



The "Deliberative Dozen"

12 Questions to ask your school as you consider applying for Schools to Watch

Is your school a high performing school? Do you have practices which attend to multiple aspects of educating young adolescents? The School Leadership Team should examine the statements below, and select "We're There" or "Not Yet" to determine readiness to launch the STW Application Process.

1. Our school meets academic eligibility requirements by being Fully Accredited by the Virginia Department of Education.
2. Our school is not in program improvement, is not being state-monitored, and does not have any unanswered or ongoing civil rights violations.
3. Our school's programs are replicable by schools with challenging and diverse populations.
4. Our school has an operational, school-wide progressive discipline plan. All students receive consistently fair and equitable treatment. The suspension data reflects that no subgroup is being unreasonably suspended.
5. Our school actively supports the physical, emotional and social health, welfare, and safety of our students with counseling, health services, adult advocacy, developmentally responsive activities, and positive incentives. Programs are designed and implemented to encourage, motivate, resolve conflict, and build character, and to increase resiliency, attendance, and achievement for all students.
6. The Division (Superintendent and School Board) provides strong support for its middle schools to meet the needs of young adolescents with financial resources, highly qualified teachers, administrators, and counselors, curriculum and instructional materials, and professional development for all staff.
7. The school's Vision Statement serves as the driving force for decisions in the school. The school has an operational and formalized structure of distributed leadership. Groups meet regularly with a clearly articulated system of norms, collaborative purpose, communication, and ability to make meaningful decisions. Groups should include at least:
 - School-wide leadership team with representation from key individuals
 - Departments work regularly throughout the year to disaggregate data and adapt instruction as dictated by that data

- Grade level department groupings
 - Grade level interdisciplinary teams of teachers with a common set of students and mutual accountability for student behavioral and academic success
 - Special programs for at-risk students
 - Parent or parent teacher association
 - Student council
8. The school is an integral part of the community. It seeks support from the community (universities, colleges, businesses, non-profits) and provides support to the community in terms of student volunteer services, facilities, and joint projects.
9. The master schedule of the school is a reflection of students' needs and the school mission. It is flexible and innovative in providing time and opportunity for coherent, rigorous, standards-based instruction for all students. It provides students with curricular opportunities in core subjects, targeted intervention opportunities, electives/encore classes, and physical education. It provides common planning time for teacher teams in the school to work collaboratively for the benefit of their students. It creates small, close communities of learners.
10. Students are heterogeneously placed on teams and in classrooms to the fullest possible extent. Instruction is differentiated for interventions and enrichment opportunities. Resource specialists collaborate or co-teach. Additional intervention or content specific classes are provided for students with specialized needs that cannot be met in the regular classroom (i.e. intervention, ESOL, remedial reading). Enrichment and leadership opportunities are accessible by all and not determined on the basis of IQ and/or test scores. All classes have high expectations and high levels of student engagement. Classrooms exhibit active learning and multiple teaching and learning strategies.
11. Every classroom and every student has equal access, opportunity, and challenge in any classroom to which they are assigned. Curriculum, instruction, school-wide strategies, pacing, assignments, homework, assessment, grading and reporting, enrichment projects and activities (science fair, academic bowl, field trips etc.) in each subject area are consistent and coherent across the school.
12. By the time the STW application is submitted, the entire administrative and teaching staff will have participated in an extensive, ongoing discussion of the Schools to Watch Self-Rating Rubric and will have a school average for each indicator. If selected, your school will be prepared to fulfill the obligation of sharing with others statewide and nationally what it takes to be a high performing middle school that is on its own continuous journey of improvement. It is understood that your school will attend the National STW Conference to receive the STW designation and present a session at that conference, share at state meetings, provide readers for other STW Application reviews, and provide site visitors for potential STW schools in Virginia