

Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education

Don Eichhorn Schools to Watch 2024-25

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THREE MIDDLE SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED AS “Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch” for the 1st time and ELEVEN SCHOOLS RE-DESIGNATED

ANNOUNCED IN PENNSYLVANIA

Mechanicsburg, PA - Fourteen exemplary Middle Grades Schools in Pennsylvania have been recognized as 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 (PAMLE), Kutztown University, and the Horace Mann Service Corporation, PA STW has been recognizing schools since 2006-07. The Pennsylvania “Schools to Watch” leadership team has announced that the following schools have met the strict STW criteria and have been recognized:

New Schools

New Hope Solebury Middle School, Hew Hope-Solebury SD – New Hope, PA
Freeport Area Middle School, Freeport Area SD – Sarver, PA
Marshall Middle School, North Allegheny SD - Wexford, PA

Re-designated for the 2nd time. These schools were originally recognized three years ago.
Andrew Mellon Middle School, Mt. Lebanon SD - Pittsburgh, PA
Hampton Middle School, Hampton Township SD, Allison Park, PA
Upper Dauphin Area Middle School, Upper Dauphin Area SD, Lykens, PA
West Allegheny Middle School, West Allegheny SD, Imperial, PA

Re-designated for the 3rd time – These schools were first recognized nine years ago
Bentworth Middle School, Bentworth SD – Bentleyville, PA
Pleasant Hills Middle School, West Jefferson Hills SD – Pittsburgh, PA
South Fayette Middle School, South Fayette SD, McDonald, PA

Re-designated for the 4th time. These schools were originally recognized twelve years ago.
Elizabeth Forward Middle School, Elizabeth Forward SD – Elizabeth, PA
South Side Middle School, South Side SD – Hookstown, PA

Re-designated for the 6th time – These schools were originally recognized 18 years ago.
DuBois Area Middle School, DuBois Area SD – DuBois, PA
Pine Richland Middle School, Pine-Richland SD, Gibsonia, PA

These 14 schools join 38 other Pennsylvania middle-grades schools previously recognized and still active in the STW process. Since our beginning in 2006-07 we have recognized 62 schools across Pennsylvania. Schools opt out of the STW program for multiple reasons. These fourteen schools will be recognized at the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educations State Conference on February 22, 23 & 24, 2025, at the Double Tree Pittsburgh-Greentree. Each of these schools will have a local celebration in either May or June of 2025 in their school. They will also 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 26-28, 2025.

PA STW State leaders selected each school for its Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity and Organizational Structures and Processes. 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, 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. These schools have proven that it is possible to overcome barriers to achieve excellence, and any middle-level school in any state can truly learn from their examples."

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 to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by a state team, 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 need to re-apply to continue to be recognized as a STW school. They must also 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. The re-designation process is based on the schools continued growth since their last STW recognition.

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 website <https://www.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 20 states across the country, which have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, with more than 650 schools recognized across the country.

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.

Information about the STW program can be found on the website of the National Forum as well as on the PAMLE website.

<https://www.pamle.org/Schools-to-Watch>

<https://www.middlegradesforum.org/>

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