



The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Schools-to-Watch[®] Criteria

Organizational

Structures and Processes

High-performing schools with middle grades are learning organizations that establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

1. A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does drives every facet of school change.
2. The principal has the responsibility and authority to hold the school-improvement enterprise together, including day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning, and communication.
3. The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and time and opportunity for reflection are the norm.
4. The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional development, which is connected to reaching and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.
5. The school is not an island unto itself; it is a part of a larger educational system, i.e., districts, networks and community partnerships.
6. The school staff holds itself accountable for the students' success.
7. District and school staff possess and cultivate the collective will to persevere, believing it is their business to produce increased achievement and enhanced development of all students.
8. The school and district staffs work with colleges and universities to recruit, prepare, and mentor novice and experienced teachers.
9. The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.