



## The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

### Schools-to-Watch<sup>®</sup> Criteria Academic *Excellence*

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**High-performing schools with middle grades are academically excellent. They challenge all students to use their minds well.**

1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards.
2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.
3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.
4. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts, and skills being taught.
5. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess and monitor the progress of student learning (e.g., tests, quizzes, assignments, exhibitions, projects, performance tasks, portfolios).
6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.
7. Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.
8. The adults in the school are provided time and frequent opportunities to enhance student achievement by working with colleagues to deepen their knowledge and to improve their standards-based practice.