



Steere Farm Elementary School

Burrillville

The SALT Visit Team Report

March 15, 2002



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

The members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs on Conducting a SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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For information about SALT, please contact Ken Fish at 401-222-4600, x 2200 or salt@ridoe.net.

This report is available at <http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/visits.htm>

The findings of this report are those of this SALT visit team. The names and affiliations of the members of the team are in the appendix. The team follows the school visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs on Conducting a SALT School Visit*. The team is required to focus on what it observes at the time of the visit and is restricted from comparing the school with any other. This school visit was supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as one component of its accountability system, School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Steere Farm Elementary School from March 11-March 15, 2002. The following features are at the heart of the report:

- ◆ The team seeks to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school presents a unique picture.
- ◆ The team does not compare this school to any other school.
- ◆ When writing the report, the team chooses deliberately the words that convey its message best to the school, based on careful consideration of what it has learned about the school dynamics.
- ◆ The team makes its judgment explicit.

The major questions the team addresses are:

- ◆ How well do the students learn at this school?
- ◆ How well does this school teach its students?
- ◆ How well does this school support learning and teaching?

The SALT report creates accountability for improvement by directly connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement to the actual work going on in this school at the time of the visit.

The team closely follows the visit protocol in the *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit*. The Catalpa endorsement certifies that this team followed the protocol and that this report meets all criteria required for a legitimate SALT visit report.

The visit team is made up primarily of 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.

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report, the team examines test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Steere Farm Elementary School is 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 builds its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, the visit allows the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually take place at Steere Farm Elementary School.

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

- ◆ *observing a total of 105 complete and partial classes. The team spent a total of over 92 hours in direct classroom observation. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.*

- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following eight students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of eight teachers and many 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 administrator*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

classroom textbooks

classroom assessments

district and school policies and practices

records of professional development activities

list of Article 31 expenditures

Steere Farm Elementary School Action Plan

2002-2003

Burrillville School District Action Plan 1999-2003

Burrillville School Department Professional Development Program, 2001-2002 School Year

Burrillville School Department Professional Development Program, 2001-2002 School Year, Addendum, September 28, 2001

Burrillville School Department Essential Learnings curriculum document, revised September, 2001

Burrillville School Department Performance Tasks document, September, 2001

Burrillville District Policy Related to Pupil Services, Bullying, March 8, 2002

Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs "School Support System Report and Support Plan for the Burrillville School System, October 18-25, 1999"

Burrillville Public Schools, Special Education Procedural Manual, May 2000

Agreement Between the Burrillville School Committee and Burrillville Teacher's Association, 2002-2003

Burrillville School Department Mentoring, 2001-2002 School Year

Burrillville School Department Policy Manual

Burrillville Elementary Schools Parent/Student Handbook, 2001-2002

Burrillville Elementary Schools Faculty & Staff Handbook, 2001-2002

The Principal's Self-Study Binder, 2001

You are V.I.T.A.L. to Your School, Steere Farm Elementary School

Burrillville District Rubrics Packet

Steere Farm Principal's Album, 2001-2002

Steere Farm ARTSWORKS

Steere Farm Teacher Support (TST) Forms

Steere Farm Elementary Superstars Binder

2001-2002 SALT Survey report

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results

1999, 2000, and 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary

2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary

The full team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 31 hours in six separate meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team must agree that every conclusion in this report:

- ◆ *is important enough to include in the report.*
- ◆ *is supported by the evidence the team has gathered during the visit.*
- ◆ *is set in the present.*
- ◆ *contains the judgment of the team.*

Using the Report

The team chooses deliberately the words, phrases, and sentences it uses in its conclusions, as well as in the *Portrait* and *Final Advice*. Thus, this report is the team's best attempt to encourage and support the school's continued improvement in strengthening the learning of its students.

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

It is important to note that this report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report does not cover what the school plans to do, or what it has done in the past. This report is not prescriptive.

The value of this report will be determined by its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. By considering the importance to the school of what the team said and why, the school takes its first step in becoming accountable in a way that actually improves learning.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in relation to the conclusions they follow.

After the school improvement team considers this report, it should make changes in the school improvement plan. The revised plan will form the basis for negotiating a Compact for Learning with the district. The purpose of the compact is to ensure that the school and its district work out an agreement about the best way to improve the school and the best way to target district support for the school. A RIDE Field Service team representative will offer assistance in preparing the compact.

2. PROFILE OF Steere Farm Elementary School

Background

Steere Farm Elementary School was originally known as Pascoag Grammar School, located on Sayles Avenue in Pascoag, Rhode Island. The town acquired and renovated Meadow Glen Nursing Home, located on Steere Farm Road, and opened it in September 1995 as Steere Farm School. Under its new name Steere Farm Elementary School serves students in grades two through five.

A staff of one principal, 31 full-time and two part-time teachers, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a social worker, an adjustment counselor, an ESL teacher, seven teaching assistants, one library clerk, three custodians, three food service workers, one administrative secretary, and one office clerk serve the students of this school.

The Steere Farm Elementary School “Superstars” consist of 450 students. The majority of students (97%) are white, and a small number (3%) are of black, Asian, Native American, or Hispanic descent. Steere Farm qualifies as a Title 1 school with 52 students (12%) participating in the program. Seventy-one students (16%) receive special education and resource services. One hundred students (22%) are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Steere Farm Elementary School students participate in various musical activities. These include the performance of the fourth and fifth grade chorus in a Christmas play for parents and senior citizens that takes place at a holiday gathering sponsored by the school’s business partner, Wright’s Farm Restaurant. In addition, students perform in concert with the other elementary schools and the middle school in the district in an “All Town” chorus. The fifth grade Recorder Ensemble performs at the Christmas play at the Burrillville Family Fair and at two assemblies for the entire school. This Ensemble performs annually at the Rhode Island Music Educators General Music Festival at Rhode Island College. Additionally, the third graders perform in a musical production for parents and students at the school.

Student-painted murals enhance the walls of the school. Currently, the fourth grade students are designing and completing a mural of a map of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations using a wooden puzzle as their template. Student artwork is also showcased monthly in the foyer display cases.

Parent involvement is strong at Steere Farm Elementary School. The Parent Teacher Forum organization provides information, activities, and support for school/community functions and events. As part of V.I.T.A.L. (Volunteering Individual Time to Assist Learning), parents volunteer their valuable time to work in the school in various capacities to enhance the learning experiences of the students. The students actively participate in many community service events as part of the Feinstein “Good Deeds” initiative.

Steere Farm Elementary School has just completed the first phase of a school wide enrichment program in which all staff serve as facilitators in their areas of interest. The program ran on Friday afternoons with all students participating. Students could choose from a wide range of activities including sewing, basketball, pop-up cards, strategy games, street hockey, and bird watching.

State Assessment Results for Steere Farm Elementary School

On the 2000-2001 National Standards Mathematics Reference Examination subtests eight in 10 of the fourth graders (76%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in two of the fourth graders (47%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts; and one in three of the fourth graders (29%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist for poverty and special education students on the mathematics subtests. An upward trend in the percentages of students meeting and exceeding the standard is evident over the four years of data collected in all three subtests of the math assessment. Students at the Steere Farm Elementary School perform at the same level as similar students in the state.

On the 2000-2001 National Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination subtests nine in 10 of the

students in the fourth grade (87%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding; seven in 10 of the students in fourth grade (71%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation; seven in 10 of the students in fourth grade (70%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness; and six in 10 of the students in fourth grade (63%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist for poverty, special education, and male students on the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination sub-tests. Students at Steere Farm Elementary School perform below the level on three subtests and above the level on one subtest when compared with similar students in the state.

On the Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in four of the students in the third grade (27%) met or exceeded the standard.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Steere Farm Elementary School is available at www.ridoe.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Steere Farm Elementary School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Located in a quiet and pastoral setting, Steere Farm Elementary School presents an aesthetically pleasing, warm, bright interior that is clean and well maintained. Student work is displayed with pride and fills hallways and classrooms. Colorful murals enhance the passageways and give visitors a glimpse of the many themes promoted throughout the grades. The children come to school ready to learn and eager for challenge. Most are willing to take risks in their academic thinking and are respectful of one another's opinions.

Upon entering the school everyone is greeted by the friendly and helpful office staff. The new principal is an enthusiastic individual who enjoys his job and values children. The teachers and staff are very dedicated and hardworking. They love their school and put the students first. The staff is respectful of each other and work well together.

Parents play an active role in the school in various ways. They are instrumental in creating extracurricular activities for enriching their children's school experience. They report that they are generally pleased with the education their children receive here; parent volunteers work throughout the school.

However, areas within this school community require attention. Although the school is categorized as a "high performing" school, too few students meet the standard with honors. Occasionally the school is slow to address special education referrals and issues. A disconnect exists in effective communication between the teachers at Steere Farm Elementary School and district level staff. The faculty reports that it feels neither supported nor appreciated by the district administration. This atmosphere could pose a significant obstacle for the successful implementation of district reform plans.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination, English Language Arts School Summary*
- ◆ *analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001-2002 SALT Survey results*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*

Conclusions

The students are well behaved and respectful of their teachers and peers. They take pride in their school and their work. They are conscientious about their work, enjoy being responsible for their learning, and are enthusiastic and eager to participate actively in their learning. Students come to school ready for challenge. (*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, staff, and school administrator, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2001-2002 SALT Survey results*)

Students read daily across the curriculum. They take part in a wide range of reading activities that include oral reading, silent reading, partner reading, independent reading, and reading in groups. In some classes students participate in a fair amount of structured reading, as all students complete the same assignment at the same time. In many classes students complete a good deal of worksheets that are focused on reading skills. Primarily, they practice such reading skills and strategies as defining vocabulary words, vocabulary “guessing,” investigating unknown words, and answering simple comprehension questions. However, in other classes students successfully participate in student-led literature circles. Students listen to stories as an effective pre-reading activity and as a tool to help them develop fluency. Some students use computer programs such as Success Maker and Reading Counts to enhance their reading abilities. Students competently employ reading skills to conduct their research and access the

information necessary to complete their projects and reports. They capably use Venn diagrams and other graphic organizers to make connections that enhance their understanding. Many students make use of their free time reading various books of their choice. These good reading efforts are reflected in and correlate well with the high percentage of students meeting and exceeding the standard on the Reading: Basic Understanding and Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtests of the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2001-2002 SALT Survey results, classroom textbooks)*

Students engage in a limited number of problem solving activities across the curriculum. In some classes they are actively involved when they graph and analyze data, construct and test “earthquake proof” buildings, complete probability activities, make estimations, and engage in multi step tasks requiring the organization and application of information. Some students also solve the Problem of the Day. However, many students are involved in relatively few and simple problem solving activities and typically solve word problems in math classes. Although the data from the past four years of assessments on problem solving in mathematics show a steady growth in student performance, less than a third of the students currently meet the standard. *(following students, observing classes, classroom textbooks, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Students write across the disciplines throughout the day. They use the writing process to create stories, letters, and reports. In some instances they successfully edit, peer edit and revise their work. Many students frequently write in journals. They respond to literature and math problems, design brochures, record data and observations, and describe projects. However, student writing often is limited to simple tasks such as filling in blanks, copying definitions and spelling words, and completing single sentence responses. These writing activities do not advance the effectiveness of student writing. Although 70% of students met or exceeded the standard on the 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, only 3% of the students achieved the standard with honors, and 30% did not meet the standard. *(observing classes, following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, analyzing 3 years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination English Language Arts, School Summary)*

Students are highly involved in ongoing community service fundraising activities such as collecting soda can tabs, donating dollars for Afghan children, and making gimp bracelets. They make valentines for veterans and for people in nursing homes. They also beautify and expand their school gardens. They enthusiastically participate in the “morning greeting” that irrefutably demonstrates their high standard for student respect and civility. As stated in the School Pledge, they “expect the best in all they do.” *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator)*

Commendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

- Students eager to accept the learning challenge
- Respectful, helpful, happy, enthusiastic, polite children
- Students’ continuing contributions to community service

Recommendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

- Increase the student led discussions of literature.
- Add challenging activities to enhance students’ ability to analyze and interpret what they read.
- Expand the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Provide high-level problem-solving activities for all students across the curriculum.

Increase the quantity and variety of student writing assignments.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*

Conclusions

Teachers are hardworking and dedicated. They are compassionate people who care about their students' learning, as well as their social and emotional well being. They are supportive of each other and put in extra time to plan cooperatively. Teachers make a good faith effort to implement district initiatives such as *Essential Learnings* and utilizing rubrics. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, observing the school outside of the classroom*)

Instruction in reading is frequent and takes many forms. Teachers encourage students to read aloud, silently, and in pairs and groups. They encourage students to read during any free time. Some teachers read aloud and guide students in small groups. Reading activities are prevalent in daily classroom routines. Both classroom teachers and special education teachers, as well as the reading teacher, employ reading remediation strategies to aid students. They place less emphasis on writing instruction and practice. Journal writing is a daily routine in many classrooms. Some classes incorporate the complete writing process from brainstorming to publishing. Some writing activities include responding to literature, conducting research, and writing reports. More often, student writing is limited to writing short answers, filling-in-the-blanks, copying definitions, and writing vocabulary and spelling words. The time teachers spend emphasizing writing conventions limits the time students have to develop skills in the more creative aspects of writing that include voice, rich language, cohesiveness, and fluency. These skills must be developed if student writing is to improve. (*following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work,*

2001 New Standards Reference Examination results)

Teachers use a new math series that has a strong problem-solving component. Some teachers use the Problem Solver and the Problem of the Day. Open-ended complex problem solving activities are found in a few classes. Until teachers commonly use these activities, students will show minimal progress in problem solving. *(following students, observing classes, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, classroom textbooks, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments)*

While teachers effectively use groups and group work in their instruction, the prevalent pattern in many classes throughout the day is whole-group instruction. Although this type of instruction is sometimes essential and efficient, students, who often finish their work quickly, must wait for others to finish. Students, who do not finish, must move on to the next part of the lesson. This whole-group emphasis does not serve the students at either end of the learning spectrum. A few teachers successfully implement differentiated instruction. In these classes each student works at his own pace, selects the topic and/or designs activities to demonstrate his knowledge, and monitors his own progress. This type of instruction honors each child's individual learning style and results in end products that are unique. The benefits are twofold: students work at their own paces and to their highest abilities and they competently show what they know and are able to do. Differentiated instruction will help increase the number of Steere Farm students who achieve the standard and who achieve the standard with honors on state assessments. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, meeting with the school improvement team)*

Teachers employ various forms of assessments to evaluate student progress. Many teachers use fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice tests and work sheets. Teachers tend to ask closed questions, rather than open-ended ones. With a few exceptions, assessments are summative in nature rather than formative. As a result, students do not have the opportunity to revise or the benefit of improving their own work with teacher guidance. However, teachers are beginning to use and adapt rubrics to establish their expectations for student performance. Also, some teachers assign a variety of projects that provide authentic evidence of student learning. These strategies encourage students to be independent learners because they provide clear expectations for how students can succeed. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom assessments, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents)*

Teachers have established expectations and routines that students understand. Students often meet their teacher's expectations independently. Teachers effectively use humor to make the students feel comfortable and accepted. They facilitate a positive learning rapport between and among all learners in the classroom setting. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers)*

Commendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

Compassionate, dedicated and hardworking faculty and staff

Emergent use of rubrics

Effective facilitation of a positive learning atmosphere

Mutually supportive faculty

Recommendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

Expand the use of the writing process in all classes.

Raise the expectation for open-ended written responses and discussions that incorporate higher level thinking skills.

Provide for more consistent use of open-ended complex problem solving activities.

Routinely employ differentiated instruction across the curricular areas so that all students are encouraged to move toward higher levels of learning.

Provide a variety of authentic performance-based assessments, both formative and summative. Continue to develop and use task specific rubrics for student assessment.

Recommendations for Burrillville School District

Support teachers in their efforts to incorporate authentic performance-based assessments and activities.

Support teacher efforts to differentiate instruction.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, parents, and school administrators*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing district strategic plan*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing district and school policies and practices*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing the list of Article 31 expenditures*
- ◆ *reviewing Policy Related to Pupil Services, Bullying, March 8, 2002*

Conclusions

The new principal has initiated a successful transition. The Steere Farm Community is supportive of his leadership. He is personable, student oriented, and respectful of his staff. He recognizes the importance of building a strong school community. He is often visible in the classrooms and has developed a positive rapport with students. (*observing classes, following the students, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrator, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and parents*)

The newly reorganized School Improvement Team includes parents, teachers, a community business partner, and the principal. They meet regularly and report back to the faculty about their work. They are still establishing the scope and responsibilities for the team, but they currently lack a clear sense of direction and focus for their work. The school improvement plan is at least part of the problem. It is written so closely parallel to the district strategic plan that it is unwieldy and impossible to implement. It is too ambitious. Also, an Article 31 Professional Development Committee is not in place. (*meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan*)

Grade level teachers strive to work together. However, there is not an adequate amount of common planning time for this necessary and beneficial horizontal articulation. As a result, there is no uniformity in the delivery of curriculum and the opportunity does not exist for teachers to share ideas and information. There is also a lack of vertical articulation among grade levels within the school. Consequently, students move from grade to grade without the advantage of consistent expectations. In addition, limited communication between Steere Farm Elementary School and its feeder school seems to create a learning gap, again around expectations, for incoming second graders. Finally, there is inadequate articulation between Steere Farm Elementary School and the middle school. Parents report that their children have difficulty making the important transitions from school to school. *(meeting with parents, talking with teachers, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)*

Providing a resource teacher at every grade level enables the school to deliver effective special education services. However, in some instances the time required to screen children referred for special education services has been unreasonably long. Concerns also exist around the proper placement of a few special education students. *(talking with teachers and staff, observing classes, meeting with school and district administrators)*

In its recent groupings the Rhode Island Department of Education recognizes Steere Farm Elementary School as a high performing and improving school. The school takes a great deal of pride in this accomplishment. However, many teachers and parents express disappointment that their hard work has gone unacknowledged by the district leadership. This hurts teacher morale. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with parents and teachers)*

Essential Learnings and *Essential Learning Performance Tasks* form the K-12 core curriculum document for the Burrillville school district. The grade-specific *Essential Learnings* are posted for each subject area in every classroom, and teachers refer to these as they conduct their classes. The correlation between the *Essential Learnings* curricula and the *New Standards Performance Standards* for what students know and are able to do is not clear to the teachers who use the former, and it is not clear to the visit team as well. Since state assessments are based on the *New Standards Performance Standards*, this lack of clarity is a disadvantage to the school community, as well as to the students. This means that students do not have a working knowledge of, or a proficiency in, applying the *Performance Standards* evaluated in the state assessments. Since the *Essential Learnings* document, as written, does not incorporate or align itself with the *New Standards*, the Burrillville school district is isolating itself from the rest of the Rhode Island learning community in preparing its students to perform at their highest possible levels in their schoolwork and on the state assessments. *(observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team and district administrators, following students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Every student in the school has one class period each week in the Technology Center, where he spends most of his time on hands-on activities that are outlined in the *Essential Learnings*. The technology program successfully integrates classroom content into technology instruction. In addition, each classroom has at least one computer, which students can use for programmed learning activities. Teachers express a need for additional technology in their classrooms in order to develop their technology programs. This would enhance and expand the use of technology for more students across the content areas. *(observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, interviewing teachers about the work of their students)*

The school environment is safe and secure. Students are respectful and polite in classes and hallways. Early morning greetings and saying the "School Pledge" in classes adds to students' sense of well being. However, parents and students report instances of bullying at the bus stop and on the bus ride to and from school. At these times some students do not feel safe. Plans are in place to develop a district-wide policy to address these concerns. *(meeting with students and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing district and school policies and practices, talking with teachers and the school administrator, reviewing Policy Related to Pupil Services, Bullying, March, 8, 2002)*

Teachers take advantage of Article 31 professional development opportunities. Nine teachers are completing their I-

Plans. Mentoring for new teachers is informal and voluntary. The district professional development activities are diverse, teacher-led, and practical. However, these activities have enrollment caps and are offered after-school, which limits the number of teachers who can attend. Also, school specific job-embedded professional development in areas of differentiated instruction, problem solving across the curriculum, Writing Workshop, rubric development and use, authentic assessment, and cooperative learning is less than adequate. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing list of Article 31 expenditures, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, parents)*

Commendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

The visibility of the principal in classrooms

A resource teacher at every grade level

High performing and improving school

Integration of curriculum in technology class

Recommendations for Steere Farm Elementary School

Rewrite the School Improvement Plan to make it a more workable guide to school improvement. Provide training for the School Improvement Team. Establish an Article 31 Professional Development Committee.

Improve articulation within and among grades at Steere Farm Elementary School.

Expand and enhance opportunities for students to use technology in the classroom.

Ensure that Special Education evaluations are done to coincide with state regulations.

Creatively plan the school schedules to allow for common planning time so teachers can collaborate.

Recommendations for the Burrillville School District

Ensure that curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned with the New Standards Performance Standards used by the State of Rhode Island in its assessments of student learning.

Improve articulation with Levy School, Burrillville Middle School, and William L. Callahan Elementary School.

Follow through on plans to develop a system-wide plan to eliminate bullying.

Assist the principal in creatively scheduling common planning time for teachers.

7. Final Advice to the School

Steere Farm Elementary School maintains a warm, inviting atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The caring and safe atmosphere created by the faculty and staff is the bedrock of all the success that the school has enjoyed. Continue to maintain a happy and supportive environment. Be proud of your status as a high performing and improving school, but don't be lulled into complacency. There are still children here, who are performing below standard. Many other children, who perform at standard, are undoubtedly capable of performing at the highest level and achieving the standard with honors.

Share your best practices with one another. There are some wonderful instructional practices in your classrooms. These must become commonplace throughout your school, replacing the less inspired practices seen in some classes. Insist that your students have an active role in their education. Differentiate your instruction and provide opportunities that allow children to be responsible and to express their learning in different ways. Make them think about what they are doing and why. Offer them choices, ask for explanations and reasons, and let the knowledge unfold before their eyes.

Make certain that your curriculum is aligned with state standards. So long as there are questions, there will be uncertainty about what needs to be done to improve student performance. Create a school improvement plan that is a usable guide for your school's reform efforts. With this in place, create avenues of communication to ensure that the entire school community understands and supports your plan.

Use the recommendations in this report to set a new course for your school. You have what it takes to be an exemplary school. Work closely with one another, celebrate your successes, and enjoy learning along with your students as you take the next steps to reach for the stars!

Steere Farm Elementary School Improvement Team

Suzanne Bailey
Music Teacher
Music Curriculum Leader

Leslie Bowen
Parent

Constance Brady
Grade 4 Teacher
Science Curriculum Leader

Diane Erler
Special Education Resource Teacher

Frank Galleshaw, III
Wright's Farm Business Partner

Kimberly Gould
Grade 4 Teacher

Nancy Inzer
Art Teacher
Art Curriculum Leader
Local Union Representative

Paula Kopeski
Grade 3 Teacher

Deborah O'Neil
Parent

Kenneth Rassler
Principal

Monica Tomson
Grade 5 Teacher
Parent

The SALT Visit Team

Margaret M. Della Bitta
Science Teacher
South Kingstown High School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island
on leave to the Department of Education
as a Regents SALT Fellow
Visit Team Chair

Jeanne Ballou
Teacher Assistant, SIT Co Chair
John J. McLaughlin Cumberland Hill School
Cumberland, Rhode Island

John R. Golden
Executive Director
Rhode Island Association of School Principals
Providence, Rhode Island

Morgan Hardwick-Witman
Parent
Foster/Glocester School District
Glocester, Rhode Island

Peggy Nelson
Grade 5 Teacher
LaPerche School
Smithfield, Rhode Island

Joanne M. Olson, Ed. D.
Principal
Melville Elementary School
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Laura Pesare
Grade 2 Teacher
North Scituate School
Scituate, Rhode Island

Claire Schwarzbach
Grade 6 Math/Science Teacher
Broad Rock Middle School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

New Standards Reference Examination and RI Writing Assessment Results (2001)

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Steere Farm Elementary School

March 15, 2002

To complete the Catalpa Ltd. report endorsement, I discussed the conduct of the visit with the Visit Chair while it was in process, and I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge derived from these sources of evidence, using the criteria specified in the *Endorsing SALT Visit team Reports by Catalpa Ltd.*, and using the methodology and procedures specified in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*, I conclude that:

1. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
2. The conclusions and all other content of this report meet the criteria specified for a SALT Visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report as a legitimate SALT Visit Report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
April 7, 2002