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**Wisconsin Newest State to Join**

**Schools to Watch Program**

**Savoy, IL** – In its efforts to replicate the programs and practices of outstanding middle-grades schools, and bring innovative and successful practices and programs to the country’s middle-schoolers, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform has selected Wisconsin as the newest state to implement its acclaimed “Schools to Watch” program.

Wisconsin will now join 17 states in the Schools to Watch program and work to identify exemplary middle-grades schools across the state that are not only academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable, but also have the organizational supports to sustain the school’s success. Shelley Joan Weiss and Ann K. Yehle will serve as co-directors of the program in Wisconsin and take the lead in implementation efforts. The newly selected state team will receive technical training and support from the National Forum to implement the program.

“We are so excited to join this esteemed group in the important work of figuring out how best to serve young people at the very time in their lives that their decisions about academics, habits and relationships with each other and adults are so important,” said Shelley Joan Weiss. Ann K. Yehle added, “Wisconsin is committed to delivering high-quality education to all students, and we are eager to share what we know about the crucial middle grades and learn from colleagues nationwide who are also participating in Schools to Watch.”

The state joins **Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah,** and **Virginia** which annually identify exceptional middle-grades schools in their states. To date, 465 schools across the country have been designated “Schools to Watch.”

The program was launched in 1999, the and the 465 schools currently identified by state Schools to Watch programs serve as models of what high-performing middle-grades schools can achieve. These include a diverse set of middle schools in urban, rural and suburban areas in each of the designated states.

“This is not just another awards program. Schools to Watch will allow Wisconsin to identify high-performing middle-grades schools that can serve as models for others to follow,” said Ericka Uskali, Executive Director of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. “We are identifying schools across the nation that recognize the unique developmental needs of young adolescents, have rigorous academics, and give every student the opportunity to grow and achieve. We look forward to Wisconsin joining us in this effort and recognizing their own new Schools to Watch,” Uskali said.

[*The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform*](http://www.middlegradesforum.com/) *is an alliance of educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle-grades. The Forum seeks to improve student learning dramatically by advocating that schools provide strong academics, respond to students' needs and interests, and ensure equal access to high-quality classes.*