

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWELVE MIDDLE SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED AS “SCHOOLS TO WATCH”

THREE NEW SCHOOLS & EIGHT SCHOOLS RE-DESIGNATED

ANNOUNCED IN PENNSYLVANIA

Mechanicsburg, PA - Three more exemplary Middle Grades Schools in Pennsylvania have been named PA Don Eichhorn Schools: “Schools to Watch” (PA STW) as part of a recognition program developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. In partnership with the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Duquesne University, Edinboro University, Shippensburg University, and the Horace Mann Service Corporation, the Pennsylvania “Schools to Watch” team has announced that the following new schools have met the strict STW criteria:

Twin Valley Middle School, Elverson, PA
Upper Dauphin Area Middle School, Lykens, PA
West Allegheny Middle School, Imperial, PA

These three schools join 35 other Pennsylvania middle-grades schools recognized previously. The three newest schools as well as the eight re-designated schools will be recognized at the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education State Conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College on February 25, 2018. They will be recognized nationally with all the other recognized STW schools across the country in Washington DC at the National Forum’s National Schools to Watch conference on June 28-30, 2018.

State leaders selected each school 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. Bruce Vosburgh, President of the National Forum, as well as the PA State STW Director, stated, “We congratulate these schools for being places that do great things for all of their students. These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools are places that focus on academic growth and achievement. They are also places that recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensure that every child has access to a challenging, high-quality education.”

The Schools to Watch selection process is based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the National Forum. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by state teams, which observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, students, 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, they must demonstrate progress on specific goals in order to be re-designated. Unlike the Blue Ribbon recognition program, “Schools to Watch” requires schools to not just identify

strengths, but to also focus on areas for continuous improvement; thus the three year re-designation.

Recognized for Re-designation (1) this year as “Schools to Watch” are four schools initially recognized three years ago:

Central Valley Middle School, Monaca, PA
Kane Area Middle School, Kane, PA
North Hills Middle School, Pittsburgh, PA
Pleasant Hills Middle School, Pittsburgh, PA

Recognized for Re-designation (2) this year are four schools that were initially recognized six years ago. This is the second time these school has been re-designated:

Cambria Heights Middle School, Patton, PA
Kennett Middle School, Landenberg, PA
Souderton Charter School Collaborative, Souderton, PA
Titusville Middle School, Titusville, PA

Recognized for Re-designation (3) this year is one school that was initially recognized nine years ago. This is the third time this school has been re-designated.

Avonworth Middle School, Pittsburgh, PA

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 researched based criteria developed by the National Forum. The Forum developed a web site (<http://middlegradesforum.org>) that features online tours of schools, as well as detailed information about the selection criteria used in the recognition program. There are now 18 states across the country, which have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, with more than 450 schools recognized across the country.

“We are pleased that our Schools to Watch program has shown that schools can meet high academic expectations while preserving a commitment of healthy development and equity for all students,” said Ericka Uskali, National 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,” Uskali said.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform began as an alliance of 65 educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle grades.

Contact person:

Bruce Vosburgh, Director, PA STW, bvosbur@comcast.net