

**New York State's
Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Program (2019-20)
(Fifteenth Cohort)**

Do you believe your middle-level school is a model for others? If so, please consider completing the application for the twelfth cohort of schools in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch program.

New York State is seeking to identify high-performing model middle-level schools that will constitute the twelfth cohort of schools selected for inclusion in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch program. These schools must be academically excellent, developmentally appropriate, socially equitable, and organized to ensure continuous improvement, as they will serve as exemplars for the implementation of the Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education and the State Education Department's Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs.

The New York State EE: STW program is being implemented by a statewide middle-level education partnership involving, among others, the New York State Middle School Association, the New York State Education Department, New York State United Teachers, the School Administrators' Association of New York State, and the Statewide Network of Middle-Level Education Liaisons and Support Schools. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform developed the project prototype – the nationally recognized Schools-to-Watch Program – in 1999. New York State's *Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Program* is a State-level adaptation of the National Forum's model.

In New York State, selection criteria for the Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch program are aligned with the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education*, the Education Department's seven *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*, and the National Forum's four tenets of a model middle-level school: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes aimed at continuous improvement.

Benefits to participating schools and districts that elect to complete and submit an application include:

- A thorough, research-based, review of the middle-level school and its programs consistent with the Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education, the State Education Department's Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs, and Commissioner's Regulations related to the middle grades.
- Engagement of the educational community in a constructive school improvement activity.
- Identification of school/program strengths as well as areas in need of improvement.
- Development or refinement of a research-based continuous improvement plan for the school.

Additional benefits to those schools and districts ultimately selected to be in New York State's fourteenth cohort of Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch schools include:

- National and state recognition for the district, school, and staff.
- Participation in a national Schools-to-Watch Conference in Washington, DC, hosted by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.
- Attendance at and participation in the New York State Middle School Association's annual conference.
- Membership in a small, select pantheon of middle-level schools nationally recognized for their academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, organizational structure, and capacity to grow and improve.
- Priority for participating in cutting-edge research initiatives and special instructional pilot projects.
- Professional development opportunities and networking.
- Coaching towards continued success.

Schools eligible to participate in New York's EE: STW program must have **at least TWO of the following grades**: grade six, grade seven, grade eight. **Schools classified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement or Targeted Support and Improvement accountability status are NOT eligible to apply.**

Eligible schools and districts interested in being considered for the fifteenth cohort of New York's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch program should review and download the application announcement and related information at the Essential Elements: Schools to Watch website (www.eestw.org) click on "Downloads Drop-down Menu," to access the school self-study rubric and the formal application materials. Note that completed applications must be submitted by Friday, July 19, 2019. The application and self-study tool are also available on the NYSED website: (<http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/essential-elements-schools-watch>)

Questions about New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch program should be directed to:

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