

Is Your Middle-Level School Ready to Implement the Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch School Improvement Program?

13 Beliefs to Consider

Interested in implementing the Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch (EE: STW) School Improvement Program? A certain mindset is necessary to be successful. Before you begin, here are some beliefs to consider.

	13 Beliefs for Schools to Consider BEFORE Implementing the EE: STW School Improvement Program	We Believe
1	We believe the <i>Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education</i> and the Education Department’s <i>Essential Elements of a Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs</i> provide a sound, research-based foundation for continuous school improvement.	
2	We believe our school should focus on academic excellence for all students, the personal development of each student, and social equity for every student.	
3	We believe our school should actively support the mental, physical, emotional, and social welfare and safety of students with programs and services such as counseling, advisor-advisee, health services, developmentally responsive activities, positive incentives, etc.	
4	We believe the district (superintendent and school board) must be committed to providing strong support for our school to meet the needs of young adolescents (e.g., financial resources, highly qualified teachers, administrators, and counselors, curriculum and instructional materials, professional development, etc.).	
5	We believe it is important for our school to be organized into houses and/or interdisciplinary teacher teams designed to create smaller, more intimate learning communities for students and staff and for interdisciplinary teacher teams to have common planning time to work together collaboratively on behalf of a common group of students.	

	13 Beliefs for Schools to Consider BEFORE Implementing the EE: STW School Improvement Program, continued	We Believe
6	We believe our school’s master schedule should be flexible and innovative, providing time and opportunity for coherent, rigorous, standards-based instruction for all students within the school day and must provide students with curricular opportunities in core subjects, targeted intervention opportunities, exploratory courses, and physical education.	
7	We believe that most teachers should regularly practice a variety of research-based instructional and assessment strategies (e.g., differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, hands-on learning, interdisciplinary projects, etc.), guided by up-to-date, standards-based curricula and systematic data collection and analysis, that engage and challenge every student in their classrooms.	
8	We believe that high quality standards-based curricula, instruction, school-wide strategies, assignments, homework, assessments, grading and reporting, enrichment projects and activities should be available to all students.	
9	We believe our school should be a community of learners, constantly working and learning together to refine curricula, improve classroom instruction, create a positive climate/culture, and meet the academic and personal needs of all students and all staff.	
10	We believe our school should be structured to encourage distributed leadership and to support shared responsibilities between administration and staff.	
11	We believe our school should have a progressive and responsive discipline plan that treats all students fairly and equitably.	
12	We believe our school should be an integral part of the larger community (elementary/high schools, colleges/universities, local businesses and families, etc.) and that it supports -- and seeks support and participation from -- this community.	
13	We believe our school has the capacity and the will to implement the EE: STW School Improvement Program successfully.	

If you answered YES to all of the 13 belief statements, you are ready to implement the EE: STW School Improvement Program. If you answered NO to any statement, you may want to consider making it a school priority and developing a plan to turn the “NO” into a “YES” before actively pursuing implementation of the EE: STW School Improvement Program.

For more information about the EE: STW Program, visit the New York State Middle School Association’s website (NYSMSA.org) and click on: **Schools to Watch.**