



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School

PROVIDENCE

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

February 11, 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 Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School from February 7 - 11, 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 carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful 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 Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School?*

*How well does the teaching at Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School affect learning?*

*How well does Oliver Hazard Perry 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 schoolwork, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Oliver Hazard Perry 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) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) 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 assures 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 125 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Additionally, the team interviewed faculty and staff at the school for more than 61 hours during the visit week.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 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 Oliver Hazard Perry 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 Providence School District 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 amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Providence School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who looks only at the recommendations misses important information.

## 2. PROFILE OF OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School in Providence, Rhode Island, was built in 1929 as a junior high school. This large brick and concrete building has two sub-basements, a basement, three main floors and a partial fourth floor that once contained a greenhouse. Many of the shop-related rooms in the basement were converted to classrooms in the 1970s and 1980s. Notable features of the building include high ceilings, wide corridors, separate boys' and girls' gymnasiums and a large auditorium with a full performance stage. A city-owned ball field and a fenced area for off-street parking are adjacent to the school. This year a Community Resource Center was built in the school to provide a meeting space for professional development activities and other school needs.

This large school houses students in grades six, seven and eight, and the student body currently comprises 748 children. Five-hundred-and-three students (69%) are Hispanic, 132 (18%) are African American, 56 (8%) are white, 33 (5%) are Asian and two (less than 1%) are Native American. Ninety-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. One-hundred-and-eighty-two students (25%) are in the ESL or bilingual programs. Additionally, one-hundred-and-seventy students (23%) receive special education services.

Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School is in the fifth year of corrective action due to its low test scores and its failure to meet several improvement targets. The school was placed under the guidance of an oversight team comprising members of the state department of education, the Providence Public School Department, Perry School and the Providence Teachers' Union. This team is charged with approving school improvement plans and new programs of action. Many of the new personnel, programs and initiatives in curriculum, school management and outreach come from this effort to turn the school around. As a result of corrective action and school improvement plans, some interventions at this school include intensive professional development and schedule modification, as well as changes in the classrooms, school and community relations.

Three administrators lead Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School as a team. The school has been reorganized with three grade level houses, each on a separate floor and each led by a different administrator. The grade level administrators move with the students as they progress through the grades. This administrative structure is one action approved by the oversight committee and the school improvement team to improve this school. In conjunction with the administrative leaders, the School Improvement Team serves as the principal governing body and decision-making entity at the school. The School Improvement Team comprises five faculty-led leadership teams and an administrative implementation team.

There are 67 teachers, 12 teacher aides, four clerks, six custodians, and five kitchen aides, for a total 92.5 full-time equivalent positions. Of this total, there are 8 classrooms of regular education students per grade and 5 self-contained classrooms that provide specialized educational services. Four classrooms support English language learners, and one classroom provides intensive services for educationally and behaviorally challenged students.

Several new initiatives are underway at Perry in response to the state-required intervention. The school has adopted READ 180 for 234 students, who are reading two or more years below grade level. READ 180 provides these students with extended blocks of instructional time in reading. Students who perform two or more years below grade level in math are instructed with the PLATO program. Other instructional initiatives include the implementation of grade level expectations, disciplinary literacy, Institute for Learning practices and standards-based instruction. The school also recently hired an additional instructional coach and is currently implementing phase two of the Positive School program to support teachers in improving classroom behavior.

Perry Middle School also is implementing a variety of programs and initiatives to support the students and their families. The intramural sports program is tied directly to student attendance and the academic and behavioral expectations of the school. The school recently implemented a Student Planning Center as a positive intervention prior to punitive consequences for chronically disruptive students. A parent teacher organization, several student and family events held at the school, and partnerships with community organizations and businesses, such as the Rhode Island Children's Crusade, the Urban League, Volunteers in Public Schools, the Rhode Island Bar Association and Amica Mutual Insurance also support the needs of Perry students and their families.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School is a welcoming and cheerful school. The elaborate architecture provides an element of grandeur to the clean and well-maintained building accentuated throughout with bright and colorful art and murals. Also evident throughout the school are the many reminders of the 'Perry Pride' program and school rules that encourage all students to attend school, to come prepared and ready to learn, to respect others, self and property, and to prevent and resolve conflicts. As a result of 'Perry Pride,' the school is a vibrant and safe community in which to learn.

The students of this school are energetic and hopeful for their futures. They are happy to come to Perry Middle School, and they say the "worst part of their day is 2:25," when they must go home. While many students struggle to achieve at Perry, most students understand the importance of school and the importance of obtaining an education. Students are eager to learn, and they respond positively to teachers who challenge them to learn and who hold them to high standards of achievement and behavior.

The administration, faculty and staff at Perry Middle School have an obvious affection and concern for their students and provide a nurturing environment for all. This urban middle school is led by not one, but by three dedicated and dynamic administrators. They work as a close and effective team with each member serving a different grade level. The teaching and support staff has joined the administrative team to make Perry a better place to teach and learn. The faculty and staff say that they recognize their challenges, that Perry is a school in transition and that they have begun to put plans in place and are receiving the necessary training to move the school forward.

In its fifth year of corrective action, this school faces challenges that are many and great. While students recognize the importance of obtaining an education, they struggle to see a connection between what happens in their daily lives and what happens daily in their school. In many cases their aspirations are higher than their teachers' expectations of them. Furthermore, students in the upper grades and those in many of the general education classes often seem to have an air of 'learned helplessness,' and they seem disconnected and discouraged by the learning they receive in school.

Recent notable gains in language arts scores on the state assessments, as well as the promising early results from the school-based interventions in literacy, numeracy and the behavior support plan, show that by working together the teachers and administrators at this school are making gains and can continue to move forward. While many promising programs to improve academic performance and student behavior have been implemented, much work remains to be done to deliver the emerging vision at Perry Middle School that all students can learn and achieve.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Despite their obvious effort to produce quality writing, many students at Perry Middle School struggle to write well. They do not always know what makes writing good or how to improve their written work. Many students say that writing is hard and that they need more help to become better writers. Many also say that they need examples of good writing so that they can become more successful and effective writers. Furthermore, while students say that teachers use rubrics to score their writing, they do not understand how to use those rubrics to write effectively, to revise their work or to improve it. Many students have difficulty choosing correct words, spelling words correctly and following the rules and conventions of proper language usage in their writing. While students may receive high scores on many writing assignments throughout the school, their written work often is not accomplished. This scoring practice does not set high expectations for them. Many students also do not use or understand the steps of the writing process that their teachers use to teach writing. Some students did improve their ability to write, as evidenced by gains in the scores of the writing effectiveness subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination from 16% of the students in 2002 to 34% of the students in 2004 that met or exceeded the standard. Examples of effective writing show that these students can develop and support an idea, revise their writing in response to teacher feedback and the use of rubrics and have pride in their final products. Nevertheless, such effective student writing is not the norm in all grade levels or subject areas. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and school administrators, 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 results, school and district report cards)*

Students' ability to read well varies greatly throughout this school. While some students read at their grade levels, most do not. Many, however, are making improvements in their ability to read. Those who read well know how to question, predict and reflect. They read fluently and independently and can explain what they have learned from their reading to others and make connections between different texts and use these skills in science and math, as well as in English. These good readers say that reading is important "because anything you do in life you need to read." Many students, however, do not read well or at their appropriate grade levels. Therefore, it is not surprising that 64% of the students did not meet standard on the basic understanding subtest and 93% of the students did not meet standard on the analysis and interpretation subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination. These struggling readers do not know what good readers do or how they improve. Many of these students stop reading when they are stuck; they wait for their teacher to prompt them to continue, or they read the words without comprehending the meaning of the text. This often causes them to become frustrated and leads to their acting out in class and disrupting the learning of others. Many of these struggling readers lack the motivation to read. Subsequently they say that reading is not important to them. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district and school policies and practices, meeting with the school improvement team, students, district administrators, school and district report cards, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Students at Perry Middle School have limited opportunities to problem solve and, as a result, most are ineffective problem solvers. It is not surprising, therefore, that only 2% met the standard for problem solving on the mathematics subtest and only 7% met the standard in the analysis and interpretation subtest of the New Standards Reference Examination. Most students say that they problem solve in all of their classes, yet they neither understand what problem solving is nor know how to use problem-solving strategies in their schoolwork. Students think problem solving is completing routine math problems or basic assignments, rather than thinking critically, conducting in-depth investigations, connecting prior knowledge, developing new questions or justifying and explaining their solutions. Because they lack understanding and skills, they do not persist when they are faced with challenging classroom work. They depend on their teachers for help, or they give up. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Students at Perry Middle School have hopes and plans for their futures. They say they would like to be lawyers, teachers, nurses, engineers and even paleontologists. Most say that they hope to attend college after high school and understand the importance of school and how it will help them improve their lives. Perry students are friendly and respectful of the school and its faculty and staff, and they appreciate the kindness and attention of adults. Many students say that school is the best part of their day and that the “worst part of the day is 2:25,” when they have to go home. In fact, they look for ways to stay after school for dance club, the robotics club and the intramural basketball league. They would like more choices including band, chorus, computers and flag football. Most students are energetic and want to excel in their schoolwork. Sometimes their excitability interferes with their learning and prevents them from behaving properly in both the school and their classrooms. Many of these students struggle to connect their understanding of the value of school to what they learn in their classes. *(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 school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

- ◆ *Students recognize the importance of school and appreciate the kindness and attention of adults.*
- ◆ *Many students do not understand what makes a good reader or writer or how to improve their reading and writing.*
- ◆ *Students are not successful problem solvers.*
- ◆ *Students are not persistent learners.*
- ◆ *Students improve their reading, writing and problem solving through practice.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

While teachers in most classrooms help their students become better writers by providing them with numerous opportunities to write, the teaching of writing varies greatly both in quality and expectations for achievement. Also, teachers in most classrooms do not adequately or effectively teach their students to use proper grammar and writing conventions. Perry teachers, who teach writing effectively, provide explicit instruction, guide their students in the steps of the writing process and hold their students to a high standard. Many other teachers are learning to teach writing effectively, including the necessary, direct work with students in class to help them draft and organize their writing. Some of these teachers are also beginning to help their students revise their work by providing feedback and through the use of rubrics but, they do not yet do this effectively. Other teachers do not teach writing effectively. They simply assign writing topics or assignments to their students without teaching them how to write and without having high expectations for their success. They do not set and review criteria or guide their students to use words from word walls or teaching resources that are available to them. They do not effectively require students to revise their work. Regardless of their success in teaching writing, many teachers acknowledge that they need to improve their writing teaching and have found the ongoing professional development helpful. *(following students, observing classes, 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, reviewing records of professional development activities, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Teachers' success in teaching reading also varies significantly. Perry teachers, who effectively teach reading, teach their students explicit reading strategies such as making predictions, retelling stories, and identifying and analyzing elements of the text. These teachers provide students time to read in class, and they succeed in engaging all their students in reading. They invite students to read more by having books readily available and accessible to them. Not surprisingly, students in these classes enjoy reading and become better readers. Many teachers are working to improve their reading teaching. They acknowledge the value of the many training sessions, professional development activities and the new materials and programs that are available to them. Teachers and administrators also say that the instructional coaches have proved key to improving their teaching. Furthermore, teachers say they have learned from sharing their practices with their colleagues and that "teachers and students are learning to become better readers side-by-side." Those teachers, who do not effectively teach reading, do not explicitly teach reading strategies. They simply assign students reading materials, focus exclusively on the content of their subject, do not check for student understanding, and do not require students to stay on task while reading. Often these teachers do not talk with students about what they read or find other ways to motivate them to read. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, reviewing records of professional development activities, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Unlike writing and reading, there has been little improvement in the teaching of problem solving. Only a few teachers give a high enough priority to teaching problem solving. While teachers and administrators say students are real world problem solvers, they do not have high expectations for their ability to problem solve in school. Many of these teachers shy away from problem solving; they say that their students cannot succeed because problem solving is too difficult for them. Still other teachers do not have a clear understanding of what problem solving is or how to provide their students such opportunities. These teachers provide students with the answers to problems without allowing them to struggle with their own ideas and come to their own solutions; they provide only routine skill assignments. They do not challenge their students to engage in higher order thinking. The few teachers who do effectively teach problem solving create challenging problems for their students to investigate and solve. They ask their students to develop their own questions and find their own answers through inquiry and investigation. They expect and require students to explain their ideas and alternative solutions and to reflect on why they chose one solution over another. These teachers say that, when students are challenged, they can persist and succeed. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Teachers at Perry Middle School genuinely care for their students. Most teachers embrace the changes that are occurring at this school and say they need to move forward as a team with the administrators to help their students improve. These teachers take advantage of the numerous professional development opportunities available and attempt to implement these strategies in their classrooms. Teachers say that they share lessons and resources and particularly appreciate the instructional coaches. While teachers use rubrics for a variety of purposes, their inconsistent expectations among classes and subjects confuse students and do not set clear standards for achievement. The inconsistent practice of effective classroom routines, such as beginning and ending classes on time, keeping all students on task throughout lessons and providing cooperative groups with a clear purpose, further confuses the students' understanding of what is expected of them. This confusion contributes to classroom distractions and the loss of instructional time. While teachers care for their students, their expectations for academic achievement are not as high as their students' hopes and expectations. This results in teachers not challenging their students to the extent that they should. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

**Commendations for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School**

Teachers who genuinely care about their students

Teachers who provide numerous opportunities for students to write

Teachers who are improving their ability to teach reading and writing throughout the disciplines

Teachers who participate in and use professional development

Teachers who are open to change and who welcome change

**Recommendations for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School**

Raise expectations for student achievement, and teach to those standards.

Develop school-wide practices, and provide explicit instruction for teaching reading, writing and problem solving.

Make problem solving a priority in all content areas.

Provide explicit instruction and opportunities for students to revise and improve their work through the consistent use of rubrics.

Improve and develop the consistency of classroom practices and routines.

Continue to use the instructional coaches and one another to improve teaching and student learning.

Continue to participate in professional development, and implement those practices in your classrooms.

Continue to provide numerous opportunities for students to write while improving the teaching of grammar and writing conventions.

**Recommendations for Providence School District**

Continue to provide professional development in all content areas.

Explore more effective ways to help teachers teach problem solving.

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

### Conclusions

Oliver Hazard Perry is in its fifth year of corrective action. In conjunction with a state oversight team, the school implemented several intervention programs to foster student achievement in teaching and learning. Read 180 program, an intensive reading support program, provides reading instruction for students who are reading below grade level. When implemented effectively, students' reading ability improves. Between September and January 2005 many students' reading scores or Lexile numbers actually decreased while this program was in use. Teachers, however, remain enthusiastic about the potential of Read 180. Although they say it is helping many students to improve, they report concerns about technology and classroom management. Students enrolled in Plato, an intensive math intervention program, have made considerable gains in their math performance—111 of the 119 students enrolled in the program have made gains. Teachers find this program is a great way for students to catch up on their math skills and to prepare themselves to succeed in a more challenging curriculum. While the teachers in the school are attempting to implement the scope and sequence curriculum and to implement consistent school-wide practices and classroom routines, they are not implementing these consistently. Perry Middle School has also implemented several school-wide initiatives such as hiring an instructional coach and establishing the Positive Schools Program and the Credit Recovery after school program. These effective programs provide assistance to teachers and students throughout the school. The final intervention component requires the school to build partnerships with families and the community. The school has built an important partnership with Amica Mutual Insurance Company, which provides the school with considerable financial and material support. The school has not been as successful in building partnerships with parents. While parents say they feel welcomed at this school, they express a need for more communication and for that to be timelier. Parents want to know how their children are doing in school, what after school programs are available and how they can help their children gain admission to the high schools of their choice. Collectively, these interventions are a positive step and remain a work in progress. *(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 school improvement plan, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, Oliver Hazard Perry CAP Leadership Team, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

The three administrators at Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School are out to create an environment to improve teaching and learning. These dynamic, dedicated and proactive leaders share their administrative duties using a consensus leadership model to run the school in conjunction with the School Improvement Team. Teachers say the new administration is "a welcome change." District administrators also support the principals and the new leadership model and expect this model to take hold in other schools around the district. The principals say that their primary focus is to establish order and create a safe and secure environment in which all students can learn. Now that school-wide discipline has improved, the emphasis on this focus gets in the way of the school shifting to a more balanced focus that includes a major emphasis on student academic achievement. The administrative team successfully uses extensive data analysis to monitor, inform and guide

their decision making about all issues in the school. The principals say that, while they have been given full responsibility and authority by the district to effect change at Perry, they are occasionally frustrated by district policy and budget decisions. For example, they were unable to continue teaming this year, even though the School Improvement Team and the teachers in the school saw that as a top priority. The administrators recognize the need to help teachers improve their teaching. They see themselves not only as administrators, but also as “head teachers.” The tools available to the administrators to help teachers improve, such as the teacher evaluation system and the mentoring program, are not adequate. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

The majority of teachers who teach special populations including ESL, bilingual and special education, as well as those who teach the sixth grades, provide more effective instruction and hold noticeably higher expectations for student achievement than is the school norm. These teachers teach with a purpose and encourage their students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. They nurture and support their students and expect their students to learn. They routinely and effectively use cooperative learning and differentiate their instruction to meet the diverse needs of the learners in their classrooms. These effective practices promote student learning and minimize discipline issues. These teachers say that they maintain close contact with their students’ parents to inform them of how their children are performing and to obtain their support. In special education classes smaller group instruction along with differentiated instruction is tailored to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers in ESL and bilingual classes make connections between their students’ cultures and the school. Teachers in the sixth grade classes effectively model reading and writing strategies across the curriculum. Teachers, parents and school and district administrators report that students in these effective and supportive classrooms are out-gaining students in other grades and classrooms. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, 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, 2004 SALT Survey report, school and district report cards)*

According to all stakeholders, the culture of Perry Middle School has improved significantly. Teachers and administrators work together; students like coming to school, and parents feel welcome. Recent renovations and thorough maintenance make this school a comfortable and inviting place to learn; however, as with all old buildings, there are still needs for further repair—such as the school roof. The teachers and administrators say that the Perry Pride program also has contributed significantly to the positive atmosphere. The posting of rules throughout the building, the ‘Perry Bucks’ reward system, the student planning center, the community resource center, the honors assemblies and the incentives to boost student attendance—all make this school a better place to learn. While the concentrated effort to improve school-wide discipline and attendance has worked, gains and celebrations of academic achievement are limited in the Perry Pride program. Although students are now ready to grow and achieve academically, teachers and administrators still say discipline must come first. *(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 school improvement plan, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

**Commendations for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School**

Positive improvement in school culture

Dynamic and dedicated administrators

Effective instruction in special populations and the sixth grade classrooms

Perry Pride Program

Considerable gains from the Plato program

**Recommendations for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School**

Continue the focus on maintaining appropriate student discipline while increasing emphasis on academic achievement.

Continue to work as a school-wide team to improve teaching and learning.

Continue to implement and improve the delivery of the interventions identified in the Providence One Plan.

Develop effective strategies for administrators to support teachers in need of assistance in classroom instruction and management.

Develop strategies to provide more consistent school-wide classroom routines and practices.

Work with the Providence School District to reinstitute teaming.

Explore innovative and effective ways to build partnerships with parents that go beyond traditional avenues.

Continue your partnership with Amica Mutual Insurance Company, and look to acquire partnerships with other interested parties.

**Recommendations for Providence School District**

Reinstitute teaming at Perry Middle School.

Work with the leadership team and interested parties to improve the teacher evaluation and mentoring process to improve school-wide instruction.

Continue to support the new leadership and leadership model.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School is making strides and should continue its positive efforts to improve school climate and academic achievement. One of the most important qualities of this school is its wonderfully diverse population of learners. Your students want to learn and can learn. Make their dreams yours.

Instill academic rigor across all classes and all contents areas. Strike a balance between your focus on discipline and your focus on academic success. Share the secrets and tools of teachers who are teaching well so that all classrooms can support substantial student learning.

Continue to implement the recommendations and interventions needed to improve your school. Continue to link the efforts of teachers and administrators to reach your shared vision for excellence. Find innovative and culturally appropriate ways to build partnerships with parents; they are one of your most valuable resources.

You are making progress. Continue to strive for excellence. Make Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School an even better place to teach and learn.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School

February 11, 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 two portions 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.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

DATE: March 11, 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 Oliver Hazard Perry 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 Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School.

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

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *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 Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2004 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2003 Information Works!*
  - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
  - 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*School and District Report Cards*

*Providence Schools Scope and Sequence Binders: Grade 8 Science and Mathematics, Grade 7 Science and Mathematics, Grade 6 Science, Mathematics, and Language Arts*

*Providence School Department: Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers*

*Annual Report on Progress in the Positive Schools Initiative, Year 1*

*Brief Mid-Year Progress Summary Positive Schools Initiative, Perry's Pride Year 2*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, Data Read 180 and Plato*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, School Profile*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School Corrective Action Plan Leadership Teams*

*The Positive Schools Program Binder*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, Student Planning Center Binder*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, Communication Chain Folder*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, Professional Time: District-Based, School-Based Folder*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, Guidance Department News Folder*

*Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, School Improvement Team Meeting Minutes, 2004-2005 Binder*

## **State Assessment Results for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School**

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

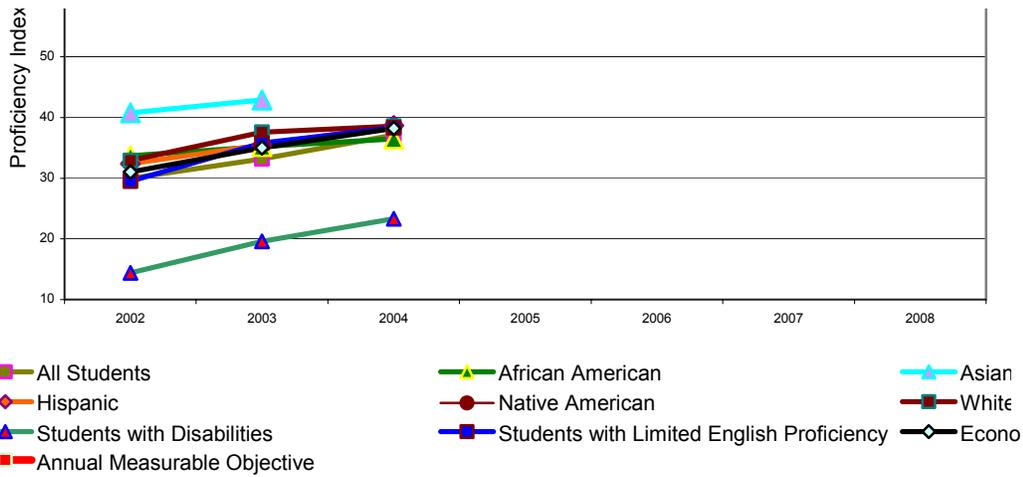
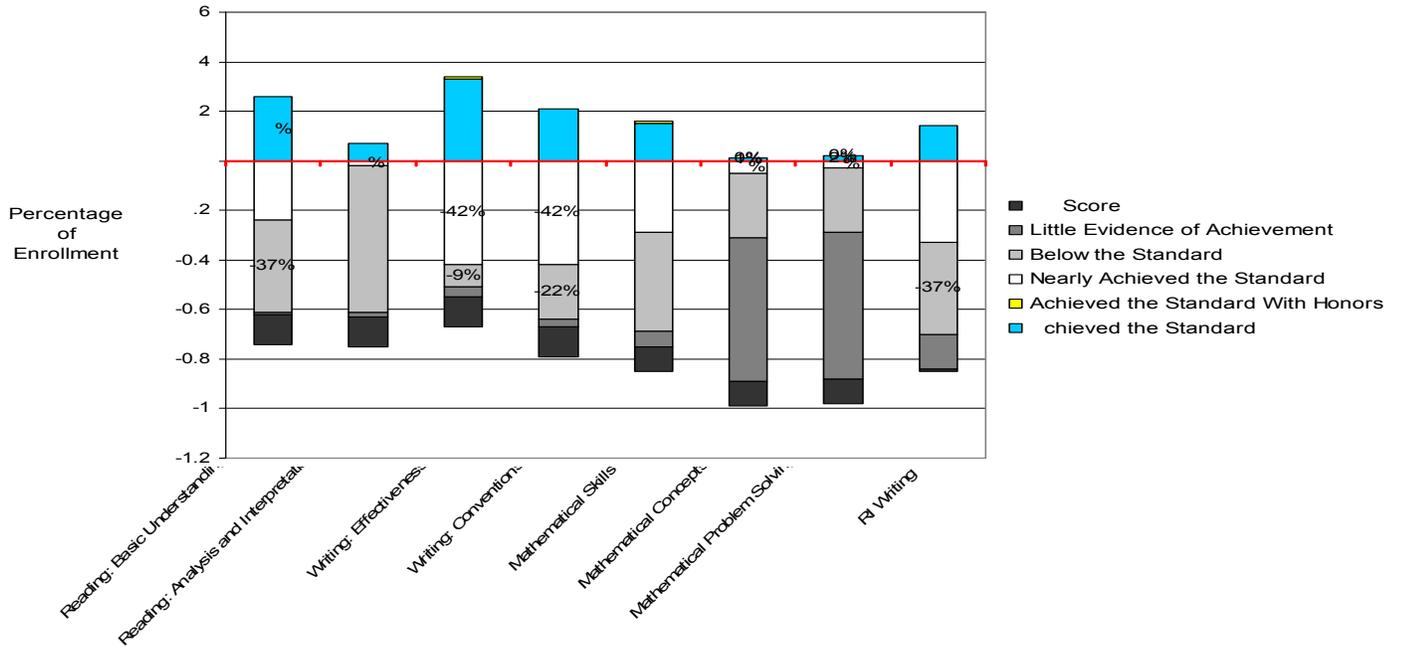
- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

### **RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

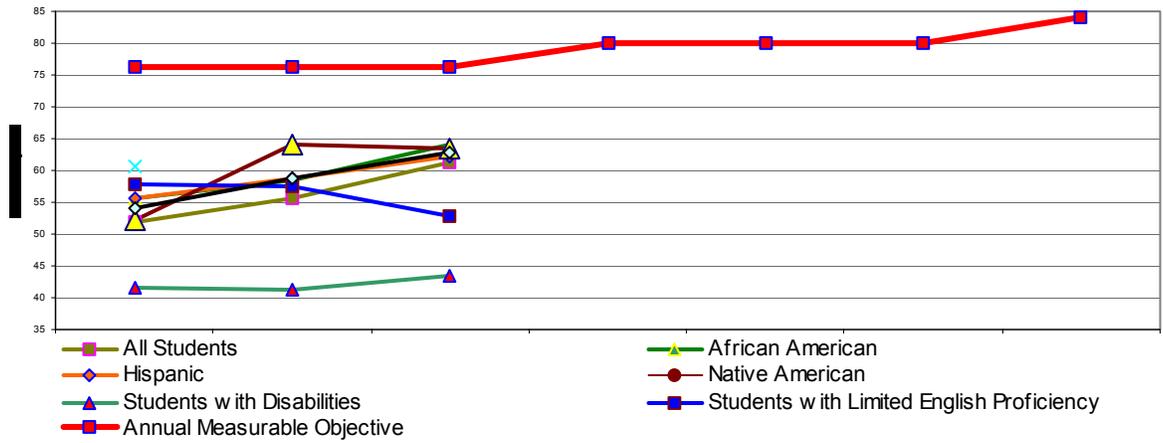
The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board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

Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

Results across student groups within the school  
Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School State Assessment Results of 2004



Annual Proficiency, Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School, ELA, Gr. 8



**REPORT CARD FOR OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

This Report Card show the performance of Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School compared to the school’s annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School as a School In Need of Improvement, Insufficient Progress.

Table 3. Report Card for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School

2004 Rhode Island School Report Card

RI SCHOOL: OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL  
 RI DISTRICT: PROVIDENCE  
 GRADE: 08

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE: 68				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 46.1			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
All Students	61.1	YES††	66	80.3	37.1	YES†	44.9	66.5
African Americans	64.1	YES†	65.9	71.2	36.5	NO	42.5	49.5
Asian	*	YES	71	79.3	*	YES	52.3	64.9
Hispanic	62.3	YES†	65.5	69.5	38.7	YES†	43.9	48.8
Native Americans	*	YES	66.3	76.7	*	YES	39.7	58.6
White	63.4	NO	69.5	84.4	38.6	NO	51.1	72.8
Students with Disabilities	43.3	NO	45.5	63.3	23.3	NO	31.4	46.8
Students with Limited English Proficiency	52.9	NO	55.3	61	38.3	NO	38.1	43.3
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	62.8	YES††	65.8	70.8	38.2	YES†	44.1	50.9

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	92.2	NO	95.7	98.6
Mathematics	94.6	YES	96.3	98.8

ATTENDANCE RATE	Target: 90%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
	89.1	YES	89.2	93.6

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	6	3
Mathematics Index Score	5	4
Percent Tested	1	1
Attendance Rate	1	0

**THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:**

**School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress**

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](#).

Information Works! data for Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**THE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Jane Forbes  
Chairperson

Peter Bullock  
Teacher

Jeffrey Cameron  
Teacher

Jeffrey Doucette  
Teacher

Luke Driver  
Dean of Discipline

James Duffy  
Teacher

Diane Fagan  
Teacher

Gloria Jackson  
Manager of Operations

Carol Jutras  
Teacher

Leonard Kernian  
Teacher

Samnang Kea-Or  
Teacher

Tilda Lewis-Grant  
Teacher

Barbara McArdle  
Teacher

Karen O'Donnell  
Teacher

Robert Palombo  
CAP Administrator

Laura Travis  
Teacher

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

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Standards Coach  
Pawtucket School Department  
Office of School Improvement and Support Services  
Rhode Island Department of Education  
Regents SALT Fellow  
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Woonsocket Education Department  
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Calcutt Middle School  
Central Falls School Department  
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Archie R. Cole Middle School  
East Greenwich School Department  
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Richard Kershaw  
Grade 8 Science Teacher & Team Leader  
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Foster-Glocester School Department  
Glocester, Rhode Island