



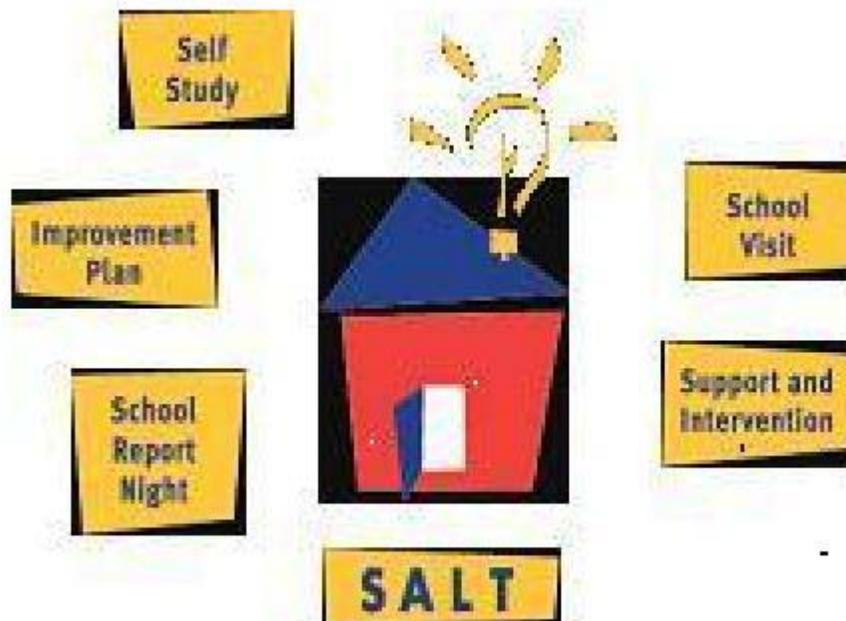
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

PAWTUCKET

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

January 14, 2005



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School from January 10-14, 2005

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 M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School?*
- ◆ *How well does the teaching at M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School affect learning?*
- ◆ *How well does M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary 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 M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary 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 130 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 more than once. Team members had conversations with various faculty and staff members for over 44 hours.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 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 M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary 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 Pawtucket School District 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 Pawtucket School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary 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 M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located in the Woodlawn section of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, M. Virginia Cunningham School opened its doors in 1965. Named after Mary Virginia Cunningham, a teacher in Pawtucket for twenty-six years, the brick and steel fireproof building connects underground with the adjacent Slater Junior High School. There have been two additions to the school. Presently, there are 27 classrooms housing students in grades Kindergarten through sixth grade.

Students at Cunningham Elementary School are from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Of the 542 students, 17.9% are white, 40% are black, 42% are Hispanic, and one student is Native American. Ninety-three percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Seventy-nine students receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services, and seventy-seven students receive special education services. Cunningham Elementary is a Title I Schoolwide school.

The faculty and staff consist of one administrator, 32 classroom teachers, four full-time and four part-time itinerants for library, physical education, art and music. One reading specialist services students in grades K-2, and one literacy teacher services students in grades 3-6. The staff also includes one full-time speech pathologist, one psychologist and one English Language Learner Resource teacher, as well as one part-time nurse, one part-time adaptive physical education teacher, one part-time social worker, one part-time Cota worker, and two part-time enrichment teachers. Two Americorps workers assist with reading and math. A Child Opportunity Zone (COZ) staff provides services and activities for both students and their parents. A secretary, interpreter and three custodians complete the staff.

Both the math and English Language Arts programs are standards-based. Cunningham currently is using the *Growing with Mathematics* program in Kindergarten through grade four and the *Connected Math Program* in grades five and six. Both programs place a strong emphasis on problem solving. In addition, district math coaches support the ongoing implementation of the programs and train the classroom teachers. As part of the English Language Arts program, Cunningham uses a Balanced Literacy model, as well as *Readers-Writers Workshop* in the primary grades and *Write Traits* in grade 6. Teachers use the Accelerated Reader Program to motivate and encourage students to read independently. District English Language Arts coaches help teachers to implement these programs.

Several clubs and after-school programs address and enrich the academic needs and special talents of this student population. The clubs include arts and crafts, sports, and chorus. An after-school math program supports students who need extra help.

Each year, under the auspices of the Substance Abuse Task Force of Pawtucket, the school observes a Red Ribbon Week that culminates with a district wide presentation of their week-long activities. Cunningham Elementary School has won first place for their presentations for the past four years.

3. PORTRAIT OF M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School is located in western Pawtucket. Because it is located behind Slater Junior High School, the main entrance is difficult to find. Behind the plain exterior facade of the school, friendly students and teachers attend to their daily routines. Once inside, it is immediately apparent that the building is in need of some basic maintenance and fresh paint. Space is at a premium, as classrooms are partitioned to carve out needed space for instruction.

Parents and teachers refer to Cunningham School as “the best-kept secret in Pawtucket.” It is a place where students feel safe, parents are welcome, and teachers want to stay despite the challenges and overwhelming problems their students face. Teachers are dedicated to their students and work hard to address their social and emotional needs. There are strong community ties here. Numerous support services through the COZ program provide students and their families with medical and dental assistance and translating services, as well as after school and summer school programs.

While Cunningham has had three principals in the past five years, the new principal provides stability and has greatly improved teacher morale. Student absenteeism and tardiness have decreased. Students regard him as their principal, as well as their friend. Expectations for student behavior are clear. However, the principal has not yet successfully conveyed the same clear high expectations for consistent, instructional practices. Students have minimal confidence in their ability to become successful learners.

Cunningham teachers are working hard in many areas to absorb new materials and to learn new instructional practices. District support presently emphasizes problem solving in an effort to raise low test scores in math. However, the school has no clear academic vision, and teachers lack direction and accountability. Teaching practices, teacher competence and expectations for student achievement are inconsistent both within and across the grades. Instructional planning with colleagues is rarely prearranged, systematic or data driven. Teachers do not fully utilize the expertise that exists among them. These issues, along with the constraints of technology and budget, restrict Cunningham’s ability to develop a school-wide shared commitment to the success of every child.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Most students are not competent problem solvers in math. They think that what is important is for them to get the correct answer, rather than to know how to solve the problem. They have not yet learned that they can solve problems in numerous ways. They find it difficult to explain their solutions mathematically because their vocabulary is limited. Many students fail to understand math concepts adequately and do not know how to apply them. While students enjoy making graphs and charts to organize information, few fully understand how to interpret data to draw conclusions. Students in some classrooms learn from one another as they share their solutions. Students do not consistently spend sufficient time exploring ways to solve problems. As a result, most students use manipulatives as problem solving tools only when the teacher directs them to do so. The majority of students and some teachers say that students rely on their teachers to assist them to get the answer rather than on the resources available in their classrooms to investigate and discover the solution on their own. According to 2003-2004 SALT Survey results, sixty-one percent of the parents say they would like to know how to help their children at home to improve their math skills. It is not surprising that ninety percent of the students scored below the standard in math concepts, and ninety-eight percent did not meet the standard in problem solving on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, talking with students and teachers, 2003-2004 SALT Survey report)*

While students at Cunningham School proudly state that they are readers, in fact, many do not read well. Many read below grade level. Students know it is important to read in order to become better readers. However, because of their limited vocabulary and background knowledge, students are unable to analyze and interpret text easily. They rarely extend their understanding of what they read beyond the literal level. Most students continually rely on their teachers to assist them; they do not have the confidence to try to solve problems on their own. Students in the primary grades enjoy reading and often read better than their intermediate peers. They confidently sound out new words, make predictions, and use picture clues to understand the story. In contrast, as they move into the intermediate grades, many of these students become less enthusiastic and confident. Books that students read independently often lack meaningful content and do not match their interests. As a result, not all students consistently practice the skills they need to be critical readers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Despite the fact that seventy-two percent of the fourth graders met or exceeded the standard in writing effectiveness on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination, many students at Cunningham Elementary are not effective writers. Only a few students at every grade level write well. Their writing is organized and contains a variety of sentence structures. Their writing clearly shows that they understand the importance of descriptive language, juicy details, dialogue and main idea sentences. These elements of quality writing are most evident when students write about their own lives. In a few classrooms, students know how to improve their work by using classroom resources effectively, including word walls, descriptive word lists, charts with writing cues and the dictionary. Working with teachers to create rubrics, they know how to use these tools to guide, improve and critique their writing. Less effective writers often go from rough draft to final draft without knowing how to improve their work. They do not persist or question how to improve. As a result, many students do not know what makes a quality writing piece, and they lack the confidence to improve their work. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, talking with students and teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students at Cunningham Elementary School are respectful and eager to please, yet few demonstrate the qualities of expert learners. Some students at every grade level communicate their thinking, listen attentively and persist in their learning, but not all students demonstrate these attributes. Many students say they like to learn by doing projects and working with their friends, but few understand how they learn best. Their enthusiasm soars when they work to help others, such as collecting money for Tsunami victims or cleaning tables in the cafeteria. They enjoy staying after school for music, arts and crafts, games and the Children's Crusade. They thrive on attention and praise. Students lose their enthusiasm and curiosity for learning when they must sit in classrooms and listen to their teachers talk for long periods of time. In these classrooms, they ask few questions, become distracted and are less motivated to learn. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, observing the school outside of the classroom, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

- ◆ *Students mainly rely on teacher assistance to learn, and they lack self-confidence.*
- ◆ *Students lack critical thinking skills.*
- ◆ *Many students are passive learners.*
- ◆ *Students thrive on attention and praise.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

There is effective reading instruction at every grade level but not in every classroom. Teachers do not share a common vision or common high expectations for student achievement. Many model effective reading practices when they read aloud daily to their students. They teach vocabulary using word walls, adjective/synonym charts and dictionaries. All teachers conduct student conferences to assess how well students understand their independently read texts. However, not all teachers consistently use their conference notes or observations of students to plan, modify or differentiate their daily reading instruction. Few ask questions that require students to use their critical thinking skills. As a result, many lessons do not adequately address student needs, and they often repeat what students already know. These inconsistencies not only deter students from developing the ability to build on their prior knowledge, but they widen the gaps in student learning. Teachers say they need more support in reading instruction, especially in the intermediate classrooms. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with school and district administrators, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks)*

Not all teachers communicate the same high expectations for quality writing to their students. Students write well in classes where teachers deliberately identify, model and discuss the elements of quality work. Teachers in these classes also provide visual resources to support students while they are writing and encourage them to share and critique their work. They clearly communicate their expectations by developing rubrics and criteria with their students and teaching them how to use these tools to guide and improve their work. However, these effective instructional practices exist only in some classes at every grade level. Teachers rarely share and discuss student writing samples with their colleagues. This limits their ability to set consistent expectations among themselves or to build on what students have learned in their previous classes. While for several years the emphasis in professional development has been on literacy, some teachers continue to be reluctant to implement these effective teaching practices in their classrooms. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Only a small core of teachers instruct math well. Few are using the action steps in the revised school improvement plan to guide their instruction. Approximately one-third of the staff effectively uses a problem-centered inquiry approach as defined by the District. Students in these classes independently explore and discover many ways to solve problems. These teachers provide numerous opportunities for students to collaborate and share solutions, thus allowing them to learn from one another. Teachers report that utilizing the expertise of math coaches helps them improve their instruction practices. Math coaches work with classes upon the request of the teacher. These competent coaches demonstrate, co-plan, co-teach and provide teacher feedback, but only two coaches exist for the ten elementary schools in Pawtucket. They often answer questions by phone in the evening. More importantly, coaches, as well as school and district administrators, report that the number of teachers willing to implement these initiatives is slowly increasing. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing classroom textbooks, completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan)*

Cunningham teachers genuinely care about their students and work hard to address their social and emotional needs. Students say they can always depend upon their teachers for help. Teachers, school and district leaders report that teacher turnover is low despite the challenges and overwhelming needs of the students. While teachers say that they respect and value one another, they do not effectively utilize the expertise that exists among them, which limits their ability to improve their instructional practices. Mutual free time exists at every grade level, yet few teachers use this time regularly to examine student work or to develop clear, high criteria for student achievement. As a result, the implementation of curriculum and expectations for student achievement are inconsistent both within and across grade levels. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, school administrator)*

Commendations for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

- Hard working, caring teachers
- Strong sense of community
- Competent, dedicated math coaches

Recommendations for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

- Implement consistent methods of instruction for reading, writing and math. Set clear, high expectations for all students.
- Make it a priority to set agendas for grade level meetings, and systematically use mutual free time for collaboration and planning.
- Review, implement and monitor the effectiveness of action steps as stated in the school improvement plan for math, reading and writing. Use this information to differentiate instruction.
- Use teacher expertise, from both within the school and the district, to encourage and support change in instructional practices. Continue to utilize math coaches and professional development opportunities to improve the teaching of reading, writing and math.
- Emphasize an inquiry approach to learning, increasing hands-on activities. Increase cooperative learning opportunities for all students. Reduce teacher-centered lessons.
- Increase emphasis on critical thinking skills across the curriculum.

Recommendations for Pawtucket School District

- Be creative in finding ways to increase the number of literacy and math coaches. Provide more support for intermediate students in literacy.
- Continue to support professional development for literacy and math. Monitor and hold teachers accountable for their instructional practices.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

The school administrator sets a positive tone for the school and provides a positive role model for students. Teachers, parents and district leaders report that he is accessible, supportive and visible. During his two-year tenure as principal, it is very evident that student behavior, attendance and tardiness have markedly improved. All teachers say that the school climate and teacher morale is much more positive than before his arrival. The principal describes his leadership style as “tough love.” Students support this apt description by saying that “they know he means business.” However, routine duties and managerial tasks consume the majority of his valuable time, limiting his ability to concentrate on the educational needs of his students and faculty. He states that he is working to free time for more classroom involvement, but progress is slow. While he visits classrooms daily and checks the lesson plans, he does not adequately monitor progress or hold teachers accountable for the consistent implementation of the action steps as stated in the school improvement plan. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students, teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, Pawtucket School Department Schoolwide Projects Update: Elizabeth Baldwin and M. Virginia Cunningham Schools)*

The school facility requires upgrading. The interior is dreary; walls are dirty; and classrooms lack daily maintenance. Classroom floors and student desks require cleaning. Temporary partitions carve out needed classrooms but limit classroom space. Teachers report that the inadequate size of many classrooms restricts student movement and exploration. Outdated and unused materials clutter shelves. Storage closets act as classrooms. Cafeteria workers set up for lunch in close proximity to students participating in physical education classes. Art and music take place in the classroom, limiting the variety of possible activities, shortening instruction time and disturbing neighboring classrooms. All of these conditions negatively affect the learning environment. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school administrator)*

There is limited technology at Cunningham School. There is at least one computer in every classroom, but the number of printers is totally inadequate. Students and teachers share three printers located in central classrooms throughout the school. As a result, the constant flow of students and teachers in and out of these classrooms disrupts instruction and greatly distracts students. Moreover, frequent intercom announcements add to the disruption. The announcements, which often contain information unrelated to students, interrupt learning and the flow of instruction. While the number of computers per room is sufficient, the librarian reports a need for more computers in the library to assist student research and support classroom projects. Technology, as it is presently used, does not fully support student learning or facilitate communication among the staff. *(following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, students, school administrator, talking with teachers, the Pawtucket School Department Schoolwide Projects Update: Elizabeth Baldwin and M. Virginia Cunningham Schools)*

The inclusion and integrated classroom models work well to address the strengths and needs of English Language Learners (ESL) and special education students at Cunningham School. Teachers in these classrooms effectively modify and differentiate their instruction. Students help one another, translate when necessary and share their cultural differences. Teachers and school and district administrators, as well as the SALT team, concur that these inclusion classes facilitate collaboration and allow for flexible grouping that benefits all students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team and district administrators, talking with teachers)*

As written, the school improvement plan states specific action steps that address changes that are needed in student learning behaviors and instructional practices. Commendably, teachers worked collaboratively using data from the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries to prioritize and make decisions about teaching and learning. However, no consistent organized monitoring and reporting process exists. As a result, the school improvement team lacks sufficient information to make informed decisions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the action steps. Teachers are not held accountable for implementing this plan. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan, the Pawtucket School Department Schoolwide Projects Update: Elizabeth Baldwin and M. Virginia Cunningham Schools)*

The support for students and families provided by the Child Opportunity Zone (COZ) is commendable. Its numerous after school programs effectively address the diverse student and family needs present at Cunningham School, providing dental and medical assistance and clothing and local resources, when needed. Staffed by dedicated Cunningham teachers and community members, the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CLC) offers numerous after school programs where students receive academic support, as well as time and space to complete their homework. The 21st CLC also includes numerous club activities that enrich and honor cultural diversity. Many students actively participate in the Children's Crusade for Higher Education, managed through COZ. This program reinforces and emphasizes the value of an education and encourages students to stay in school. Additionally, numerous adult education programs provide English as Second Language (ESL) adults with literacy and General Education Degree (GED) classes as well as babysitting services so that parents may attend. Teachers, students, school and district leaders and the SALT team agree that COZ plays an integral role in the education of Cunningham students, helping to build and foster a sense of community within the school and supporting the needs "of the whole child." *(observing the school outside of the classroom, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, Americorps personnel, school and district administrators, The COZ Program summary)*

Commendations for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

- Dedicated school improvement team
- Effective inclusion classroom models
- Positive school climate and community support

Recommendations for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

- Reduce the use of the intercom during instructional time. Explore alternative methods of communication to reduce interruptions.
- Increase the number of printers, and place them in central locations, other than classrooms to avoid disruption to instruction.
- Prioritize storage space, and discard outdated materials.
- Develop school wide monitoring tools, a calendar and a reporting system for the implementation of the school improvement plan.
- Distribute the responsibilities for routine duties to free administrative time.
- Continue to support, develop and increase inclusion classrooms. Provide professional development to support differentiation of instruction.
- Explore and use alternative funding for computers and printers.

Recommendations for Pawtucket School District

- Refurbish paint in halls and classrooms.
- Explore ways to provide needed classroom space.
- Fund more computers and printers.
- Continue to support and provide training for inclusion classrooms and the differentiation of instruction.
- Examine the use of administrative time for routine duties. Support principal's efforts to free administrative time for educational leadership.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The SALT team wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the principal and staff of M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School. It is obvious that you care about your students and work to support their many needs despite the daily challenges. Your expectations for conduct and mutual respect are evident throughout the school. If you approach math and reading instruction with the same consistent, high expectations that you have for conduct, your students will only benefit.

You are fortunate to have committed members on your school improvement team, who work well together. Use their strength and leadership to guide your next steps in improving student learning. Utilize teacher expertise and district coaches to expand the high quality teaching practices that exist within the school. Regularly gather information from student work, assessments and observations to find patterns in student learning. Use this information to adjust action steps in student learning and teaching practices so that your action plans better address the needs of your students. Build on the strengths of your students, and raise your expectations for their achievement. Allow students to explore and investigate to foster their independence. A true learning community is one that reflects on its practice. It is important to raise the level of competence and confidence of both students and teachers.

The SALT team challenges you to acknowledge that your students possess the potential to achieve high standards in all areas of learning. Use this report to guide your next steps, and have confidence in your ability as teachers.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

January 14, 2005

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 *not* routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
February 14, 2005

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 M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team 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 M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 8 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!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2003-2004 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 2003 Information Works!*
 - 2002, 2003, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
 - 2003, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - School and District Report Cards*

No Child Left Behind-Best Practices for Student Success
Pawtucket School Department Policy and Information Handbook for 2004-2005
ELA Master Manual, K-5, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
K-5 Mathematics Binder for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Pawtucket School System, Professional Assessment for Tenured Teachers
Nontenured Formative Evaluation Report
Contract between The School Committee of the City of Pawtucket and Teachers' Alliance Local 930 American Federation of Teachers
District Wide Parent Involvement Policy and Informational Handbook
Pawtucket School Department Schoolwide Projects Update: Elizabeth Baldwin and M. Virginia Cunningham Schools

State Assessment Results for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary 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:

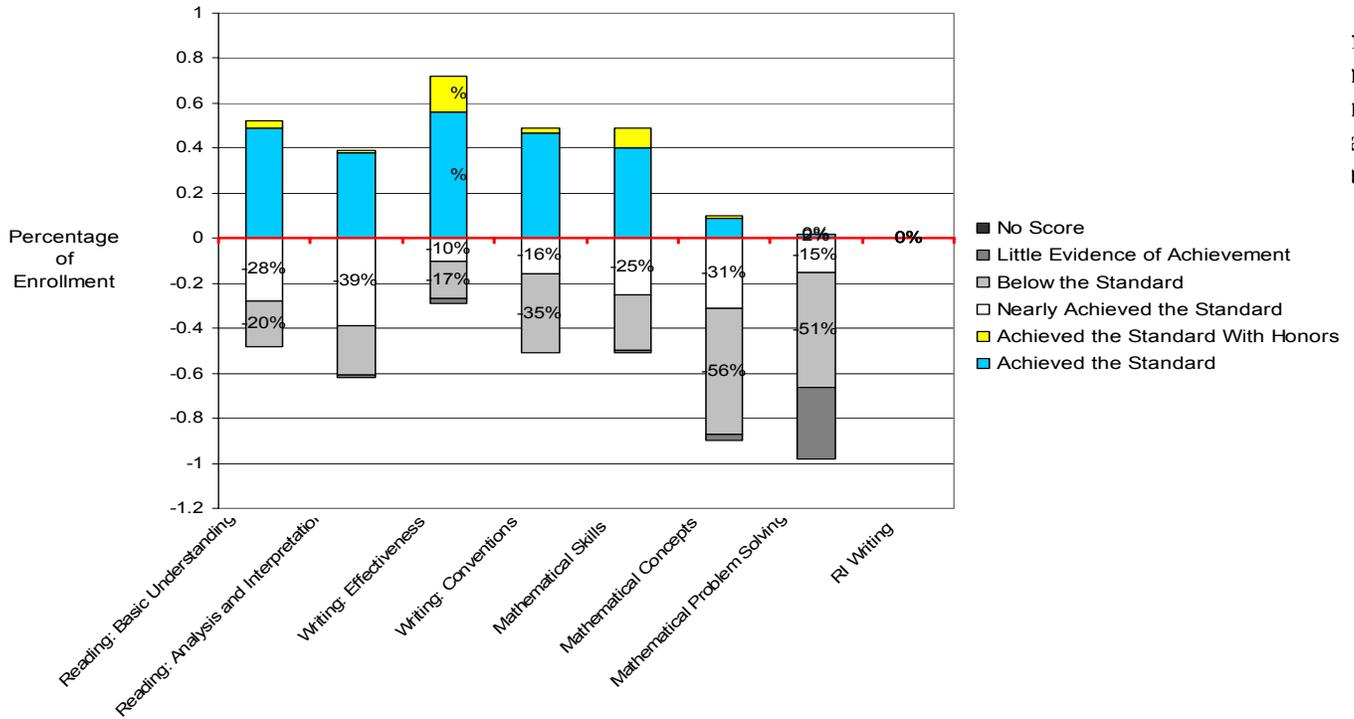
- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

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. 2003-04 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

Virginia Cunningham School State Assessment Results of 2004



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REPORT CARD FOR M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This Report Card show the performance of M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School compared to the school’s annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School as a school in need of improvement, making insufficient progress.

Table 3. Report Card for M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School

RI SCHOOL: **M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM SCHOOL**
 RI DISTRICT: **PAWTUCKET**
 GRADE: **04**

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE: 76.1				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 61.7			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
All Students	80.4	YES	82.7	86.1	61.4	YES††	71.7	77.5
African Americans	82.1	YES	80.4	77.8	59.3	NO	66.6	65.9
Asian	*	YES	*	84.5	*	YES	*	77.1
Hispanic	78.7	YES	79.4	75.8	60.4	YES††	67.4	65.8
Native Americans	*	YES	*	83.9	*	YES	*	73
White	81.9	YES	86.2	88.5	68.5	YES	76	82
Students with Disabilities	65.5	NO	64.6	69.5	55.8	YES†	59.9	66.4
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	69.4	68.9	*	YES	56.8	61
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	80.1	YES	81.1	77.8	61.1	YES††	68.8	68.4

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	8	1
Mathematics Index Score	8	1
Percent Tested	2	0
Attendance Rate	1	0

THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:

School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress

ATTENDANCE RATE	Target: 90%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
	95	YES	95.1	94.8

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04

	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	100	YES	99.5	99.1
Mathematics	100	YES	99.5	99.4

THE M. VIRGINIA CUNNINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Rebecca Mulligan
Teacher
Tri-President

Sandra Santa Cruz
Special Education
Teacher

Helen Gumieniek
Teacher

Julia Charpentier
Teacher
Tri-President

Kerri Rigby
Parent

Mary Pendergast
Teacher

Heather Fournier
Teacher
Tri-President

Mary Burns
Teacher
Vranelly Espinosa
Parent

Phil Bannigan
Teacher

Mary Mustafa
Teacher
Secretary

Shannon McLaughlin
Teacher

Alice Scullin
Teacher

Deborah Harrold
Teacher

Darrell LuffBorough
Principal

Shirley Medina
COZ

Michael Bennett
Teacher

Erica Brodeur
Art Teacher

Helen Dobosz
Literacy Teacher

Shannon Gity
Teacher

David Creamer
Library Media
Specialist

Donna Langton
Teacher

Melinda McCann
Teacher

Mary Parella
COZ

Joyce Lizotte
Teacher

Jason Brule
ESL Teacher

Jane Blanchette
COZ

Debbie Rankowicz
ESL Teacher

Cheryl Babiec
Teacher

Elaine Cruz
COZ

Diane Landry
Reading Teacher

Claire Lenhart
Teacher

Beverlie Passerelli
Americorps/Crusader

Debbie Simao
Special Education
Teacher

Tara Lenhart
Teacher

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