“Schools to Watch”

**STATE of TEXAS**

**PROGRAM APPLICATION**

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Texas Association of Secondary School Principals

*in collaboration with*

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Diagram

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**Program Overview**

The Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP) and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform recognize that effective middle schools differ significantly from elementary and secondary schools in curriculum and instruction, preparation of teachers and administrators, and organization of time and space. In this era of educational reform and rising expectations this program seeks to identify high-performing, high-impact middle schools to serve as comprehensive models from which other schools can learn and be inspired. This independent program is long-term, continuous, and is conducted by practicing middle grades professionals who understand the middle school concept. The criteria used to evaluate and select schools has been developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and is uniform throughout all states participating in the program. Schools selected will be highlighted in publications and programs at both the state and national levels. Applicant schools are encouraged to contact and/or visit current Texas Schools to Watch prior to applying for the program.

**What is a Texas School to Watch?**

A Texas School to Watch is a school that consistently has moved to meet fully the nationally endorsed criteria for high-performing middle schools; one that has made marked progress in meeting all of these criteria, including measurable gains in the academic achievement of all students over time, and is committed to continuous improvement. These schools will serve as models and mentors for other schools seeking to improve.

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**Texas Schools to Watch Program**

## Application Deadline: Applications must be received electronically no later than 5 PM, September 15, 2021

## Submission of Applications: One electronic copy must be e-mailed to [pringle@tassp.org](mailto:pringle@tassp.org) and [nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org](mailto:nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org).

Schools will be notified by email that the application has been received.

**General Instructions:**

1. A leadership team of at least six individuals that represents a cross-section of the school faculty should be assembled to study the application carefully and assume responsibility for preparing it.
2. The use of the rubric at the beginning stages of the application process helps a school determine if they are, indeed, ready to apply for this designation. The extent to which your school now engages in the practices listed on this self-assessment scale may lead you to decide to delay submitting the application while you use the rubric as a professional improvement guide.

Using a collaborative, school-wide process, discuss the **School Self-Study and Rating Rubric©**. Contact Billy Pringle ([pringle@tassp.org](mailto:cami_@bellsouth.net) ) when you are ready to begin your application, so the school can be set up to take the rubric online. **ALL SCHOOLS SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS MUST COMPLETE THE ONLINE RUBRIC AND TURN THE RESULTS IN WITH THEIR APPLICATION.**

*This rubric is the same instrument that will be used by evaluators when reviewing a school’s written application and when assessing a school during a site visit.*

1. Complete the questions on the application. Click in the text fields to answer all questions within the application. If you choose to attach pages, you must label each page with the question generating that response.
2. Complete all data pages in the application.
3. The major portion of the application is comprised of your school’s description of how it meets the

criteria within the four domains:

*Academic Excellence*

*Developmental Responsiveness*

*Social Equity*

*Organizational Structures and Processes*

The self-assessment compiled by the school should be the guiding force of the narrative. The application must provide explanations of specific practices and/or programs reflecting EACH of the four domains and supporting indicators. Your application must provide evidence that shows HOW the criteria are being implemented in EACH of the domains.

Responses for this portion of the application should not exceed ten pages, in narrative form, should not include exhibits or appendices, and must be submitted in 11-point type or larger.

1. Narrative – Focus on the Future (limit 3 pages)

This portion should include a reflective analysis of the results of the rubric self-study and how improvement in some areas could contribute to greater student success in your school. In addition, it should identify several areas where your staff can concentrate improvement efforts over the next several years.

1. The final application should be numbered consecutively with the school’s name as a header on each page. Please submit in the following order:

Cover Sheet

Vision statement

Mobility pattern statement

Discipline

Strategic Plan

Teaming Information

Special Aspects of the school

Research, grants, articles, projects

Faculty information

Current Demographics

Absenteeism & Suspension Data

Testing Data

Narrative – Academic Excellence

Narrative – Developmental Responsiveness

Narrative – Social Equity

Narrative – Organizational Structures and Processes

Narrative – Focus on the Future

Permission Form

Electronic copy of the STW Self-Study Rubric

1. It is suggested strongly that if any of the following are true for your school you should delay application:

* a principal new to the school
* a major change in program, student body, or grade configuration
* recent test scores that do not reflect an upward trajectory
* the school is less than three years old

1. Prepare one electronic copy and submit the electronic copy to pringle@tassp.org and [nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org](mailto:nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org)

*Applications prepared by external grant writers or paid consultants will not be accepted.*

Each application will be read by the Texas School to Watch committee to determine if the school indicates sufficient progress in meeting the criteria to warrant a two-day site visit. Schools selected for site visits will be assessed further through interviews with administrators, faculty, parents, and students, review of various records, and classroom visits.

Following visits to all selected schools, the Texas Schools to Watch committee, after reviewing and discussing the site visit reports, may indicate that a school needs to reapply after further refinement and work in specific criteria areas, or may designate a school as a Texas School to Watch. All schools visited, regardless of whether they are designated as a Texas School to Watch, will be notified of their status in writing. This notification will include a detailed report of the findings of the visiting committee.

*Texas Schools to Watch* will be recognized in the media, required to present at the TASSP Making Middle School Matter Symposium as well as the National Forum annual STW conference in Washington, D.C., asked to serve as mentors and models to other schools, and be featured in newsletters and publications. In addition, every Texas School to Watch campus principal must be a member of TASSP. These schools also will be featured on the TASSP website ([www.tassp.org](http://www.tassp.org)) and the website of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (<www.middlegradesforum.org>).



**Application Cover Sheet**

**Type or print all information**

School Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

School Address:Click or tap here to enter text.

School District: Click or tap here to enter text.

School Phone: Click or tap here to enter text. Fax: Click or tap here to enter text.

School Web Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Total Enrollment: Click or tap here to enter text.

Grades in school (check appropriate grades):  5  6  7  8  9

Principal’s name (please print):Click or tap here to enter text.

Principal’s e-mail address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Signatures of Application Writing Team:

**Application Deadline: 5 PM - Sept. 15, 2021**

**E-mail completed application to:** [**pringle@tassp.org**](mailto:pringle@tassp.org)

**Application**

What is your school’s vision/mission statement? To what extent does this statement drive the decisions made in your school? (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

If student mobility is a factor in your school, provide a paragraph that describes the mobility patterns over the last three years.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe the discipline plan in place at your school with particular attention to programs or strategies to decrease the number of suspensions and to promote positive behaviors. (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your current strategic plan for school improvement? Summarize it. (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe the teaming model in place at your school, including common planning time and usage of that time, professional learning communities, vertical teaming opportunities, team use of data to form instruction, etc. (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is special about your school that might warrant it being designated as a Texas School to Watch®? (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Are there any research projects, grant awards, articles, projects, and/or special awards of which your school has been the subject or recipient in the past five years? (limit one page)

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Faculty Information (full-time certified staff)**

Number of full-time certified staff: Click or tap here to enter text.

Number of full-time certified staff with advanced degrees: Click or tap here to enter text.

Number of full-time certified staff with National Board certification: Click or tap here to enter text.

Length of service for full-time certified staff at the school:

0-3 years: Click or tap here to enter text. 4-6 years: Click or tap here to enter text. 6+ years: Click or tap here to enter text.

What was the average absentee rate of teachers (percentage of ALL teachers) in your school during the 2017-2018 school year? Click or tap here to enter text.

How long has your administrative staff been in place at the school?

Principal: Click or tap here to enter text. A.P.#1: Click or tap here to enter text.

AP #2: Click or tap here to enter text. AP#3: Click or tap here to enter text. AP#4: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Professional Involvement**

List of middle school related professional educational organizations to which the school belongs:

Click or tap here to enter text.

State and/or national conferences at which faculty/staff members have presented in the past three years:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Administrative vitae: Please attach vitae for the principal and assistant principal(s)

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Current Demographic Information**

School Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

School District: Click or tap here to enter text.

Street Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

City,State,Zip: Click or tap here to enter text.

Phone with Area Code: Click or tap here to enter text. Fax: Click or tap here to enter text.

School Website: Click or tap here to enter text.

Grades in school (check appropriate grades):  5  6  7  8  9

Principal’s name:Click or tap here to enter text.

Principal’s e-mail address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Profile of School Community:  Urban  Suburban  Rural

**Student Information: *Enrollment Data***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Number in Grade** | **5th** | **6th** | **7th** | **8th** | **9th** | **Total # of Students** | **% of Total Enrollment** |
| **Caucasian** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Native American** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Asian** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **African-American** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Filipino** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Hispanic** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Pacific Islander** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 100% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Number in Grade** | **5th** | **6th** | **7th** | **8th** | **9th** | **Total # of Students** | **% of Total Enrollment** |
| **Male students** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Female students** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Free/Reduced lunch students** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Identified Special Education students** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **ELL students** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Absentee and Suspension Data for 2020-2021**

What was the average attendance rate for students in your school during the 2020-2021 school year (%)?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Would you define your student population as mobile or stable?  Mobile  Stable

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **In-School Suspension Data 2020-21** | **1-5 Days** | | **6-10 Days** | |
| **Total # of Students in School** | **# of Incidents** | **# of Students with Multiple Incidents** | **# of Incidents** | **# of Students with Multiple Incidents** |
| All students |  |  |  |  |
| Caucasian |  |  |  |  |
| Native-American |  |  |  |  |
| Asian |  |  |  |  |
| African-American |  |  |  |  |
| Filipino |  |  |  |  |
| Hispanic |  |  |  |  |
| Pacific Islander |  |  |  |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male students |  |  |  |  |
| Female students |  |  |  |  |
| Free/reduced lunch students |  |  |  |  |
| Identified Special Education students |  |  |  |  |
| English language learner students |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Out-of-School Suspension Data 2020-2021** | **1-5 Days** | | **6-10 Days** | |
| **Total # of Students in School** | **# of Incidents** | **# of Students with Multiple Incidents** | **# of Incidents** | **# of Students with Multiple Incidents** |
| All students |  |  |  |  |
| Caucasian |  |  |  |  |
| Native-American |  |  |  |  |
| Asian |  |  |  |  |
| African-American |  |  |  |  |
| Filipino |  |  |  |  |
| Hispanic |  |  |  |  |
| Pacific Islander |  |  |  |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male students |  |  |  |  |
| Female students |  |  |  |  |
| Free/reduced lunch students |  |  |  |  |
| Identified Special Education students |  |  |  |  |

Were there any students suspended for more than 10 days?

Yes  No If yes, how many? Click or tap here to enter text.

Were there any students expelled during the last school year?

Yes  No If yes, how many? Click or tap here to enter text.

**Testing Data**

**2020-2021**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Accountability Rating Overall Performance**  (out of possible 100) |  |
| **Student Achievement Score** (out of possible 100) |  |
| **School Progress** (out of possible 100) |  |
| **Closing the Gaps** (out of possible 100) |  |

**2019-2020**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Accountability Rating Overall Performance** |  |
| **Index I Student Achievement Score** |  |
| **Index 2 Student Progress Score** |  |
| **Index 3 Closing Performance Gaps Score** |  |

**2018-2019**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Accountability Rating Overall Performance** |  |
| **Index 1 Student Achievement Score** |  |
| **Index 2 Student Progress Score** |  |
| **Index 3 Closing Performance Gaps Score** |  |

Narratives

Responses for this portion of the application should not exceed ten pages total (there are four sections and each section should be close to two pages in length, please do not exceed 10 pages total), in narrative form, should not include exhibits or appendices, and must be submitted in 11-point type or larger. Please provide specific examples based on rubric exemplars for each area.

1. **Academic Excellence**

*The school is academically excellent. It challenges all students to use their minds well.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

1. **Developmental Responsiveness**

*The school is sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

1. **Social Equity**

*The school is socially equitable, democratic, and fair. It provides every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. It keeps positive options open for all students.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

1. **Organizational Structures and Processes**

*The school is a learning organization that establishes norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Narratives**

***This is an additional narrative and should be no longer than 3 pages total.***

**Focus on the Future**

*Write a two to three-page narrative on your school’s plans for the future based on your collaborative analysis and discussion of:*

* *The STW self-study and rating rubric*
* *state testing data*
* *School Improvement Plan*

*When doing this portion, you might want to think about the following:*

* *Are we meeting the needs of students over time?*
* *Are our students making strides towards proficiency or do we still have about the same percentages each year?*
* *Is the achievement gap closing for statistically significant subgroups of students?*
* *Why are some groups not achieving at the levels they should be and how can we address this?*
* *As a result of the self-study, which of the four domains and specific exemplars indicate a need for concentrated efforts to improve?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Permission Form**

We give permission for TASSP and *Texas Schools to Watch* to publish information included in this application in order to help other schools move toward high performance. This information may also be shared with and published by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.

**If selected as a Texas School to Watch:**

Phone and/or e-mail inquiries and visits from other educators and media publicity will result. The school will

participate in a network of middle-level practitioners, share their knowledge and experience with others in

order to accelerate middle-grades reform, and document these mentorship experiences using forms provided

by *Texas Schools to Watch*®.

The school will give permission to the National Forum and Texas Schools to Watch program to publish

the information and materials included in this application on their websites in order to help other schools move toward high performance.

The school will agree to participate as presenters and participants in the following:

* TASSP’s annual “Making Middle School Matter Symposium”
* National Forum Schools to Watch© annual conference, Washington, D.C.
* Campus principal will be a member of TASSP

In addition, the school will:

* Provide pertinent materials to be posted to the TASSP and Texas Schools to Watch website
* Serve as members of the Texas Schools to Watch state committee by completing the annual training (activities include reading applications, visiting potential Texas Schools to Watch sites, coaching future applicants, etc.).
* Agree that if there is a change of principal leadership at the school, the new principal will fulfill the obligations

and take Texas Schools to Watch training at the earliest opportunity.

* Agree to annually review and update their Texas Schools to Watch self-assessment and to keep Texas Schools to Watch apprised of their continuous improvement.
* Prepare a packet of materials about the school to have available for visitors.

***\*\*\*Failure to meet these responsibilities could result in revocation of Texas Schools to Watch status.***

***We certify that this application has not been prepared by an external grant writer or paid consultant.***

(Principal’s signature) (Date)

(Superintendent’s signature) (Date)

***Please return completed applications to:***

**Electronic copy: pringle@tassp.org and** [**nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org**](mailto:nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org)

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**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. 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**.

* Expectations are clear for students and parents.
* Teachers provide students with exemplars of high quality work that meet the performance standard or level so that students know what high quality work should be like.
* Students revise their work based on meaningful feedback until they meet or exceed the performance standard or level.

1. **Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.**

* The vision guides what students should know and be able to do, and it is coherent.
* Students, teachers and families understand what students are learning and why. In any class and at any time, students can explain the importance of what they are learning.
* The curriculum is rigorous, non-repetitive, and moves forward substantially.
* Work is demanding and steadily progresses.

1. **The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.**

* Teachers make connections across the disciplines to reinforce important concepts and assist students in thinking critically and applying what they have learned to solve real-world problems.
* Teachers incorporate academic and informational literacy into their course work (i.e. reading, writing, note taking, researching, listening, and speaking)

1. **Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts, and skills being taught.**

* To reach students, teachers draw from a common subset of instructional strategies and activities such as direct instruction, cooperative learning, project-based learning, simulations, hands-on learning, and integrated technology

1. **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, student conferences).**

* Teachers use common, frequent assessments to benchmark key concepts and the achievement of their students.
* Students learn how to assess their own and others' work against the performance standards, expectations, or levels.

6. **The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.**

* Students are provided more time to learn the content, concepts or skills if needed.
* Flexible scheduling enables students to engage in academic interventions, extended projects, hands-on experiences, and inquiry-based learning.

**7. Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards.**

* Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.
* Students have multiple opportunities to succeed and receive extra help as needed, such as: co-teaching or collaborative resource model, support and intervention classes, before- and after-school tutoring, and homework centers.

**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.**

* Teachers collaborate in making decisions about rigorous curriculum, standards-based assessment practice, effective instructional methods, and evaluation of student work.
* The professional learning community employs coaching, mentoring, and peer observation as a means of continuous instructional improvement.

**DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS. The school is sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.**

1. **The staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.**

* Adults and students are grouped into smaller communities (e.g. teams, houses, academies) for enhanced teaching and learning.
* These small learning communities are characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships.
* Every student has a mentor, advisor, advocate, or other adult he/she trusts and stays in relationship with throughout the middle school experience.

1. **The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.**

* Teachers are trained to recognize and handle student problems.
* Students with difficulties, and their families, can get help.
* The school houses a wide range of support (e.g. nurses, counselors, resource teachers) to help students and families.
* School staff members offer parent education activities involving families.

1. **All teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment.**

* Teachers enhance standards-based learning by using a wide variety of instructional strategies.
* Teachers incorporate well-developed procedures and routines for effective classroom management.
* Teachers facilitate learning by deliberately teaching study and organizational skills.
* Teachers integrate creative activities in the lessons, e.g., current technologies, visual and performing arts, etc.

1. **The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.**

* Students talk about daily issues in their own lives, their community and their world.
* Students take action, make informed choices, work collaboratively, and learn to resolve conflicts.

1. **Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.**

* Teachers collaborate to create integrated activities that cross content boundaries.
* Students can work on the same project in several different classes.

1. **Students are provided multiple opportunities to explore a rich variety of topics and interests in order to develop their identity, learn about their strengths, discover and demonstrate their own competence, and plan for their future.**

* Teachers and counselors push students to challenge themselves and set high academic and career goals for their future.
* Students are provided with multiple opportunities to explore topics of interest to them.
* Students demonstrate competency in a variety of subjects as well as areas of interest.

1. **Students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.**

* All students have a real say, or have legitimate representation, in what happens at school.
* School staff members have an “open-door” policy to encourage student involvement and connection.
* Students take an active role in school-family conferences.

1. **The school staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children.**

* Parents are more than just volunteers or fund-raisers; they are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the school.
* Parents are informed, included, and involved as partners and decision-makers in their children’s education.

1. **Staff members provide all students with opportunities to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support.**

* Students take on projects to improve their school, community, state, nation, and world.
* Members of the community engage in meaningful learning opportunities with the school.

1. **The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment.**

* Student co-curricular activities cover a wide range of interests—team sports, clubs, exploratory opportunities, service opportunities, and a rich program in the visual and performing arts.
* Co-curricular programs are infused with activities that help students develop relevant life skills.

**SOCIAL EQUITY. The school is socially equitable, democratic, and fair. It provides every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. It keeps positive options open for all students.**

1. **To the fullest extent possible, all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations.**

* Faculty and administrators are committed to helping each student produce proficient work.
* Evidence of this commitment includes tutoring, mentoring, enrichment assignments, differentiated instruction, special adaptations, supplemental classes and other supports.
* Accelerated, short-term interventions for students with similar needs are fluid.

1. **Students are provided the opportunity to use many and varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards.**

* Teachers differentiate instruction in order to give each student equal opportunity to comprehend the standards-based curriculum.
* Teachers provide a variety of learning experiences, so all students have opportunities to master a challenging curriculum.
* Teachers provide learning activities that represent varying learning styles, so all students have opportunities to master standards.

1. **Teachers continually adapt curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling to meet their students' diverse and changing needs.**

* The faculty is always seeking ways to improve programs, curriculum, and assessment to better meet student needs.
* Teachers assess mastery continuously and modify their instruction to meet current needs.
* The master schedule is developed in a way that provides flexibility for teachers to meet specific instructional needs on a daily basis.

1. **All students have equal access to valued knowledge in all school classes and activities.**

* To the fullest extent possible, students use technology to do research and analyze data, read more than textbooks, and understand how to solve complex problems.
* To the fullest extent possible, students with disabilities are in regular classrooms.
* Students have access to interest-based classes, activities, or opportunities.

1. **Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures.**

* The school values knowledge from the diverse cultures represented in the school, community, and our nation.
* Materials in the media center represent all of the cultures of the students.
* Families often come and share their traditions and beliefs.
* Multiple viewpoints are encouraged.

1. **The school community knows every student well.**

* Each student is appreciated and respected.
* Staff members do not use negative labels or discuss students in negative ways.
* Every student has an adult advocate and supporter in the school.

1. **To the fullest extent possible, the faculty welcomes and encourages the active participation of all its families and makes sure that all its families are an integral part of the school.**

* Transportation, meals, childcare, and translation support are provided so all families of diverse cultures and languages can attend school events.
* Efforts are made to eliminate barriers (e.g. transportation, childcare, translation) to attend school events.
* Multiple forms of communication are used with families and communication is two-way.
* Families have a voice in the decision-making process of the school.
* Opportunities are provided for families to engage in supporting student learning (e.g. parenting classes, literacy programs, accessing information about student progress, making meaningful connections to the curriculum).

1. **The school’s reward system is designed to value diversity, civility, service, and democratic citizenship.**

* The faculty recognizes the contributions of all its students.
* Awards are not limited to sports and academic honors.

1. **To the fullest extent possible, staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of its students.**

* The school recruits a culturally and linguistically diverse staff.
* The staff members are a good match to the school’s community.

1. **The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied.**

* Students and parents are informed of school rules and know exactly what will and does happen if students break the rules.
* Staff members routinely analyze and act upon referral and suspension data to make sure that no one group of students is unfairly singled out by classroom teachers and school staff.
* The school's disciplinary referrals and suspension rate are low as a result of proactive interventions that keep students engaged, resilient, healthy, safe, and respectful of one another.

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES. The school is a learning organization that establishes 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.**

* The shared vision drives constant improvement.
* Shared, distributed, and sustained leadership propels the school forward and preserves its institutional memory and purpose.
* Everyone knows what the plan is and the vision is posted and evidenced by actions.

1. **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.**

* Lines of leadership for the school’s improvement efforts are clear.
* The school leadership team has the responsibility to make things happen.
* The principal makes sure that assignments for staff are clear and explicit and are completed in a timely manner.

1. **The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and the opportunity for reflection are the norm.**

* School leadership fosters and supports interdependent collaboration.
* Expectations of continuous improvement permeate the school culture.
* Learning is ongoing for everyone.

1. **The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional learning, which is connected to reaching and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.**

* Professional learning is intensive, of high quality, ongoing, and relevant to middle-grades education.
* Teachers get professional support to improve instructional practice (i.e. classroom visitations, peer coaching, demonstration lessons, etc.)
* Opportunities for learning increase knowledge and skills, challenge outmoded beliefs and practices, and provide support in the classroom.

1. **The school is not an island unto itself; it is a part of a larger educational system, i.e., districts, networks and community partnerships.**

* Deliberate vertical articulation and transition programs exist between feeder elementary schools and destination high schools.
* The district supports through funding and time its schools’ participation in best practice networks, associations, learning communities, and professional learning focused on middle grades improvement and achievement.
* The school and district work collaboratively to bring coherence to curriculum, instruction, assessment, intervention, data collection, analysis, and accountability for student achievement.

1. **The school staff holds itself accountable for student success.**

* The school collects, analyzes, and uses data as a basis for making decisions.
* School-generated evaluation data is used to identify areas for more extensive and intensive improvement.
* The school staff intentionally and explicitly reconsiders its vision and practices when data call them into question.

1. **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.**

* Barriers are viewed as challenges, not problems.
* District and school staff assess and evaluate current programs regularly and adapt them as needed to maximize the level of student mastery.

1. **The school and district staffs partner with colleges and universities.**

* A mentoring program for new teachers is in place.
* The principal contacts colleges and universities when hiring new teachers.

1. **The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.**

* Families and community members are informed about the school’s goals for student success and students' responsibility for meeting those goals.
* Representatives of all stakeholders are engaged in ongoing and reflective conversation, consensus building, and decision making about governance to promote school improvement.

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**Application Checklist**

***Please use this checklist to ensure that you have all parts of the application   
complete and that they are in the correct order.***

**Cover Sheet**

**Vision Statement**

**Mobility Pattern Statement**

**Discipline Plan**

**Strategic Plan summary**

**Teaming Information**

**Special Aspects of the School**

**Research, grants, articles, projects**

**Faculty information**

**Data pages** (current demographics, absenteeism & suspension, testing)

**Narratives** (Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity, Organizational Structures and Processes, Focus on the Future)

**Permission Forms**

**Send one completed copy of the application electronically to Billy Pringle at** [pringle@tassp.org](mailto:pringle@tassp.org) **and** [**nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org**](mailto:nationalforum@middlegradesforum.org)

***Applications are due September 15, 2021 (No later than 5 PM on this day)***