



# Frank E. Thompson Middle School

## NEWPORT

### THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

December 9, 2005



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Frank E. Thompson Middle School from December 5 – 9, 2005.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The 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 Frank E. Thompson Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Frank E. Thompson Middle School affect learning?

How well does Frank E. Thompson Middle 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 Frank E. Thompson Middle 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org). Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-8401 or [rick.richards@ride.ri.gov](mailto:rick.richards@ride.ri.gov) for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also ensures 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 150 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Also, the team spent a total of over 72 hours interviewing faculty and staff members.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 28.5 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 Frank E. Thompson Middle 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 Newport School Department 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 how it can amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Newport School Department, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Frank E. Thompson Middle 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 FRANK E. THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Frank E. Thompson Middle School is located on Broadway in the city of Newport, Rhode Island, and is part of Newport's public school system. The school serves students in grades six through eight, having made the transition in 1994 from Thompson Junior High School. The building that the school currently occupies re-opened in 2002 after an extensive two-year, \$19M renovation. Before the renovation, the facility consisted of four connected buildings that had been built between 1893 and 1978. The original Townsend Industrial School building was restored in the renovation and now houses the school offices, library, and computer lab. The other buildings were demolished to allow construction of new classroom space, as well as a cafeteria/performing arts space and gymnasium.

There are 571 students enrolled at Thompson Middle School: 177 in grade 6, 218 in grade 7, and 176 in grade 8. Fifty-five percent of the students are white, 26 percent are African-American, and 15 percent are Hispanic. Two percent describe themselves as Native Americans and 1 percent as Asian/Pacific Islander. Twenty-five percent of the students receive special education services. Twenty-two Thompson students are designated as English as Second Language learners. Fifty-four percent of the students receive free or reduced cost lunch.

One principal, one assistant principal, one dean, a behavior specialist, two guidance counselors, a school social worker, a literacy coach, 61 full- and part-time teachers, 13 teacher aides, 13 support staff, and a staff of more than five in the Human Services Mall serve the students of Thompson. In addition, the Newport Community School has four full-time staff and 22 part-time staff. Core subject teachers (Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies) and special education teachers work together on grade-level cluster teams. The school's two reading teachers also meet with teams as their schedule allows.

In 2003, Thompson Middle School received a three-year, \$350,000 Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grant. Entitled the SUCCESS (School Using Comprehensive Change to Enrich all Students Through Standards) program, its goal is to raise student achievement through the implementation of a school-wide, balanced approach to literacy.

This program features professional development, the use of research-based strategies for learning and teaching, a broad base of staff support, and parent involvement. Other important initiatives include the school-wide Connected Math Program and the use of the Scholastic Read 180 program. Thompson Middle School also recently implemented 'Instructional Improvement Time,' during which grade-level cluster teams meet to embed professional development and examine their practice.

Thompson Middle School provides students with various support services through the Human Services Mall located within the school. Sponsored by the Newport Partnership for Families, through a \$70,000 grant from Newport Hospital, the Mall offers students counseling, mentoring, community service, and a variety of programs designed to help them succeed academically and socially.

With the opening of Thompson's new building in 2002, the Newport Community School (NCS) was launched as part of the United Way's Community Schools – RI Initiative. A school-community partnership, the goals of NCS are academic success, lifelong learning, and community safety and stability. Currently, the Community School offers A.M. Academy before school, homework help after school, and a variety of after-school enrichment programs. Two-hundred-forty-five students are enrolled in the Community School. In addition to the full-time and part-time staff, the Community School draws on the resources of 10 work study students and more than 20 weekly volunteers from Salve Regina and Roger Williams universities, as well as other community partners who provide enrichment programming.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF FRANK E. THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Frank E. Thompson Middle School innovatively blends both old and new architecture to provide a beautiful new facility for learning that brims with potential. The immaculate and well-appointed classrooms, shining halls, stately media center, attractive gymnasium, and cafeteria/performing arts center combine to foster an environment conducive to learning and excellence.

The strength of this school is its sense of community. At its heart are the many and diverse sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who say with pride that they love this school and that Thompson is a “fun place to be.” The students know that they are cared for here, and most act with respect while taking responsibility for their behavior and learning. While many students still read below grade level, they have made recent and notable gains in their learning and are ready for more. When asked, they say—and their parents echo—“Challenge us more.”

The sense of community evident at Thompson is more than just a product of a state-of-the-art-facility. It is a direct and deliberate result of the entire adult staff creating a safe and nurturing place in which students can learn. Teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and community members provide students numerous opportunities for learning and enrichment to reach their academic, social, and emotional potential. In particular, The Newport Community School and the Human Services Mall provide “amazing and excellent” support for Thompson students.

Teachers comprise the foundation of this learning community. Most say that they truly enjoy teaching here, and all want their students to do well. They work hard to collaborate with their colleagues to design and deliver effective lessons. While much of this teaching is successful, they also have room to improve so that they may challenge all students to produce exemplary work.

The school administrators, in conjunction with the leadership and school improvement teams, lead this community. Like the teaching staff, they work hard and care deeply for the education and well being of the students. Despite the recent changes in administration and the subsequent transition period, it is a tribute to the leadership and both the faculty and staff that the school continues to head in the right direction. However, a shared vision for the school does not yet exist.

While the school community makes strides to provide an excellent education for all, barriers inhibit progress and growth. A serious disagreement exists throughout the school over the status and direction of the integrated English/Language Arts-Social Studies block. There is a division among the leadership teams that prevents the development of a coherent message necessary for improvement.

Despite these challenges, Thompson Middle School is well poised to move forward and fulfill its potential and deliver to its students an excellent education that matches this impressive facility.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students are fairly effective problem solvers across all disciplines and classrooms. Most students solve a variety of short- and long-term problems in their classes including science experiments, translating foreign language cognates, finding written text to support a position, and working in groups to solve mathematics problems. These students know how to follow steps in their classes to complete problem solving activities. They follow established rituals and routines, use accountable talk, focus on the task, and are interested in the activity. Many of these students, however, say that their work is too easy and that they would like to be challenged more. Some students do not solve problems effectively. They do not actively participate in learning; they excessively rely on teachers and wait for prompting to move forward. Some of these students say that they like to problem solve and do hands-on activities but only until it gets too hard. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students say that they write a lot and that they write in most of their classes. Many students write fairly well. They compose fluent sentences, write with purpose, and effectively use supporting details. They cite texts to support their writing, hook their readers with leads, and clearly organize and convey their thoughts from introduction to conclusion. Importantly, they use their writing to reflect what they are learning in their classes. Some students, however, do not write well and lack the confidence to become good writers. Even though they know how to follow a process, much of their writing is rote, and students often just want to finish their assignments. Also these students do not receive enough feedback or know how to use feedback to improve. Many students still struggle to write with proper conventions. *(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, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Students read often and in a variety of formats— independent, guided, whole-class, and in small groups. Students say they read a lot, are proud to point out their progress towards the twenty-five-book standard, and particularly enjoy reading when they can choose their own reading materials. Many students read well, but too many read below grade level. The high number of students, who have personal literacy plans (PLPs)—53% at grade eight, 54% at grade seven, and 61% at grade six—supports this. Students who read well can decode words with ease, discuss their reading with one another, extract information from texts, and make inferences from and connections to their readings. Students say that practicing reading in school helps them become better readers and helps them prepare for their futures. However, too many students do not comprehend their reading and become frustrated, which deters them from continuing. These students do not know words they read and have difficulty applying reading strategies to understand texts. They often rely on others to provide answers or information. *(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, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, classroom textbooks, Thompson Middle School Self-Study)*

Students enjoy coming to Thompson Middle School. They are polite and love their school. Students like their teachers and the faculty and staff and see them as positive role models who genuinely care about them. Both students and parents report that children feel safe here. Students also greatly appreciate the many before and after school activities that make this a “fun place to be.” (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, 2005 SALT Survey report*)

Most students behave well at this school. They know the rules and the consequences for infractions, and they know who will enforce these consequences. Students take responsibility for themselves and their behavior. However, some students report that not all rules are applied consistently and that going to adults with their problems “would make it worse.” (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, talking with students and school administrators, 2005 SALT Survey report*)

Students care about learning and are proud of their work. They think learning is important to prepare them for their future and get ready for high school. However, many students at all levels do not work to their fullest potential, and many do not look for opportunities to extend themselves beyond the minimum. While parents and students report that they like the school, both groups express concern about the lack of challenge in classes. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2005 SALT Survey report*)

## Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Are fairly effective at problem solving, reading, and writing*
- ◆ *Know how to follow rituals and routines*
- ◆ *Want to be challenged*
- ◆ *Are proud of their work and love their school*
- ◆ *Take responsibility for themselves and their behavior*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Teachers across all disciplines teach their students to problem solve fairly well. These teachers establish rituals and routines that facilitate problem solving among their students. They teach students to use a variety of resources and strategies to solve problems. They design and structure their lessons so that students have time to work together, test solutions, and arrive at appropriate conclusions. While teachers say that they challenge their students, many of the problems and learning opportunities that they provide are not challenging enough for students to develop higher-level thinking. Also, many teachers do not require students to move beyond their comfort level, take risks, and extend their learning by thinking creatively. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2005 SALT Survey report, TMS Self Study)*

Teachers teach writing adequately across disciplines. Teachers say that their writing instruction helps their students improve, and they make sincere efforts to teach students how to use tools and strategies to become better writers. They provide numerous opportunities to write in their classes, share examples of good writing, and teach students how to use writing resources. They also teach students formats and structures to write for specific purposes and audiences. This teaching helps students produce work that adequately answers questions, draws conclusions, and is generally coherent. However, while most teachers work hard to teach students to write, their efforts do not support exemplary student writing. Their teaching does not engage all students or ignite a love for writing. Further, not all teachers provide sufficient or useful feedback for students to improve. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment)*

Despite too many students still reading below grade level, teachers teach reading well and work hard to help their students improve. They create a pervasive climate for reading that encourages students to read and improve as readers. They teach students how to select suitable books and when to abandon them. They teach students how to use tools and strategies to build their vocabulary and comprehension to read both fiction and non-fiction. They also provide students ample time to read, allowing them to practice and learn from their teachers, as well as from their peers. Importantly, teachers require multiple forms of evidence for reading, which holds students accountable. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, 2005 SALT Survey report, Thompson Middle School Self-Study)*

Most teachers provide a positive learning environment that promotes a community of learners. They organize their classrooms to stimulate, inform, and encourage student learning. They post student work, as well as important resources such as daily agendas and objectives, classroom rules and expectations, and subject-specific information. Most teachers engage their students immediately upon entering their classrooms with warm-ups and other self-directed learning activities. Teachers readily and effectively use computers, LCD projectors, overheads, whiteboards, manipulatives, text, trade books, and films and documentaries to reach all students. Teachers also set up cooperative learning groups in most classes that enhance instruction and support student learning. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers)*

Most teachers manage their classrooms to promote appropriate student behavior. Students say that they like those teachers who keep their classes in control and who understand middle school students. These teachers establish clear and consistent rules and expectations. They redirect inappropriate behavior immediately by applying the school-wide discipline policy. Teachers are respectful to the students and require respect in return. Some teachers lack the skills to manage their classrooms effectively and, as such, student behavior is not as good in these classes. These teachers do not set high behavioral expectations for all students or require them to remain engaged in learning throughout the entire class. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students and school administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, 2005 SALT Survey report, Thompson Middle School Self-Study, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Teachers like their students and want them to do well. Many teachers exhibit a range of best teaching practices and are working toward improvement. They design effective lessons, use resources well, and collaborate during Instructional Improvement Time to monitor the progress of their students. Many teachers also work hard to implement new school and district initiatives including the workshop model, READ 180, inclusion, the Connected Mathematics Program, Science Kits, disciplinary literacy, and the ELA/Social Studies block. While some do these things effectively and others are beginning to integrate these practices within their disciplines, some are complacent or stubbornly resistant to change. Unfortunately, and teachers concur, most find it difficult to challenge all students to their highest potential. *(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, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2005 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, reviewing records of professional development)*

### Commendations for Frank E. Thompson Middle School

- ◆ *Positive climate for learning*
- ◆ *Reading, writing, and problem solving across all disciplines*
- ◆ *Established rituals, routines and effective cooperative learning*
- ◆ *Hard-working teachers who use a variety of resources and strategies*
- ◆ *Teachers who like their students and want them to do well*

### Recommendations for Frank E. Thompson Middle School

- ◆ *Provide more high-level learning opportunities for all students.*
- ◆ *Ignite a love for writing, and continue to improve your teaching of reading.*
- ◆ *Provide challenging problem solving work for all students.*
- ◆ *Provide students useful and effective feedback for improvement, and require students to revise their work.*
- ◆ *Maintain your expectations for reading accountability.*
- ◆ *Make uniform high behavioral expectations in all classes.*
- ◆ *Continue to structure classrooms to promote a positive learning environment.*
- ◆ *Be open-minded, and work together to implement school and district policies and initiatives.*

### Recommendations for Newport School District

- ◆ *Lead the school and faculty to build consensus effectively in order to implement school and district policies.*
- ◆ *Provide sufficient and ongoing professional development to support all teachers so that they can challenge all students to their highest potential.*

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

### Conclusions

Thompson Middle School is an impressive facility that complements the history of the community and conveys to all the value of education and learning. The building is well maintained, apportioned, and well stocked with the latest technology. The library media center is beautiful and has state-of-the-art-resources to support learning. This aesthetically pleasing school establishes a foundation for an environment that is conducive to learning. Community members say that they are proud of this school. *(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, and school administrators)*

The principal, assistant principal, and dean work well together to lead the school, promote effective instruction, and encourage appropriate behavior. They have a coherent vision and high expectations for all teachers and students. This is a new leadership team this year, and they understand the challenges they face to move the school forward. Together with the grade level leaders, the principal, and assistant principal form the administrative team. This team meets weekly to discuss school-wide issues. Unfortunately, there is no sixth grade leader, so the sixth grade is not appropriately represented on the team; additionally the administrative team does not have a shared vision for improving the school. This limits its ability to make effective progress. It is not clear how the School Improvement Team integrates with the leadership or administrative team to improve the school. Disagreement within the School Improvement Team seems to limit its ability to fulfill its role as a catalyst for change. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices, 2005 SALT Survey report)*

The controversy over the implementation of the ELA/Social Studies double block of instruction hurts this school. While some say the double block helps them teach their students well and others say it compromises their content, still others would like an “honest effort” to try to make this work. This issue divides the faculty and diverts energy from providing instructional excellence. Disagreement exists over the origin of the initiative, how to implement it effectively, and how this initiative will affect all disciplines. Additionally, some grade levels and clusters refuse to participate. Because of this, too many teachers do not take advantage of instructional resources and personnel intended to help them improve. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team and school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The exploratory classes provide valuable enrichment opportunities for students to read, write, and problem solve. Many of these classes have intentionally designed instruction to support the work of the core subject area teachers. Students love going to these classes where they can participate in hands-on activities and stretch themselves. However, due to budget cutbacks that limit their availability, the scheduling of these classes has had a negative impact on student daily schedules. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks)*

The special needs program provides an effective support system for students and teachers throughout the school. The inclusion model is working very well, and it is fully implemented. Most teachers in the co-teaching model feel supported and say that they have the resources they need to do their jobs. Most notably, students benefit from this student-centered approach to teaching by interacting with their peers and the general education teachers and by being held to higher expectations. Students in the functioning life skills program also are well served by being increasingly integrated into the school and community. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

There are “amazing and excellent” supports for students at this school. The Human Services Mall provides an invaluable service to the school and its community. It is an oasis of support for all students, as they make the difficult transition to early adulthood. The Mall connects students and families to essential community services that support students’ basic academic, social, and emotional needs. The Newport Community School provides outstanding before and after school academic and enrichment activities. It delivers on its mission to involve the public to create “a safe, fun, and nurturing atmosphere for learning.” The behavior management specialist is a vital asset for the success of this school. He works with teachers and students to help produce a culture of mutual respect and a climate for learning. *(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, and school administrators, 2005 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, Newport Community School Program Handbook and Schedule of Activities)*

Parents love the teachers here and greatly appreciate the new building that makes their children feel “that what they do matters and that they are respected.” While the School Improvement Plan identifies increasing parent involvement and “meaningful school-to-parent communication” as priorities, parents report that they still are not satisfied that the school communicates with them either effectively or in a timely fashion. Further, some parents express concerns that they are not adequately involved in school events as they conflict with their schedules. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, talking with students, parents, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, 2005 SALT Survey report, 2005 Information Works!, Thompson Middle School Self-Study)*

## Commendations for Frank E. Thompson Middle School

- ◆ *Amazing supports and enrichment opportunities for students*

- ◆ *Impressive facility that is conducive to learning*
- ◆ *Administrators who work well together*
- ◆ *Fully-implemented inclusion model*

### Recommendations for Frank E. Thompson Middle School

- ◆ *Develop a shared vision for the leadership teams to improve the school.*
- ◆ *Continue to maintain the exceptional physical plant and the technological resources of the school.*
- ◆ *Resolve conflicts in scheduling the exploratory classes.*
- ◆ *Resolve the controversy over the implementation of the ELA/Social Studies double block of instruction.*
- ◆ *Take advantage of all instructional resources and personnel for improvement.*
- ◆ *Maintain the high level of inclusion practices for special needs students.*
- ◆ *Continue to integrate support services for students such as the Human Services Mall, the Newport Community School, and the Behavior Management Specialist.*
- ◆ *Increase effective and timely communication with all families.*

### Recommendations for Newport School District

- ◆ *Provide budgetary resources to maintain the quality of the school and its programs.*
- ◆ *Provide leadership and guidance to resolve the controversy over the ELA/Social Studies double block.*
- ◆ *Continue to support the integration of the Human Services Mall, Newport Community School, and the Behavior Management Specialist for Thompson Middle School students.*

## 7. FINAL ADVICE TO FRANK E. THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

As a “moderately performing and improving” school, you should be proud of the continuous gains and progress you are making. Continue to push and challenge your students to achieve at every level. Maintain the solid support systems already in place for students.

Keep implementing all the good practices you have started. Work together to provide a top quality education for all of your learners. Resolve the differences surrounding the ELA/Social Studies double block so that they no longer interfere with your efforts to improve.

Develop a shared vision among leaders and teachers in order to move forward and best serve your students. The leadership teams need to work together to lead the school.

Do not take for granted the outstanding learning environment that is Thompson Middle School. Strive to develop a level of instruction that parallels the excellence of your facility.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Frank E. Thompson Middle School

December 9, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 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 Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

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

The findings from the review are:

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

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, Ed.D.  
Catalpa Ltd.  
December 30, 2005

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Frank E. Thompson Middle 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 Frank E. Thompson Middle School.

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

- ◆ *observing classes directly*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 10 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices
  - records of professional development activities
  - classroom assessments
  - school improvement plan for Frank E. Thompson Middle School
  - district strategic plan
  - 2005 SALT Survey report
  - classroom textbooks
  - 2005 Information Works!
  - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries
  - School and District Report Cards
  - TMS Self-Study

TMS Staff Biographical Information Binder

TMS Professional Development Binders, August 30 and 31, 2005;  
October 24, 2005

TMS Across the Curriculum, ELA and Social Studies Binder

TMS Parent Newsletters

TMS Community School Program Handbook and Schedule of  
Activities

TMS Community School CIPAS Binder

Newport Public Schools 2005-2006 Staff Evaluation Tools

Newport Community School Program Handbook and Schedule of  
Activities

Report of a Management Review of the Newport Public Schools, July  
19, 2005 (Berkshire Report)

Contract Between the Newport School Committee and the Teacher's  
Association of Newport

## State Assessment Results for Thompson Middle School

State assessment results create evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses the most recent evidence available to locate critical issues about the school. While 2005 state test score evidence is available for high schools, the most recent test score data for elementary and middle schools comes from 2004 testing. This school's results are presented here in three different ways:

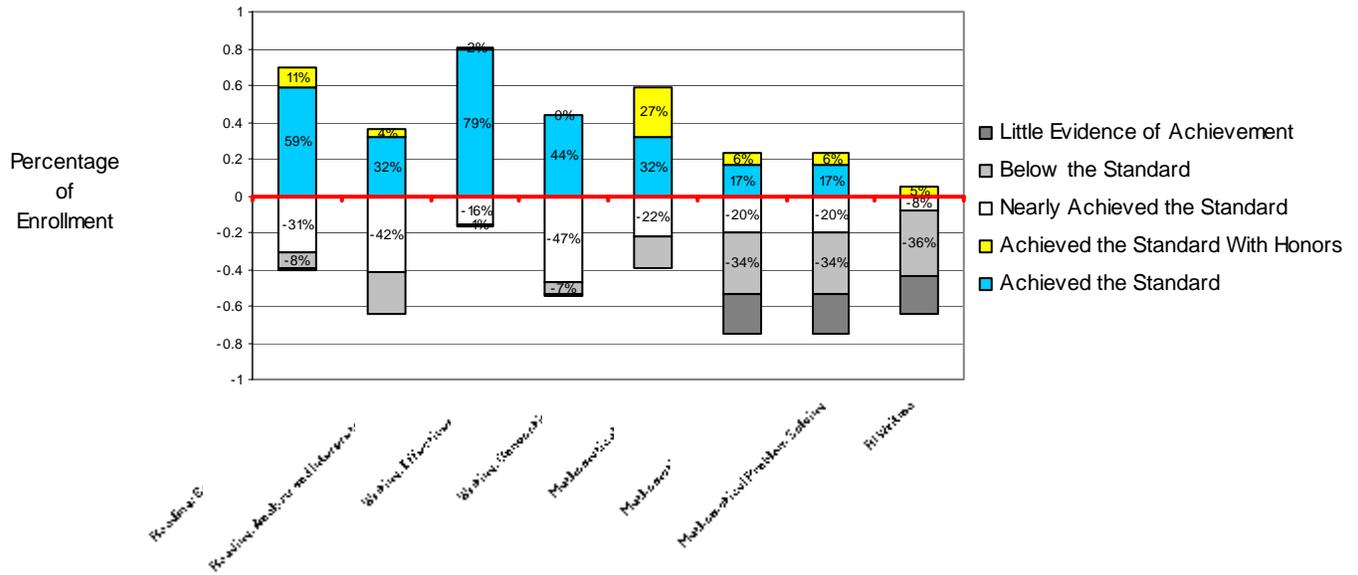
- ◆ *against performance standards,*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school, and*
- ◆ *over time.*

Information Works! data for Thompson Middle School is available at [/www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2005/default.asp](http://www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2005/default.asp).

**RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

**Table 1. 2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**





**2004 REPORT CARD FOR THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL**

This Report Card shows the performance of Thompson Middle School compared to the school’s annual measurable objectives (AMO). These report card scores describe Thompson Middle School as a *high performing and improving school*.

In 2005, schools were classified by their attendance rate. Using this measure alone, Thompson Middle School made *adequate yearly progress*.

| Index Proficiency Score, 2002-04            | English Language Arts Target score: 68 |             |               |           | MATHEMATICS Target score: 46.1 |             |               |           |
|---|--|-------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| Student Group                               | this School                            | Target Met? | this District | the State | this School                    | Target Met? | this District | the State |
| All Students                                | 80.7                                   | YES         | 80.3          | 80.3      | 65.6                           | YES         | 64.7          | 66.5      |
| African Americans                           | 76.8                                   | YES         | 76.8          | 71.2      | 54                             | YES         | 53.5          | 49.5      |
| Asian                                       | *                                      | YES         | *             | 79.3      | *                              | YES         | *             | 64.9      |
| Hispanic                                    | 78.6                                   | YES         | 78.3          | 69.5      | 57.4                           | YES         | 56.3          | 48.8      |
| Native Americans                            | *                                      | YES         | *             | 76.7      | *                              | YES         | *             | 58.6      |
| White                                       | 84.2                                   | YES         | 83.8          | 84.4      | 71.2                           | YES         | 70.3          | 72.8      |
| Students with Disabilities                  | 66.7                                   | YES††       | 65.8          | 63.3      | 47.3                           | YES         | 45.2          | 46.8      |
| Students with Limited English Proficiency   | *                                      | YES         | *             | 61        | *                              | YES         | *             | 43.3      |
| Students who are Economically Disadvantaged | 72.9                                   | YES         | 72.5          | 70.0      | 53.1                           | YES         | 51.9          | 50.9      |

| PERCENT of students tested, 2002-04 | Target: 95% |             |               |           |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
|                                     | this school | target met? | THIS DISTRICT | the state |
| English Language Arts               | 98.6        | YES         | 98.6          | 98.6      |
| Mathematics                         | 98.9        | YES         | 98.4          | 98.8      |

| Attendance Rate | Target: 90% |             |               |           |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
|                 | this school | target met? | THIS DISTRICT | the state |
|                 | 92.7        | YES         | 92.7          | 93.6      |

| TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL   |             |                |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
|                                   | TARGETS MET | TARGETS MISSED |
| English Language Arts Index Score | 9           | 0              |
| Mathematics Index Score           | 9           | 0              |
| Percent Tested                    | 2           | 0              |
| Attendance Rate                   | 1           | 0              |

this school is classified as:

**Moderately Performing and Improving**

KEY: \* Student group has too few students to calculate results.  
 † "Safe Harbor" - Student group has fallen short of the target but has made sufficient improvement over last year's score.  
 †† Student group has met the target based only on the most recent year of test results. NOTE:

[For information on targets and classifications, please see Quick Guide .](#)

**THE FRANK E. THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

\

Michael Browner  
Co-Chair  
Teacher

Elizabeth Gibbs  
Co-Chair  
Teacher

Cheryl Abney  
Guidance

Lindy Lopes  
Parent

Anna Anderson  
Teacher

Ryan Perugini  
Teacher

Megan Anderson  
Teacher

Donna Radkovich  
Teacher

Tina Brownell  
Literacy Coach

Lisa Ruth  
Student Assistance Coordinator

Jamie Caster  
Teacher

Colleen Soares  
Teacher – Council 94 Representative

Lisa Clarke  
Human Services Mall

Eric Thomas  
Assistant Principal

Hugo DeAscentis  
Parent

Dr. Richard Tresky  
Principal

Kathy Hole  
Teacher

Barbara Walton-Faria  
Teacher

## MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Andre Audette  
Standards Coach  
Pawtucket School Department  
Rhode Island Department of Education  
Office of Progressive Support and Intervention  
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Team Chair

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Social Studies Teacher  
Calcutt Middle School  
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Coventry School Department  
Coventry, Rhode Island

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Teacher  
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Foster-Glocester School Department  
Glochester, Rhode Island

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Social Studies Teacher/District  
Trainer CORE-Literacy  
Lawn Avenue School  
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Middle School Social Studies  
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Portsmouth, Rhode Island

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Science Teacher  
Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School  
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**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM**

INSERT HERE