



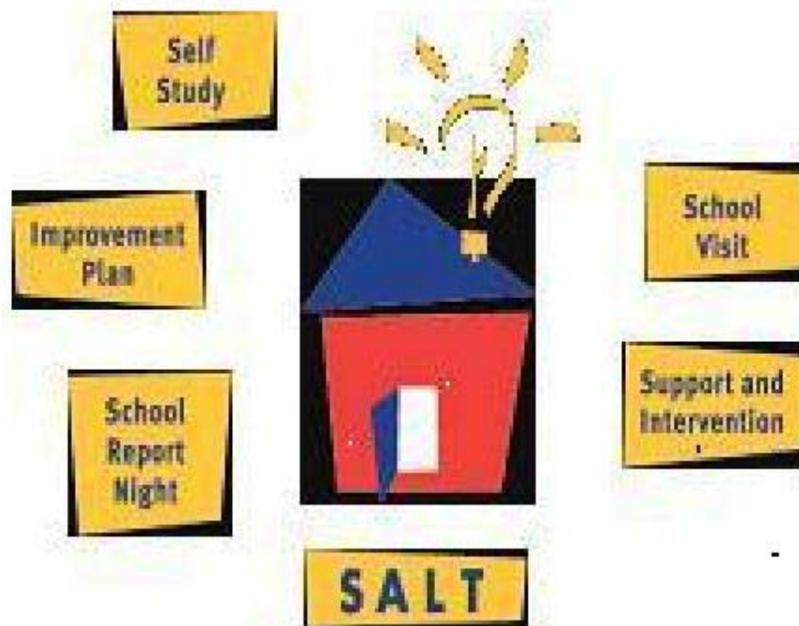
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
www.ridoe.net

Garden City School

CRANSTON

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

October 8, 2004



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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For information about SALT, please contact:

Rick Richards

401-222-4600, x 2194

or

salt@ridoe.net.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Garden City School from October 4 through 8, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

- ◆ *How well do students learn at Garden City School?*
- ◆ *How well does the teaching at Garden City School affect learning?*
- ◆ *How well does Garden City School support learning and teaching?*

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the 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.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Garden City School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

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

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 135 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed multiple times. Team members had conversations with various faculty and staff members for a total of 26 hours throughout the week.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 28 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Garden City School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Cranston School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Cranston, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Garden City School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF GARDEN CITY SCHOOL

Garden City Elementary School, located in Cranston, Rhode Island, serves students from preschool through grade five. Built on a former asparagus farm, the school originally opened in 1953 comprising six classrooms and three offices. In 1963 a second wing was added that included seven additional classrooms and a library. Four classrooms, two in the school and two portable, were added in 1970. The Shriners constructed a tot park at the school in the mid 80's. In 2003 Garden City Elementary School built a new playground.

The Garden City School faculty includes one principal, 13 classroom teachers, eight part-time teachers, eight teacher assistants, two special educators, one resource teacher and one reading teacher. A guidance counselor, a social worker, a psychologist, a DPT, two speech and language therapists, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and an adaptive physical education teacher are employed part time. Additionally, Garden City employs two part-time librarians, one part-time library clerk, one literacy aide, and one full-time and two part-time nurses. Two part-time building assistants, one full-time secretary, two kitchen staff, and one full-time and one part-time custodian complete the staff.

Of the 280 students in attendance, 90% are white, 5% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and 1% is black. Fourteen percent of the student body receives free or reduced-price lunch and 66 students (24%) have Individualized Education Plans. Students in the district, who have significant medical problems, attend Garden City School, as it is one of two elementary schools in the district that has a full-time nurse.

Literacy is a major focus at Garden City Elementary School. Classroom teachers have developed extensive classroom libraries or are working to develop them. Every classroom has a two-and-a-half to three-hour literacy block daily. Further, the administration and the teachers both have received training in the Institute for Learning's Principles of Learning™, and they focus on ensuring evidence of Clear Expectations™, Accountable Talk™, and Academic Rigor™ in every classroom. The school regularly conducts both formal and informal Learning Walks™. Garden City teachers utilize the *Investigations* math program, and teachers provide math workshops for parents throughout the year. The school incorporates a full inclusion model for special and regular education students.

Garden City School is one of four schools in the state that is modeling "Response to Intervention" this year. This pilot project examines the school's capacity to utilize a "problem solving" approach toward meeting the needs of students who require early interventions. The goal is to provide students with early supports before they reach third grade, with the hope of better distinguishing between whether they have a reading problem or a learning disability. Consequently, these services are more instructionally based, and testing is for diagnostic purposes, rather than for determining student eligibility.

3. PORTRAIT OF GARDEN CITY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Garden City School is located in the heart of a charming suburban neighborhood. Immediately upon entering the building, one sees a beautiful flowery wall mural of scenes that are pleasant and homey. The uniquely decorated Wee Deliver mailboxes by classroom doors add to the sense of welcome and warmth. Students enthusiastically write letters to others in the learning community and look forward to receiving their own personal mail. This strengthens the personal connections among all participants. A strong sense of community permeates the school.

The principal is a strong, charismatic leader with a vision, a purpose, and abundant support for her staff. She sets high standards for herself and her staff. Teachers strive to exceed those standards as they work diligently to implement several initiatives that are underway here. The cohesive, energetic, and highly-dedicated staff shares similar beliefs. They are committed to supporting one another, and they are experts at developing their students' literacy skills and knowledge.

Parents feel very welcome here. They participate in the school's various activities, and many volunteer to work in the classrooms. Parents say that they are very pleased with their children's education. Children are actively involved in the daily life of the school. They come to school ready and eager to learn. They demonstrate the utmost respect for everyone in the school community, as well as for themselves.

The school works conscientiously to implement several new programs that support the optimal learning of all children. The Response to Intervention pilot program, the full inclusion of special needs students, and the character building program underway here make the Garden City School agenda an *all kids* agenda.

The literacy focus of the school has met with success, as every student is a reader and every student is a writer. The new *Investigations* math program is slowly taking hold in the classrooms. However, teachers require the support of additional professional development and more materials in order for their students to realize the full benefits of this program. Students use the computers in their classrooms for word processing, PowerPoint presentations and research, but many of these computers are old and require upkeep. Internet service often is not available.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Students at Garden City School read enthusiastically, confidently, and skillfully. They utilize a variety of strategies while they read, including predicting, making connections, summarizing, and drawing conclusions. Students read for their own enjoyment as well as to find information for their science and social studies units. They actively participate in reading activities, and they eagerly choose to read during their free time. Sixty-six percent of the fourth and fifth graders stated in the SALT Survey that they read five or more books each month. Children in all grades declare that they love to read and would like to have more time to read in school. They work cooperatively; guiding and prompting one another in literature circles, buddy reading, and appropriate book selections. Students expertly learn the skills of competent readers, as confirmed by the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination results. Seventy-nine percent of the fourth graders met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding, and 75% met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrator, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, completed and ongoing student work, 2003 SALT Survey report)*

Students at Garden City School are strong and effective writers. They understand and use the writing process to create polished products. They write clearly, communicating their thoughts in journals, poems, stories, reports, and justifications to their solutions of math problems. Students enthusiastically write letters and send them through the school's Wee Deliver System, and they enjoy writing at home with their parents when they use the Writing Suitcase. Students at every grade level use rich descriptive language, convey strong voice, and incorporate imaginative leads and wrap-ups to create well-written pieces. Children are proud of their writing and share and celebrate one another's work. They consistently meet or exceed the classroom standards in their writing. It is not surprising that 89% of the fourth grade students met or exceeded the standard on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination Writing: Effectiveness subtest. Students, however, rarely choose topics for their writing. Rather, they typically write to prompts or assigned topics, missing opportunities for student creativity. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students are beginning to explore mathematical concepts and problem solving strategies in their math lessons. They use manipulatives and participate in games to investigate different approaches to solving problems. Children read, discuss, and solve problems of the day and week. Furthermore, they attempt to explain in writing the strategies they have utilized. Although students are practicing these important concepts and strategies, some state that they do not understand the problem, know how to use the rubric effectively, or know how to justify their solutions. Compounding this situation, the time they spend on problem solving is fragmented throughout the day and occurs sporadically throughout the week. Overall, students spend too little time in school practicing the skills they need to become proficient in math. This need for more math practice is evident in the small percentages of students that meet the standard on each of the three subtests of the 2004 New Standards Reference Math Examination. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

All students at Garden City School take their education seriously. They respect themselves and members of their school community. Students model appropriate classroom behavior. They generally know what is expected of them academically and socially, and they make the transition from one activity to the next smoothly. Kindness, consideration, trust, and cooperation are evident in the classrooms and throughout the school. Students encourage one another to do their best with positive comments such as, "Now you've got it!" and "Nice job!" Boys and girls are at ease in this setting, feel safe taking academic risks, and assume responsibility for their choices. These positive attitudes and behaviors lay the foundation for an environment of optimal learning for all students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team and, students, talking with students, teachers, reviewing 2003 SALT Survey report)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- are active, eager participants in their learning
- take pride in their work
- support one another in their work
- are skilled readers and writers
- create a respectful, positive community of learners

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Teachers currently teach at least one uninterrupted two-and-a-half hour block of literacy. They are outstanding educators, and their students excel in reading and writing as a result of this rigorous instruction and extended time. Some of the successful teaching strategies they use include modeling, Read Aloud, think aloud, Literature Circles, Guided Reading, I Wonder™, as well as reading and writing conferences. Teachers offer their students many opportunities across the curriculum to practice and enjoy silent reading and reading out loud as a class, with a buddy, and in small groups. Teachers establish clear routines for their classes using work boards, centers, transitional cues, and behavior management techniques. Through their instruction and use of visual aids, teachers provide their students with a clear understanding of the writing process. Teachers reinforce the use of rubrics to improve student writing. For high interest and personalization of writing, teachers encourage students to participate in Wee Deliver activities, which involve them in writing letters to various members of the school community. Teachers further expand student-writing activities to include family connections through the use of the Writer's Suitcase. These practices successfully prepare students to be highly proficient readers and writers. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2003 SALT Survey report)*

Teachers are in the initial stages of implementing the *Investigations* math series. Grades three through five are in their second year of implementation, while kindergarten through second grade are in their first year. Teachers use manipulatives and games to teach problem solving and skill development. However, math instruction is primarily in the form of problem solving, often manifested as a 'Problem of the Day' or 'Problem of the Week.' Teachers are beginning to incorporate rubrics for effective problem solving, and students are just starting to understand their meaning and use. Teachers pepper the time they allot for math instruction throughout the day, thus diluting students' development of mathematical skills and concepts. The math curriculum is delivered through diverse approaches and with varied results. Teachers teach math, but not in the same organized approach as they teach reading and writing. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrator, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district and school policies, school improvement plan)*

Educators at Garden City School create a safe and nurturing learning environment. They are warm and welcoming, and they show a deep concern for their students and their families, as well as for their colleagues. Teachers say, “It may sound hokey but we really like each other here,” and, “We are like a family and help each other.” Character development and respect are emphasized throughout the school. Teachers tend to each individual student, addressing his social and academic needs and concerns. For example, teachers and staff act on their belief in full inclusion and provide for the diverse needs of all students. They embrace parents’ involvement in their classrooms. Children thrive as exceptional learners and good citizens in this environment. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and the school administrator, reviewing 2003 SALT Survey report, school improvement plan)*

The Garden City School staff loves learning as much as their students do. Teachers strive to acquire new strategies and techniques to ensure the educational well being of all students. They do not rest on their laurels, but set high standards for themselves, which they rise to meet. Teachers take advantage of the voluntary professional development opportunities that are offered, including the Book Club that currently is reading Strategies That Work. They are models of life-long learning for other teachers and their community, especially their students. The dedicated staff leads by example. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing records of professional development activities, Garden City School’s Highly Qualified Teachers binder, school improvement plan)*

Commendations for Garden City School

Dedicated, nurturing, caring teachers

Teachers as life-long learners

Each child perceived as an individual

Commitment to literacy and full inclusion

Recommendations for Garden City School

Continue to foster your students' love of reading and writing.

Give students opportunities to choose what they write about.

Dedicate more uninterrupted time to math instruction.

Continue to learn how to use your new math program, *Investigations*, effectively.

Continue to aggressively seek knowledge to improve your craft.

Continue to make students your top priority.

Continue to support your character development initiative and the inclusion model.

Recommendations for Cranston School District

Provide professional development for Garden City School teachers in the implementation of the new math program, *Investigations*

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

The principal is the cornerstone of the school. A courageous leader, she is a catalyst for change. The principal is a visionary, who has implemented full inclusion and Response to Intervention at Garden City School. Through tireless enthusiasm she constantly pushes the school and herself to achieve higher standards. The principal has the talent to recognize and empower others to become leaders in the school community. She is respected, appreciated, and admired by the students, staff, parents, and the community. The principal is selfless, and the staff reports, “She doesn’t ask anyone to do anything that she wouldn’t do herself.” The district reports that she is a mentor and a role model for other administrators. Her leadership qualities are an inspiration to everyone. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, school and district administrators)*

Garden City School accepts and appreciates students of all learning styles. A seamless implementation of the inclusion model provides all children with meaningful learning opportunities. Flexible grouping, differentiated instruction and peer modeling are found throughout the school. Consequently, students blend together to create a unified learning community. Teachers, teacher assistants and support staff are trained and prepared to meet the needs of all students. Additionally, parents support the program. The school effectively collaborates with outside agencies to better serve this learning community. Furthermore, the school is one of four schools in Rhode Island that is piloting the Response to Intervention program. The goal of this program is to provide students with early supports before they reach third grade, with the hope of better distinguishing between students who have reading problems and those who have learning disabilities. These interventions are incorporated into the students’ Personal Literacy Plans. The school successfully prepares all students for the diverse nature of diverse society. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan, district and school policies, records of professional development activities)*

Literacy is the focus of learning at Garden City School. Scheduling priorities ensure large blocks of uninterrupted reading and writing time daily. The abundance of trained personnel, materials purchased through grants and ongoing professional development allows for effective literacy instruction. A strong home-school connection is evident in the use of Book Bags with parent response journals, the Writing Suitcase, and parent Read Alouds. The district’s dedication to “Every child a reader, Every child a writer” manifests itself in this school. Hence, the students at Garden City School are successful readers and writers. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and the school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 SALT Survey report, school improvement plan, records of professional development activities, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, district and school policies)*

In contrast to the preceding conclusion, support for mathematics instruction at Garden City School is lagging. The district reports that, due to limited resources in recent years, it is three years behind in implementing the mathematics program fully. Furthermore, the school schedule does not allow for a significant, uninterrupted block of time dedicated to math instruction. The ongoing support for teachers as they implement these new ways of teaching mathematics is not in place. Teachers' comfort level with teaching complex problem solving and *Investigations* in their classrooms is only now emerging. Additionally, parents say they do not understand the new approach and are unable to help their children successfully with their math homework. Students report that they have difficulty pulling apart the information in a problem in order to solve it and effectively using the rubric to improve their work. A cohesive vision for mathematics instruction is not evident. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district strategic plan, district and school policies, records of professional development activities, school and district report cards)*

The district technology plan is not being implemented at this time due to the lack of district funds. Although teachers incorporate technology in their curriculum, there is a shortage of up-to-date computers in the classrooms. Seventy percent of the computers at Garden City School are at least five years old. The computers are abysmally slow, crash often, and interfere with the learning of the students. When they use the computers in the library, students rarely print or save their work. Students and teachers are frustrated when the computers disconnect from the Internet during lessons. Due to an inadequately-maintained system, the Internet, at best, is intermittently accessible. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrator, discussing student work with teacher)*

Garden City School is a true learning community. Parents are committed to this neighborhood school. They serve as room parents, teacher helpers, members of the School Improvement Team, and as members of the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). This ambitious PTO organizes special events such as the Harvest Festival and the Teddy Bear Drive. Students further the sense of community, encouraging one another to strive for their best, welcoming visitors, and assisting younger students. The children create opportunities within the school for their own involvement such as in making the morning announcements and delivering the sports and weather reports. Students say they feel safe here. Teachers willingly continue their own education and share their knowledge with one another. They model life-long learning and go well beyond what is required of them by regularly attending, in large numbers, events that occur outside the school day. The principal creates an atmosphere in which the efforts of all community members are welcomed and valued. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and the school administrator)*

Commendations for Garden City School

Principal as inspirational leader

Effective full inclusion model

A cohesive school community

Dedication to literacy

Recommendations for Garden City School

Provide teachers with ongoing opportunities to improve their comfort with teaching problem solving and using *Investigations*. Provide them with opportunities to meet and discuss their strategies and concerns and to observe model math lessons.

Utilize in-house leaders and outside experts of the *Investigations* program to deepen teachers' understanding and comfort level.

Continue to educate your parents to deepen their understanding of the math program and to increase their comfort with it.

Provide a significant and uninterrupted block of time for mathematics instruction and practice.

Continue your excellent literacy, full inclusion, Response to Intervention, and character development initiatives.

Continue to advocate for current and usable technology.

Maintain your positive relationships with parents and community members.

Recommendations for Cranston School District

Provide the school with the most up-to-date teacher resources for *Investigations*.

Help the school build its supply of leveled reading materials to support its literacy efforts.

Maintain ongoing professional development in literacy and numeracy.

Update technology as described in your district technology plan.

Recommendations for the City of Cranston

Financially support your school department in its efforts to provide your children with quality education, including technology, books, and instructional materials.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO GARDEN CITY SCHOOL

Garden City School demonstrates a strong commitment to the quality of education it provides its children. You have created solid bonds among teachers, administrators, children, and parents. Continue to foster these special relationships. Your character-building model and fully-inclusive environment have yielded caring, striving, respectful students.

Through initiatives such as Response to Intervention, continue to provide differentiated instruction for students of all learning styles. You have built an extraordinary learning community here. Be proud of your commitment to children and the value you place on an outstanding education.

Carry on the great work you are doing in writing and reading. We recognize that you are heroically using the technology you have. Expand your passions for literacy to include math, and improve teaching and learning in this area. Work together to incorporate the principles of the *Investigations* program so that you create a strong math foundation for your students. Continue to attend professional development, and share and discuss student work with your colleagues to improve student learning in math.

Maintain your positive and nurturing environment while moving forward into less comfortable areas of instruction. It is no surprise that your school is a model for others in the district and the state. Take the next step, take the risk - move on to math. Keep up the good work that is already underway here, and good luck to you in this endeavor.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Garden City School

October 8, 2004

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, 1st 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
- 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.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

November 5, 2004

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

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

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

- ◆ *observing classes directly*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following nine 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*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - teacher evaluation form*
 - Mentor Program*
 - Technology Plan*
 - Consolidated Resource Plan*
 - Article 31-Show Investment Funds*
 - Asset Protection Program*
 - Cranston Quarterly*

Institute for Learning (IFL) materials
Master Agreement between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance September 1, 2002 to August 31, 2005
2004-2009 Cranston District Strategic Plan
District Writing Guide
District Assessment Calendar and Plan
District Anchor Papers K-12
various curriculum documents
classroom assessments
school improvement plan for Garden City School
classroom textbooks
2004 Information Works!
2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries
2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries
2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
2003 SALT Survey report
School and District Report Cards
Garden City School SIT Parent Engagement Committee binder
Garden City School SIT Math committee, Spring 2002
Ways to Support Your Child's Math Education, booklet
Garden City School Be a Piece of Our Puzzle Parent Volunteer brochure
Garden City School SALT Visit, October 4, 2004 binder
Garden City School Research and Materials for PDI, 2004-2005 box
VICS, Volunteers in Cranston Schools, Garden City binder
Garden City School Administrative Policies binder
Garden City School Instructional Assessment binder
Garden City School Assessment, Progress Monitoring binder
Wee Deliver Writing Suitcase
Garden City School Professional Development Activities 2001-2004
Entering Grade 1 Summer Literacy Support Materials-After School Program 2004-2005
Garden City School School Activities box
Learning to Enrich Our Schema Goals binder
Garden City School's Highly Qualified Teachers binder
Garden City School Character Development Program binder and materials
Garden City School Class Books 1953-2004
Golden Gala Celebration, Celebrating 50 Years of Community, November 1, 2003 binder
Garden City School Where Students Grow in Every Way video

State Assessment Results for Garden City School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

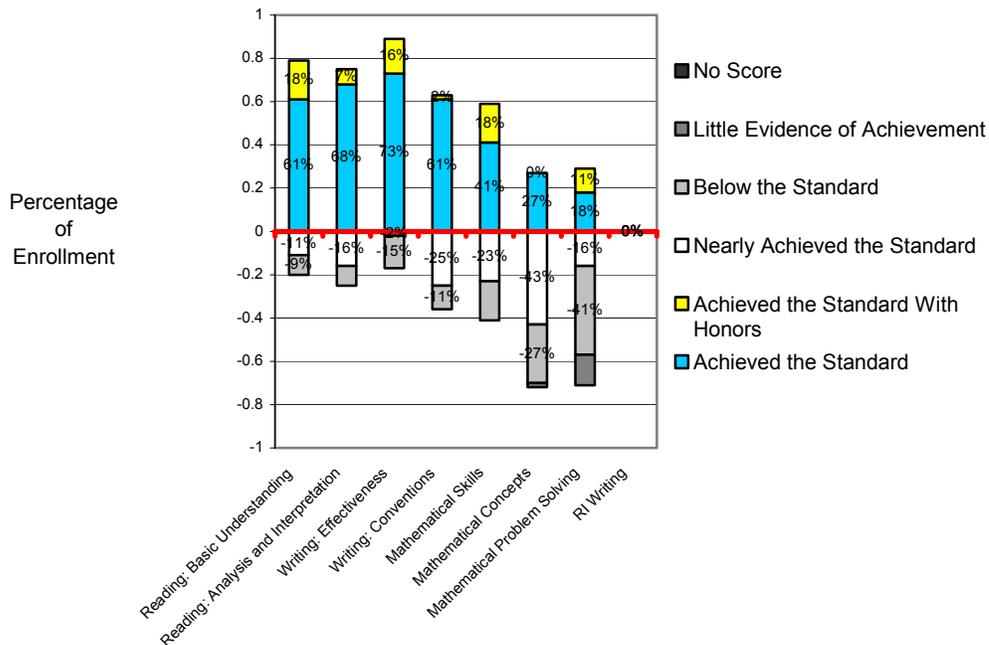
This school’s results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. 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*.

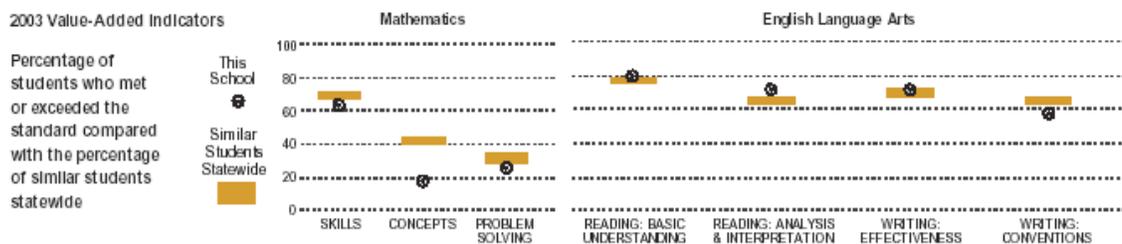
Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments



RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

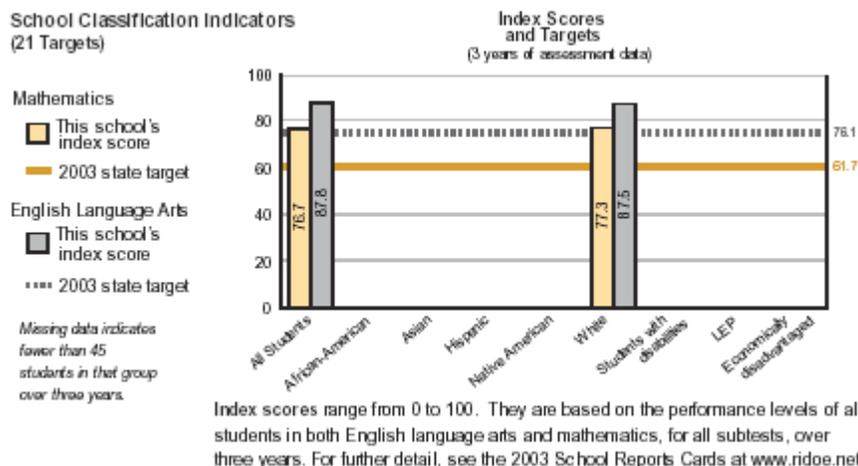
Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students who are in the school. This display shows targets and index scores and reflects the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows groups with 45 or more students across three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gaps.

Table 3. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups



REPORT CARD FOR GARDEN CITY SCHOOL

This Report Card shows the performance of Garden City School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO). These report card scores describe Garden City School as a moderately performing and sustaining school on the basis of its assessment results from 2000 to 2003.

Table 4. Report Card for Garden City School

Information Works! data for Garden City School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

THE GARDEN CITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Shannon Cauley

Bob Creamer

Jackie Day

Stephanie DiChiro

Caroline Frey

Gail Jeschke

Monica Finelli

Marianne Larson

Rachel Livesey

Stephanie McCormick

Paula Munko

Bethanie Parenteau

Pia Riccitelli

Joanne Coletta

Dena Chamberland

Rose Muccio

Cheryl Rossi

Mrs. Chakmakian (Samuel, Rm. 10)

Mrs. Milson (Abby, Rm. 1)

Mr. Sherman (Catherine, Rm. 4)

Mrs. Perelman (Phoebe, Rm. 9)

Mrs. McPhillips (Kelly, Rm. 8)

Mr. & Mrs. Sarenson (Matthew, Rm. 1)

Heidi Baker (Courtney DiFonzo (Rm. 9)

Mrs. Walmsley (Samuel, Rm. 4)

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Margaret M. Della Bitta
Science Teacher
South Kingstown High School
on leave to the
Office of School Improvement and Support Services
Rhode Island Department of Education
Regents SALT Fellow
Team Chair

Suzanne Brillon
Grade 4 Teacher
Cumberland Hill School
Cumberland, Rhode Island

Marion Fodor
Reading Specialist
Guiteras School
Bristol, Rhode Island

Catherine Hutz
Regents SALT Fellow
Office of School Improvement and Support Services
Rhode Island Department of Education
Providence, Rhode Island

Diane Jolin
Assistant Principal
North Smithfield Elementary School
North Smithfield, Rhode Island

Linda Menard
Grade 2 Teacher
Saylesville Elementary School
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Cynthia O'Brien
Grade 3 Teacher
Carl G. Lauro School
Providence, Rhode Island

Carol-Lynn Wilcox
Special Education Teacher
Alan Shawn Feinstein Elementary School
Providence, Rhode Island

Gregory Zenion
Principal
Cumberland Hill School
Cumberland, Rhode Island