



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Forum

EXCEPTIONAL MIDDLE-GRADES *SCHOOLS TO WATCH* ANNOUNCED

Champaign-Urbana, IL – Seventy-nine exemplary middle-grades schools in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia have been named “Schools to Watch” as part of an eighteen state recognition and school improvement program developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. Having established partnerships with education leaders in these states, the Forum today announced the names of schools in each state that meet its strict criteria. **[list of schools attached]**

Each school was selected by state leaders for its academic excellence, its responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents, and its commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement.

Dr. John Harrison, Chair of the National Forum’s Schools to Watch Committee stated, “These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools have a clear focus on academic growth and achievement. They also recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensuring that each and every child has access to a rigorous, high-quality education. We are proud to have these schools serve as models from which others can learn.”

Selection is based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the Forum. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by state teams who observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, and parents, and looked at achievement data, suspension rates, quality of lessons, and student work. Schools are recognized for a three-year period, and at the end of three years must repeat the process in order to be re-designated. Thirty-seven of the seventy-nine schools recognized have maintained or increased their levels of excellence and are being re-designated. The schools vary in size from several hundred to several thousand students and represent urban, suburban, and rural communities.

"We are pleased that our Schools to Watch program has shown that schools can meet high academic expectations while preserving a commitment to healthy development and equity for all students," said Dr. Deborah Kasak, Forum executive director. "These Schools to Watch are indeed special; they make education so exciting that students and teachers don't want to miss a day. These schools have proven that it is possible to overcome barriers to achieving excellence, and any middle-level school in any state can truly learn from their examples," Kasak said.

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle-grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 criteria developed by the Forum. The Forum web site (<http://www.schoolstowatch.org>) features online tours of schools, as well as detailed information about the selection criteria used in the recognition program.

In 2002, the Forum began working with states to replicate the Schools to Watch program as a way to introduce the Forum's criteria for high-performance and identify middle grades schools that meet or exceed that criteria. Different education organizations have taken the lead in each state, but all have received training and support from the Forum to implement their Schools to Watch programs. The lead state organizations are the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Education, the California League of Middle Schools, the Colorado Association of Middle Level Education, the Florida Department of Education, the Georgia Middle School Association, the Association of Illinois Middle Schools, the Indiana Middle Level Education Association and the Center of Excellence in Leadership & Learning, Kentucky Center for Middle School Academic Achievement, the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, New Jersey Consortium for Middle Schools and New Jersey Department of Education, the New York State Middle School Association & New York State Department of Education, the North Carolina Middle School Association, the Ohio Department of Education, the Oregon Middle Level Association, the Pennsylvania Middle School Association, the South Carolina Middle School Association, the Utah Middle Level Association, and the Virginia Middle School Association. All are planning in-state recognition ceremonies. Eighteen states are currently involved in the program and the addition of these schools raises the total number of Schools to Watch to 200 nationwide.

The National Forum sponsors the Schools to Watch state program with the support of its members and the State Schools to Watch programs. Schools convene at the Schools to Watch Conference in the Washington, DC area June 24-27, 2009.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform is an alliance of 81 educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle grades.

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**National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
New & Re-Designated “Schools to Watch”**

ARKANSAS

Contact: Dr. Mona Briggs (501) 658-1811 or Charles Green (501) 351-6638

McNair Middle School – Fayetteville, AR

CALIFORNIA

Contact: Dr. Irv Howard (800) 786-4554

Clarke Intermediate School – Clovis, CA
Dartmouth Middle School – San Jose, CA
Tincher Preparatory School – Long Beach, CA
Castaic Middle School – Castaic, CA
Culver City Middle School – Culver City, CA
Deportola Middle School – San Diego, CA
McKinleyville Middle School – McKinleyville, CA
R.H. Dana Middle School – Hawthorne, CA
Silverado Middle School – Roseville, CA
Toby Johnson Middle School – Elk Grove, CA

COLORADO

Contact: Diane Lauer (970) 613-7398

La Junta Middle School – La Junta, CO
Holmes Middle School – Colorado Springs, CO

FLORIDA

Contact: Iris Wilson (850) 245-0509

Jaega Middle School – West Palm Beach, FL
Stonewall Jackson Middle School – Orlando, FL

GEORGIA

Contact: Linda Hopping (404) 252-9417

Hahira Middle School – Hahira, GA
Morgan County Middle School – Madison, GA
Pickens County Middle School – Jasper, GA
Yeager Middle School – Douglasville, GA
Crabapple Middle School – Rosewell, GA
Gladden Middle School – Chatsworth, GA
Rabun County Middle School – Tiger, GA
Webb Bridge Middle School – Alpharetta, GA

ILLINOIS

Contact: Deb Schrock (217) 333-7104

Emerson Middle School – Niles, IL
Hickory Creek Middle School – Frankfort, IL
Jack London Middle School – Wheeling, IL
Ingersoll Middle School – Canton, IL
Thurgood Marshall Middle School – Chicago, IL

KENTUCKY

Contact: Fran Salyers (859) 622-1513

Auburn School – Auburn, KY
South Oldham Middle School - Crestwood, KY

MICHIGAN

Contact: Steve Hoelscher (248) 249-3265

Baldwin Street middle School – Hudsonville, MI
Escanaba Middle School – Escanaba, MI
Riley Street Middle School – Hudsonville, MI

NEW JERSEY

Contact: Linda Morse (609) 777-1653 or Dr. Gail Hilliard-Nelson (908) 737-3866

Dwight D Eisenhower Middle School – West Berlin, NJ
Holland Township School – Milford, NJ
Medford Memorial Middle School – Medford, NJ
Roosevelt Middle School – West Orange, NJ

NEW YORK

Contact: Marybeth Casey (518) 474-0059 or David Payton (518) 356-3299

A.A. Kingston Middle School – Potsdam, NY
Glens Falls Middle School – Glens Falls, NY
Jericho Middle School – Jericho, NY
Barker Road Middle School – Pittsford, NY
Calkins Road Middle School – Pittsford, NY
Moravia Middle School – Moravia, NY
Oliver W Winch Middle School – South Glens Falls, NY
Sayville Middle School – Sayville, NY
Twelve Corners Middle School – Rochester, NY
Victor Junior High School – Victor, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

Contact: Dr. John Harrison (910) 235-3761

Apple Valley Middle School – Hendersonville, NC
Crestdale Middle School – Matthews, NC
East Wilkes Middle School – Ronda, NC
Alexander Graham Middle School – Charlotte, NC
Ashe County Middle School – Newland, NC
Mint Hill Middle School – Matthews, NC
Rugby Middle School – Hendersonville, NC
Seventy-First Middle School – Fayetteville, NC

OHIO

Contact: Gloria Redding (614) 644-5702 or Lynn Wallich (614) 728-6698

Bellbrook Middle School – Bellbrook, OH
New Albany Middle School – New Albany, OH
Teays-Valley Middle School – Ashville, OH
Bexley Middle School – Columbus, OH
Bridgetown Middle School – Cincinnati, OH
Frank L. Wiley Middle School – Cleveland, OH
Kilbourne Middle School – Worthington, OH
Monticello Middle School – Cleveland, OH
Rapid Run Middle School – Cincinnati, OH
Spinning Hills Middle School – Dayton, OH
Van Wert Middle School – Van Wert, OH
Wantz Middle School – Miamisburg, OH

PENNSYLVANIA

Contact: Paul Meck (717) 697-8909

Abington Heights Middle School – Clarks Summit, PA
Avonworth Middle School – Pittsburgh, PA
Great Valley Middle School – Malvern, PA
Meadville Area Middle School – Meadville, PA
South Allegheny Middle School – McKeesport, PA
Yellow Breeches Middle School – Boiling Springs, PA

SOUTH CAROLINA

Contact: Linda Allen (843) 839-5025 or Phyllis Pendarvis (803) 772-4315

Belton Middle School – Belton, SC

VIRGINIA

Contact: Sandy Dutemple (703) 368-6465

Belmont Ridge Middle School – Lessburg, VA
Hidden Valley Middle School – Roanoke, VA
Smart's Mill Middle School – Lessburg, VA
EB Stanley Middle School – Abingdon VA
Woodbridge Middle School – Woodbridge, VA