

The Bridgeport Story

What Urban School Districts Need to Know About School
Leadership Teams

June, 2002

A Project of the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN)



The Bridgeport Story

What Urban School Districts Need to Know About School Leadership Teams

Project Co-Directors:

Phil Zarlengo, Ph.D., Director Special Projects, Education Alliance
James Betz, Director of State and Federal Grants, Bridgeport Schools

Assisted by:

Vidal Perez, Research & Development Specialist/Equity & Diversity Projects
Education Alliance

Chief Consultant:

Louis J. Esparo, Ph.D., Consultant

GREETINGS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

“Improving Bridgeport Schools Through Empowerment” is the banner under which I expressed my vision for the district when we first met in August, 2000. At that time I believed that our district was on the threshold of a new era. The energy and talents of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and our community needed to be focused on school improvement to create synergy on a scale that would enable us to reform our schools to achieve excellence for all students. District-wide initiatives, including a major reorganization of the district’s leadership, a comprehensive approach to professional development, and school-based decision making, were essential elements of our vital mission.

The outstanding support, hard work, and commitment of all stakeholders are key elements in helping us move forward as we implement a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning. Classroom instruction is becoming more student centered as a result of the district-wide implementation of the Principles of Learning, a research-based teaching model from the University of Pittsburgh. A fundamental shift in the budget and allocation process enables schools to assess their professional development needs and implement relevant training activities for teachers, administrators, and parents. The selection of new and more effective instructional materials is now a school function rather than a central office responsibility.

A shift from a rigid, top-down bureaucratic structure to a strong, school-based governance model is advancing in the district. School Leadership Teams (SLTs) made up of the principal, teachers, parents, students (when appropriate), and community representatives have been established in 12 Bridgeport schools. Committees from each SLT school are working diligently to establish a model as well as a standard for the implementation of SLTs in all district schools during the 2002-03 school year.

The School Leadership Team initiative will be a key factor in our capacity-building efforts to establish communities of leaders in all Bridgeport schools. The most important stakeholders in the educational community will be empowered to make those decisions that have the greatest effect on the children they serve. SLTs will develop, implement, and monitor school improvement plans to drive educational reform in each school. SLTs will manage school-level funding to support school reform and will address any and all issues presented to them by their constituent groups. This initiative is at the heart of the district’s mission.

The Bridgeport Public Schools owe a debt of gratitude to The Education Alliance at Brown University for their guidance in this SLT initiative. We are particularly grateful for the dedication and commitment of the Bridgeport principals, teachers, parents, students, and community leaders who worked so hard to make this “ground-breaking” project a reality.

Sonia Diaz Salcedo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools, Bridgeport, Connecticut

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Getting Started	1
Building a Successful Leadership Team.....	2
Guidelines	2
The By-laws.....	2
The Principal’s Checklist	5
SLT Self-Assessment Tool	6
School Leadership Team Checklist.....	7
Comprehensive School Performance Assessment	8
Analysis: Lessons Learned.....	9
Support from the Top.....	9
Funding.....	10
Pilot Testing.....	10
Staff Development	10
Teamwork	11
External Advice	11
Bridgeport Public Schools School Leadership Teams.....	12
Appendix A.....	17
Appendix B	23
Appendix C	27
Appendix D.....	31
Appendix E.....	35

INTRODUCTION

Early in her tenure, Dr. Sonia Diaz Salcedo, the newly appointed superintendent of schools in Bridgeport, Conn., made it clear to her school board and staff that school leadership teams (SLTs) were important to her and critical to the success of the Bridgeport schools. Accordingly, she appointed James V. Betz, director of federal and state programs, to develop and coordinate the effort to establish a plan and a process for creating meaningful, productive, and effective school leadership teams.

Initially, the project coordinators group—including Mr. Betz, school district personnel, and a support team from The Education Alliance at Brown University, led by Dr. Phil Zarlengo—held informational sessions with all principals to discuss the efficacy of school leadership teams and to identify what needed to be done and by whom. Subsequently, because voluntary and not mandatory participation of building principals was critical, Mr. Betz asked for volunteers. Twelve principals answered the call and committed to the project. Meetings with the staff of each focus school followed to explain and discuss the benefits of school leadership teams. The project coordinators then conducted brainstorming sessions and developed an action plan that provided focus, direction, and content for this initiative.

GETTING STARTED

In preparation for this initiative, the program coordinators urged focus school principals to take advantage of an opportunity to gain funding for community conversations, the first step in forming school leadership teams. The Bridgeport Public Education Fund provided support for the schools' work of forming the SLTs and discussing this initiative with their respective communities and parent groups. Each school was eligible to receive \$1,500 to conduct a conversation involving the entire community. This was a critical step because the conversation was designed to lay the groundwork for the formulation of the SLT and to facilitate the development of each SLT mission statement. School district personnel continuously assured school staff and others involved in the project that the implementation of school leadership teams was among the district's highest priorities for the 2001-02 school year. Mr. Betz conveyed his intent to provide whatever human and material resources were necessary to ensure the success of the project. This intent was supported by all the key players in the district. Insuring the success of this project was essential because the participating schools will serve as models when SLTs are mandated in all the district's schools during the 2002-03 school year.

During the preparatory stages, the project coordinators wrote a draft of guidelines and by-laws for the initiative. Participating schools received a draft of the general guidelines and by-laws, and a special meeting was called to review them. At this meeting, a group consisting of the principal, a teacher, and a parent leader represented each focus school. The group agreed to complete any necessary revisions of the draft based on reactions and input from the stakeholders prior to the presentation of the project to the Connecticut Board of Education. Additionally, the meeting provided the information needed to establish each school's leadership team and to implement team activities by the established deadline.

The project coordinators also wrote up the "Checklist for School Leadership Teams" and "Attributes of Effective School Leadership Team Members," both self-assessment tools. School district and Education Alliance staff presented and discussed these tools and a PowerPoint presentation on the school leadership team guidelines and by-laws at a dinner meeting of all school leadership project committees and stakeholders in the project. The project coordinators expected that all participating schools would have completed elections for parent and teacher members and would have conducted

their first SLT meeting prior to this meeting. If not, a representative group from the school would be invited to participate in this next phase of the project. Each school's group sat together for both the meeting and the dinner. After the presentations, school district and Education Alliance staff joined each group at their dinner table and engaged in informal dialogue with the principals, teachers, and parents from each school. They discussed progress made to date, future plans and timelines, and issues that needed to be addressed.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Guidelines

The project coordinator group first required each school, with substantial technical support from the district, to develop, administer, and analyze data from a school performance assessment instrument. Based on the findings of the assessment, each team would then create, implement, and monitor the school's improvement plan. Further, the team would have to develop a school-based budget and staffing plan that aligned with the improvement plan. The provisions of the improvement plan would determine and guide all the activities of the team and the school staff. The success of the team would be measured by the extent to which the plan improved the education of the children in each school.

Additionally, each school and its team, before the close of the 2001-02 school year, would have to establish and nurture a functioning and effective SLT in accordance with the adopted guidelines and by-laws. Also, the school would need to create a list of school leadership team activities and training needs for the 2002-03 school year. Accordingly, each team would be a school-based governing body that exists to determine and implement the school's educational vision, goals, and priorities and the strategies to achieve that vision.

The By-laws

(see Appendix A)

Every institution and organization would need to have a set of rules—a constitution—and clear guidelines that specify its purposes, operating procedures, membership, limitations, jurisdiction, structure, and individual and collective responsibilities and accountabilities. Setting these guidelines would provide a vibrant and objective framework that would validate and facilitate the functioning of the team. Mr. Betz and The Education Alliance team held many structured meetings and conducted conversations to elicit the thoughts of all stakeholders in the project. The project coordinators group discussed, debated, and refined these thoughts and ideas to serve as the tenets of the rules that would govern the creation and implementation of the SLTs. The rules were crafted to be indicative of and responsive to the unique character and needs of the Bridgeport community. They are consistent with the values, philosophy, goals, and objectives of the community and its schools. The project coordinators wrote the by-laws in order to give form, substance, focus, and purpose to the activities of the team.

The by-laws approved and adopted by Bridgeport reflect its distinctive needs and purposes and make it imperative that the school leadership team respect the confidentiality rights of staff, parents, and students at its school. The team is not permitted to discuss the performance or assessments of staff members and is precluded from violating provisions of any collective bargaining agreements or laws, policies and regulations of the city, state, and the board of education.

The project coordinators determined the rules of membership with much thought and deliberation in an effort to be inclusive, responsive, and as representative as possible without making the process unmanageable or cumbersome. The building principal would be a permanent member and five staff members and five parents, serving specific terms, would make up the remaining ten core members. In schools having lower populations, the number of team members could be less, but the ratio of parents to staff would have to be the same. Also, the by-laws mandated a bilingual secretary. He/she would translate and communicate the team's proceedings and decisions in the native language of the particular school community and would perform the team secretary's duties and obligations in his/her absence. To be current and responsive to community interests, the principal would be allowed to appoint one to three members of the community for specific needs and determine the term each would serve.

Recognizing the necessity and importance of open, candid, and ongoing communication, the by-laws specify the audience the team should try to reach and the means, frequency, and quality of communication required of the team. The project coordinators made the communication plan a critical element in the process because they wanted to stress that belief in effective communication among the team, staff, and the community is central to the growth, credibility, and survival of the team.

The stages of leadership team planning can create, together, a tremendous communication campaign through which to gain the support of the community. A focused communication plan offers these benefits to a school leadership team:

- It acts as a binding agreement. When you tell people you're going to do something, producing a communication plan or commitment in writing will force you to carry through with your efforts and give others the opportunity to provide you with input.
- It assures that you will take advantage of all opportunities, including chances for ongoing implementation.
- It helps keep communication focused.
- It helps prevent unwanted surprises.

The program coordinators group prepared, shared, and discussed with the participating principals the communication plan requirements and the supplementary materials to the by-laws dealing with this important area. Mr. Betz and his colleagues continued to emphasize the necessity of effective and ongoing communication among all stakeholders. A team of Education Alliance staff, including Dr. Hal Hayden and Gwen Jordan, provided significant assistance in this respect. A sample of some of the shared material follows.

Tips for Developing Your Communication Plan

- Set up a tracking system (i.e., journal, scrapbook, video spots, photographs)
- Have a creative person develop a unified look for all your strategic-planning documents and printed material
- Incorporate two-way communication utilizing your local area network (LAN)
- Consider all of your audiences as "customers"
- Build in community involvement

- Think about how you can best use the plan to your advantage
- Segment the community into separate, manageable parts
- Organize a steering committee where membership allows and encourages discussion. Make sure the members understand their responsibilities
- Think about using PTA/home-school meeting programs, community town meetings, and media releases as possible communication vehicles
- Begin early. Announce the district's participation in school leadership teams
- Announce public meetings, dates and locations
- Request volunteers for action teams
- Acknowledge significant milestones through the process.
- Incorporate ongoing implementation activities
- Include detailed information on beliefs, missions, and the like in a district newsletter.
- Allow the completed plan/final document to be used as a marketing tool for group presentations, discussion groups, or town meetings.

Tips for Communicating Change

- Ask people for their opinions well in advance of the implementation
- Be thoroughly familiar with your plan so that you can summarize it in a short sentence
- Explain the change in language people can understand
- Explain the change in terms of how it will affect the community, parents, and students rather than what's in it for the school district
- Anticipate how people will react, the questions they will raise, and the issues that may result
- Design your communication plan to deal with those concerns immediately
- Keep your key communicators up to date regularly
- Expect the change to generate a corps of resisters and appreciate their perspectives
- In addition to encouraging anyone from the community to participate in the implementation of the change, listen to what the people have to say
- Solicit ideas that will strengthen what you want to do
- Identify the people in your community who you can go to for advice regarding new ideas and concerns
- Be direct in stating the change and explaining the rationale for the change in relation to the overall goals you wish to achieve
- Keep communicating about the change after it has been made. Recognize and celebrate its successful implementation

The Importance of Internal Communication

Make sure school staff who are not directly involved in SLT plans and activities know what is going on. It is demoralizing to hear about something that is happening where you work from someone outside the system. Also, don't forget your support staff. Research indicates that they are the most important communicators and public relations specialists you have in your district.

Keeping staff informed can be done through:

- A staff newsletter
- Volunteers
- Ongoing updates regarding the status of the school leadership team,
- Recognition for those involved in the process
- Focus groups at building, staff, or department meetings
- Soliciting their input on the mission, belief statements, and vision
- Building two-way feedback into already scheduled meetings
- Sharing the vision, mission, and strategic goals
- Soliciting community members to participate in the implementation of the action items

The Principal's Checklist

(see Appendix B)

The Education Alliance team, and Mr. Betz and his staff, spent considerable time discussing and refining a critical path plan to guide participating principals through the myriad of responsibilities and activities they would encounter as they planned and implemented their respective school leadership teams. The project coordinators strove to create a concise yet comprehensive list of what needed to be done and the sequence in which efforts would be most productive and effective. Although this list may appear very basic in language and content, the coordinators wrote it precisely and deliberately, and it is more complex than its initial appearance. The coordinators knew it was crucial to provide principals with a concrete depiction of the necessary tasks.

Further, the coordinators highlighted the importance of performing tasks simultaneously yet in logical order so that the intended result(s) occur. The checklist aligns with all provisions of the by-laws, policy, guidelines, and goals and objectives relating to the development of school leadership teams. Literally, the checklist functions as a step-by-step road map for each principal to follow; it is comprehensive yet easy to understand and follow; it is universally applicable and adaptable to meet the unique needs and conditions of each participating school; and it works in all settings as interpreted by a dozen or more individuals, each with a different background, a different set of preconceived notions, and a different management style.

A series of four distinct yet related steps comprise the checklist. Some of the steps contain tasks and activities that must be accomplished on a repeat basis. For example, the principal must help team members gain and enhance personal knowledge of the SLT concept and program continually. The principal, whether he/she is chair of the SLT or simply a member, must be conversant with the concept and in a position to motivate and instruct others on the team.

The principal also must develop an initial agenda for the SLT consistent with provisions of the existing school improvement plan. The agenda can continuously evolve, but the principal must work to keep the team focused on meeting the requirements of the plan. In short, the principal's work is

not done once the first agenda is complete; the principal must offer continuous support during the ongoing formulation of an agenda that reflects adherence to the school improvement plan.

Second step responsibilities include a logical set of activities that will facilitate achievement of the overall goal of establishing an effectively functioning SLT. Each substep is an important piece in the mosaic that is the checklist. The checklist is a dynamic tool that is always in use. The principal does not mark the end of the road when he/she completes the third- and fourth-step components. The principal will refer back to it frequently to assess his/her status in the overall scheme of the project and his/her progress in meeting the needs and expectations of the team and of the school district. The project demands and, in fact, expects that the principal will review the list regularly and indicate, by using the rating scale, the status of each requirement for each of the four steps. Simply, the principal would show the status of each item by marking the scale as either *IP* for "in progress," *I* for "incomplete," or *C* for "complete." This indicates whether the principal is meeting his/her responsibilities and where he/she stands in relation to his/her colleagues.

The SLT Self-Assessment Tool

(see Appendix C)

The project coordinators also provided the principal and his/her fellow team members with a tool to use as an indicator of the attributes that define effective team members. With the items on the instrument, the project coordinators intended to generate thought, self-reflection and introspection by each team member on a regular basis. Additionally, the items should provide a standard to which each member can aspire. The project coordinators group clustered the items into three sections--Personal Attributes, Skills, and Knowledge Base--for ease of comparison and discussion. The coordinators designed the tool to help team members reflect on the traits of effective leadership in order to evaluate and improve their own understanding and performance within the team.

A sampling of questions from all three sections follows.

Personal attributes

- Do I view problems as opportunities?
- Am I courageous?
- What is my tolerance for ambiguity?
- Am I committed to innovations that are best for children?

Skills

- Do I debate, clarify, and enunciate my values and beliefs?
- Can I fuel, inspire, and guard the shared vision?
- Can I communicate our school improvement plan at all levels?
- Do I ask the "big picture" and "what if" questions?
- Do I encourage dreaming and thinking the unthinkable?

Knowledge Base

- Do I know board and superintendent roles and responsibilities for planning and implementing action?
- Do I know the board and district vision, beliefs, and mission?

- Do I know the relationship of the budget to district planning?
- Do I know the strategies the team must use to involve and communicate with the community?

School Leadership Team Checklist

(see Appendix D)

Mr. Betz, his staff, and The Education Alliance team felt that developing a checklist exclusively for the team was equally important to providing the principals with one. The project coordinators organized the SLT checklist into five parts that measure the extent to which team activities and responsibilities have been achieved, are in progress, or have not been achieved. The checklist serves as an evaluative tool and a means to diagnose individual or team needs. These evaluations in turn guide the remedial or enrichment activities provided by and for team members. With proper and regular use of the instrument, team members can spot trouble areas and generate ideas about how to alleviate any negative practices.

The project coordinators intended for the checklist to serve not only as an ongoing progress report for the team, a candid assessment of the team's effectiveness, and a means to identify strengths and weaknesses of the team, but also as a tool to identify training and other resource needs for the 2002-03 and subsequent school years.

The SLT Checklist must be completed and analyzed by the SLT before June 1st of the current school year in order to provide data for the first annual SLT status report that will be given to the superintendent of schools. The report will consist of a description of the SLT's focus, members' individual roles, procedures, internal relationships, and external relationships. Additionally, each member of the team must sign a memo attesting to the completion and analysis of the SLT Checklist and send it to the Director of Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Grants by June 1, 2002.

The activities and traits that comprise the SLT Checklist are vital to successful collaborative planning and implementation. The principles upon which these responsibilities are based are characteristic of effectively functioning teams. The values that prompted and guided the writing of this checklist included the following:

- There must be a commitment to unity on the part of all team members.
- There must be interpersonal relationships. Members must have a chance to learn from and work with others.
- The team members must have the ability to act together toward a common goal.
- Members must proudly share a sense of why the team exists and be invested in accomplishing its mission and goals.
- Members must know what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when to achieve team goals.
- Members must know their roles in getting tasks done and know when to allow a more skillful member to do a certain task.
- Members must understand authority and decision-making lines clearly.
- Members must deal with conflict openly and consider differences of opinion to be important to decision making and personal growth.

- Members must feel that their unique perspectives and contributions are appreciated and well utilized.
- Members must understand group norms for working together and view them as standards for everyone in the group.
- Team meetings must be efficient and productive and team members should look forward to this time together.
- Members must know when the team has met with success and share in these accomplishments equally and proudly.
- The team must provide opportunities for feedback and updating skills, and members should take advantage of them.

Members also must:

- ✓ Contribute ideas and solutions
- ✓ Recognize and respect differences in others
- ✓ Value the ideas and contributions of others
- ✓ Listen and share information
- ✓ Ask questions and get clarification
- ✓ Participate fully and keep their commitments
- ✓ Be flexible and respect the partnership created by a team
- ✓ Have fun and care about the team, the children it serves, and the outcomes of its action plan

Comprehensive School Performance Assessment

(see Appendix E)

Vidal Perez, in cooperation with Phil Zarlengo, Mr. Betz, and the staff at The Education Alliance and the Bridgeport Schools, created this assessment instrument. Mr. Perez designed the instrument to measure what each respondent thinks about certain characteristics and functions of his/her school. Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and other stakeholders of the school and community would respond individually and anonymously to items that are grouped under these 13 headings: School Mission and Goals, School Culture, School Climate, Communications, School Improvement Plan, Student Assessment and Achievement, Curriculum, Professional Development, Instructional Materials and Technology, Staffing and Support, Physical Plant, Community Relations, and Leadership and Decision Making. An outside agency would then score and analyze the instruments to detect patterns, trends, and themes in the climate and performance of the school and pass the results on to the principal, who would share them with the school leadership team.

The school leadership team and the principal keep the data confidential as they use it to identify program priorities. The team can use the instrument as a major diagnostic tool to identify problems and issues, and to focus team activities on school programmatic needs in order to enhance the quality of instruction for the students.

Although student achievement is the primary goal of the education system, every school is different. Groups of unique young people, from various backgrounds and cultures and with various needs, make up the population of each school. SLT members who use the data must know the objectives of the school improvement plan and make the appropriate programmatic decisions in order to respect the needs of each school, its staff, and its community.

SLT members must want the best for the children in their school. They must take on a sustained and productive hands-on role in the education and development of those children. In addition, they must work with other involved and concerned parents, teachers, and administrators to collaborate on solutions that will benefit all children, the school itself, and eventually the entire school system. The Bridgeport School District's leadership has provided human and material resources, money, instruments and data, and unfailing support to guide each SLT and point members in the right direction.

Ultimately, the project aims to have each SLT functioning at a high level of efficiency and demonstrating these characteristics:

- **Participative Leadership:** Creating an interdependence by empowering people in the school community to be a part of change and by addressing the needs of others
- **Shared Responsibility:** Establishing an environment in which all team members feel responsibility for the performance of the team
- **Unity of Purpose:** Having a sense of common purpose regarding why the team exists and what function it serves
- **Strong Communication:** Creating a climate of trust and open, honest communication
- **Focus on the Future:** Viewing change as an opportunity for growth
- **Focus on the task:** Keeping meetings and interactions centered around results
- **Application of creative talents:** Efficiently using the unique talents that each team member brings to the group
- **Rapid Response:** Identifying and acting on opportunities to benefit children

ANALYSIS: LESSONS LEARNED

Support from the Top

Few if any initiatives survive without the moral and resource support of the person or people at the top of an organization. Half-hearted commitments, apathy, mixed signals, lack of perseverance in difficult times, uncertainty, loss of courage, and a host of other characteristics of poor leadership can cause the demise of any effort taken on by the leaders' subordinates. The ultimate success of the effort depends on the veracity and intensity of support from the leaders.

From the outset, the Bridgeport School Department made it clear that it strongly supported the creation and implementation of school leadership teams. The superintendent continues to demonstrate her support for the project not only in her words but, most importantly, in her actions. The key administrators of the project, Mr. Betz, and The Education Alliance staff worked diligently and without pause to provide unwavering and balanced support to the people involved in the project. The Bridgeport school leadership teams know they can continue to call on the central office to provide resources and information to assist them in meeting their goals. They know that the central office will provide access to professional development for all team members on educational planning, the use of technology, and team participation and responsibilities. The central office also continues to provide access to leadership training for principals and team chairs, and specialized training for parents to enable them to participate in discussions about instruction.

The district also has put communication strategies in place that keep the teams informed of district policies and, in turn, help the team keep the district informed about school-level activities and issues. Additionally, the project coordinators arranged for identification and dissemination of best practices, opportunities for schools to share their issues and ideas with other schools, and access to facilitation services for participating schools.

In summary, the leadership of the Bridgeport schools wants SLTs to be successful. The district wants its children to enjoy an enhanced quality of life and wants children, staff, and community members to be successful and motivated. The leadership has provided the human and material resources that each school and school leadership team needs to facilitate change and insure the success of the project.

Funding

As noted above, talk is good but it takes money to make things happen. Money buys the materials needed by the school and its team to function effectively on behalf of children. Money also secures the services needed to implement the provisions of the team's plan and provides the tangible proof that this initiative is important and has the support of the district. Bridgeport has generated human and material support for the project staff and for the teams by using general fund resources and creatively seeking and writing grants.

Pilot Testing

Mr. Betz, his staff, and the Bridgeport leadership knew that seeking voluntary participation in this initiative would result in recruitment of interested and motivated principals and team members. Simply assigning this responsibility to principals and staff might elicit some results, but volunteers would have a sense of ownership, commitment, and resiliency that would ensure a better chance of initial and long-term success.

Consequently, 12 principals volunteered to participate in the program and serve as the test pilots for implementing school leadership teams. Each of the 12 schools would pilot the program and would be trained, supported, and studied in order to provide a solid foundation and framework for their sister schools in Bridgeport, which would implement SLTs in the 2002-03 school year. The district dedicated time and money to using local, outside resource personnel to assist with and assess the initial effort. What the schools learn through the pilot activities and practices will ensure a smoother and more productive expansion of the School Leadership Team initiative.

Staff Development

Other urban models have demonstrated—and research literature confirms—that successful team functioning requires professional development and training of team members. Training areas include team building, diversity, conducting focus groups, action research, strategic planning, sustainability, and best practices. Bridgeport has provided and will continue to provide:

- professional development on team operations for all team members (parents, teachers, administrators, and students);
- professional development in educational planning for all team members;

- training and capacity building for parents, because it is critical for parents to be a part of the learning process and to have the opportunity to view teachers and administrators as colleagues;
- training in group dynamics and team building in order to provide an overview of partnerships, how successful partnerships work, and what these partnerships enable schools to achieve; and
- training in skill building so that all team members know how to do the necessary work such as conduct focus groups, action research, and strategic planning.

Teamwork

Each school can become an effective learning organization if people feel they are doing something that matters to them personally and to the larger community. Every individual in the organization must feel that he/she is growing and enhancing his/her capacity to create. Teamwork allows for more intelligent and diverse solutions, which can be universally applied to meet the needs of all students. An organization like a school system will become more aware of its underlying knowledge base by using the talents and ideas of its employees effectively. Visions of the direction of change can emerge at all levels; the responsibility of the administration is to manage the process whereby emerging visions become shared visions. Therefore, leadership should invite employees to learn about every level of the organization, so they can understand how their actions influence others. People should feel free to inquire about each others' assumptions and biases and treat each other as colleagues. They should project mutual respect and trust in the way they talk to each other and work together, no matter what position they occupy.

External Advice

No doubt, the Bridgeport leadership and staff made this project a success. However, The Education Alliance helped by working as an external lever for change and an advisor to the project staff. The Alliance provided models, helped teams avoid obstacles, and presented ongoing feedback to the project coordinators. Further, the LAB (Northeast and Islands Regional Education Laboratory at Brown University, funded by OERI) provided several print and electronic resources that were eagerly used by the school leadership teams.

The success of each pilot team will directly influence the outcome of the district-wide effort to have a school leadership team in each Bridgeport school. If each team member is selfless and works toward what is best for children, then that school and the district can work as a team to dedicate their efforts to the welfare and needs of all its children. Teamwork multiplies the chances for the success of the initiative.

Bridgeport has been and will continue to be successful because it approached this initiative in a deliberate and dedicated manner. The project has support from the top and meaningfully involves the community and its agencies in the effort; leadership provides ongoing training and development for staff, parents, and members of the team and the resources to get things done; and schools have volunteered willingly to pilot the program.

**BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS**

Planning Committee

The principals, teachers, parents, and community of Bridgeport’s 12 School Leadership Team (SLT) pilot schools are providing excellent models of how school staff, parents, and community can work cooperatively to set the course of development for their school vision, goals and priorities, and strategies to achieve their vision.

SLTs will also create, implement, and monitor their school improvement plans and develop a school-based budget and staffing plan aligned with the school improvement plan. The 12 pilot schools are establishing a standard of excellence for the remaining Bridgeport schools that will implement SLTs in the coming years.

These schools led the way in the development and implementation of this project. As a result of the time and effort put forth by SLT planning committees in the 12 schools, school leadership in our district is being transformed from the former bureaucratic, central office-driven model to school-level governance. Each SLT will assess its school’s needs, establish challenging goals and objectives, adopt effective strategies, and evaluate their projects for continued improvement.

The Bridgeport School District owes a debt of gratitude to the following principals, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and community representatives:

Name	Title	School
Gladys D. Walker-Jones	Principal	Barnum School
Neville Rosa	Assistant Principal	Barnum School Annex
Myrna Saldana	Home-School Coordinator	Barnum School
Madeline Lugo	Paraprofessional	Barnum School
Tamera Weeks	Teacher	Barnum School Annex
Veronica DeVillegas	Math Teacher	Barnum School
Caesar Lara	Fourth-grade Bilingual Teacher	Barnum School
Mildred Tomassini	Paraprofessional	Barnum School
Arlene Berkowitz	Third-grade teacher	Barnum School
Kim Bohannon	Physical Education Teacher	Barnum School
MaryAnn Grygorcewicz	Sixth-grade Teacher	Barnum School
Victor Rivera	PAC President	Barnum School
Dawn Melendez	Co-President/PAC	Barnum School
Claribel Gutierrez	PAC Secretary	Barnum School
Patricia Delgado	Parent	Barnum School
Brian Moales Sr.	Parent	Barnum School
Mr. & Mrs. Luciano Rivera	Parents	Barnum School
Bertha Conner	PAC Vice President	Barnum School
Ronald Remy	Principal	Bassick High School
Nancy Bond	Physical Education Teacher	Bassick High School
Stella Dennis	ESL Teacher	Bassick High School
Kathy Flynn	Social Studies Teacher	Bassick High School
Keith Joines	Guidance Counselor	Bassick High School

Name	Title	School
Agnes Reilley	English Teacher	Bassick High School
Peter Ziegler	Social Studies Teacher	Bassick High School
Lehem Felican Sr.	PAC President	Bassick High School
Katie Thompson	Parent	Bassick High School
Eva Canales	Parent	Bassick High School
Nicholas Durand	Parent	Bassick High School
Arish Fahme	Parent	Bassick High School
Denise Clemons-Graham	Principal	Cross School
Eugene Foreman	Associate Principal	Cross School
Lea Chapple	First-grade Teacher	Cross School
Maureen Gore	Guidance Counselor	Cross School
Tammy Jackson	Fifth-grade teacher	Cross School
Jackie Wright-Smith	Math Resource Aide	Cross School
Errol Johnson	PAC President	Cross School
Conroy Bloomfield	PAC Vice President	Cross School
María Damas	PAC Secretary	Cross School
Carolyn Graves	Parent	Cross School
Karen Counts	Parent	Cross School
Warren Blunt	Community Leader	Cross School
Officer Harold Dimbo	School Resource Officer	Cross School
Michael Hanna	Principal	Curiale School
Mary Beth Trafencante	Reading Remedial Teacher	Curiale School
Beth Stites	Math Remedial Teacher	Curiale School
Rita Nolan	Language Arts Teacher	Curiale School
Lina Cardozo	Seventh-grade Teacher	Curiale School
Jennie Firisin	Seventh-grade Teacher	Curiale School
Jeff Grice	PAC President	Curiale School
Dorine Manlapit	PAC Secretary	Curiale School
Assad Abdullah	Parent	Curiale School
Wilhemina Chavez	Parent	Curiale School
Celeste Tompkins	Parent	Curiale School
James Hodge	Principal	Dunbar School
Helen Moran	Associate Principal	Dunbar School
Chris Taggart	Language Arts Teacher	Dunbar School
Edna Kobialka	Special Education Teacher	Dunbar School
Deanna Negri	Art Teacher	Dunbar School
Therese McDonald	Reading Teacher	Dunbar School
Angela Simone	Second-grade Teacher	Dunbar School
Janet Lindsey	PAC President	Dunbar School
Delores Needham	Parent	Dunbar School
Andrea Townsen	Parent	Dunbar School
Candida Paul	Parent	Dunbar School
Rosauea Olavarria	Parent	Dunbar School
Loretta Ebron	Outreach Worker	Bridgeport Comm. Health Center
Elizabeth Dunlap	Principal	High Horizons School
Yazmin Carattini	Corresponding Secretary	High Horizons School

Name	Title	School
Mary Fedanick	Fifth-grade Teacher	High Horizons School
Alfreda Taylor	Kindergarten Teacher	High Horizons School
Janet Masanotti	Home Economics Teacher	High Horizons School
Sally Swain	Second-grade Teacher	High Horizons School
Francine Sorrentino	Second-grade Teacher	High Horizons School
Devele McCord	Gear Up Family Liaison	High Horizons School
Eleanor Scrimenti	PAC President	High Horizons School
Rosemarie Pekar	PAC Treasurer	High Horizons School
Evelyn Olavarria	PAC Vice President	High Horizons School
Andrea Kovacs	Parent	High Horizons School
Andrew Cimmino	Principal	Hooker School
Joe Dobbins	Math Specialist	Hooker School
Tom Stumbris	Reading Specialist	Hooker School
Alyssia McPhail	Second-grade Teacher	Hooker School
Deborah Swist	Sixth-grade Teacher	Hooker School
Ken Hayes	Sixth-grade Teacher	Hooker School
Michel Sevigny	Eighth-grade Teacher	Hooker School
Anne Barney	PAC President	Hooker School
Naomi Rodriguez	PAC Vice President	Hooker School
Madeline Lopez	Parent	Hooker School
Patricia Kilburn	Parent	Hooker School
Laura Hudson	Parent	Hooker School
Wanda Gonzalez	Parent	Hooker School
Sandra McLeod	Principal	Maplewood School
Monica Kent	Third-grade Teacher	Maplewood School
Palma Flewellyn	First-grade Teacher	Maplewood School
Karen Perachio	Early Literacy Teacher	Maplewood School
Patricia Slauson	Reading Specialist/Teacher	Maplewood School
Carol Ung	Parent	Maplewood School
Sulma Burgos	Parent	Maplewood School
Hector Sanchez	Principal	Multicultural Magnet School
María Conroy	ESL Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Rosemary Bradbury	Sixth-grade Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Deborah Tisdale	Fifth-grade Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Audrey Montesi	Kindergarten Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Emma Rodriguez	Language Arts Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Sandra Sarmiento	Language Arts Teacher	Multicultural Magnet School
Lisa Russell-Anderson	PAC President	Multicultural Magnet School
Sue Vilanova	PAC Co-President	Multicultural Magnet School
Olga Sibitini	PAC Recording Secretary	Multicultural Magnet School
Lucia Figuerido	Parent	Multicultural Magnet School
Denise Holley	PAC Treasurer	Multicultural Magnet School
JoAnn Jackson	Parent	Multicultural Magnet School
Carmen Perez-Dickson	Principal	Newfield School
Kara Lyddy-DeFilippo	Kindergarten Teacher	Newfield School
Annie Bowles	First-grade Teacher	Newfield School

Name	Title	School
Carmen Romero	Home-School Coordinator	Newfield School
Carla Smith	PAC President	Newfield School
Tanara Semedo	PAC Vice President	Newfield School
Loretta Ebron	Parent	Newfield School
Ralph Council	Principal	Park City Magnet School
Naomi L. Amezquita	Sixth-grade Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Gloria Ganino	Fourth-grade Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Gladys Imbro	Special Education Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Beth Jarrell	Sixth-grade Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Kimberly Trez	First-grade Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Lois Hoyt	Second-grade Teacher	Park City Magnet School
Dominic Sciusco	PAC President	Park City Magnet School
Mayank Mehta	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Aarati Mehta	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Malihe F. Bigdeli	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Theresa Davis	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Debra Hubbard	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Joanne Jimenez	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Vivian Farmassony	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Raymond Panther	Parent	Park City Magnet School
Randy Dixon	Principal	Winthrop School
Alana Callahan	Associate Principal	Winthrop School
Mazie Muniz	Fifth-grade Teacher	Winthrop School
Jackie Vallillo	Third-grade Teacher	Winthrop School
Claire Mastromonaco	Fifth-grade Teacher	Winthrop School
Del Porter	Eighth-grade Reading Teacher	Winthrop School
Terry Carroll	Social Studies Supervisor	Administrative Office
Cathy Digirolamo	PAC President	Winthrop School
Lauren Filomena	PAC Vice President	Winthrop School
Debra Mancini	PAC Treasurer	Winthrop School
Pam Harris	PAC Secretary	Winthrop School
Quenette Pugh	Parent	Winthrop School
Alma Maya	Executive Director	ASPIRA
Marge Hiller	Executive Director	Bridgeport Public Education Fund
María Arroyo	Assistant Director	Federal & State Programs
Glen Mudre	Supervisor	Research & Evaluation
Kathy Flynn	Manager	Priority School District
Sandra Morales	Secretary	Federal & State Programs
Griselle Romero	Secretary	Federal & State Programs

APPENDIX A

School Leadership Team By-Laws
Developed by
The Bridgeport Public Schools
and
The Education Alliance at Brown University

Article I — PURPOSE

Section 1. The purpose of the school leadership team is to assist, advise, and provide the building principal with a broad base of input to improve school and student performance and to help design, develop, and implement a school improvement plan that is aligned with state and district standards.

Section 2. The specific goals of the School Leadership Team

- 2.1 To help design and monitor the school’s instructional program consistent with established performance standards
- 2.2 To continuously adjust the instructional approach to meet the needs of students
- 2.3 To conduct a comprehensive assessment of the school’s performance which will serve as a foundation for the development of the school improvement plan
- 2.4 To research, monitor, and evaluate potential initiatives
- 2.5 To maintain and enhance a favorable relationship with the community
- 2.6 To implement strategies that will develop and maximize the life skills of our children
- 2.7 To develop, implement, and evaluate the school improvement plan

Section 3. Limitations

- 3.1 The team may not violate the confidentiality rights of staff, parents, and students.
- 3.2 The team may not violate any provisions of collective bargaining agreements, a state or city law or ordinance, or a board of education or district regulation or policy.
- 3.3 The team may not discuss the evaluations of staff members.

Article II — MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Number of Team Members and Constituencies

- 1.1 The team shall be composed of 11 core members including:
 - The building principal
 - Five staff members (may include one paraprofessional)
 - Five parents (parent includes a parent or legal guardian with whom the child resides). The PAC or PTSO president, vice president, and secretary shall serve on the team automatically. The other two members will be elected by their constituencies.
 - One to three members of the community, who may be appointed by the principal to address targeted needs.
- 1.2 A parent who is an employee of the board of education may serve as a parent member on the team with one exception: an employee may not serve as a parent member in the school where she/he is employed.

- 1.3 In smaller schools the number of team members may be less, but the ratio of parents to staff must be the same.

Section 2. Election of Members

- 2.1 The building principal shall serve on the team automatically.
- 2.2 The other core members of the team shall be elected by majority vote of the constituency from which they come.
- 2.3 Community members shall be appointed by the building principal.
- 2.4 Elections shall be advertised within the school community and open to all members of the constituency group.
- 2.5 The term of office for the principal is ongoing.
- 2.6 The initial term of office for the ten other core members is from the introductory election of the school leadership team to the first school day in June. New elections for parents and staff members will be conducted during the first full week of June.
- 2.7 Each June thereafter, two parents and two staff will stand for election for a two year term.
- 2.8 The members appointed by the principal may serve a two-year term.

Section 3. Attendance, Resignation, and Removal of Team Members

- 3.1 Team members will be removed if they have THREE (3) consecutive, unexcused absences. They will be notified in writing after the second absence.
- 3.2 Team members may resign their seat by delivering a written letter of resignation to the team.

Section 4. Filling of Vacancies

- 4.1 If a vacancy occurs, an alternate, duly elected by the parents or staff, will assume the vacant position with the same rights and privileges.
- 4.2 4.2 The alternate will complete the unexpired term of the member.
- 4.3 Non-team members may attend team meetings as observers. Observers shall neither take part in the discussions nor the decision-making process.

Article III — TEAM STRUCTURE

Section 1. Officers and Their Elections

- 1.1 The officers of the team shall be elected by majority vote at the June meeting. They include:
 - Team chairperson
 - Co-chairperson
 - Secretary
 - Bilingual secretary
 - Timekeeper

Section 2. Duties of Officers

The chairperson shall prepare the agenda in consultation with the principal (if the principal is not the chairperson).

Additionally, the chairperson shall

- have overall responsibility for the affairs of the team;
- ensure that all orders and resolutions of the team are put into effect;

- ensure minutes of the team meetings are recorded and filed;
- communicate regularly with the principal (if he/she is not the principal);
- ensure there is regular and ongoing communication with the school community; and
- consult with the appropriate assistant superintendent as required.

The co-chairperson shall, in the absence of the chairperson, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson and shall perform such other duties as shall be asked of him/her by the team from time to time.

The secretary shall attend all meetings of the team and act as clerk thereof and shall be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose. The secretary shall give notice of all meetings to all members of the team and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the team or chairperson under whose supervision he/she shall work.

The bilingual secretary shall translate and communicate the team’s proceedings and decisions in the native language of the particular school community and shall perform the secretary’s duties and obligations in his/her absence.

The timekeeper shall keep meeting items on schedule and announce to the group when the allotted time has expired.

Section 3. Duties of the Team Members

The members of the team are accountable to their constituents and shall

- maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
- regularly attend and participate in team meetings;
- participate in information and training programs;
- act as a link between the team and the community; and
- encourage the participation of parents and others in the school community.

Article IV — MEETINGS

Section 1. Decision Making

- 1.1 Decisions shall be made by consensus of those present.
- 1.2 If a consensus cannot be reached after two meetings, the principal shall decide the issue.
- 1.3 The principal’s decision may be appealed by the team to the assistant superintendent if decided by a majority vote.
- 1.4 A majority vote may advance the appeal by steps to the associate superintendent, superintendent, and the board of education.

Section 2. Time and Place

- 2.1 The team shall meet twice a month, at a time to be determined by the members unless there is a conflict. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed.
- 2.2 Meetings shall be held at the same, agreed-upon location.
- 2.3 The meeting schedule will be developed by the team to accommodate as many members as possible.

Section 3. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of members, which shall include the core members, in order to conduct business that leads to a decision.

Section 4. Order of Business

The following order of business shall be observed in all regular meetings:

- Reading and approval of minutes
- Old business
- Reports
- New business
- Questions and comments from visitors
- Adjournment

Article V -- CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Section 1. In the event of an impasse or conflict, the team will attempt to resolve it internally. In the event that the team is unable to do so, the principal will decide how the team shall proceed.

Section 2. In conflicts between the principal and the team, the appropriate assistant superintendent shall mediate and resolve the issue.

Article VI — COMMUNICATION

Section 1. Means of Communication

- 1.1 The team shall communicate its activities and decisions to the school community through a bulletin board, newsletter, use of electronic mail, parent meetings, community conversations, staff meetings, print and broadcast media, or any other means deemed appropriate by the team.
- 1.2 The team shall receive communication from the school community via any written or spoken means, including a suggestion box, periodic formal and informal surveys, needs assessments, and personal interactions.
- 1.3 The team shall send copies of all communications, proceedings, and minutes to the appropriate assistant superintendent.

Section 2. Committees

The team may establish standing committees. Each committee shall have at least one team member to serve as liaison. In addition, ad hoc committees shall be formed at any time to investigate, analyze, and make recommendations on any issue deemed necessary by the team.

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM Principal's Checklist

First Steps

1. Gain personal knowledge of the SLT concept.
2. Prepare a folder of data on SLTs.
3. Acquire “seed money” for the project.
4. Engage in a broad-based community discussion on parent, teacher, and community involvement in school leadership and introduce the SLT concept.
5. Review the school’s current improvement plan.
6. Develop an initial agenda for the SLT consistent with provisions of the existing school improvement plan.

Second Steps

1. Plan and schedule a meeting with school staff and provide an overview of the initiative.
2. Review the school improvement plan in light of the mission of the SLT.
3. Plan and schedule a PAC/PTSO meeting and provide an overview of the SLT initiative.
4. Conduct elections for staff participants.
5. Appoint elected parent leaders to serve on the SLT.
6. Conduct parent elections to fill remaining seats.
7. Appoint community members to the SLT.

Third Steps

1. Plan and call an organizational meeting of the team.
2. Distribute and review SLT by-laws.
3. Review the roles and responsibilities of SLT officers.
4. Conduct an election of SLT officers.
5. With the elected chairperson, plan initial team activities to implement provisions of the school improvement plan.
6. Implement school improvement activities generated by the SLT.
7. Plan a personal training schedule with a central office advisor.
8. Plan a team training schedule with a central office advisor/service provider.

Fourth Steps

1. Conduct a comprehensive school performance assessment.
2. Engage the SLT in a thorough analysis of the results.
3. Review, be conversant with, and share with the SLT implications of the school performance assessment for the development of the new school improvement plan.
4. With the elected chairperson, plan SLT activities to develop a new school improvement plan using the findings of the school performance assessment as a guide.
5. Keep school staff, parents, community, and central office informed of all SLT activities.

Use the following legend to indicate status of each item:

IP = In Progress I = Incomplete C = Complete

APPENDIX C

Bridgeport School Leadership Team's Self-Assessment Tool

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

A. Personal Attributes

- 1. Do I view problems as opportunities?**
- 2. Am I a priority setter?**
- 3. Am I customer focused?**
- 4. Am I courageous?**
- 5. Am I a critical and creative thinker?**
- 6. What is my tolerance for ambiguity?**
- 7. Do I have a positive attitude towards change?**
- 8. Am I committed to innovations that are best for children?**

B. Skills

- 1. Do I debate, clarify, and enunciate my values and beliefs?**
- 2. Can I fuel, inspire, and guard the shared vision?**
- 3. Can I communicate our school improvement plan at all levels?**
- 4. Do I recognize the problems inherent to the planning process?**
- 5. Do I ask the “big picture” and “what if” questions?**
- 6. Can I support the school staff through the change process?**
- 7. Do I encourage dreaming and thinking the unthinkable?**
- 8. Can I align the budget, planning, policies, and instructional programs with the district goals and vision?**
- 9. Do I engage in goal setting?**
- 10. Can I develop and implement action plans?**
- 11. Do I transfer our strategic planning ideas to the actual planning process?**

C. Knowledge

- 1. Do I know board and superintendent roles and responsibilities for planning and implementing action items?**
- 2. Do I know the strategic planning process, and short and long-term planning tools?**
- 3. Do I know the board and district vision, beliefs, and mission?**
- 4. Do I know the relationship of the budget to district planning?**
- 5. Do I know local, state, and national factors that affect education?**
- 6. Do I know the best practices and research pertaining to improvement of academic achievement?**
- 7. Do I know the process of change?**
- 8. Do I know the strategies to involve and communicate with the community?**

APPENDIX D

School Leadership Team Checklist

FOCUS

1. Adopt a clear and current mission statement for the school.
2. Complete the school performance assessment
3. Set goals for all key areas of the school performance assessment.
4. Initiate the development of the school improvement plan for 2002-03.

ROLES

1. Make individual roles, relationships, and accountabilities clear.
2. Make leadership style appropriate to the task.
3. Make sure each person is competent to perform his/her task.
4. Make sure a “team-player” attitude is evident and prevalent.

PROCEDURES

1. Focus meeting agendas on school improvement issues.
2. Reach decisions by consensus.
3. Share management information with the team.
4. Implement key activities effectively.
5. Manage conflict effectively as a team.
6. Adhere to the SLT by-laws.

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. Make sure there are no areas of mistrust.
2. Give constructive feedback.
3. Make sure relationships are not competitive and unsupportive.
4. Spend time and effort on identifying, building, and improving internal relationships.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. Establish relationships with external persons and groups.
2. Develop and implement procedures and appropriate mechanisms to integrate with key community persons and groups.
3. Spend time and effort on identifying, supporting, and building external relationships.

Use the following legend to indicate the status of each item:

A = Achieved IP = In Progress NA = Not Achieved

APPENDIX E

BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joan K. Nobriga, *President*

Ángel Avila, *Vice President*

Alice B. Nealon, *Secretary*

James Carbone
Anacia Geter
Sharon A. Jenkins

Maximino Medina, Jr.
John O'Connell
Bobby Simmons

Sonia Díaz Salcedo, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Clarence Tolbert, Ed. D.
Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

John DiDonato
***Assistant Superintendent for
Student Support and Special Education***

Robert Britto, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Bassick Cluster

Henry R. Kelly
Assistant Superintendent of Central Cluster

Kenneth Henrici
Assistant Superintendent of Harding Cluster