



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

January 16, 2009

Dear Superintendent:

I am told there is a mistaken belief that SALT Visits have been discontinued. This may come from confusion between the SALT Survey, which has been discontinued this year, and SALT Visits. I raise this point because it may help to explain the difficulty RIDE staff is experiencing recruiting for SALT Visit teams. Let me take this opportunity to say SALT Visits are still being conducted this year.

I also understand that current budgetary shortfalls and the recent elimination of Article 18/31 funds make it harder to send teachers and principals on SALT visits. However, we need to keep in mind that SALT Visits remain a part of our state accountability system and that we continue to have an obligation to staff these visits. SALT teams are made up of peers and the value of their reports comes directly from the fact that teachers and principals write these reports.

It is my expectation that you will advise your principals and teachers that RIDE still needs their participation on SALT Visits. I hope you will add that SALT Visits are excellent professional development opportunities for anyone wishing to develop skills associated with assessing school performance and leading school improvement processes. I also ask you to continue to approve sending your teachers and principals on SALT Visits. It doesn't take very many to satisfy the needs of the system—if each district sent only two people, my staff tells me we could fill the teams for the rest of this year.

In a related vein, my staff is working hard to develop a wider range of visits protocols. These include shorter (4 day) SALT visits and a new kind of visit we call a "Commissioner's Visit" that last either one or two days. I want to bring these visits up to RISSA for discussion in the near future and look forward to seeing you on that occasion.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education