard (The gold bulleted expectations in *The Primary Literacy Standards*). (*following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, Primary Literacy Standards*)

The school library is bright and spacious. It holds an excellent selection of good literature in a variety of genres. The library also houses a new collection of multiple copies of leveled books for guided reading instruction. Classroom libraries, however, are inadequate. The selection and the number of books there are not sufficient to meet varied purposes and needs. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff*)

Many school routines and activities are planned to support and celebrate the children's learning and behaviors: Acts of Kindness, Cookies and Milk with the Principal, and the Principal's Good Book. The school is truly a community school -- open and bustling with before and after school activities from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. (*observing classes, observing the*)

*school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, Rockwell SALT binder)*

**Commendations for Rockwell Elementary School**

- Parent commitment to the school learning community
- Collaborative efforts to create a learning community
- Effective use of common planning time
- Leveled book collection

**Commendations for Bristol Warren School District**

- Personnel and resources to support teaching and learning

**Recommendations for Rockwell Elementary School**

- Continue to add to the collection of leveled books.
- Develop classrooms libraries.

**Recommendations for Bristol Warren School District**

- Continue training in standards-based practice.
- Implement a formal mentoring program.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL**

The hard work you have done as a faculty is evident here. Rockwell Elementary School is a warm and inviting place. Your students are motivated and avid learners. A rich learning community works together and reflects on its practice. Relax a bit, and celebrate your successes. Then begin the work on your next steps towards becoming a 21<sup>st</sup> Century school.

Give your students more choices in their learning. Allow them the freedom to express themselves in their writing and to make personal connections in their reading. Let them work and share together more often.

Continue your work with standards-based practice, and include more authentic projects and assignments.

In a short time you have accomplished much. Do not consider the work complete. Raise your expectations for student achievement. . You have done the groundwork. You now have the potential to take your students to new heights.

## **THE ROCKWELL ELEMENTARY TEAM**

Mrs. Sandra Contente, Parent

Mrs. Peggy DeFelice, Teacher

Mrs. Diane Gallison, Teacher

Mrs. Eileen Herndon, Teacher

Mr. Tom Kneath, Parent

Mrs. Monique Latessa, Principal

Mrs. Morgan Lowis, Parent

Dr. Lindsey Pineo, School Psychologist

Mrs. Denise Resonina, Parent

## **THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Carol A. Belair  
Grade 4 Teacher  
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On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as a SALT Fellow

Melissa Bolton  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Kennedy School  
Middletown, Rhode Island

Geraldine Capotosto  
Principal  
M. I. Robertson School  
Central Falls, Rhode Island

Crystal Evora  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Laurel Hill Avenue School  
Providence, Rhode Island

Susan Hatch  
Aspiring Principal  
Underwood School  
Newport, Rhode Island

Phyllis Murphy  
K-1 Teacher  
Primrose Hill School  
Barrington, Rhode Island

## **ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

### **Rockwell Elementary School**

April 11, 2003 Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

DATE: May 9, 2003