

LILLIAN FEINSTEIN SACKETT STREET SCHOOL

Providence, Rhode Island

A REPORT TO THE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY THE SALT VISITING TEAM

June 1999

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1. INTRODUCTION: THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

A Profile of the School

The Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School, a Marine Science Academy, is located in the Southern Zone of the Providence Public School Department under the jurisdiction of the Providence School Committee. The three-story brick building was built in 1922 and a new addition has recently been completed.

An acting principal with assistance from a focus teacher and a magnet school administrator lead 61 full

and part time staff in grades K-5. There is a bilingual strand in each grade level. Primarily a neighborhood school, 29% of the students are bussed.

Ninety-three percent of the 476 students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Eight percent of the student population are White, 26% are Black, 14% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 51% are Hispanic and 2% are Native American.

Twenty-one percent of the students are bilingual. Seventeen percent receive special education services in either self-contained or resource settings.

The school has developed many business partnerships including Narragansett Electric, University of Rhode Island, Kinko's, and Gilbane.

The Nature of this Report

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 developing and implementing effective School Improvement Plans.

The purpose of the visit to Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School from June 1 to June 4, 1999 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- Student Learning, Progress and Achievement
- Teaching and Learning
- The School as a Teaching and Learning Community

The purpose of the SALT Visit is to ensure 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 of the visiting Team is built upon the observations and conclusions of Rhode Island school practitioners. The majority of the members of the Visiting Team, whose names and affiliations are included in Appendix A, are practicing Rhode Island educators.

Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School's Improvement Plan served as the Visiting Team's first touchstone in coming to an understanding of the School.

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, on the playground and in the hallways. The specific information generated by a Team visit is about how the students and 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 Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School.

The Visiting Team collected its evidence from the following:

- a total of 61 hours of classroom observation. Classroom teachers were observed at least once except in cases of some substitute teachers.
- many informal observations in and around the school
- following 5 students for a full day
- observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day
- meeting with the Self-Study Team
- School Improvement Team meeting
- meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators
- Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan
- The GTECH Progress Report
- District and school policies, Providence School District test data, 1998 and 1999 *Information Works!* Data book; SALT Survey Report, union contracts
- analysis of student work including a selection of work collected by the school
- analysis of the school's performance on state assessments of standards

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The Visiting Team met for a total 22 in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms and with teachers. 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 by consensus agreed to each conclusion, each commendation and each recommendation 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 Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street 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 Providence School Department, the citizens of Providence and the Rhode Island Department of Education will share that responsibility.

Following the Team's summary statement, Portrait of the Condition of Your School at the Time of the Visit, Team conclusions, commendations and recommendations are presented for each of the SALT focus areas. The report continues with the Team's most important conclusions and concludes with the Team's final advice to the school.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered as coming from the conclusions, since that is the way they were written by the Team.

2. PORTRAIT OF THE CONDITION OF YOUR SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Children with a symphony of names and smiling faces are the strength of Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School. A diverse population brings many different languages and abilities together in one setting. Respect for all, high expectations, a sense of order and a safe and engaging climate demonstrates the pride of the school. A celebration of this school community is displayed everywhere inviting the visitor to participate.

Teachers, parents, community and students work together towards common goals. A very effective bilingual program combined with a faculty that demonstrates commitment and energy in activities and programs support the mission of the school.

Good instructional practices were evident but not consistent throughout the school.

The school has made a concerted effort to procure grants to help in improving the learning at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School. Partnerships with businesses have been established as a two way street as each partner works to help each other.

3. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Sources of Evidence

- 1998 *Information Works!* (1997 scores)
- 1999 *Information Works!* (1998 scores)
- 1998 State Assessment results
- Examination of student work
- Following students
- Meeting with students
- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with SALT Self-Study Committee,
- Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan
- The GTECH Progress Report

Conclusions

Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School students are very respectful of their teachers and of each other, and they honor the school's standards for appropriate behavior. (classroom observations, meeting with students, following students)

Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School students performed very well with 58% achieving the overall standard in reading on the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam scoring significantly better than similar students across the state on three of the four subtests. (1999 *Information Works!*)

Given the good performance on the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam, it is surprising that only 5% of third graders were proficient on the Rhode Island State Writing Test. (1999 *Information Works!*)

The gap to standard performance in the Mathematics New Standards Reference Exam is considerably wider than English Language Arts with Concepts and Problem Solving the areas of greatest need. Their performance was like similar students statewide. (1999 *Information Works!*)

An equity gap exists between Black and Hispanic students who met the standard on the Mathematics Skills subtest of the Mathematics New Standards Reference Exam with Hispanic students scoring higher. A gap also exists between males and females on the Analysis and Interpretation subtest of the English Language Arts New Standards Reference Exam with females scoring higher. (1999 *Information Works!*)

Although it is commendable that there was no gap between the special education and general education students who met the standard on the Reading and Analysis subtest of the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam, there was a gap between them on the Writing Effectiveness subtest. (1999 *Information Works!*)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School for:

Notable performance on English Language Arts Reference Exam

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School:

Address the poor results in concepts and problem solving on the Mathematics Reference Exam

Analyze the results of the 1999 Grade 3 State Writing Assessment

Examine 1999 test results to see if equity gaps continue

4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- Classroom observations
- Examination of student work
- Conversations with teachers, specialists, students and staff
- Meeting with school and district administrators
- Parent meeting
- Student meeting
- SALT Self-Study Meeting
- SALT Survey Results
- Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan
- Following students

Conclusions

Schoolwide equal treatment and high expectations combined with excellent instructional strategies in the bilingual program contribute to an extraordinary and successful education for bilingual students at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School. (following students, meeting with district administrators)

While there is a school-wide focus on consistent and orderly classroom management, there is not a clear focus on the effectiveness of the diverse teaching practices which result in a mixed pattern of how well students are engaged in learning. (following students, classroom observations)

The absolute confusion about which set of standards is being used and the lack of rubrics interferes with the coherent focus on teaching practices. (conversations with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators)

Outstanding writing instruction at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School encompasses all student populations and is utilized effectively across all curricular areas and includes a variety of writing genres. (examination of student work, classroom observations)

There is recognition that math problem solving needs greater concentration. The lack of critical thinking skills and inquiry-based instruction in most classrooms is reflected in the poor performance on concepts and problem solving subtests of Mathematics Reference Exam. (Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan, classroom observations)

Every student at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School receives instruction in science weekly in an amazing science lab, however resources are under utilized in the lab and do not promote consistent inquiry based instruction and the integration of science in many classrooms. (following students, school observations)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School for:

Outstanding Bilingual Program

Classroom emphasis on improving writing skills

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School:

Increase inquiry based instruction across the curriculum

Emphasize critical thinking skills in instruction

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Providence Public Schools:

Clarify how to implement standard-based instruction and performance assessment at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School so standards become a tool rather than a distraction to good instruction

5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY

Sources of Evidence

- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with district administrators
- Meetings and conversations with administrators, staff and teachers
- Meeting with parents
- Following students
- 1998 State Assessment Results
- School and District policy documents, union contracts
- SALT Self-Study Meeting
- Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan
- GTECH Progress Report

Conclusions

The school culture is centered on children. Equal treatment with high expectations creates a phenomenal sense of belonging for all members of the school community. (following students, classroom observations)

The Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan reflects in-depth and inclusive planning, is specific and is used to effectively guide their educational emphasis and professional development. (Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Plan, conversations with teachers)

The business partnerships established at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School are remarkable. Their support for educational programs is vital to the school community providing cultural and social development, opportunities for recognition of achievement and creates awareness in the school community of opportunities for future employment. (Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Team meeting, school and classroom observations, Gtech Progress Report)

The role and function of teacher assistants is not clearly defined and training has not been provided. This limits the productivity of having two adults working in the classroom. Teacher assistants are not utilized to the fullest potential. (classroom observations, meeting with teachers and administrators)

The staff at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School aggressively seeks and receives a large number of

grants. They pursue grants that effectively enhance their school climate and support their instructional goals. (GTECH Progress Report, meeting with school administrators)

Professional development is comprehensive, well planned and meets the goals of the school improvement plan but is not always evident in classroom practice. (Professional development plan, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The over 100 computers at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School actually work, are being used by students and teachers and are integrated effectively in classroom instruction. (classroom observations, conversations with teachers and students)

Leadership is encouraged and supported throughout the faculty at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School allowing teachers to take risks to be creative in their pursuit of student learning. (meeting with district administrators, School Improvement Team meeting, conversations with teachers)

The SALT Visiting Team commends Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School for:

Genuine care and respect for each other

Outstanding business partnerships

Integration of technology

Knowledge and use of a well written school improvement plan

Energy and commitment in pursuing financial resources

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School:

Ensure that classroom practices mirror professional development efforts

Clarify role and function of teacher assistants and provide training

Keep focus on educational needs in seeking grants and resources

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Providence Public Schools:

Provide training of teacher assistants and support the school in clarifying the role and function of teacher assistants

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Most Important Conclusions

The school culture is centered on children. Equal treatment with high expectations creates a phenomenal sense of belonging for all members of the school community. (following students, classroom observations)

Schoolwide equal treatment and high expectations combined with excellent instructional strategies in the bilingual program contribute to an extraordinary and successful education for bilingual students at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School. (following students, meeting with district administrators)

While there is a school-wide focus on consistent and orderly classroom management, there is not a clear focus on the effectiveness of the diverse teaching practices which result in a mixed pattern of how well students are engaged in learning. (following students, classroom observations)

Outstanding writing instruction at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School encompasses all student populations and is utilized effectively across all curricular areas and includes a variety of writing genres. (examination of student work, classroom observations)

The business partnerships established at Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School are remarkable. Their support for educational programs is vital to the school community providing cultural and social development, opportunities for recognition of achievement and creates awareness in the school community of opportunities for future employment. (Lillian Feinstein Sackett Street School Improvement Team meeting, school and classroom observations, Gtech Progress Report)

The absolute confusion about which set of standards is being used and the lack of rubrics interferes with the coherent focus on teaching practices. (conversations with teachers, meetings with school and district administrators)

Final Advice to the School

You have achieved many successes of which you should be proud. These successes have been accomplished through a shared vision, good planning and hard work. Application of these successful strategies in other areas will lead to achievement of your goals.

Your creative and energetic pursuit of supplemental support to enhance student learning is impressive.

A well-developed School Improvement Plan and Professional Development Plan have poised you to make good instructional practice consistent throughout.

Keep the whole in mind when planning the parts!!

APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT

MEMBERS OF LILLIAN FEINSTEIN SACKETT STREET SCHOOL SALT SELF-STUDY TEAM

Karen Leach, Principal
Sandra Anderson, Grade 2 Teacher
Erin Connole, Grade 2 Teacher
Jennie Correa, Parent
Jeanie DePetrillo, Focus Teacher
Lisa Giannini, Special Education
Margaret Harrington, Bilingual Grade 4/5
Marcia Kenyon, Grade 3 Teacher
Lucy Lamboy, Bilingual Grade 3
Ann Lynch, Science Teacher
Mary Paolino, Grade 4 Teacher
Scott Sutherland, Magnet School Administrator
Mai Yang, Parent

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Patricia Ribeiro, Grade 1 Teacher
Providence Street School, West Warwick
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT
Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Sharon Cabral, Kindergarten Teacher
Captain Hunt School, Central Falls

Norma Cole, Principal
John W. Horton School, Cranston

Sue P. Duff,
Member of Rhode Island Board of Regents of Elementary and Secondary Education

Maria C. Loiselle, ESL Teacher
Fallon Memorial School, Pawtucket

Thomas A. Wilson, Catalpa Ltd.,
Providence
Coach to the Team