History of Schools to Watch

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform is an alliance of over 60 educators, researchers, national associations and officers of professional organizations committed to promoting the academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents. The Forum developed in 1997 out of a sense of urgency that middle-grades school improvement had stalled, amid a flurry of descending test scores, increasing reports of school violence, and heated debates about the nature and purpose of middle-grades education. To accomplish its goal of improved academic and developmental outcomes for all students in the middle grades, the Forum identifies and disseminates best practices, articulates and promotes effective policies, recognizes and develops enlightened leadership, and engages the public.

With initial funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Forum has implemented several key initiatives. The Schools to Watch® (STW) program is one of those initiatives.

Schools to Watch® Program

The Schools to Watch program was initially a national recognition program. In 1999 the first four pilot schools were selected and recognized. The first round schools, chosen in May 1999, were Barren County Middle School in Glasgow, KY and Jefferson Middle School in Champaign, IL. The second round schools, chosen in December 1999, were Freeport Intermediate School in Freeport, TX and Thurgood Marshall Middle School in Chicago, IL. In 2002, the program moved to the state level, selecting and training California, Georgia, and North Carolina. In 2003, Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, and Colorado were selected and trained. There are now a total of 18 states in the Schools to Watch program.

Schools are designated as Schools to Watch for a three year period. After that time, they may re-apply for possible re-designation. Several states have currently re-designated schools for a second time.

Kentucky Schools to Watch Program

In the spring of 2003, a group of middle-grades leaders from Kentucky attended a national training. In the summer of 2003, these trained leaders met with and trained middle-grades participants from Kentucky to act as reviewers for the state program. New reviewers are added each year during 2-day trainings held each summer. There are currently reviewers from many middle-grades related roles (e.g. teachers, administrators, KDE, higher level educators, parents, support staff, district offices) and from most areas of the state.

To date, the Kentucky Schools to Watch Program has designated the following schools (school, district):

- 2004 – Adairville School, Logan County

KY STW 2009-2010
Auburn School, Logan County
Mahaffey Middle School, Fort Campbell Independent

- 2005 – Burns Middle School, Daviess County
  Northern Middle School, Pulaski County
  Olmstead School, Logan County
- 2006 – Alton Middle School, Hardin County
  Crosby Middle School, Jefferson County
  South Oldham Middle School, Oldham County
- 2007 – Adairville School, Logan County (Re-designated)
  Boyd County Middle School, Boyd County
  Noe Middle School, Jefferson County
  North Oldham Middle School, Oldham County
- 2008 – Bazzell Middle School, Allen County
  Belfry Middle School, Pike County
  Benton Middle School, Marshall County
  Burns Middle School, Daviess County (Re-designated)
  Eastside Middle School, Bullitt County
  McGuffey Sixth Grade Center, Lincoln County
  Northern Middle School, Pulaski County (Re-designated)
  Oldham County Middle School, Oldham County
  Olmstead School, Logan County (Re-designated)
- 2009 – Auburn School, Logan County (Re-designated)
  South Oldham Middle School, Oldham County (Re-designated)