



Riverside Middle School

EAST PROVIDENCE

The SALT Visit Team Report

November 9, 2001



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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

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1. THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT

Overview

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Riverside Middle School from November 5 to November 9, 2001. 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 deliberately chooses the words that will best convey its message 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 connecting its judgments of quality and its recommendations for improvement directly 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 Riverside 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 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 Riverside Middle School.

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

◆ *observing a total of 164 classes. The team spent a total of over 123 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 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 three years of state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*

◆ *reviewing the following documents:*

East Providence School Department 2001-2002 School Budget

East Providence School Department Mathematics Performance Assessment Schedule

East Providence School Department Grade 6, 7, and 8 English/Language Arts Curriculum

East Providence School Department K-12 Curriculum, revised 6/18/99

East Providence School Department Strategic Plan

East Providence School Department Teacher Appraisal of Teacher Performance

East Providence Emergency Response Plan

East Providence Teacher Contract, 1999-2002

Article 31 Professional Development Plans

school improvement plan for Riverside Middle School

school profile, SALT binder

Riverside Middle School self assessment

records of professional development activities

Riverside Middle School Reading Program, Grade 7

Riverside Middle School Writing Program, Grade 6

Riverside Middle School Working Wonders IV, Closing the Gap Portfolio, 2000-2001 *Focus School*

Riverside Middle School Student Report Card

Riverside Middle School Office Record Card Marks

Riverside Scrapbook, A Work in Progress

Riverside Band Member Handbook

The Viking Press, November 2001

Riverside Middle School Agenda

Riverside Middle School Web Page

“Examples of Newsletters” Binder

Weekly Communicator, 2000-2001, 2001-2002

Millennium Messages, A Poetry Anthology

1999, 2000 SALT Survey reports

1998, 1999, 2000 2001 Information Works!

1998, 1999, 2000 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

classroom assessments

classroom textbooks

The full team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 35.5 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 deliberately chooses 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 Riverside Middle School

Background

Located in the village of Riverside in East Providence, Rhode Island, Riverside Middle School serves students in grades six through eight. Originally constructed as the Riverside Junior High School for grades seven, eight, and nine, the building opened its doors in spring 1966. The school remained unchanged until the fall of 1998, when it began its transition into a middle school with the arrival of sixth graders. One year later the ninth graders moved to the East Providence High School.

The school is part of the East Providence School Department. A superintendent and a district staff of eleven administrators and two mid-level managers administer the district. A five-member elected school committee governs the district. A professional staff of one principal, one assistant principal, 58 teachers, one school nurse, 10 teacher assistants, five secretaries, six custodians, and eight ARAMARK staff serve the Riverside Middle School community.

Of the 567 students at Riverside Middle School, 88% are white, 8% are black, 2% are Hispanic, and 1% is listed as other. Approximately 136 students totaling 24% receive special education services, approximately six students totaling 1% receive ESL support and approximately 164 or 29% of the student body are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Parent/school communications have been strengthened by the recent addition of the Homework Hotline and the Weekly Communicator. Instructional Lab, a literacy-based class, is also a new change in the schedule. Among the many unique programs found at Riverside Middle School are the B.U.D.D.I.E.S. (Building Understanding of Developmental Disabilities In Everyday Situations) Club, French Partners, Viking Tales Literary Magazine, The Annual Talent Show, and an annual musical production. Last year, the students performed *Annie*. Project COPE (Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience), the International Festival, the First Lego League, and the Talent Development Competition are several more examples. A partial list of the many awards Riverside Middle School has received are the Providence Journal Bulletin award for the *Viking Press* school newspaper, selected as the Best Middle School/Junior High School Newspaper in 2000-2001. The Beginner and Advanced Concert Band participated in the Great East Festival at Six Flags. In 2000 both bands received medals, one silver, the other, gold, respectively. In 2001 both bands won gold medals. The chorus also competed in the Great East Chorus Festival and received a gold medal in both 2000 and 2001.

Riverside is involved in many community outreach and fundraising activities that bring the entire school community together. These include: Pennies for Leukemia Drive, 15th Annual Library Giving Tree, Ronald MacDonald House fundraiser, the Christmas canned food drive, and WINTERFEST 1999 and WINTERFEST 2000, which together raised over \$21,000. This money funds school fieldtrips and non-budgeted school needs. As part of the 2001-2002 school theme, "Riverside Shines," the students adopted a New York City school affected by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and collected over \$2000 for that school.

State Assessment Results for Riverside Middle School

On the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination subtests, almost two in five the eighth graders (36%) met or exceeded the standard in basic skills; one in five of the eighth graders (18%) met or exceeded the standard in concepts, and one in four of the eighth graders (24%) met or exceeded the standard in problem solving. Using 2001 Information Works! data, equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist

for special education, black and Hispanic students on mathematics tests. Students at the Riverside Middle School perform at the same level as similar students in the state.

On the 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination subtests one in two of the eighth graders (47%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Basic Understanding; one in five of the eighth graders (19%) met or exceeded the standard in Reading: Analysis and Interpretation; and one in three of the eighth graders (33%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Effectiveness; two in five eighth graders (41%) met or exceeded the standard in Writing: Conventions. Equity gaps (a difference of more than 15%) exist for special education and black students on English Language Arts tests. The 2001 Information Works! data shows students at the Riverside Middle School perform above the level of similar students statewide on three subtests and at the same level as similar students in the state on one subtest. On the 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment one in three of the seventh graders (35%) met or exceeded the standard.

The most recently available New Standards Reference Examination results have been appended to this report. *Information Works!* data for Riverside Middle School is available at www.ridoenet.net.

3. PORTRAIT OF Riverside Middle School AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Riverside Middle School is set back within a well-maintained campus on residential Forbes Street. The school motto, "Riverside Shines," is evident throughout the school. Light pours through the many windows, the floors gleam, and even the yellow tile walls reflect the warmth of the school community. Hallways and classrooms are decorated with great imagination. Faculty and staff greet visitors cheerfully. The students are polite and respectful of the staff and each other. They are enthusiastic and eager to learn.

Dedicated teachers encourage their students' learning process and give freely of their time. Their mutual respect for students and each other shines through as well. They are hard working, open, and honest about their struggles to change. The principal is respected, admired and praised by students, staff, and parents alike. He is approachable, welcomes the parents and community into the school, and is eager to allow teachers to embark on risk-taking adventures.

This school has the potential to be a great middle school. A strong sense of community flourishes. Overall, there is evidence of change in teaching strategies and assessment. However, the professional development that is needed for a smooth transition from a junior high school to a middle school is fragmented and inadequate. The school improvement plan includes neither a clear vision nor detailed action plans to complete this transition. The leadership has yet to set the course for Riverside Middle School to become an outstanding middle school academically.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *2001 New Standards Reference Examination results*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *2000 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination School Summary*
- ◆ *classroom textbooks*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*

Conclusions

Riverside Middle School students respect their teachers and administrators. Students report genuine admiration for their school principal. Students are content and have a positive attitude toward school and schoolwork. They are cooperative, display good citizenship, and are involved and enthusiastic about their school and the community. They are well behaved and conduct themselves in an orderly manner, even in corridors and in the cafeteria. They are eager and ready to participate in the learning process. (*observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, following students, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

In many classes students work in collaborative groups. Some students conduct research for various projects,

analyze and interpret graphs, complete science labs, and brainstorm solutions to problems. These students are actively engaged in thinking and learning through discovery. They are considering multiple solutions, taking responsibility for their own learning, and developing collaborative skills to build their knowledge. Other students, while they are willing participants of the collaborative groups, are unsure of their role in the group learning process. Still other students work in groups in various settings, but often complete their work individually, rather than share tasks and responsibilities. These individuals are not benefiting from the purpose of the collaborative learning process. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

Students write across the curriculum. They maintain journals in many subjects, reflect on their work, document their thinking, peer edit, complete research reports, and write memoirs, essays, letters, and poetry. They also summarize books, fieldtrip experiences, and magazine and newspaper articles. Through these various experiences, some students demonstrate writing competence and write with enthusiasm. They also answer textbook questions, take notes, and complete work sheets. These activities, while less creative, also help students practice writing. While some students struggle with the process, others write with confidence. This is supported by the most recent testing data. The 2001 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination results show that 54% of eighth graders meet or exceed the standard on the Writing Effectiveness subtest and 61% of eighth graders meet or exceed the standard on the Writing Conventions subtest. *2001 Information Works!* data indicates that students performed as well as or better than similar students statewide on the two 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination: Writing subtests. However, on the 2001 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, only 35% of seventh graders met or exceeded the standard. (*following students, observing classes, 2001 New Standards Reference Examination results, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, classroom textbooks, talking with students, teachers, and administrators, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

Students are involved in various reading activities throughout the day. They read silently and out loud for understanding and enjoyment. As they read, many students successfully learn to analyze literary characters, make inferences, interpret directions, find connections to their everyday experiences, identify problems, and look for information. By recognizing and discussing unfamiliar words, they build their vocabularies. These activities help students become strong readers. This strength is reflected in a solid performance on state reading assessments. The *2001 Information Works!* data indicates that students performed better than similar students statewide on both 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination Reading subtests. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, 2001 Information Works!, 2000 New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination School Summary, classroom textbooks, talking with students and teachers*)

Problem solving skills are demonstrated in a variety of ways across the curriculum. Some students are able to interpret graphs, build models, use manipulatives, read maps, brainstorm ideas, and graphically organize their thoughts. Through various activities students are beginning to acquire the skills necessary to become problem solvers. They make predictions, and are involved in questioning, decision-making, and spatial thinking. In some classes students experiment, question results, and form conclusions. In some classes they also work independently, and in pairs and small groups, to complete portfolios, the Problem of the Week, hands-on activities, solutions to real life problems, and computations. Students use technology, such as graphing calculators and computers, as tools to solve problems. These activities encourage students to become better problem solvers. However, these activities are not occurring in all classes or with sufficient frequency. While eighth grade students perform as well as similar students statewide on the 2000 New

Standards Reference Examination results referenced in 2001 *Information Works!*, only 24% meet or exceed the standard in problem solving on the 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination: Problem Solving. (*following students, 2001 New Standards Mathematics Reference Examination results, 2001 Information Works!, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom textbooks, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

Commendations for Riverside Middle School

Cooperative, respectful, and proud students

Community-minded students who display good citizenship

Recommendations for Riverside Middle School

Provide students with greater academic challenges.

Encourage students to take charge of their own learning.

Increase opportunities for reading, writing, and problem solving across the curriculum.

Provide students with more direction for successful group collaboration.

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *2001 Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*
- ◆ *Riverside Grade 6 Writing Program*
- ◆ *2000 SALT Survey Report*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *School Profile, SALT Binder*
- ◆ *school improvement plan*

Conclusions

Reading is a priority at Riverside Middle School. Everyone on the staff models reading for enjoyment during the weekly silent reading program. Both teachers and students enthusiastically read out loud in class. Many writing assignments are linked to previous reading assignments. Teachers include library visits in their lessons so that students can borrow books for enjoyment and collect information from books and the Internet for class assignments and research. Teachers issue book logs so that students can document their progress toward the goal of reading 25 books per year. These practices contribute to exceptional student performance on state reading assessments, as reported in 2001 Information Works!, when eighth grade reading

performance is compared to similar students statewide. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, 2001 Information Works!, School Profile, SALT Binder, reviewing completed and ongoing student work*)

Teachers at Riverside Middle School employ a variety of teaching strategies. Many teachers lecture and question, assign and review homework, and use overhead projectors and chalkboards. When these strategies are used exclusively, students are neither fully challenged nor fully stimulated to take charge of their own learning. Some teachers utilize cooperative groups and make use of games to reinforce and review learning. They also assist students in organizing information in ways that address different learning styles. A few teach collaboratively. Some teachers model thinking and doing, as well as problem solving strategies. Teachers involve their students in the writing process (prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing) and in various other activities. They assign long- and short-term projects and use graphic organizers to help clarify thinking. These strategies afford students the opportunity to construct their own knowledge. However, student-driven discussion is noticeably absent from classroom activities. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and staff, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, 2000 SALT Survey Report, Staff Chart D.1-D.4 Riverside Middle School Grade 6 Writing Program, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

Standards-based instruction is in the process of being implemented. There are varying levels of standards in use. Standards are posted in the classrooms. Some students have an understanding of the standards and some teachers require students to cite standards for their work. Some teachers have had standards training, and many teachers use rubrics to assess student work. Some rubrics reflect the standards more effectively than others. These rubrics clearly define for students what the criteria are for meeting the standards. There is, however, no uniformity in the quality and use of rubrics. (*observing classes, following students, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing Riverside Middle School self assessment*)

Teacher expectations for students vary. Some teachers hold their students to high expectations and guide their students to meet them. Other teachers have the same high expectations but lack the strategies to guide their students. However, some teachers do not have high expectations; their classes are generally teacher-centered. Teachers in these classes allow extensive time for students to review and do homework, take notes, and complete worksheets. Some teachers maximize the use of class time by coordinating several activities simultaneously. These teachers efficiently move students from task to task, while other teachers struggle with these transitions, so that the entire class time is not effectively used for student learning. (*observing classes, following students, 2000 SALT Survey Report Staff Chart C.3, meeting with students and parents, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students and teachers*)

Some teachers are constantly reaching for a higher standard of teaching practices and energetically seeking out current and up-to-date methods and materials. They set and achieve high standards for themselves. Other teachers are also working very hard, but need direction toward meeting these same goals. A few teachers, who are content with the status quo, do not seek to improve their craft. (*observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team and students, talking with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing classroom assessments*)

The special education teachers are among the teachers that “get it.” They are compassionate, caring, and dedicated. They are positive role models for their students. They set high expectations and guide their students to meet them. These teachers’ classrooms are standards-based. They use rubrics with clearly defined

criteria and their students both self- and peer-assess. The students maintain journals and portfolios and work collaboratively. When possible, special education students are included in regular education classes. Some special education teachers work collaboratively with regular education teachers, striving to meet the needs of all students. (*observing classes, following students, talking with students, teachers, and staff, interviewing teachers about the work of their students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments*)

Commendations for Riverside Middle School

Teacher commitment to students and pride in their school

Pockets of teaching excellence

Teachers ready for change

Recommendations for Riverside Middle School

Obtain professional development for implementing standards-based instruction, designing rubrics, looking at student work, and facilitating collaborative groups.

Extend the Grade 6 Writing Program through Grade 8.

Develop questioning techniques that encourage higher order thinking skills.

Involve students in student led discussions.

Learn strategies to challenge students to construct their own knowledge.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Increase funds and opportunities for all teachers to participate in professional development activities cited in the teacher recommendations.

6. FINDINGS ON THE SCHOOL

Sources of Evidence

- ◆ *observing classes*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *talking with many students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing records of professional development activities*
- ◆ *meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents*
- ◆ *following students*
- ◆ *reviewing school improvement plan*
- ◆ *reviewing East Providence District strategic plan*
- ◆ *East Providence School District Appraisal of Teacher Performance*
- ◆ *2000 SALT Survey Report*
- ◆ *reviewing classroom assessments*
- ◆ *Weekly Communicator*
- ◆ *Homework Hotline*
- ◆ *Riverside Middle School Agenda*
- ◆ *Riverside Middle School Web Page*

Conclusions

Riverside Middle School puts students first. A safe and nurturing environment is actively cultivated here. A strong work ethic and a positive attitude by all toward school and each other contribute to an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The parents feel welcome and are very involved in their children's education. There is a shared sense of purpose and trust among the members of this community. The principal is highly respected by the school community and has been instrumental in setting the tone for the school. Differences are valued here. (*following students, 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 administrators, 2000 SALT Survey Report, Parent Chart A.2)

Riverside Middle School has been changed structurally and organizationally to fit the middle school model, but it has yet to become one philosophically. Far too much lecturing and too many teacher-centered classes, the absence of interdisciplinary units, and the inconsistent use of effective teaching strategies are some barriers to progress. Ineffective use of team planning time to plan and coordinate curriculum, to share successful strategies, and to look at student work also impedes this progress. Teams fail to take advantage of the flexible blocks of time in the schedule to extend teaching time and integrate curriculum. Technology has not yet been fully integrated into the classroom instruction. In spite of the presence of computers in the classroom, most remain underutilized. As a result, students do not have optimal access to this important research tool. Teachers report that, although they are middle school certified, they would like additional training for proper middle school functioning. The outdated teacher evaluation instrument does not facilitate a valid assessment of teacher performance nor does it help teachers improve their practice. Teacher leaders and the administrators have yet to clarify their vision for improving student learning in this school.

(following students, observing classes, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing records of professional development activities, 2000 SALT Survey Report, Staff Chart 3.1, reviewing district strategic plan, East Providence School Department Appraisal of Teacher Performance)

Exemplary communication vehicles between home and school are evident at Riverside Middle School. Parents and staff report that good communication exists between home and school. *The Weekly Communicator*, the Homework Hotline, the school's updated web site, and the Agenda keep all informed. Faculty and staff communications are student-focused, resulting in students feeling a sense of belonging to the school. The administrators are out and about the school, making connections with individual faculty, staff, and students. Internal communications, however, are less effective. Discussions at hou[TAWI]se and team planning meetings are not routinely communicated to the school principal. Some members of the faculty are not included on teams, and, therefore, they feel "out of the loop". Curriculum issues are not consistently communicated across grades. Some teachers report that they do not receive information on professional development opportunities. There is no mechanism in place for teachers to share best practices. Existing computer technology is not utilized for recording attendance, grade reporting, and scheduling.

(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators, The Riverside Middle School Web Page, The Weekly Communicator, the Homework Hotline, Riverside Middle School Agenda)

The school improvement plan is in its infancy, lacking the substance and detail necessary to carry out the school mission. It is not a sufficient guide for accomplishing the goals the school has set for itself. The plan focuses on making plans, and does not define how and when these plans will be carried out. There is no evaluative component to measure its effectiveness. It is not clear that the school community has contributed to the formulation of this document. A vision for future action is not clearly articulated here. *(meeting with the school improvement team and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with teachers and school administrators)*

Commendations for Riverside Middle School

Personable, approachable, dedicated principal

A caring and nurturing community

Excellent communication between home and school

Orderly, calm, and quiet atmosphere

Spacious, clean, and well maintained facility

Recommendations for Riverside Middle School

Identify and empower teacher leaders to take a more active role in setting the course for school change.

Adopt a middle school framework and plan professional development to support systemic change. Take advantage of professional organizations for guidance and support in developing a middle school philosophy.

Revise the school improvement plan to include timelines, detailed action plans, and evaluation tools to measure progress. Include all stakeholders in this revision. Seek help and guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Education for school improvement planning.

Develop procedures for effective team planning time. Include time for looking at student work and sharing best practices. Use agendas and keep minutes to communicate and share information with others in the learning community.

Use faculty meetings to share best practice.

Find ways to incorporate unified arts faculty with existing teams.

Explore ways to integrate technology into the curriculum. Provide faculty with professional development in this area.

Take full advantage of your data management information system. Provide staff with technical training in all areas including attendance, grade reporting, and scheduling.

Recommendations for East Providence School District

Create an effective teacher evaluation instrument that supports standards-based instruction. Implement it in a timely manner.

Increase funds and opportunities for all teachers to participate in professional development activities cited in the school recommendations.

7. Final Advice to the School

Riverside Middle School is a nurturing, hard working, and vital community. In its sunny atmosphere, students flourish. They are well behaved, ready, and eager to take charge of their learning. The faculty and staff are dedicated and caring; the principal is highly respected and admired by all; and the parents are exceptionally involved and invested in the school's success.

This learning community has enormous potential to become an outstanding middle school, academically. However, there are areas that need attention. While standards-based instruction with the effective use of rubrics has begun, there is a great need and a desire for professional development in the understanding of middle school philosophy and in the ways to improve teaching strategies so that more teachers become skilled in facilitating student-centered lessons. Teacher leaders must be encouraged and empowered to help steer the course Riverside Middle School sets to accomplish its goals and continue its transition.

Articulate a vision for how this school will change and function in both the short- and long-term. Sit down collectively and map out a working document that clearly delineates the actions to take to make your vision a reality. The cohesiveness of this community and the positive attitude of administrators, staff, and students signify that Riverside Middle School is perfectly poised to make these next steps toward excellence an actuality. Riverside Middle School will “shine” even brighter for your efforts.

Riverside Middle School Improvement Team

Rebekah Gendron, Chair
Robotics Teacher

Barbara Allen
Guidance Coordinator

Jean Arnold
English Department Chair

Connie Crowshaw
English Teacher

M. Jean Douglas
English Teacher

Barbara Faiola
Math Teacher

William Fontes
Principal

Teresa Medeiros
Science Teacher

Carol Mennucci
Reading Teacher

Karen Oliveira
Math Teacher

Ruth Reynolds
Parent

Lee-Ann Towne
Parent

Celeste Verria
Health/Physical Education Teacher

Diane Wetmore
Talent Development Teacher

Allen Winter
PTA President

The SALT Visit Team

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

Jennifer Booth
Aspiring Principal
6th Grade House Leader, Department Chair
Portsmouth Middle School
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

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School Nurse Teacher
Hugh B. Bain Middle School
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Assistant to the SALT Program Manager
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Providence, Rhode Island

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Chorus Director, Music Teacher
Tiverton Middle School
Tiverton, Rhode Island

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RITTI Fellow
Grade 7/8 Computer Education Teacher
Gallagher Middle School
Smithfield, Rhode Island

Marcia Quigley
Grade 6 English Language Arts Teacher
Park View Middle School
Cranston, Rhode Island

Marilyn Tappero
Math Teacher, Department Chair
South Kingstown High School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Cheryl Tutalo
Principal
John F. Deering Middle School
West Warwick, Rhode Island

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

Endorsement of SALT Visit Team Report

Riverside Middle School

November 9, 2001

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.
November 28, 2001

[TAW1]M I think this use is ok. Les is lucky, but most of us in the education community will know it.