

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SIX MORE MIDDLE SCHOOLS "SCHOOLS TO WATCH"**

**And**

**SIX SCHOOLS RE-DESIGNATED**

**ANNOUNCED IN PENNSYLVANIA**

**Mechanicsburg, PA** - Six 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 Department of Education, the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education, Duquesne University, Edinboro University, Shippensburg University, Horace Mann Service Corporation, and Vibra Life, the Pennsylvania "Schools to Watch" team has announced that the following new schools have met the strict STW criteria:

**Bentworth Middle School, Bentleyville**  
**Highlands Middle School, Natrona Heights**  
**Ingomar Middle School, Pittsburgh**  
**Radnor Middle School, Wayne**  
**South Fayette Middle School, McDonald**  
**Wilson Southern Middle School, Reading**

These six schools join 28 other Pennsylvania middle-grades schools recognized previously. The six newest schools as well as the six 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 28.

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. Dr. Irv Howard, Past President of the National Forum 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 rigorous, high-quality education."

Linda Hopping, Chair, as well as other members of the National Forum Schools to Watch Oversight Committee, explain that selection was 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 this year as "Schools to Watch" are three schools initially recognized three years ago:**

Elizabeth Forward Middle School, Elizabeth  
Neshannock Junior High School, New Castle  
South Side School, Hookstown

**Recognized for re-designation this year is one school that was initially recognized six years ago. This is the second time this school has been re-designated:**

Yellow Breeches Middle School, Boiling Springs

**Recognized for re-designation this year are two schools that were initially recognized nine years ago. This is the third time these schools have been re-designated. These are the first two schools that were recognized by Pennsylvania as STW Schools, and they have continued to be a part of the STW program.**

DuBois Area Middle School, DuBois  
Pine Richland Middle School, Gibsonia

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 17 states across the country, which have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, with more than 4000 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 sponsors the Schools to Watch program along with the Association for Middle Level Education, the National Association for Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Learning Forward, ASCD, and State Schools to Watch affiliates.