



# Essential Elements: Schools to Watch™

## *A School Self-Study and Rating Rubric* ©



Use the School Self- Study and Rating Rubric as a baseline and roadmap for middle school improvement.

This School Self-Study and Rating Rubric may be used as a continuous improvement tool. It is fully aligned with New York State's Essential Elements of a Standards Focused Middle Level School Program. Self-study and rating is a requirement for schools interested in applying for designation as an Essential Elements: School to Watch™ and is highly recommended by the New York State Education Department and the New York State Middle School Association as a tool for school improvement in all schools with middle grade students.

The rubric is divided into four sections: **Academic Excellence**, **Developmental Responsiveness**, **Social Equity**, and **Organizational Structure and Processes**. Under each section there is general criteria followed by the applicable NYS Essential Element in italics. Beneath each general criterion are concrete, detailed, examples of excellence. In various instances your school may be able to show additional evidence to support certain criteria. Any additional evidence should be placed in the "other" category available under each general criteria and labeled. Also under each general criterion there is a space to provide a description of specific school programs, policies or activities that relate to those criteria. This section is **very important** as this is where you will describe the evidence to support your rating. Through a **collaborative process** schools should study their data and practices and rate themselves for each criterion. The **ultimate goal** is to show evidence that demonstrates your school is consistently reflective of school practices and is on a steady trajectory of improvement. Even when a well evidenced score point 4 is reached, a true high performing middle school will continue to seek ways to improve as new challenges arise.

**4** in any component means the practice is highly and completely implemented, systemic, and coherent in every classroom, by every teacher, across the school.

**3** in any component means that there is a high degree or maturing quality of implementation that is systemic, but it may not be coherent or of the highest quality in every classroom and by every teacher, but certainly by most, 75 percent or better.

**2** in any component means that there is a mixed, fair, or immature quality of implementation. A 2 also means that practices may include many teachers but not the majority. The program may be too new to have realized accountable results or to be evaluated as effective.

**1** in any general and detail component means that the practice may just have gotten started, (very immature), or is only practiced by a handful of practitioners).

**Please submit only one collaboratively compiled Self-Study and Rating Rubric with your application.**

**Essential Elements:  
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**District:**

**School:**

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

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating
<b>1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards</b> <i>The educational program is challenging, rigorous, and purposeful; it has performance expectations that are common across all grades and subject areas. Teachers maintain performance expectations that are consistent and interrelated across and within subject areas. Everyone has high expectations for all students (Essential Element characteristics 2.2, 2.8, 4.18, 7.4)</i>		4	3	2	1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations are clear for students and parents.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to students beginning an assignment, teachers supply students with exemplars of high quality work that meet the performance standard or level.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students know what high quality work should be like.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students revise their work based on meaningful feedback until they meet or exceed the performance standard or level.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.</b> <i>The educational program is comprehensive and inclusive, embracing and encompassing all of the State's 28 learning standards. It is articulated vertically and horizontally with a set of learning skills that are common across all grades and subject areas and taught and reinforced in each grade and subject area. The program has up-to-date written curricula aligned with the State's learning standards Teachers provide instruction that is standards-based, challenging, rigorous and purposeful; they use classroom assessments that reflect the State's learning standards and are aligned with State assessments. (Essential Element Characteristics 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.10, 4.2, 4.13)</i>		4	3	2	1	_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards provide a coherent vision for what students should know and be able to do.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students, teachers and families understand what students are learning and why.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In any class and at any time, students can explain the importance of what they are learning.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The curriculum is rigorous, non-repetitive, and moves forward substantially.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is demanding and steadily progresses.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs activities etc. rated above.</b>						

4 = High quality, complete, mature, and coherent implementation – NEARLY PERFECT, LITTLE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT  
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 2 = Fair quality, mixed implementation, immature practice, sporadic by some – SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT NEEDED  
 1 = Poor quality, low level of implementation, new program, by a few –CONSIDERABLE STRATEGIC PLANNING, CONSENSUS BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT NEEDED  
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General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating  _____
		4	3	2	1	
<b>3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.</b> <i>The educational program reflects interdependence, emphasizes cross-program connections, and promotes shared responsibility. Teachers focus instruction on thinking, reasoning, and problem solving and, at the same time, ensure that students acquire necessary content and subject matter. They use interdisciplinary approaches to help students integrate their studies and meet learning standards. (Essential Element characteristics 2.4, 4.10, 4.11)</i>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers make connections across the disciplines to reinforce important concepts and assist students in applying what they have learned to solve real-world problems.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All teachers incorporate academic and informational literacy into their course work (i.e. reading, writing, note taking, researching, listening, and speaking)</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities, etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>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.</b> <i>The school and the staff provide each student with a variety of learning experiences that are academically challenging, developmentally appropriate, and personally relevant in order for each of them to make informed educational and personal decisions. Teachers vary activities to maintain student interest. (Essential Element characteristics 1.6, 4.8)</i>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reach students, all teachers draw from a common subset of instructional strategies and activities such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct instruction</li> </ul> </li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperative learning</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project-based learning</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simulations</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hands-on learning – integrated technology</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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<b>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).</b> <i>The educational program includes diagnostic assessments that regularly and routinely monitor the learning of each student relative to the State's standards and community expectations. Teachers use classroom assessments that are instructionally useful indicators of individual student growth and performance not only to monitor each student's progress in meeting the State's learning standards but also to plan instruction. Staff use data, both personal and achievement, to make curricular and instructional decisions. (Essential Element characteristics 2.11, 4.14, 4.15)</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All teachers use common, frequent assessments to benchmark key concepts and the achievement of their students.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students learn how to assess their own and others' work against the performance standards, expectations, or levels.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.</b> <i>The school has a schedule with flexible time assignments within blocks of time to encourage interdisciplinary programs and the creative use of time. (Essential Element characteristic 3.3)</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are provided more time to learn the content, concepts or skills if needed.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible scheduling enables students to engage in academic interventions, extended projects, hands-on experiences, and inquiry-based learning.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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7. <b>Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards.</b> <i>The program provides targeted and timely academic intervention services that are based upon a careful assessment of the academic, social, and emotional needs of students at risk of not meeting the State's learning standards. The school provides, for those students needing additional help to meet the State's standards, opportunities for additional time, instruction, and personal support. (Essential Element characteristics 2.14, 3.8)</i>		4	3	2	1	Rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.</li> </ul>					_____
	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,					
	○ homework centers					
	• Other					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
8. <b>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.</b> <i>The school has teacher teams sharing responsibility for the education and personal development of a common group of student and provides common planning time for those teachers and teacher teams sharing responsibility for a common group of students. (Essential Element characteristics 3.1, 3.2, 4.17)</i>		4	3	2	1	Rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They collaborate in analyzing student achievement data and making decisions about rigorous curriculum, standards-based assessment practice, effective instructional methods, and evaluation of student work.</li> </ul>					_____
	• The professional learning community employs coaching, mentoring, and peer observation as a means of continuous instructional improvement					
	• Other					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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**Developmental Responsiveness** High-performing schools with middle grades are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating  _____
		4	3	2	1	
<b>1. The staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.</b> <i>The school and staff are committed to developing the whole child, intellectually and academically, personally and socially, physically, emotionally, and ethically. The school is structured to create close, sustained relationships between students and teachers. Essential Element characteristics 1.1, 2.1, 3.6</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults and students are grouped into smaller communities (i.e. teams, houses, academies) for enhanced teaching and learning.</li> <li>• These small learning communities are characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships.</li> <li>• Every student has a mentor, advisor, advocate, or other adult he/she trusts and stays in relationship with throughout the middle school experience.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					_____
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>2. The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.</b> <i>The school provides support services such as guidance, counseling, and health-related services to all students. Counseling and guidance services are available to assist students and their families in making life, career, and educational choices. A network of trained professionals, special programs, and community resources are available to assist those who have extraordinary needs and require additional services to cope with the changes of early adolescence and/or the academic demands of middle-level education. The school collaborates and cooperates with other human service agencies in the community. (Essential Element characteristics 3.15, 6.4, 6.7)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are trained to recognize and handle student problems.</li> <li>• Students with difficulties, and their families, can get help.</li> <li>• The school houses a wide range of support—nurses, counselors, resource teachers—to help students and families who need special assistance.</li> <li>• The school staff-members offer parent education activities involving families.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					_____
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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**District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>3. Teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment.</b> <i>Teachers have a deep understanding of their subject matter, of different approaches to student learning, and of diverse teaching techniques. They use a range of successful, research-based teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate, matching instruction to the students' varied learning styles and different intelligences. Teachers involve students in their learning, encouraging them to contribute to their learning experiences, to make choices, to explore, to question, to experience, to learn, to grow, to develop social, interpersonal and leadership skills in addition to academic proficiency.(Essential Element characteristics 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Teachers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ enhance standards-based learning by using a wide variety of instructional strategies;</li> <li>○ incorporate well-developed procedures and routines for effective classroom management;</li> <li>○ facilitate learning by deliberately teaching study and organizational skills;</li> <li>○ integrate creative activities in the lessons, e.g., current technologies, visual and performing arts, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					
<b>4. The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.</b> <i>The educational program offers opportunities for the development of personal responsibility and self-direction. (Essential Element characteristic 2.12)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students talk about daily issues in their own lives, their community and their world.</li> <li>• Students take action, make informed choices, work collaboratively, and learn to resolve conflicts.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					

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**District:**

**School:**

**Developmental Responsiveness** (continued)

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating  _____
		4	3	2	1	
<b>5. Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.</b> <i>The educational program emphasizes reading, writing, and mathematics (literacy and numeracy) across the subject areas with expectations for performance that are consistent across and within the disciplines and commonly understood by teachers, students, and parents. (Essential Element characteristic 2.7)</i>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers team together to plan interdisciplinary units.</li> <li>• Every teacher sees themselves as a literacy and numeracy teacher and takes responsibility for each student's literacy and numeracy achievement.</li> <li>• Students can work on the same project in several different classes.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>6. 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.</b> <i>The school has ties with the school community that strengthen connections between school/education and career opportunities. Students have opportunities to examine, explore, discuss, and understand the changes associated with early adolescence. (Essential Element characteristics 3.12, 6.3)</i>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers and counselors push students to challenge themselves and set high academic and career goals for their future.</li> <li>• All students are offered a rich and comprehensive academic program including all intermediate course requirements outlined in Commissioner's Regulations 100.4</li> <li>• The school forms partnerships with the community in order to expose students to career opportunities and topics they may not otherwise have available to them.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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<b>7. All students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.</b> <i>Those in positions of leadership provide students with opportunities to assume significant and meaningful leadership roles in the school. (Essential Element characteristic 5.11)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students have a real say, or have legitimate representation, in what happens at school.</li> <li>• School staff members have an “open-door” policy to encourage student involvement and connection.</li> <li>• Students take an active role in school-family conferences.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									
<b>8. The school staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children.</b> <i>The school encourages active parent involvement through a variety of activities. Teachers inform and involve parents of middle-level students in their children’s education by helping them understand the learning standards that their children must meet, the instructional program, their children’s progress, and how to help their children at home with schoolwork, school decisions, and successful development through adolescence. There exists a system of two-way communication between the school and the parents and families of its students. (Essential Element characteristics 3.11, 4.19, 6.5)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are more than just volunteers or fund-raisers; they are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the school.</li> <li>• Parents are informed, included, and involved as partners and decision-makers in their children’s education.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									
<b>9. 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.</b> <i>The school provides opportunities for students to participate in youth service, community service, and/or service learning activities. (Essential Element characteristic 3.10)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students take on projects to improve their school, community, state, nation, and world.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									

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10. The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment. <i>The school provides a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. (Essential Element characteristic 3.9)</i>	4	3	2	1	Rating
					_____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<p><b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b></p>					

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**District:** **Social Equity** High performing schools with middle grades are socially equitable, democratic, and fair. They provide every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. They keep positive options open for all students

**School:**

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating
		4	3	2	1	
<b>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.</b> <i>The school provides, for those students needing additional help to meet the State's standards, opportunities for additional time, instruction, and personal support. The school promotes and encourages appropriate participation of pupils with disabilities in all curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. The programs and services of students with disabilities or other special needs are integrated throughout the school building to ensure access to the same instruction as their peers. (Essential Element Characteristics 3.8, 3.13, 3.14)</i>						Rating <hr/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty and administrators are committed to helping each student produce proficient work.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of this commitment includes tutoring, mentoring, enrichment assignments, differentiated instruction, special adaptations, supplemental classes and other supports.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated, short-term interventions for students with similar needs are fluid and do not become low-level or permanent tracks.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>2. Students are provided the opportunity to use many and varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards.</b> <i>Teachers use technology and other instructional resources purposely to support and enhance learning. Use a range of successful, research-based teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate, matching instruction to the students' varied learning styles and different intelligences. (Essential Element characteristics 4.6, 4.9)</i>						Rating <hr/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers know each student's learning style.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers differentiate instruction in order to give each student equal opportunity to comprehend the standards-based curriculum.</li> </ul>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

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<b>3. Teachers continually adapt curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling to meet their students' diverse and changing needs.</b> <i>Staff routinely and systematically monitor and evaluate student learning to assess and improve instructional effectiveness. (Essential Element characteristics 7.10)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The faculty is always seeking ways to improve programs, curriculum, and assessment to better meet student needs.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>				

**Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.**

<b>4. All students have equal access to valued knowledge in all school classes and activities.</b> <i>The school provides, for those students needing additional help to meet the State's standards, opportunities for additional time, instruction, and personal support. The school promotes and encourages appropriate participation of pupils with disabilities in all curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. The programs and services of students with disabilities or other special needs are integrated throughout the school building to ensure access to the same instruction as their peers. (Essential Element Characteristics 3.8, 3.13, 3.14)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students use technology to do research and analyze data, read more than textbooks, and understand how to solve complex problems.</li> <li>• To the fullest extent possible, students with disabilities are in regular classrooms that are co-taught by special education professionals.</li> <li>• All students have access to participate in interest-based classes, activities, or opportunities.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>				

**Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.**

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<b>5. Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures.</b> <i>The school ensures that all students, staff, parents, and families feel secure, valued and respected as significant contributors to the school community. Respect and caring engender a feeling of self-worth, self-confidence, and personal efficacy (Essential Elements Characteristic 3.7, 6.2)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school values knowledge from the diverse cultures represented in the school, community, and our nation.</li> <li>• Materials in the media center represent all of the cultures of the students.</li> <li>• Families often come and share their traditions and beliefs.</li> <li>• Teachers use multi-cultural materials and methods.</li> <li>• Multiple viewpoints are encouraged.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									
<b>6. The school community knows every student well.</b> <i>The school and staff ensure for each student a safe, inviting, trusting, and mutually-respectful learning environment that offers both physical and psychological safety. The school and staff connect each young adolescent in positive ways with the school and with caring adults within the school. (Essential Element characteristics 1.4, 1.5)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each student is appreciated and respected.</li> <li>• Staff members do not use negative labels or discuss students in negative ways.</li> <li>• Every student has an adult advocate and supporter in the school.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									
<b>7. 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.</b> <i>The educational program engages and involves the family, local community, and the world outside school in the education and personal development of young adolescents. (Essential Element characteristic 2.15)</i>					4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation, meals, childcare, and translation support are provided so all families of diverse cultures and languages can attend school events.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>								
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>									

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**District:**

**School:**

<b>8. The school's reward system is designed to value diversity, civility, service, and democratic citizenship.</b> <i>Adults and older youths provide positive role models and constant affirmation and recognition. (Essential Element characteristic 6.1)</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	• The faculty recognizes the contributions of all its students.					
	• Awards are not limited to sports and academic honors.					
	• Students' success and good deeds are always noticed.					
	• Other					

**Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.**

<b>9. Staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of its students.</b> <i>The school ensures that all students, staff, parents, and families feel secure, valued and respected as significant contributors to the school community (Essential Element Characteristic 3.7)</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	• The school recruits a culturally and linguistically diverse staff.					
	• The staff members are a good match to the school's community.					
	• Other					

**Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.**

<b>10. The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied.</b> <i>The school fosters each student's personal development, health, wellness and safety. (Essential Elements Conclusion)</i>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	• Students and parents are informed of school rules and know exactly what will and does happen if students break the rules.					
	• The school's suspension rate is low.					
	• 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 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.					
• Other						

**Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.**

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**Organization 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.

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				Rating
		4	3	2	1	
<b>1. A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does, drives every facet of school change.</b> <i>The school staff understand the philosophy and mission of the standards-driven middle-level school and are implementing the Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education and the Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs. (Essential Element characteristics 7.2, 7.3)</i>						_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The shared vision drives constant improvement.</li> <li>• Shared, distributed, and sustained leadership propels the school forward and preserves its institutional memory and purpose.</li> <li>• Everyone knows what the plan is and the vision is posted and evidenced by actions.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					_____
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						
<b>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.</b> <i>Those in positions of leadership create, promote, and sustain a school culture of mutual support and collective responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every young adolescent. They promote and facilitate inter-school cooperation, collaboration, and communication with feeder elementary schools and receiving high schools. (Essential Element characteristics 5.6, 5.13)</i>						_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lines of leadership for the school's improvement efforts are clear.</li> <li>• The school leadership team has the responsibility to make things happen.</li> <li>• The principal makes sure that assignments are completed.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					_____
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>						

4 = High quality, complete, mature, and coherent implementation – NEARLY PERFECT, LITTLE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT  
 3 = Good quality, incomplete, maturing, or not fully implemented by all – STILL ROOM FOR REFINEMENT and IMPROVEMENT  
 2 = Fair quality, mixed implementation, immature practice, sporadic by some – SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT NEEDED  
 1 = Poor quality, low level of implementation, new program, by a few –CONSIDERABLE STRATEGIC PLANNING, CONSENSUS BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT NEEDED  
 0 = No score, isolated or not in practice – INITIATE DISCUSSION

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<b>3. The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and reflection are the norm.</b> <i>Teachers are themselves learners who are constantly engaged in professional and intellectual growth activities. The school staff collaborate and cooperate in planning and providing professional learning opportunities. (Essential Element characteristics 4.20, 7.9)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School leadership fosters and supports interdependent collaboration.</li> <li>• Expectations of continuous improvement permeate the school culture.</li> <li>• Everyone's job is to learn.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					
<b>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.</b> <i>Those in leadership positions involve staff and others in the operation of the school or program, empowering and encouraging them to contribute and to make decisions that benefit students. The school staff know the needs and characteristics of students in the middle grades and the instructional strategies and techniques that work best for these students; they are familiar with each of the State's 28 learning standards and incorporate in their own classrooms and work spaces educational experiences that help all students achieve all the standards - including those that are outside their own area of content expertise; know and understand their subject matter and course curriculum thoroughly; know and understand the State's assessment system; and, know and understand how to use data to make curricular and instructional decisions to improve students' academic performance and/or enhance personal development. (Essential Element characteristics 5.10, 7.1, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development is intensive, of high quality, ongoing, and relevant to middle-grades education.</li> <li>• Teachers get professional support to improve instructional practice (i.e. classroom visitations, peer coaching, demonstration lessons, etc.)</li> <li>• Opportunities for learning increase knowledge and skills, challenge outmoded beliefs and practices, and provide support in the classroom.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					

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<p><b>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.</b> <i>The school and staff provide a successful transition from the elementary grades to the middle grades to the high school grades and from childhood to adolescence. The educational program is articulated with the elementary feeder schools and with the secondary receiving schools, building on the foundational knowledge and skills of the elementary grades and, in doing so, preparing students for success in high school. The school provides a gradual transition from the more self-contained classrooms of the elementary school to the more departmentalized structure of the high school, providing students with opportunities for increasingly independent learning experiences and responsibilities within a safe and structured environment. (Essential Element characteristics 1.7, 2.9, 3.17)</i></p>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are deliberate vertical articulation and transition programs between feeder elementary schools and destination high schools.</li> <li>• The district supports (funding and time) its schools' participation in best practice networks, associations, learning communities, and professional development focused on middle grades improvement and achievement.</li> <li>• School and district work collaboratively to bring coherence to curriculum, instruction, assessment, intervention, data collection, analysis, and accountability for student achievement.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<p><b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b></p>						
<p><b>6. The school staff holds itself accountable for the students' success.</b> <i>Those in leadership positions articulate and maintain high standards for classroom instruction and student performance. (Essential Element characteristic 5.7)</i></p>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Rating</b>  _____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school collects, analyzes, and uses data as a basis for making decisions.</li> <li>• The administrators and faculty grapple with school-generated evaluation data to identify areas for more extensive and intensive improvement.</li> <li>• The staff delineates benchmarks, and insists upon evidence and results.</li> <li>• The school staff intentionally and explicitly reconsiders its vision and practices when data call them into question.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<p><b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b></p>						

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<b>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.</b> <i>Teachers recognize that they must work together cooperatively and collaboratively, rather than individually and in isolation, to ensure that all their students achieve at high levels and meet all the State's learning standards. Those in leadership positions support and encourage teachers, individually and collectively, to take risks, to explore, to question, to try new instructional approaches, to continue as learners, and to grow. Essential Element characteristics 4.21, 5.12)</i>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The faculty and administrators see barriers as challenges, not problems.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					
<b>8. The school and district staffs work with colleges and universities to recruit, prepare, and mentor novice and experienced teachers.</b>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals insist on having teachers who promote young adolescents' intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ethical growth.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					
<b>9. The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.</b>	4	3	2	1	<b>Rating</b> _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The administrators and teachers inform families and community members about the school's goals for student success and the students' responsibility for meeting those goals</li> <li>• The administrators and teachers engage all stakeholders in ongoing and reflective conversation, consensus building, and decision making about governance to promote school improvement.</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>					
<b>Please describe the specific school policies, programs, activities etc. rated above.</b>					