



Captain Isaac Paine School

Foster

SALT Visit Team Report

April 12, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

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

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1. THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

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

The purpose of the visit to Captain Isaac Paine School from April 9 through April 12, 2001 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- ◆ Student Learning
- ◆ Teaching
- ◆ The School

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

This report is built upon the observations and conclusions of the visit team. The visit team is composed of Rhode Island school practitioners and a parent. Their affiliations are included at the end of the report.

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

The visit team collected its evidence from the following:

- ◆ *a total of 52 full and partial classroom observations which totaled over 60 hours of time spent in direct classroom observation. Most classrooms were visited at least once. Most teachers were observed more than once.*
- ◆ *many observations of the school (outside of classroom)*
- ◆ *following 6 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with the following groups:*
 - *School Improvement Team*

- *school and district administrators*
- *students*
- *parents*
- ◆ *conversations and/or interviews with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *examination of student work, including a selection of work collected by the school*
- ◆ *analysis of achievement and equity gaps based on Information Works! data*

- ◆ *review of district and school policies*
- ◆ *review of professional development activities*
- ◆ *review of classroom assessments.*
- ◆ *review of the following documents:*
 - *School Improvement Plan for Captain Isaac Paine School*
 - *district strategic plan*
 - *1999-2000 SALT Survey report*
 - *classroom textbooks*
 - *1998 Information Works!*
 - *1999 Information Works!*
 - *2000 Information Works!*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
 - *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
 - *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*

- *Foster School Department Progress Reports*
- *Captain Isaac Paine School content areas curricula and frameworks*

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. PROFILE OF Captain Isaac Paine School

Captain Isaac Paine School serves students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school also houses an early childhood education program, FELT (Foster Early Learning Together). Located in Foster, Rhode Island, a rural community of 4300 residents, Captain Isaac Paine is the only school in the Foster School System. Constructed in 1951 with major renovations in 1988, the school serves as a hub for community events and activities. Students from Foster attend the regionalized Ponagansett Middle School and High School.

A superintendent, who also serves as the principal, administers the school district. An additional administrator serves as the Literacy and Curriculum Director, as well as the Co-Principal. An elected school committee of 3 members governs the school district. A total of 40 full and part time faculty, 11 teacher assistants, and 17 support staff, as well as a Speech Pathologist, Social Worker, and School Psychologist service the 415 students. A large number of parent volunteers provide extra support for special projects.

Of the students attending Captain Isaac Paine School, one per cent are Asian, two per cent are black, one per cent are Hispanic, and 96 per cent are white. Fourteen per cent are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, and 11 per cent receive Special Education Services.

Statewide assessment results reported in *Information Works! 2000*, indicate that in 1998-99 grade 4 students performed better than similar students statewide on all Mathematics subtests and about the same as similar students statewide on all the English Language Arts subtests, except Reading Analysis and Interpretation where they did not perform as well. A review of the 2000 New Standards Reference Exam results indicate that these students made gains in Reading Analysis and Interpretation and Writing Effectiveness.

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

3. PORTRAIT OF Captain Isaac Paine School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Captain Isaac Paine School serves as the heart of the rural community of Foster, Rhode Island. This learning environment is built on mutual trust, respect, and admiration. At school-wide “town meetings” stakeholders exhibit “Paine Pride.” Teachers and parents beam as students showcase their talents. Students cheer for their outstanding teachers and revel in the acknowledgement of their accomplishments.

All who pass through the doors of this school are welcome to become active participants. Community and parent involvement is encouraged. As a result, students benefit from the many talents and resources these adults offer. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students exude boundless energy directed towards daily activities, ongoing projects, and new challenges. A commitment to learning, and especially to one another, is evident to anyone entering this school. Many in this school community refer to the educational process as “seamless.” All students and staff know that each and every person is valued and that the education of each and every child is the responsibility of all.

A typical day at Captain Isaac Paine School would include students fully engaged in their learning; teachers and teacher assistants working in collegial and cooperative teams; and administrators moving throughout the school building, offering support and guidance where it is needed. Loyalty, dedication, and hard work are evident in each and every corner of this safe and nurturing environment. Clean corridors and classrooms that display a wide variety of student work contribute to an atmosphere where learning is a cause for celebration.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations made in the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with students, teachers, and staff*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with parents, students, and the School Improvement Team*
- ◆ *following students*

Conclusions

Students at Captain Isaac Paine School are very happy to be here. They take great pride in their accomplishments and in their school. Students are very polite, well behaved, and demonstrate respect for each other and for all members of this school community. Students are well spoken and are eager to share their learning. They are willing to take risks and are motivated to achieve. Their positive attitudes contribute to the creation of an environment where education is greatly valued. (*classroom observations, observations made in the school, conversations and interviews with students, teachers, and staff, scheduled meetings with parents, students, and the School Improvement Team, following students*)

Students at Captain Isaac Paine School love to read and are motivated to read. They especially enjoy the time they spend in the library. Most students keep reading logs and meet or exceed the literacy standard for the suggested number of volumes they should read. Students respond to their reading in a variety of ways. They write book reports, keep journals, and discuss their reading. Students read independently, with peers, and with their teachers. Students read different genre and comprehend materials of varying length and complexity. Most students are able to analyze and interpret what they read successfully and are emerging as critical readers. These findings are consistent with student performance on the 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, where 83 per cent of the students tested met or exceeded the standard in Reading Basic Understanding and 74 per cent of the students met or exceeded the standard in Reading Analysis and Interpretation. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students, scheduled meetings with parents and students, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 Information Works!*)

Students at Captain Isaac Paine School actively and effectively participate in the process of writing every

day. Students have a clear understanding of teacher expectations for their work, based on the national standards. Students engage in a variety of prewriting activities such as brainstorming, outlining, webbing, self and peer editing, and publishing. Some add detail to their writing and apply higher order thinking skills to the process. Most write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Writing takes place consistently across the curriculum. Students use technology as a learning tool to enhance their finished products. As a result, most students communicate effectively through written language. These findings are consistent with the improvement in student performance on the New Standards English Language Arts Writing Effectiveness subtest over the last three years. (*classroom observations, examination of student work, 2000 Information Works!, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, scheduled meetings with parents, students, and school improvement team, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam School Summary*)

Most students at Captain Isaac Paine School are proficient in the use of mathematical skills. Some students are able to successfully apply mathematical concepts to problem solving and explain those concepts orally and in writing. These students are able to formulate problems, implement solutions, justify conclusions, and use the language of mathematics to describe concepts and explain their reasoning. Students use manipulatives to assist them in problem solving. Students apply mathematical skills and reasoning across content areas. They demonstrate a clear understanding of expectations as outlined by the national mathematics performance standards. These findings are consistent with student performance on the New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam, where 80 per cent of the students tested met or exceeded the standard on the Mathematical Skills Subtest, 41 per cent met or exceeded the standard on Mathematical Concepts, and 35 per cent met or exceeded the standard on Problem Solving. (*classroom observations, examination of student work, conversations and interviews with teachers and students, 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam School Summary, 2000 Information Works!*)

Commendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

The well-behaved, polite, and articulate student body

School-wide efforts to foster a love of reading

Improved student performance on the New Standards English Language Arts Writing Effectiveness subtest

Recommendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

Continue to foster an environment where students are encouraged to take risks and are motivated to achieve.

Examine the “what students need” portion of the 2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary.

5. Findings on Teaching

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *1999, 2000 Information Works!*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with teachers, staff, and students,*
- ◆ *examination of student work*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with parents, students, School Improvement Team, district and building administrators*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *Foster School Department Progress Reports*

Conclusions

Teachers at Captain Isaac Paine work as a cohesive team. The collegiality, informal mentoring, and support they offer one another greatly enhance the daily practice of teaching and contribute to a learning “community” where each member is valued. Grade level team meetings that are inclusive of special education teachers, teacher assistants, and “specialists,” allow for full integration of instruction across content areas. As a result students are immersed in thematic units and projects that allow them to make connections and apply their learning to real world situations. (*classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers, staff, and students, examination of student work, scheduled meetings with students, district and building administrators, observations made in the school*)

Teachers at Captain Isaac Paine School work tirelessly to provide the best possible education for their students. They truly enjoy the work that they do and spend many hours beyond the school day supporting after school and weekend activities. Teachers have spent countless hours engaged in professional development activities. They look to some of their colleagues to serve as instructional leaders and professional development trainers. These program coordinators provide classroom instruction, peer support, and curriculum development in targeted areas. As a result, teachers are better prepared to implement standards-based instruction and are comfortable that the necessary supports are available on a daily basis. (*classroom observations, observations made in the school, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff, scheduled meeting with the School Improvement Team*)

Teachers at Captain Isaac Paine School encourage their students to be active learners. They provide

opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning groups and employ manipulatives in hands-on learning activities. Teachers create positive learning atmospheres with stimulating and print-rich environments. Displays of student work serve to reinforce the belief that student accomplishments are valued. Teachers integrate technology to enhance instruction, encourage creativity, and develop research skills. Teachers are building a solid foundation for students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. (*classroom observations, following students, observations made in the school, conversations and interviews with teachers, staff and students, scheduled meeting with students*)

Teachers at Captain Isaac Paine School have incorporated standards-based instruction into their daily teaching. They have high expectations for student performance, but in many cases they have not differentiated instruction for those students who have already reached proficiency or for those who need more time to acquire basic skills. As a result, some students do not have the opportunity to experience rigorous and challenging academic activities that would allow them to exceed standards and expectations. Additionally, there is some concern that students who are not meeting the standards may not be given the necessary supports, modifications, and accommodations to meet teacher expectations. (*classroom observations, scheduled meetings with students, the School Improvement Team, and district and building administration, following students, examination of student work, 2000 New Standards Reference Examination Results*)

Some teachers at Captain Isaac Paine School are successfully employing a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate student work and inform their instruction. They are providing detailed feedback that allows students to revise and improve their work. Others seem less comfortable using assessment tools to determine student progress and the need for re-teaching or review. Additionally, teachers are having difficulty translating classroom evaluations and assessments into the grading system used on report cards for grades three to five. As a result, some students do not receive the necessary feedback or support to fully develop their skills or to improve the quality of their work. (*classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with students, scheduled meeting with students, examination of student work, Foster School Department Progress Reports*)

Commendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

The mutual respect, support, and collegiality of the teaching staff

The hard work and dedication to professionalism

The instructional leadership provided by the Math and Reading Coordinators

The integration of technology in classroom instruction

Recommendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

Continue to support one another in a collegial and professional atmosphere.

Seek professional development in the areas of differentiation of instruction and performance-based assessments and incorporate these strategies in your daily classroom techniques.

Provide more detailed and prescriptive feedback on student work.

Recommendations for Foster School District

Fund needed professional development in targeted areas.

Develop a formal mentoring program for teachers.

Align the progress reporting system to more accurately reflect standards-based classroom instruction and performance-based assessments.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *classroom observations*
- ◆ *observations of the school*
- ◆ *conversations and interviews with many students, teachers, staff and school administrators*
- ◆ *scheduled meetings with school improvement team, school and district administrators, students, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *School Improvement Plan for Captain Isaac Paine School*
- ◆ *review of Captain Isaac Paine School content areas curricula and frameworks*
- ◆ *examination of student work*

Conclusions

District and building administrators at Captain Isaac Paine School inspire this school community and encourage effective communication and collegiality. They have built upon the mutual trust and respect that exists for all families, teachers, staff, and students. They have empowered each and every member of this learning community to achieve their greatest potential and they continually celebrate and recognize their accomplishments. The calm and relaxed environment that they create ensures that everyone feels comfortable, secure, and self-confident. These factors have resulted in the full support, loyalty, and dedication of the community that make this school unique. (*observations made in the school, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff, scheduled meetings with district and building administrators, School Improvement Team, parents and students*)

The Captain Isaac Paine School Improvement Team, the district, the building administrators, and some of the teachers make effective use of available data to identify strengths and weaknesses in student performance, determine and address equity gaps, improve instructional strategies, inform professional development planning, and review allocation of financial and human resources. This provides for the efficient use of time, energy, and funding and allows administrators to focus on continuous school improvement. (*scheduled meetings with district and building administrators, School Improvement Team, observations of the school, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers*)

The community of Foster commits the financial resources necessary to provide Captain Isaac Paine students with a high quality education. The district administrator is fully supported in his efforts to fund a wide variety of programs before, during, and after school, including special summer programs and an early childhood program. All members of this school community have cooperated to provide a substantial budget for the School Improvement Team to initiate and pilot innovative programs. The efficient use of all available financial and human resources has allowed this school to meet the technological, educational, emotional, and

social needs of its students. *(scheduled meetings with the School Improvement Team, district and building administrators, observations made in the school, following students, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff)*

Standards-based curricular guides for Captain Isaac Paine School have been established. The guides for English language arts, math, library science, visual and performing arts, health, and physical education are continually revised. These guides provide effective instructional support for classroom and “specialist” teachers. Additionally, school personnel have developed an innovative Applied Learning Program to address national standards. Recent attention to the science curriculum has resulted in improved efforts to provide a standards-based framework for instruction. However, the absence of a clearly defined social studies curriculum with an established scope and sequence results in an inability to provide a consistent and cohesive body of knowledge in this content area. As a result, students do not receive all of the components necessary for a comprehensive elementary program. *(review of Captain Isaac Paine School content areas curricula and frameworks, classroom observations, following students, conversations and interviews with teachers, scheduled meetings with district and building administrators, examination of student work)*

Teacher evaluation at Captain Isaac Paine School is based on an ongoing and informal evaluation process. The mutual respect and trust that district and building administrators share with teachers allows for open dialogue and feedback on a regular basis. However, the absence of a formal evaluation document or schedule of teacher observations does not always allow for identification of the rare instances where teacher performance may not result in a high quality of student learning. It also inhibits the establishment of clearly stated expectations, objectives, and goals for teacher professional growth and development. *(scheduled meetings with district and building administrators, classroom observations, conversations and interviews with teachers)*

Special needs students at Captain Isaac Paine are being served in fully inclusive classrooms and are supported by caring adults who make every effort to meet their needs. However, the current methods of referral and evaluation are not sufficient to identify all students who need special services. In some cases staff members, who lack the necessary certification to work independently with special needs populations, are the service providers. In addition, students who are in need of more programmatic attention and instruction are not necessarily accommodated. *(classroom observations, scheduled meetings with parents, district and building administrators, conversations and interviews with teachers and staff)*

Commendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

The effective communication and leadership of the district and building administrators with all members of this school community

The efforts of the School Improvement Team to identify and address those needs which will enhance teaching and learning for all students through innovative pilot programs

The innovative and efficient use of human and financial resources

Recommendations for Captain Isaac Paine School

Continue to encourage an environment of mutual trust and respect.

Continue to use data to inform your planning and decision making.

Continue to identify and address discrepancies in student performance and equity gaps to guide school improvement efforts.

Develop and implement comprehensive curricula and frameworks for Science and Social Studies programs.

Recommendations for Foster School District

Develop and utilize a formal teacher evaluation instrument.

Review your current referral and evaluation process for special needs students.

7. Final Advice to the School

This SALT Visit Team recognizes and appreciates the unique circumstances of a school district that governs a single school. The community of Foster takes great pride in the quality of education it provides its students. We encourage you to reflect on the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations in this report as you continue to seek ways to improve your school. Some of our suggestions focus on themes that your School Improvement Team has already identified as areas of concern. We encourage you to more actively address these issues of curriculum, district policies, and professional development. Your previous efforts to identify and solve problems will serve as a strong foundation for continued school improvement.

Encourage all members of this learning community to focus their efforts and energies on building an even better learning environment. Continue to celebrate your “Paine Pride” and the many accomplishments of your staff and students.

Captain Isaac Paine School Improvement Team

Dr. Andrew Carrano
Superintendent/Principal

Monica Darcy
FELT Coordinator, Parent

Paul Darcy
Co-Chair
Parent

Ted Donnelly
Parent

Virginia Giacobone
Grade 1 Teacher

Lauren Graham
Parent

Sue Krikstone, Co-Chair
Multiage Teacher, Technology Specialist

Gloria Laramee
Co-Principal

Marge Manco
Reading Specialist

Jan Mowry
Math Specialist

Nancy O'Hare
Special Education Teacher and Parent

Marc Parmentier
Parent

Barbara Portney
Grade 4 Teacher

William Potter
Parent

John Reynolds
Parent

Sharron Rothberg
Library Media Specialist

Cathy Santosuosso
Health, Physical Education Teacher

The SALT Visit Team

JoAnn LaBranche
Social Studies Teacher
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Chair

Morgan Hardwick-Whitman
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New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2000)

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Captain Isaac Paine School

April 12, 2001

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.
May 12, 2001