

*GRAPHIC: RIDE Logo*

# **Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

**PROVIDENCE**

## **THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

March 24, 2006

*GRAPHIC: SALT Logo*

**School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	<b>THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT</b> .....	1
	<b>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE</b> .....	2
	<b>USING THE REPORT</b> .....	2
2.	PROFILE OF SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL .....	4
3.	PORTRAIT OF SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT .....	6
4.	FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING .....	7
	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	7
	<b>IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING</b> .....	8
5.	FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING .....	9
	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	9
	<b>COMMENDATIONS FOR SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> .....	10
	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> .....	10
6.	FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING .....	11
	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	11
	<b>COMMENDATIONS FOR SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> .....	14
	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> .....	14
	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT</b> .....	14
7.	FINAL ADVICE TO SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL .....	15
	ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT .....	16
	<b>HOW SALT VISIT REPORTS ARE ENDORSED</b> .....	16
	<b>THE ENDORSEMENT DECISION</b> .....	17
	REPORT APPENDIX .....	18
	<b>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT</b> .....	18
	<b>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> .....	19
	THE SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM .....	23
	MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM .....	24
	CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM .....	25

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School from March 20 to March 24, 2006.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School affect learning?

How well does Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique, and the team has tried to capture what makes Samuel W. Bridgham 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.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-Based Inquiry®<sup>1</sup> (Catalpa Ltd.). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org). Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-8401 or [rick.richards@ride.ri.gov](mailto:rick.richards@ride.ri.gov) for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE did not participate in the editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also ensures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 110 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. In addition, the team spent 30 hours in conversations with teachers, staff, students and administrators.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 33.5 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report
- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit
- Set in the present, and
- Contains the judgment of the team

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

*This report is a decisive component of the Rhode Island school accountability system. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) expects that the school improvement team of this school will consider this report carefully and use it to review its current action plans and write new action plans based on the information it contains.*

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<sup>1</sup> Practice-Based Inquiry® is a registered trademark of Catalpa Ltd.

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 Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching and the school and how it can amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

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

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

## 2. PROFILE OF SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School is an urban school that serves students in grades six through eight. It is located on Westminster Street in Providence, Rhode Island, and is one of eight middle schools in the Providence School District. The school first opened its doors to students in 1977. An addition to the school was completed in 1996.

The population of 594 students is ethnically diverse, consisting of 346 (61%) Hispanics, 122 (21%) African Americans, 56 (9.8%) Asians, 41 (7.2%) White, and four (.07%) Native Americans. Seventy-three students (12.3%) receive self-contained special education services. Of these, twenty-three are enrolled in the 230-Day program for students with severe handicapping conditions. These students are housed in four classrooms and take part in the Alternate Assessments because of their disabilities. Bridgham has students in intensive resource at all three grade levels. These students take Mathematics and English with a special education teacher and are mainstreamed for the other content areas. The school has one self-contained classroom for English Language Learners (ELL students) in grade six and one classroom each for grades seven and eight. Approximately 92% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

The administrative staff consists of one principal and one interim assistant principal. Sixty-one full-time teachers and 22 teacher assistants, three clerks, six custodians, and six kitchen aides serve the students. The teachers are teamed, and there are eight regular education classrooms for the seventh and eighth grades, and five classrooms for the sixth grade. There are five self-contained classrooms, three Intensive Resource classrooms, and four 230-day classrooms.

In response to the state-required intervention, Bridgham offers READ 180 to students in each grade level, who are two years or below reading levels. In addition, most of Bridgham's teachers have attended professional development workshops in Disciplinary Literacy, which helps them integrate literacy across the curriculum. To make the school more conducive to learning, it has a Behavior Support Team, which rewards students who show positive behavior.

The school follows both the Code of Conduct and the Student Success Initiative developed by the Providence School District. This initiative defines how the faculty and staff can make effective connections with students in school. Every morning the principal reads a positive quote on the public address system so that students and teachers can reflect on it during the community meeting.

The school also has an elected School Improvement Team (SIT) that meets every week. It serves as the governing body and the decision-making entity at the school. With input from the faculty, SIT selects professional development activities tailored to meet the needs of the teachers in the school. The administrators work closely with the School Improvement Team to ensure that SIT decisions are fully implemented.

Bridgham Middle School has a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that is visible in the school. It has consistently organized monthly meetings at the school for almost three years. Bridgham provides many after school programs to enhance the quality of student lives. Among these are the supplemental programs such as Princeton Review, Education Station, and Education Twenty-Twenty. Also, Bridgham is one of the sites selected to pilot the Providence After School Alliance (PASA). The Honorable David N. Cicilline, Mayor of Providence, spearheads this after school initiative. Bridgham teachers also run their own after school programs, which include the Homework Club, the Greenhouse Club, and the Chess Club.

In order to decrease the impact of gangs on the school, representatives from the Attorney General's Office work with students on a continuous basis. Bridgham also has a Truancy Court that helps to ensure that students are in school every day. Several community agencies work in partnership with the school to meet students' needs. Among these are the Rhode Island Children's Crusade, Volunteers in Providence, the Southeast Asian Mentoring Group, Big Sisters of Rhode Island, and the John Hope Settlement House. Currently, Bridgham is in the process of forming a partnership with Providence College to further enrich the lives of its students.

### 3. PORTRAIT OF SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Just beyond the front door of Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School one encounters a diverse group of educators, staff, students, and parents. The school is not only diverse in culture, but also in the students' ability and desire to learn, as well as in the educators' abilities and desires to deliver high quality instruction. Students are insecure about their abilities to learn; many shy away from taking academic risks.

Professional development opportunities are prevalent, but teacher implementation of the new learning is not. Yet, several pockets of excellence are present within the school. Here, students work hard to achieve, and teachers perfect and share their craft.

Conversely, there are deeper pockets of apathy and despair. Strong examples of disrespect between students and disrespect directed toward students by some faculty are evident. This creates a disjointed learning atmosphere that keeps students and professionals off balance and hinders the learning process. A general mood of wanting to be better is evident, but there is no clear vision about how to do that. A sense of community is missing within the school.

The challenges the teachers face are overwhelming: they say they feel a lack of support from the administration and that important issues are avoided. A dearth of true communication exists across the school and from the main office. Lacking a driving focus, this school is surviving, rather than thriving.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Most students struggle to read well. They read to obtain literal comprehension of the text rather than for critical, in-depth understanding. Students do practice skills that are necessary to become more proficient, but they do so only in some classes throughout the school day. Some students read effectively as they make predictions, inferences, and connections. Others summarize the story and demonstrate a literal understanding, when they write or talk about what they read. Some students independently and successfully connect what they read to their own lives, but most require their teachers' guidance to demonstrate text-to-world and text-to-text connections. Other students select their own independent reading books and demonstrate an understanding of the books they read by applying their knowledge in different formats. These include picture walks, story webs, and poems. Some students conference with the teacher about their reading, but they require teacher prompting to answer questions. Some listen to audiotapes as they follow the text, while others choose not to read at all. During group reading activities, one strong reader tends to dominate; therefore, not all students practice the skills of effective oral readers. Generally, students are reluctant to read out loud in classes. They say that they are not confident in their reading abilities. As a result, some students are dependent on others to extract meaning from the printed word. All in all, students are at the emergent level as readers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing 2005 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

While many students write frequently across the curriculum, their writing ranges from simplistic to very complex. The more prevalent writing is simplistic and includes labeling, copying notes, defining vocabulary words, and answering literal questions. Students are very comfortable completing these assignments. On the other hand, students complete complex writing tasks less frequently and with varying degrees of success. This more demanding writing includes drawing conclusions and making connections in science, writing math explanations, creating persuasive essays, and composing reflective responses to literature and journal prompts. While students write, they are proficient in the use of tools and strategies such as editing checklists, essay frames, and peer editing to support them in their work. Some of this writing is excellent and highly developed, while other pieces are incomplete, low quality and lack depth. Some students say that this is the hardest work they have had to do this year. At times, students copy one another's work in an effort to complete the written assignment. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, meeting with students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers)*

Students have a difficult time sharing their ideas in small groups and whole class settings. They are reluctant to respond to questions or take advantage of opportunities to share. Students come to class unprepared. When asked where their materials are, they often respond, "I don't have it; it's in my locker." Students are afraid to participate in class or to take risks. They are afraid some teachers and/or their peers will "put them down" for their responses. Students become frustrated and disengage from the learning process as a result of the pace of some classes. Some students struggle due to the varying learning styles and ranges of abilities in many classes. Many students do not persist in their work, because they know if they wait long enough, that the teacher will provide them with the answer. They know they don't have to figure it out. They do not have a clear expectation for the lesson or a clear idea about where the lesson is going. They are distracted and talk to one another, rather than listen to the teacher and follow her directions on how to complete the work. Students in some classes cannot hear the teacher above the chaos. This is not true for students in classes where the routines, procedures, and consequences are well established. They are engaged in learning because they clearly know what is expected of them in both academics and behavior. Students are persistent and comfortable knowing it is safe to stumble and struggle along the way. (*following students, observing classes, meeting with the students, school improvement team, district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers*)

A small number of students at Bridgham Middle School know how to problem solve well. These students know various strategies and successfully select a strategy that works. They seek assistance when they run into trouble as they are getting started. They successfully use manipulatives to develop their thinking. Student problem solving occurs in a wide range of subject areas, most predominately in math and science classes. Most students struggle to problem solve without assistance from their peers and their teachers; they are unable to take risks and choose strategies. They are apprehensive and lack confidence as they attempt to find solutions on their own. They have difficulty using the basic skills or their prior knowledge to develop appropriate strategies. While students say that whole class brainstorming helps them generate solutions to problems, they do not transfer this knowledge to new situations or to other classes. They say they "do not know where to begin." (*following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing 2005 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*)

## Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Do not demonstrate confidence in their ability to learn*
- ◆ *Read for literal comprehension*
- ◆ *Are not academic risk takers*
- ◆ *Struggle to transfer learned skills to new or other contexts*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

While all teachers require students to read across the curriculum, only some teach reading well. These teachers regularly provide opportunities for students to establish prior knowledge, summarize stories, and predict, infer, and connect what they read to what they have read before, to themselves and to real-life situations. They have students demonstrate their comprehension both orally and in writing through the use of picture walks, story webs, and poetry. These teachers provide texts that are highly interesting and at an appropriate level of difficulty for their students. They also provide students with occasions to report, orally or in writing, about the books they have read. Some teachers conference with students about the books they have selected to read at their independent reading levels. On the other hand, many teachers require students to read and answer only literal questions about what they read. They provide students with limited opportunities to interact with the text, improve their comprehension, and make connections. They only occasionally require students to summarize, predict, and infer meaning. These students do not practice the critical thinking skills they need to become proficient and effective readers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing classroom textbooks)*

Teachers, whose students problem solve effectively, provide only the necessary information and directions to encourage students to discover solutions on their own. They also give students enough wait time and ensure minimal interruptions so they can process the information. Although seen infrequently, teachers provide various opportunities for students to practice problem-solving skills, but few offer students complex problem solving situations. Teachers focus their instruction mostly on basic skills. When problem solving occurs in these classes, teachers excessively scaffold and break the problem into steps in an attempt to support students as learners. This often limits students' chances to practice the skills of independent problem solvers. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers)*

Although teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to write, they most often require students to perform simplistic writing tasks. Teachers less frequently demand more complex writing from their students. Effective teachers require students to use rubrics to set clear expectations and for students to use as a tool to improve their writing. They require students to work through a subject specific writing process and share their writing with their classmates. Few teachers provide their students with a variety of strategies and tools to complete higher-level writing tasks. Student writing often is incomplete, lacks depth, or contains errors that affect the meaning of the text. Often teachers relegate the quality of writing as secondary to the number of actual written pieces the student produces. Teachers often expect students to know what good writing is without their directly instructing or modeling good writing. As a result, students in these classes do not perfect their craft or create high quality pieces on a consistent basis. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Most teachers at Bridgham Middle School genuinely care about their students. Teachers who have established clear academic and behavioral expectations and consistent rules, procedures, and consequences are able to engage their students effectively in the learning process. Teachers, who have not established these expectations in their classrooms, struggle with classroom management, lack consistency, allow class distractions, and lose instructional time. As a result, both teachers and students become frustrated, which escalates to their developing a mutual disrespect that is displayed in both verbal and non-verbal behavior. This creates chaos in the classroom and results in an unhealthy learning environment. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators*)

### **Commendations for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

Teachers who genuinely care about their students

Reading and writing opportunities throughout the curriculum

Most faculty ready and eager for change

### **Recommendations for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

Set clear expectations for behavior and academic achievement throughout the school. Hold students accountable to these expectations.

Model and adhere to rules that you expect students to follow, thus creating a climate that is conducive to learning, teaching, and mutual respect.

Provide more occasions for students to problem solve. Use your teacher leaders to improve the quality of problem solving activities that occur across the curriculum.

Foster and value independent thinking by all students. Build their confidence in their abilities to succeed. Give students a voice in the school.

Differentiate and modify your instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Challenge all students so they have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Reduce the number of interruptions during lessons and improve your classroom management to maximize student learning.

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

### Conclusions

Principal leadership has been consistent at Bridgham Middle School during the last three years. However, the interim nature of the position of assistant principal is problematic. Three different individuals will have served in this capacity by the end of this one school year. Teachers report that changes in the style of this leadership impact the school climate. They say that the present leader effectively handles *reported* issues of student behavior as they occur. This includes using the Focus Room to deal with mid-level infractions without removing students from the educational setting. Other faculty members report that the principal expects them to handle a myriad of behavioral issues in their classrooms without sufficient support from the main office. This belief results in their becoming discouraged in their classroom environment and wary of seeking assistance. (*observing the school outside the classroom, following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing 2005 and 2006 SALT Survey report*)

The principal wants the students to succeed and teachers to do their best, but her leadership style disconnects her from the teaching, the learning, and the climate of this school. This hinders the school's progress in fully meeting the needs of its students. In addition, there is strong agreement among teachers that the school leader is unapproachable and unwilling to assist and that she conveys an expectation that teachers should ignore student behavior problems or deal with them on their own. This creates frustration and distrust among the faculty. As a result, opportunities for the faculty and administrator to work in partnership solve problems, initiate change, and to be proactive about student behavior are avoided. Opportunities to work collaboratively are missed within the school. Students are also put at a disadvantage. They experience a learning program that is stagnant and disjointed due to the reduction in class time available for instruction. These issues result in unclear expectations for faculty, staff, and students related to the vision and mission of the school. (*observing the school outside the classroom, following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrator, meeting with students and school administrators, reviewing 2005 and 2006 SALT Survey report*)

Many of the widely diverse special education population at Bridgham Middle School are in self-contained classrooms, while others are mainstreamed into content area classes and electives. Teachers who work with these students in small group settings teaching mathematics and English find that their charges are growing as learners. This educational model is beneficial for these students. However, the team witnessed that, when these students are mainstreamed for their other classes where they lack support, they often become lost and fail to complete the class activities. These students succeed when there is effective support in the large group settings. Generally, teacher assistants remain with the special education teacher when these students are mainstreamed. On the other hand, the self-contained classrooms are well managed, showing evidence of positive behavioral support and the implementation of core academic skills. Nurturing teachers, many teacher assistants, and a welcoming and accepting community are characteristic of the professionals who service the severe and profound population. Unfortunately, their inclusion or involvement in the rest of the school is minimal. In some cases, the needs of these students are not met due to scheduling problems and limited resources. Overall, the special education teachers say that they do the best they can with what they have. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with teachers, reviewing 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

There are health and safety concerns at Bridgham Middle School. Cleanliness and safety are not a priority at this school. Both the boys and girls bathrooms are dirty. At times, faculty, staff, and students say they feel uncomfortable when they use the facilities due to the unsanitary conditions. There are concerns about the cleanliness of the cafeteria throughout the lunch periods, the presence of “bugs” in certain classrooms, and safety in and around the school. When the school is damaged in some way, (missing door knobs, broken windows, or graffiti of an inappropriate nature), the repairs are not timely or proficient. Students with health issues that require specific equipment wait months to have their needs met. When uncontrollable students lash out, the safety of students is sometimes in jeopardy. Teachers are directed to handle these incidents on their own; they are not always reported. The offending student often experiences minimal repercussions. This affects faculty and staff, as well as students who are exposed to the altercations and those who are involved. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students and teachers)*

While many resources, both material and human, are found here, the allocation and use of these are inefficient. Teacher assistants are assigned to students and classrooms, yet they are not provided with specific plans, focus, or information about the nature of these students' disabilities as they work to meet their needs. Additionally, when outside agencies are welcomed into the school to work with students, they too lack the necessary information. Teachers are offered a myriad of professional development opportunities, yet implementation of their learning in their classes is sporadic and voluntary; accountability is minimal. Teachers with strong literacy knowledge are found in some curriculum areas, but sharing their effective practices is not common. The READ 180 program is in use in all grades, but the availability of materials is insufficient. Also, the large number of students in each of the READ 180 classes hinders their progress. Although there are computers throughout the school, only some of them function on a regular basis. There is often an extended time lapse between computer breakdown and repair. This affects the use of computers and computer programs, as well as the access to computers for all students. All in all, while materials and personnel are abundant, it is evident that they are underutilized. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing records of professional development activities, talking with teachers and teacher assistants, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and district administrators)*

Communication among the administration, faculty and staff exists through short announcements, daily advisories, and quick morning notices on the public address system. Telephones in the classrooms ring frequently for various reasons, at times disrupting learning. The present schedule prevents the faculty from exchanging or sharing information with one another during the school day. Staff members are often unaware of curriculum concerns or the needs of other educators in the school. Difficulty in communication is compounded by the absence of regular faculty meetings. Teachers are frustrated due to the lack of communication throughout the school. However, the acting assistant principal has a rapport with students and faculty that is well received, and both groups communicate with him throughout the day. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing 2005 and 2006 SALT Survey report)*

### **Commendations for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

Effective interim assistant principal

Most motivated special education teachers and service providers

Wide range of available resources

### **Recommendations for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

Facilitate the development of a learning community where best practice and common challenges are shared and discussed.

Communicate with faculty and staff to determine the school's needs and the development of action plans to improve the school.

Plan and schedule faculty meetings. Work collaboratively to develop a unified vision and mission for the school. Then follow through on them.

Use available resources in a maximally effective manner.

Utilize teacher assistants more effectively throughout the school.

Increase custodial staff during the school day so that the building can be cleaned and sanitized, as needed.

Conduct a survey of needed repairs in and around the school building, and develop a plan to attend to them.

### **Recommendations for Providence School District**

Support the school as it takes on the findings of this report.

Support your principal as she leads the school to make the necessary changes.

Facilitate the timely procurement or repair of necessary materials, such as functioning computers, assistive technology, and medical equipment.

## 7. FINAL ADVICE TO SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bridgham Middle School has enormous strength in the diversity of its students, their learning styles, and its staff. The various cultures that merge here form a richly woven tapestry. Starting today, have confidence in your skills as educators to learn and grow with your students, and work to blend these strengths together to create the rich fabric of your learning community.

Communicate often with one another. Build time within the schedule to collaborate with and support your colleagues in implementing effective teaching practices. Work to make the maximum use of the resources you have so that all students benefit. Trust that all the adults can work together to solve issues of discipline and effective teaching, and work together to establish a faculty united in what is best for your children.

To accomplish this, you must now develop and articulate a vision for this school as a learning community. Create a caring foundation for students, faculty, and staff. Promote healthy interactions and mutual respect throughout your school. Be consistent in following your code of conduct. Recognize students as intelligent future leaders, and include them in your planning.

Demonstrate and model for your students that learning is a lifelong journey, and help them to travel well. Take heart in the changes taking place in your district and school, and travel well on your journey. Using this report as a guide, rewrite your school improvement plan and follow through on all plans of action you develop. Stay positive and focused on the success that is sure to come. Good luck to you in this important work.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School

March 24, 2006

#### How SALT visit reports are endorsed

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) contracts with Catalpa Ltd. to monitor all SALT school visits and to examine each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT school visit report. Catalpa Ltd. monitors the preparations for the visit, the actual conduct of the visit and the post-visit preparation of the final report. This includes observing the team at work, maintaining close contact with the chair during the visit and archiving all of the documents associated with a visit. Catalpa Ltd. carefully reviews the text of the final report to make sure that the conclusions and the report itself meet their respective tests at a satisfactory level. The endorsement decision is based on the procedures and criteria specified in *Protocol for Catalpa Ltd. Endorsement of SALT School Visit Reports*<sup>2</sup>.

The *SALT Visit Protocol*, which describes the purposes, procedures and standards for the conduct of the SALT school visit, is the basis for report endorsement. The SALT visit protocol is based upon the principles and procedures of *Practice-based Inquiry*<sup>®3</sup> that are based on a 160-year-old tradition of peer visits that governments and accreditation agencies continue to use to assess the performance of schools.

The *SALT Visit Protocol*<sup>4</sup> requires that all SALT visits be conducted at an exceptionally high standard of rigor. Yet, because visits are “real-life” interactive events, it is impossible to control all of the unexpected circumstances that might arise. Nevertheless most of the unexpected things that happen do not challenge the legitimacy of the visit. Teams and schools adapt well to most surprises and maintain the rigor of the visit inquiry.

Catalpa Ltd. made its judgment decision about the legitimacy of this report by collecting evidence from the conduct of this visit to answer 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 that are specified in the visit protocol? (Are the conclusions important, accurate and set in present, do they show the team’s judgment?)

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

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. This handbook includes the SALT Visit Protocol and many guidance documents for chairs, schools and RIDE. It is available from the SALT Project Office and Catalpa.

<sup>3</sup> Practice-Based Inquiry<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of Catalpa Ltd.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Foundations of Practice-Based Inquiry*<sup>®</sup> (2006, Catalpa Ltd.) and *Practice-based Inquiry*<sup>®</sup> *Guide to protocol design*. (2006, Catalpa Ltd.)

The sources of evidence that Catalpa used for this review were: (These are the steps tailored for each visit.)

Discussion with the chair, the school and the RIDE project director about issues related to the visit before it began.

Daily discussion with the visit chair about possible endorsement issues as they arose during the visit.

Observation of a portion of this visit.

Discussion with the principal at the end of the visit regarding any concerns he/she had about the visit.

Thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final forms.

### The Endorsement Decision

The conduct of the Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School visit did not raise any issues of note.

Catalpa Ltd. fully endorses the legitimacy of this report and its conclusions.

The points that support this are compelling:

1. RIDE has certified that this team meets the RIDE requirements for team membership.
2. The conduct of the visit by both team and school was in reasonable accord with the SALT School Visit Protocol.
3. There is no methodological or other, reason to believe that the findings of this report do not represent the full corporate judgment of a trained team of peers led by a certified chair.
4. The conclusions meet the established tests for conclusions. They are important, supported by evidence from practice, set in the present, and they show the team's judgment.
5. The report meets the criteria for a report. It is fair, persuasive and potentially useful to the school.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Wilson".

**Thomas A. Wilson, Ed.D.**  
**Catalpa Ltd.**  
**April 14, 2006**

## 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 Samuel W. Bridgham 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 Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School.

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

- ◆ *observing classes directly*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following nine 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 2005 Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices
  - records of professional development activities
  - classroom assessments
  - school improvement plan for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School
  - district strategic plan
  - Teacher Evaluation Handbook for Probationary and Tenured Teachers, Providence School Department
  - Activities at Bridgham Middle School binder
  - Positive Schools Initiative Year 1, September 2003-June 2004

Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School P.T.O. Meeting Notes,  
September 2003-June 2006

S. W. Bridgham Middle School After School Program, September,  
2005-June, 2006

Compact for Learning (Parent Responsibility) Contracts Signed by  
Parents, binder

Providence Schools English Scope and Sequence binders

2005 and 2006 SALT Survey reports

Agreement between the Providence Teachers Union, AFT Local 958  
and the Providence School board, September 1, 2004-August 31,  
2007

classroom textbooks

2005 Information Works!

2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examination School  
Summaries

School and District Report Cards

### **State Assessment Results for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

Assessment results create sources 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 about 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 three different ways:

against performance standards,

across student groups within the school, and

over time.

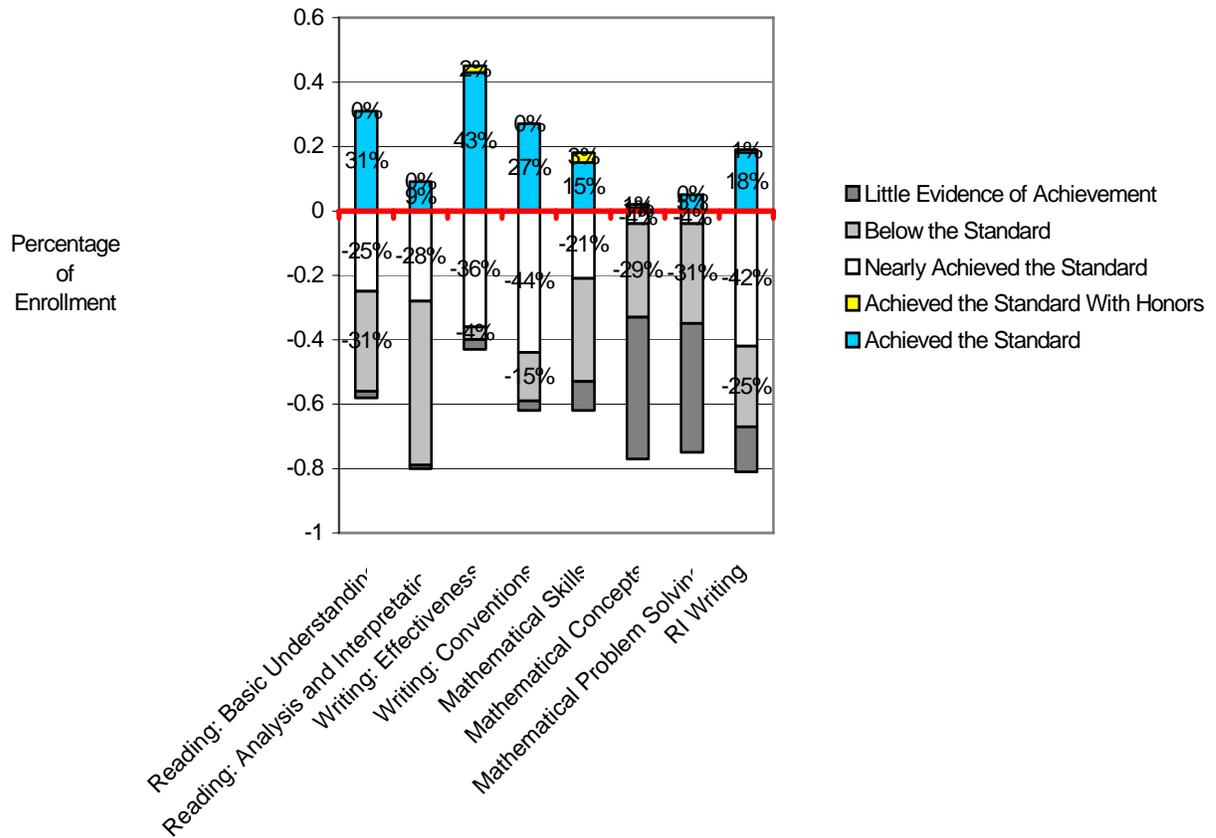
Information Works! data for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School is available at [/www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2005/default.asp](http://www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2005/default.asp).

**Results in relation to performance standards**

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

**Table1. 2003-04 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**

Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School State Assessment Results of 2005





**Report Card for Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School**

In 2005, schools were classified by their attendance rate. Using this measure, this report card describes Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School as having made Adequate Yearly Progress.

The 2004 Report Card shows the performance of Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School compared to the school’s annual measurable objectives (AMO). This report card describes Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School as a School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress.

Index Proficiency Score, 2002-04	English Language 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	64.1	YES††	66	80.3	42.6	YES†	44.9	66.5
African Americans	60.8	NO	65.9	71.2	39.2	YES†	42.5	49.5
Asian	68.2	YES	71	79.3	45.5	YES††	52.3	64.9
Hispanic	65.2	YES††	65.5	69.5	44	YES††	43.9	48.8
Native Americans	*	YES	66.3	76.7	*	YES	39.7	58.6
White	60.8	YES†	69.5	84.4	38	NO	51.1	72.8
Students with Disabilities	50.5	YES†	45.5	63.3	35.1	YES†	31.4	46.8
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	55.3	61	*	YES	38.1	43.3
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	65.9	YES††	65.8	70.8	45.2	YES††	44.1	50.9

PERCENT of students tested, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	this school	target met?	THIS DISTRICT	the state
English Language Arts	95.3	YES	95.7	98.6
Mathematics	95.9	YES	96.3	98.8

Attendance Rate	Target: 90%			
	this school	target met?	THIS DISTRICT	the state
	89.7	YES	89.2	93.6

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	8	1
Mathematics Index Score	8	1
Percent Tested	2	0
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 .

**THE SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Nicole Broadmeadow  
Teacher

Pearl Holloway  
Teacher

Linda Jones  
Parent

Dr. Dinah Larbi  
Principal

Regina Peer  
Parent

Karleen Polak  
Teacher

Teddie Polak  
Teacher, Union Representative

Luanne Simon  
Teacher

James Winn  
Teacher

Carolyn Windham  
Academic Coach

Jeff Wright  
Teacher

## MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

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Goff Junior High School  
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## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM**