

WILLIAM R. DUTEMPLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Cranston, Rhode Island

A REPORT TO THE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY THE SALT VISITING TEAM

April 1999

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1. INTRODUCTION: THIS REPORT'S PURPOSE AND LIMITS

A Profile of the School

William R. Dutemple Elementary School is located on Garden Street in the city of Cranston. An urban elementary school, Dutemple is located close to the Providence line. The original brick building was built in the 1930's. The one addition to the original structure was built ten years ago. An interactive playground was built in 1992. The Dutemple School is one of eighteen elementary schools under the governance of the Cranston Public Schools and the elected Cranston School Committee.

The current administrator has provided leadership for the last ten years. Thirteen classroom teachers, and support staff work with approximately 300 students, most of whom live near the school. Thirty-seven percent of the students participate in the federal lunch program. Ninety-three percent of the

students are White, 4% are Hispanic, 2% are Black and 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Sixteen percent of the students receive special education services in resource or self-contained settings.

A School Advisory Council was established eight years ago. A school wide enrichment model was developed three years ago and a peer reading project which pairs grade 1 and grade 5 students was implemented this year. Parent involvement is nurtured through social activities, newsletters, a video presentation and parent education programs.

The Nature of this Report

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

The purpose of the visit to William R. Dutemple Elementary School from April 27 to April 30, 1999 was to draw conclusions about the School in the three focus areas of SALT:

- Student Learning, Progress and Achievement;
- Teaching and Learning
- The School as a Teaching and Learning Community.

The purpose of the SALT Visit is to ensure that accountability supports improvement of schools by directly connecting judgments of quality and recommendations for improvement to the actual life and work of a school.

This report of the visiting Team is built upon the observations and conclusions of Rhode Island school practitioners. The majority of the members of the Visiting Team, whose names and affiliations are included in Appendix A, are practicing Rhode Island educators. One team member is a teacher on leave and serving as a staff member of the Rhode Island Department of Education.

William R. Dutemple Elementary School's Strategic Plan served as the Visiting Team's first touchstone in coming to an understanding of the School.

However informative written reports may be, there is simply no substitute for being at the school while it is in session ? in the classroom, in the lunchroom, on the playground and in the hallways. The specific information generated by a Team visit is about how the students and staff, and administrators go about their day. Thus, this visit allowed professional colleagues and stakeholders to build informed judgments about the teaching and learning that actually takes place at William R. Dutemple Elementary School.

The Visiting Team collected its evidence from the following:

- a total of 55 hours of classroom observation. Every classroom teacher was observed at least once.
- many informal observations in and around the school
- following 5 students for a full day
- observing the work of teachers, specialty teachers and staff for a full day
- meeting with the School Advisory Council
- meeting with the Self-Study Team
- meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators
- William R. Dutemple School Strategic Plan
- District and school policies, Cranston School District test data, *Information Works!* Data book; SALT Survey Report, union contracts
- analysis of student work including a selection of work collected by the school
- analysis of the school's performance on state assessments of standards

The full Team has built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussions. The Visiting Team met for a total of 23 hours in six separate meetings spanning the four days of the visit. This time is exclusive of the time spent in classrooms and with teachers. The Team sought to develop conclusions, commendations and recommendations in the three focus areas that, in its judgment, would be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning.

The Team by consensus agreed to each conclusion, each commendation and each recommendation in this report.

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

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

Following the Team's summary statement, Portrait of the Condition of Your School at the Time of the Visit, Team conclusions, commendations and recommendations are presented for each of the SALT focus areas. The report continues with the Team's most important conclusions and concludes with the

Team's final advice to the school.

It is important to read and consider this report as a whole. Recommendations and commendations should be considered in context of the conclusions, since that is the way they are written.

2. PORTRAIT OF THE CONDITION OF YOUR SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

When you enter the William R. Dutemple Elementary School brightly colored artwork, happy faces and laughter greet you. Both staff and students seem to feel at home here. Children trust their principal and teachers because they know that this learning environment is unconditional and that all students are treated as equals.

The dynamic educational leadership of the principal builds and pulls together a commitment to teaching and learning on the part of teachers, parents, students and support staff. She is actively engaged in instruction and attentive to the needs of students, parents and teachers.

Although not always assessing or teaching in the most creative manner, the staff welcomes suggestions that will enhance their teaching and student learning. In the primary grades students are actively engaged in learning.

Visual clues related to problem solving strategies and scoring rubrics demonstrates a school wide focus on education reform and a solid effort to enhance learning. The completion of the first stages of a network-wiring project along with the purchase of new computers indicates an effort to instruct children for success.

Once a traditional school, William R. Dutemple Elementary School is ready to embrace the new standards that will propel their students into the 21st century.

3. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Sources of Evidence

- 1998 *Information Works!* (1997 scores)
- 1999 *Information Works!* (1998 scores)
- 1998 State Assessment results
- Examination of student work

- Following students
- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with SALT Self-Study Committee,
- Meeting with School Advisory Council
- William Dutemple School Strategic Plan

Conclusions

While the gap between student achievement and the standard in math skills is small (39% are below standard), the gap between student achievement and the standard on problem solving is significant (91% are below standard). (Information Works 1999)

The students at William R. Dutemple Elementary School performed extremely well in relation to standards on the 1998 English Language Arts Reference Examination. In addition they performed statistically significantly higher than similar students statewide. Daily emphasis on writing in most classrooms contributes positively to this outstanding result. (Information Works 1999, examination of student work, classroom observations)

The analysis of equity gaps in Information Works 1999 shows a gap in performance between males and females in mathematical skills and writing effectiveness. (Information Works 1999)

The genuine care and respect students demonstrate for each other and their school is noteworthy. (classroom observations, following students)

The SALT Visiting Team commends William R. Dutemple School for:

Care and respect of students for each other and their school

Outstanding achievement on the English Language Arts Reference Examination

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that William R. Dutemple School:

Provide daily problem solving activities

Address equity gaps in student performance

4. FINDINGS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- Classroom observations
- Examination of student work
- Conversations with teachers, specialists, students and staff
- Meeting with district administrators
- Parent meeting
- Student meeting
- SALT Self-Study Meeting
- School Advisory Council Meeting
- SALT Survey Results
- William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan
- Following students

Conclusions

The faculty at William R. Dutemple Elementary School is in the process of introducing standards based education. A more serious commitment is needed to fulfill their vision in preparing students to be responsible members of the global community, critical thinkers, and effective communicators. (classroom observations, conversations with administrators and teachers, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

The needs of diverse learners were best met in classrooms where students were actively engaged in a variety of activities throughout the day. The traditional, passive teaching style practiced in some classrooms does not challenge all students well. (following students, classroom observations)

The school's introduction of math journals and the problem of the week demonstrate an effort to increase scores in problem solving. Additional steps are necessary to successfully close the gap in student performance. (classroom observations, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

The data gathered from the district-wide language arts assessment program is used well by teachers in grades 1 and 2 to make decisions regarding instruction. A similar program is being piloted in grade 3. Similar data gathering programs would promote better connections between language arts and other content area instruction in grades 4-5. (examination of student work, classroom observations)

The SALT Visiting Team commends William R. Dutemple School for:

Implementation of math problem solving strategies

Development and use of a Language Arts Assessment program in grades 1 and 2

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that William R. Dutemple School:

Provide professional development that creates standards based instructional units

Provide daily problem solving activities that focus on real life situations

Develop mechanisms to share diverse instructional strategies

Create interdisciplinary instructional units

Increase the use of active learning strategies across contents and grades

Develop and utilize consistent sets of rubrics for all classrooms

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Cranston Public Schools:

Provide professional development to support standards based education

5. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY

Sources of Evidence

- School and classroom observations
- Meeting with district administrators
- Meetings and conversations with administrators, staff and teachers
- Meeting with parents
- Following students
- 1998 State Assessment Results
- School and District policy documents, union contracts
- School Improvement Team Meeting
- SALT Self-Study Meeting
- Meeting with School Advisory Council
- William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan

Conclusions

Although computers are present in each classroom and a twenty-station computer lab exists, staff use for teaching and learning is minimal. While the staff has completed a needs assessment and basic level training, additional steps must be taken to address the integration of technology into the teaching and learning process. (meeting with Self study team, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The library program is not adequately funded. Limited staffing and outdated resources do not support curricular needs, interdisciplinary learning or the achievement of higher standards. (school observations, meeting with district administrators)

The educational leader has built a climate of trust and cooperation within the learning community that fosters a shared vision for success. This provides the base for staff to build coherence in teaching and learning across grades. (meetings with parents and district administrators, school observations)

While significant improvement has occurred on the Rhode Island Health Assessment, the William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan does not address the need for enhanced health instruction for the 61% of the students who did not achieve the standard. (1998 Assessment results, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

The school wide enrichment program has provided students with opportunities to explore potential areas of interest, develop critical and creative thinking skills, enhance learning skills, and nurture their individual abilities as stated in their school improvement goals. (conversations with students, parents and administrators, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

The school Advisory Council, formed to establish a shared decision making approach to school governance, created a strategic plan that serves as a catalyst for school improvement efforts. However, the lack of regularly scheduled meetings and a mechanism to communicate decisions inhibits the effectiveness of school improvement efforts. (meeting with William R. Dutemple Elementary School Advisory Council, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

William R. Dutemple Elementary School teachers in Kindergarten through grade three participate voluntarily in the district SWAP which enables them to share ideas by grade level enhance their teaching strategies, and better meet the needs of diverse learners across all curricular areas. (William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan, conversations with teachers)

Recognizing that the current teacher evaluation process does not support professional growth, a district wide committee has developed a more effective instrument to address five critical areas related to professional assessment. (meeting with system and school administrators)

The SALT Visiting Team commends William R. Dutemple School for:

Participation of teachers in voluntary SWAP meets

Development of the school wide enrichment program

Positive school climate

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that William R. Dutemple School:

Guide staff and students to reach for and achieve higher standards

Develop an action plan in the area of health education

Develop a plan to improve library services

Integrate technology into the teaching and learning process

Document the ongoing work of the School Advisory Council

The SALT Visiting Team recommends that Cranston Public Schools:

Increase funding for the library program

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Most Important Conclusions

The faculty at William R. Dutemple Elementary School is in the process of introducing standards based education. A more serious commitment is needed to fulfill their vision in preparing students to be responsible members of the global community, critical thinkers, and effective communicators. (classroom observations, conversations with administrators and teachers, William R. Dutemple Elementary School Strategic Plan)

While the gap between student achievement and the standard in math skills is small (39% are below standard), the gap between student achievement and the standard on problem solving is significant (91% are below standard). (Information Works 1999)

The needs of diverse learners were best met in classrooms where students were actively engaged in a variety of activities throughout the day. The traditional, passive teaching style practiced in some classrooms does not challenge all students well. (following students, classroom observations)

Although computers are present in each classroom and a twenty-station computer lab exists, staff use of these for teaching and learning is minimal. While the staff has completed a needs assessment and basic level training, additional steps must be taken to address the integration of technology into the teaching and learning process. (meeting with Self study team, conversations with teachers and administrators)

The library program is not adequately funded. Limited staffing and outdated resources do not support curricular needs, interdisciplinary learning or the achievement of higher standards. (school observations, meeting with district administrators)

Final Advice to the School

William R. Dutemple Elementary School should be very proud. An atmosphere of trust and acceptance has been established. Since the children are so comfortable with their teachers the stage is set for a more strident approach to standards based learning. For this to occur professional development should be offered as soon as possible. This advice should be repeated in the area of technology. Fortunate enough to be a school with both a computer lab and classroom computers, courses using grade specific software and online resources should be instituted if teachers are expected to use technology as a teaching and learning tool.

Focus your energies on areas that serve all teachers and learners and ensure that every class has access to a library media center with current quality resources that support active rather than passive learning.

With an administrator who has faith in the professional judgement of her staff these transitions can and will happen.

APPENDIX TO THE VISITING TEAM'S REPORT

MEMBERS OF WILLIAM R. DUTEMPLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SALT SELF-STUDY TEAM

Maureen H. Cicchitelli, Principal
Suzanne Macfarlan, Teacher
Paula Fish, Teacher

Carolyn Sieczkiewicz, Teacher
Nahiah Hookway, Parent
Mary Zolli, Teacher
Lynn Sullivan, Parent
Anne Wilks, Parent

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Patricia Ribeiro, Grade 1 Teacher
Providence Street School, West Warwick
(on leave to Rhode Island Department of Education to serve as SALT Fellow)
Chair of the Team

Barbara Ashby, Librarian
George J. West School, Providence

Linda Cliff, Grade 4 Teacher
Aquidneck School, Middletown

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