



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School

PROVIDENCE

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 2, 2004



### **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 Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School from March 29, to April 2, 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 Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Laurel Hill Avenue 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 Laurel Hill Avenue 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* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

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 147 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 30 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 Laurel Hill Avenue 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 Providence 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 Providence School District, RIDE, and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Laurel Hill Avenue 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 LAUREL HILL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

The campus of Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School includes two buildings—the main one and the annex. The main building was constructed in 1916, and a wing was built in 1990 to house three additional classrooms. Because of the increasing student population, an annex was added in 1994. Today there are ten classrooms in the annex.

The Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary Schools is situated between Hartford Avenue and Plainfield Street between the Silver Lake and Olneyville sections of Providence, Rhode Island. Approximately half of the students of the Laurel Hill School reside in nearby neighborhoods and in the Providence Public Housing communities located along Hartford and Manton Avenues. The remaining students are transported to the school by bus or community center vans.

The Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School and Annex has a staff of 82. Besides the principal and assistant principal there are 30 classroom teachers, 18 full- or part-time faculty, 16 teacher assistants, three secretaries, five custodians, and eight cafeteria workers. The total number of students in kindergarten through grade five at both buildings is 668—438 in the main building and 230 in the annex. The majority of the student population (79%) is of Hispanic/Latino descent. The remaining population is 12 percent African American, seven percent Caucasian, and two percent Asian. Forty-three percent of the students receive bilingual education. About 93 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Two full-time literacy coaches support teachers in the fourth year of the district mandated Balanced Literacy initiatives. Two math coaches also work with the teachers. There are 13 bilingual classrooms to meet the needs of the diverse student population.

The Rhode Island Children's Crusade targets students in grade 5 and focuses on Science and Literacy skills. Fourth grade "reading buddies" act as mentors in literacy for their first grade counterparts.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF LAUREL HILL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Laurel Hill Avenue School—main and annex—provides stability and structure for its students. The street that separates the main building from the annex is more than a physical barrier. In many ways, teachers, parents, and students view the two buildings as two separate schools.

Children and parents are comfortable with the routines and expectations that remain constant here. The walls and the floors of these old buildings shine with fresh paint and wax. The classrooms are filled with new books arranged by genre or reading level, writing materials, and math manipulatives. Published writing pieces, math activities, student generated criteria, and charts clearly demonstrate the work that is going on here. New computers are waiting to be unpacked. Missing, too often, is a sense of excitement about learning and teaching.

A principal and assistant principal complement one another in the day-to-day operations of the schools. Although the annex teachers would appreciate more of an administrative presence in their building, the entire school community appreciates the professional support this team provides. The principal has created a unique schedule that allows time once a week within the school day for professional development.

Extensive professional development, the availability of math and literacy coaches, and a plethora of district initiatives have not been successful in improving student performance. In spite of many caring teachers, the staff spends so much energy on following the Scope and Sequence and other district mandates that Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School is not a student-centered school community.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School understand what is expected of them. They are comfortable with the regular routines that are well-established in their classrooms. Although they know what is expected, they do not always meet the requirements of their assigned tasks. They use criteria and rubrics to assess their own work. However, they rarely use rubrics to improve their work after it has been graded. Hand signals make it easy for students to indicate their agreement, disagreement, confusion, difficulty hearing, and applause, and they use these signals in many classrooms. Students in the main building like the principal and feel they can talk to him. Although students generally feel safe in school, some are concerned about the teasing and bullying that goes on both in and out of school. These students feel that there are no consequences for students who are disruptive. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2003 SALT Survey report)*

Students at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School have many daily opportunities to read. Although they read often, they have few opportunities to share their reading experiences. Students frequently talk about what they already know (APK—activate prior knowledge), make predictions, and make connections between the text and their lives, but they do not have a complete repertoire of strategies to increase their reading comprehension. While some students demonstrate the ability to make good book choices for their independent reading, others still need to be redirected by the teacher to choose books at or below their independent reading levels. Students wish there was a greater selection of books in the school library and more time to access the library for research. While they have a great deal of time to read during the school day, they often lack the stamina to read independently for long periods of time. Sometimes they procrastinate on their assigned notebook work during independent practice time. This decreases the amount of time they spend actually reading. Bilingual students have many opportunities to develop their vocabulary, and they expand their ideas during read alouds by their teachers. In many bilingual classrooms, students have more opportunities than their general education peers to share their reading and their experiences. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and teachers, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers)*

Students at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School write often and well. They write letters, poetry, memoirs, informative reports, procedures, summaries, and narratives. Students effectively use graphic organizers, word walls, wall charts, and teachers' models to guide their writing. They follow the writing process—brainstorming, drafting, conferring with their peers and the teacher, revising, editing, and publishing. They understand the difference between revising and editing. Students maintain writing portfolios that contain work they have done over time and that demonstrate their improvement. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and teachers, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers)*

Students are enthusiastic about math activities and games. They use mental math, manipulatives, and calculators to explore, develop their understanding of concepts, and solve problems. They work well with partners or in teams. They ask one another for help before asking the teacher. Students are able orally to explain their answers to simple tasks and word problems. Because they have few opportunities to solve complex math problems using a variety of strategies, they have difficulty naming and describing the strategies they have used. Although students' performance on the state mathematics assessment is the same as similar students statewide for math concepts and problem solving, only eight percent of students meet the standard for math concepts, and three percent for problem solving. Stanford 9 results on the third grade tests also indicate that students are not improving in mathematics. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students and teachers, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, POP 2003-2004*)

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

Students:

- ◆ *Understand what is expected of them.*
- ◆ *Work well with their peers but have difficulty staying on task.*
- ◆ *Are passive learners, who are not excited about learning.*
- ◆ *Are not independent learners, who try to exceed the basic expectations.*
- ◆ *Are not critical thinkers.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Teachers at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School work hard to make their classrooms print rich environments. Many care deeply about this school and their students and say they would not want to work anywhere else. However, not all teachers have high expectations of their students. In classes—general, special needs, bilingual, and art—where teachers demand excellence and provide active learning experiences for their students, the students work harder to meet the teachers' expectations. Most teachers at Laurel Hill establish regular routines. Some teachers adhere so closely to these routines that they often miss teachable moments, and school becomes tedious. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers)*

Teachers say the professional development offered by the administration has helped their reform efforts “catch up” with the other Providence schools. The district's scope and sequence, not assessment data, drives instruction. Extensive professional development, along with prescribed district level initiatives, has not led to improved student performance. In fact, in most cases, scores have gone down on state and district testing. Only the fifth grade Stanford 9 assessments show that students are maintaining or improving their performance in most areas. In the fifth grade classrooms, teachers demonstrate creativity and use their professional judgment to decide what is best for their students. This strategic instruction, based on student needs, has led to student improvement. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities, POP 2003-2004)*

The district requires teachers to use balanced literacy as a framework for teaching reading. The components of this framework are guided reading, word work, read alouds, writers' workshop, and independent reading within a readers' workshop. The literacy block of time is too long for many students to maintain a focus on reading and on doing the tasks they are expected to do. This district emphasis on literacy at the expense of content area subjects has not had a positive effect on student performance on the state tests. Some teachers are frustrated and discouraged by this. Some of them resist the efforts of literacy coaches to change their instruction; others question the benefits of the literacy coach model. The lack of buy-in for the new initiatives by some teachers is a problem. Teachers lack a clear understanding of the role and duties of the literacy coaches in improving instruction. In most classrooms, the direct instruction of focus lessons during guided reading and mini-lessons during workshops does not occur every day. Even when these lessons are given, they are often superficial and rarely promote critical questioning and thinking. Many teachers have not developed a repertoire of strategies for teaching reading comprehension. There is inconsistency in assessment and confusion about what should be happening during the various components of literacy time. Although some teachers effectively implement guided reading and readers' workshop at every grade level, they do not often use their independent practice time effectively. Teachers seldom hold students accountable for the work they have assigned during this time, and they do not apply good management techniques to keep students on task. Because teachers do not have literature circles or book talks, students do not benefit from sharing their reading with one another. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities, POP 2003-2004, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Teachers devote considerable time in their classrooms to writing, and they organize well for writers' workshop with writing notebooks, folders, and student portfolios. They use the writing process to teach writing and effectively monitor the students' progression through the steps of the writing process. They establish clear expectations by using noticing charts to develop criteria. Teachers model the writing genres for students and conference with them about their writing. They provide rubrics for students to assess their own work. The district provides Units of Study to serve as mini-lessons for writers' workshop. Teachers expect students to maintain writing portfolios that clearly demonstrate their improvement over time. Writing scores on the New Standards Reference Examination indicate some success with students' performance on the writing subtests. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Teachers feel overwhelmed by the pacing of the *Investigations* Program. They feel they sacrifice quality for quantity, because the district mandates for the high number of units to be taught in each grade is unreasonable. Math coaches work with both teachers and students to model good instructional practices. They are encouraging teachers to use the *Investigations* Program more consistently and effectively. Teachers, who use the *Investigations* Program, notice positive changes in their students' attitudes about mathematics. They say students' math vocabulary is improving and students are more comfortable talking about math. However, students' mathematical thinking is not yet well-developed, and they have a limited knowledge of problem solving strategies. The *Math Matters* Program, which includes *head problems* and a *two-problem approach*, is a good beginning for developing math skills and strategies. Teachers, on the other hand, are not always holding students accountable for explaining their answers and demonstrating different ways to solve problems. Teachers miss opportunities for closure in their mathematics lessons when they could clarify concepts and correct misunderstandings. In a few classrooms posted student work contains incorrect answers that were scored as correct. Problem solving strategies—working backward, guess and check, organized list, logical reasoning—are not used regularly. The lack of a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve instruction inhibits the teaching of mathematics. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with students, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, district and school policies and practices*)

**Commendations for Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School**

Consistency in the writing process

Exposure to and practice with many different genres of writing

Development of criteria for writing with students

**Recommendations for Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School**

Demand rigorous instruction with high expectations for student performance.

Use your book discussion group on *Strategies That Work* to enhance the breadth of comprehension strategies taught and practiced in the classroom.

Make the delivery of mini-lessons and units of study more interesting and exciting.

Provide students with a choice of activities during their independent practice time, and hold them accountable.

Trust the *Investigations* Program, and use it consistently in all classrooms.

Make problem solving a priority in all subjects and grades throughout the school day.

Define the coaches' roles, and use the coaches effectively in all classrooms.

Use student assessment data to plan instruction.

**Recommendations for the Providence School District**

Add content area subjects now that provide students with opportunities for hands-on-learning in every grade.

Allow the school to use assessment data, along with the Providence initiatives, to improve student performance.

Reconsider the pacing required for the *Investigations* Program. Align the units with the Rhode Island Grade Level Expectations, and require only those units to be implemented.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

The leadership team at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School has set a goal for improvement through professional development. Teachers see the principal as an educational leader. A creative schedule developed by the principal provides coverage to classroom teachers for in-house professional development that supports district professional development. Administrators provide excellent feedback about classrooms and instruction to the teachers through checklists and learning walk letters. Follow-up is provided in professional development during the school day. However, a few teachers choose not to use what they have been taught. Although teachers at the annex like the feeling of being a small community, they miss the presence of an administrator for facilitating positive interactions among themselves, their students, and the parents. *(following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, learning walk letters, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district strategic plan)*

The principal treats all students with respect and kindness. Students see him as a positive role model who speaks their language. Some teachers build communities of respect and kindness in their classrooms. In these classrooms students feel valued, but respectful behavior falls apart outside of these rooms. Some adults do not serve as positive role models for students. Mutual respect is not an integral part of the school culture at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff)*

Students have few outlets for socializing within their school day. There is very limited time for recess or snacks. Inappropriate behavior is often ignored at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School. Although teachers are encouraged to use Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline Program and post rules along with their consequences, these are seldom enforced or even referenced. Teachers, parents, and students alike are confused about how discipline is handled. Teachers often send disruptive students to one another's classrooms rather than to the office. This only disrupts another teacher's classroom and is not an efficient or acceptable consequence. Parents and students complain about bullying in the basement bathrooms and on the way to and from school. Bathrooms are not monitored, and some students in the main building say they are reluctant to use the bathroom during the school day. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, and school administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, Teacher Orientation Packet 2003-04)*

Students with special needs in self-contained classrooms are not well-included at Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School. Although these students attend lunch and physical education classes with their peers, they do not have a regular classroom placement. In some of these self-contained rooms, they receive appropriate instruction and behavior management. However, in others, behavior is poorly managed, and they have no positive models. Low expectations and the lack of differentiated instruction in these self-contained rooms result in disruptive behavior. Resource services are provided effectively to some students with special needs in the regular classrooms; however the pull-out model is still used for some students because of scheduling issues. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrators)*

The library with its closed doors and dreary atmosphere is not an inviting place for students to learn or explore. Although automated, the limited number of books, especially non-fiction books, and periodicals does not support the emphasis on literacy in this school. Too few of these books are in Spanish. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and school administrators)*

The Providence School District provides extensive professional development to its teachers. Scope and Sequence documents in all areas, units of study, test prep, and coaches provide the foundation for instruction. Many materials and programs are funded by grants. This leads to a district-down approach to instruction that often stifles teacher creativity and discourages teachers from adjusting their lessons to meet student needs. As a result, these reforms have not affected student performance enough to raise test scores. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, classroom textbooks, 2003 Information Works!, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

### **Commendations for Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School**

Principal as an educational leader

Learning walk letters

Creative schedule to provide professional development

### **Commendations for Providence School District**

Professional development

Materials to support programs

**Recommendations for Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School**

Create a climate of mutual respect among all members of the school community.

Provide more administrative support to the annex.

Develop a discipline plan, and implement it school wide.

Develop a clear in-school suspension location and policy.

Work with the district to implement an inclusion model for all students with special needs.

Increase socialization through hands-on activities.

Create a library/media center that is bright and inviting and that has appropriate materials for the population.

**Recommendations for the Providence School District**

Allow teachers more flexibility in making decisions about instruction.

Create and implement a science and social studies curriculum now.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO LAUREL HILL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Programs are in place, professional development has been provided, and new leadership is at the helm. You are no longer in transition. You must find ways to excite and motivate your students. Do not be afraid to hold high expectations, and expect your students to reach for them. Your children will accept the challenges you give them.

Use time more effectively. Within the balanced literacy framework, energize your students to read. Vary the activities that take place during literacy periods. Use book talks, literature circles, and content area explorations. Students and teachers should share the books they love. Celebrate literature!

Question students often and well. Challenge their thinking. Accountable talk<sup>sm</sup> requires good listening skills. Be sure the quiet voices are heard. Encourage your students to ask questions. Take advantage of the teachable moments.

Problem solving happens all day. By becoming transparent in your thinking and modeling how you solve problems, students will become more aware of problem solving strategies.

Both students and teachers must be accountable for teaching and learning. Continue to collaborate and share your ideas during your professional development and planning periods. Celebrate your successes!

It is important that your annex community feels connected to Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School. A greater administrative presence is important to improve morale there and assure that the initiatives that are in place are school-wide.

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

### **Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School**

April 2, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*.

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

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

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

April 29, 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 Laurel Hill Avenue 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 Laurel Hill Avenue 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 9 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*
  - literacy coaches*
  - 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*
  - Providence One Plan (POP) 2003-2004 for Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School*
  - Scope and Sequence*
  - learning walk letters*
  - Teacher Orientation Packet 2003-04*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2003 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*

2003 Information Works!

2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries

2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

School and District Report Cards

**State Assessment Results for Laurel Hill Avenue 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.

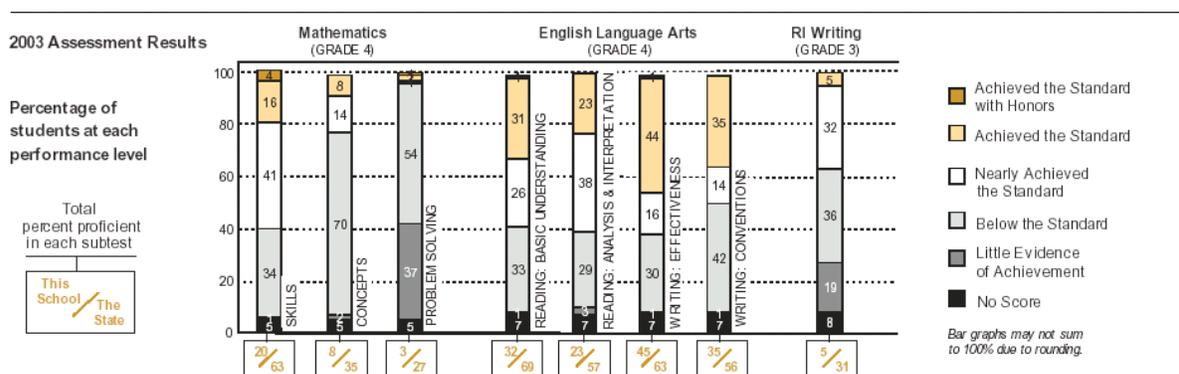
This school’s results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ against performance standards;
- ◆ 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*.

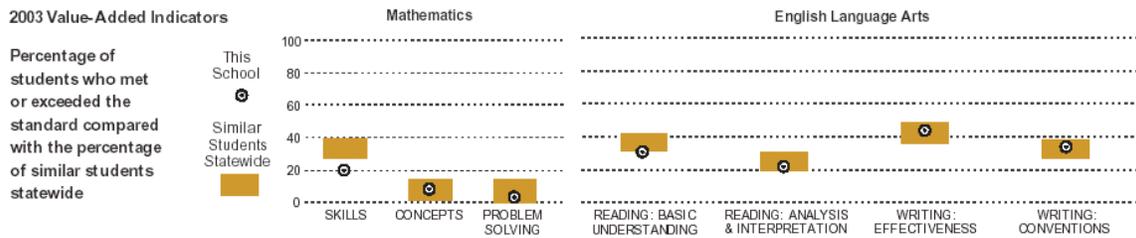
*Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments*



**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.

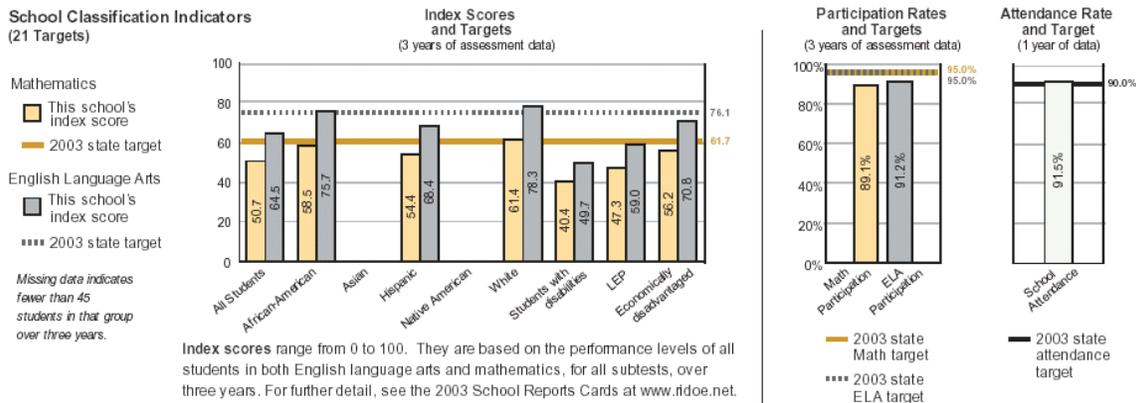
Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



**RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL**

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

Table 3. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups



**SCHOOL REPORT CARD**

The Laurel Hill Avenue Elementary School has been categorized as in need of improvement, insufficient progress on the basis of its assessment results from 2000 to 2003. The following is the school report card that shows the school's performance in relation to the 2004 annual measurable objectives (AMO).

Rhode Island School: Laurel Hill Avenue School (includes Laurel Hill Annex)  
 Rhode Island District: Providence

School Report Card - 2003 - Accountability

Grade 4

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Student Group	English Language Arts - Target Score: 76.1						Mathematics - Target Score: 61.7					
	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target Met	District 01-03	State 01-03	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target met	D	
All Students	65.2	64.4	-0.7	5	71	84.2	49.9	50.6	0.7	0		
African-American	75	75.6	0.5	2	72.9	76.4	58.4	58.4	0	0		
Asian	*	*	*	1	76.3	83.8	*	*	*	1		
Hispanic	70.2	68.3	-1.8	0	72.5	74.6	54	54.4	0.3	0		
Native American	*	*	*	1	75.4	83.9	*	*	*	1		
White	76.8	78.2	1.4	2	78.3	89	57.6	61.3	3.7	2		
Students with Disabilities	*	49.6	*	0	54.5	68	*	40.4	*	0		
Students with Limited English Proficiency	60.3	59	-1.2	0	65.4	66.6	46.8	47.2	0.4	0		
Economically Disadvantaged Students	71.7	70.7	*	0	72.9	76.9	55.2	56.2	0.9	0		

\* fewer than 45 test takers.

Percent of Students Tested (2001-2003):

	This School	This District	This State
ELA	91.2	96.2	98.5
Mathematics	89.1	96.8	98.5

Attendance Rate: (2003)

This School	This District
91.4	92.5

Targets Met/Missed:

	Targets Met	Targets Missed
ELA	5	4
Mathematics	3	6

Classification:

School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Pr

Target Met Code:

- 0 - did not meet target
- 1 - met target because of minimum N
- 2 - 3 year AMO
- 3 - 3 year SH
- 4 - 1 year AMO
- 5 - 1 year SH

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

**THE LAUREL HILL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Rosa DeVarona  
Literacy Coach

Crystal Evora  
Grade 4 Teacher

Andrea Mancini  
Grade 3 Teacher

Javier Montanez  
Grade 3 Bilingual Teacher

Al Sangermano  
Physical Education

Theresa Sangermano  
Grade 4 Teacher

Kelly Spaziano  
Assistant Principal

Jose Valerio  
Principal

Linda Zaagarella  
Literacy Coach

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Carol A. Belair  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Wilbur and McMahon Schools  
Little Compton, Rhode Island  
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as a SALT Fellow

Virginia Avenia  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Saylesville School  
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Dena Chamberland  
Reading Consultant  
Garden City School  
Cranston, Rhode Island

Keith Hemenway  
Principal  
Nathanael Greene School  
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Susan Henley  
LEP/ESL Teacher  
Dunn's Corners School  
Westerly, Rhode Island

Angela Holt  
Grade 3 Teacher  
Citizens' Memorial Elementary School  
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Tina Mendes  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Mary V. Quirk School  
Bristol/Warren, Rhode Island

Rosemary Petrucci  
Grade 4 Teacher  
Sarah Dyer Barnes Elementary School  
Johnston, Rhode Island

Patti Powell  
Pre-School Special Educator  
Melville School  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island