

NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS TO WATCH[®] GROWING, LEARNING, AND SUCCEEDING!

New 2011-2012 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

New Jersey Schools to Watch[®] is a middle grades improvement program designed to identify high-performing and high-impact schools that specifically address the needs of students in grades 6, 7, and 8.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

- New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)
- New Jersey Middle School Association
- Garden State Partnership for Teacher Quality
 - Kean University
 - William Paterson University
 - Rowan University
- New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association/Foundation for Educational Administration
- National Partner
 - The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform



NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS TO WATCH®: GROWING, LEARNING, AND SUCCEEDING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The New Jersey Schools to Watch® (NJSTW): Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program is sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Education and the Garden State Partnership for Teacher Quality, which includes Kean, Rowan and William Paterson Universities. In 2006, New Jersey was accepted as a School to Watch state by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. New Jersey is one of 19 states participating in this research-based program (<http://www.mgforum.org/>).

Schools identified as NJSTW must be focused on maximizing student *growth*, supporting *learning* for all students, and preparing students for *success* in high school, college, and careers. These schools provide the organizational support and leadership to sustain improvement and meet the needs of all students.

For the purposes of the NJSTW: Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program, grades 6, 7, and 8 constitute the middle grades. **Schools do not have to be organized as “middle schools” in order to participate in this program, but they must have at least one of the three grades defined as middle level or middle grades.**

What is a NJSTW?

NJSTW are:

- **Academically Excellent:** All middle level students are challenged to use their minds well.
- **Responsive to Student Needs:** Programs and services are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.
- **Socially Equitable:** All middle level students are treated equitably and fairly with every student having high-quality teachers, resources, and supports.

To achieve this level of performance, these schools establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory towards excellence. These schools have a sense of purpose that drives every facet of practice and decision making.

How can my school become a NJSTW?

The NJSTW: Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program is NOT an award program. The purpose of the program is to establish a network of schools to serve as models and mentors for others. The program aims to identify those schools that are continuously striving to improve student achievement without sacrificing other aspects of student growth—in other words, middle level programs that address the needs of the whole child.

- The road to becoming a NJSTW begins with the school principal completing the **Principal's Checklist**. This tool provides an overview of the requirements of NJSTW and allows the principal to determine if the school is ready to pursue NJSTW designation.
- The next step is the **NJSTW Self-Study and Rating Rubric**. All school personnel, lead by a smaller coordinating committee, complete the self-study which includes indicators in four critical areas: academic rigor, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational support and processes. The rubric is designed to focus on the key elements of high-performing schools and should lead to reflection and lively discussion about the school's performance.
- Based on the completion of a successful self-study process, the coordinating committee completes a NJSTW **application** that includes a narrative. The application requires school leaders and the coordinating committee to gather, review and report specific data about student achievement, behavior, and demographics. The narrative should provide a complete and accurate picture of the school, its students, and the programs and policies that make the school worthy of designation.
- The Self-Study and Rating Rubric, application and narrative are submitted online to the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education, via [NJDOE Homeroom](#) for review by the NJSTW partnership team. The partnership team reviews the school's application, narrative and analysis to determine if the school warrants further evaluation in the form of a site visit. There are two levels for site visits: **(1) preliminary site visit**; and **(2) full site visit**.
- A limited number of candidate schools will be selected for a preliminary site visit by a team of educators representing the various NJSTW partners. The purpose of this visit is to verify the information in the self-study and application and to actually see the exciting things happening in the school. During the preliminary site visit, team members will visit classrooms, interact with administrators, teachers and students, observe students in social settings such as the cafeteria and examine school policies and practices unique to the school. The site team's assessment of the school will determine whether a full site visit is warranted.
- The full site visit will include many of the activities conducted during the preliminary site visit, but will be a more in-depth review of programs and practices. Focus groups with teachers, students and parents will be conducted during the full site visit.
- All applicants will not be selected for a preliminary site visit and not all schools selected for a full site visit will become a NJSTW. All schools that apply for designation will become part of the **New Jersey Schools to Watch-Professional Development Program (NJSTW-PDP)** which will provide consultation, technical

assistance and other professional learning opportunities to help schools address areas that do not meet the Schools to Watch criteria.

Once we become a NJSTW, what happens next?

NJSTW are expected to serve as role models for middle level education. Designated schools must allow representatives from other schools to visit and observe and must be willing to present at state meetings and conferences. Information about the school will be placed on a dedicated NJSTW website.

NJSTW will be invited to attend a national ceremony in June 2012 in Washington, DC sponsored by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. This prestigious event allows identified schools to network with schools from other states and provides administrators from the schools an opportunity to address issues of national significance with federal education and legislative officials.

Please note that the NJSTW designation is applicable for three years only. At the end of the three-year cycle, a school must reapply for designation. Schools may not continue to use the name or logo of NJSTW or the National Forum unless they reapply and are designated again at the end of the three-year cycle. More information about the requirements for identified schools can be found in Part G: Conditions and Agreements section of the application.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/dsis/stw/hpmgs.htm> and download the **New Jersey Schools to Watch[®] Principal's Checklist**. Use the checklist to determine if your school is ready to serve as a model focused on Growing, Learning, and Succeeding!

NOT QUITE READY TO APPLY?

After completing the Principal's Checklist, if you feel your school is not quite ready to serve as a model for others, or if you have questions about the process, don't stop now! For more information about the program and process, contact the Office of Career and Technical Education at NJSTWapps@doe.state.nj.us or via telephone at (609) 633-0665. Even if you decide not to apply this year, you are encouraged to use the Self-Study and Rating Rubric to guide school improvement efforts and visit the schools designated as NJSTW to learn about their programs.

READY TO APPLY?

Congratulations! Please follow these steps...

1. The instructions, questions and required data for completion of the application and submission to the New Jersey Department of Education are contained in this document. Please read all sections prior to accessing the online application. **All applications must be submitted online.**
2. Go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/dsis/stw/hpmgs.htm> to download the **NJSTW Self-Study and Rating Rubric**. Save this Word document to your computer before you begin the process.
3. Using a collaborative, school-wide process, complete the NJSTW Self-Study and Rating Rubric. Please note that you may include parents and/or students in this process (optional); however, those results should be scored and reported separately. There are two options for completing this process for school personnel:

Option 1

All school personnel complete the Self-Study and Rating Rubric. The averages should be calculated using the following steps:

- Step 1: Add (total) all of the numbers entered in the **Average** box, for each corresponding General Criteria.
- Step 2: Count how many numbers are in the set being calculated.
- Step 3: Divide the total (sum) from step 1 by the result of your count from step 2.
- Step 4: Enter this number in the **Average** box provided for the corresponding General Criteria on a separate Self-Study and Rating Rubric.
- Step 5: Complete steps 1 through 4 for each of the General Criteria in all four sections: Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity and Organizational Support and Processes.
- Step 6: Record your ratings on a blank Self-Study and Rating Rubric for entry into the online application.

Option 2

All school personnel complete the Self-Study and Rating Rubric. The averages should be determined using the following process:

- Step 1: The principal convenes a meeting of the entire school faculty to discuss the results.
- Step 2: Breakout groups are formed to review and discuss the results and come to a consensus on the averages for all of the detail components in all sections.
- Step 3: Enter this number in the **Average** box provided for the corresponding General Criteria on a separate Self-Study and Rating Rubric.
- Step 4: Complete steps 1 through 3 for each of the General Criteria in all four sections: Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity and Organizational Support and Processes.

Step 5: Record your ratings on a blank Self-Study and Rating Rubric for entry into the online application.

Option 1 must be used to calculate the averages for students and parents. You must identify the option selected and enter your averages in the Self-Study and Rating Rubric in the last section of the online application. The calculation/determination of the averages should be made to one decimal point.

The four-point rating system is described in the introduction of the Self-Study. Be conscientious and rate your school appropriately and honestly. Involve all stakeholder groups (e.g., administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, nurses) in the self-study process. This same rating system will be used to review the school's application and will be used again if the school is selected for a site visit. As indicated in the Self-Study and Rating Rubric, schools applying for NJSTW designation should consistently average scores between 3.4 and 4.0 in all sections and components. Therefore, if your school has scored below 3.4 on a significant number of indicators, your school may not be ready to apply.

4. Review the required student achievement data for grades 6, 7, and 8 (e.g., NJASK6) for years 2009 and 2010. For your convenience, this data is available to you in Part C of the online application. Please note that the format for this data is different from the NJ School Report Card. You may also review this data in your New Jersey School Report Card located on the department's website at <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc10/index.html>. The 2011 state assessment results will be posted in the **New Jersey Statewide Assessment Reports** (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/achievement/index.html>) and will be available in August 2011. In the narrative you must reflect on all assessment data results. In addition, we also encourage you to submit any other assessment data used to assess student progress and learning in grades 6, 7, and 8. Make sure that you reflect upon this information as part of the narrative.

5. Part G outlines the terms and agreements of the NJSTW: Growing, Learning and Succeeding Program. This must be signed by the building principal, chief school administrator and board of education president and submitted as part of your application. Part G: Conditions and Agreements, containing the required signatures should be faxed to (609) 984-5347. Incomplete applications, those missing signatures, or those that do not follow the procedures described in this application will NOT be considered for review.

6. The application, which includes the Self-Study and Rating Rubric and narrative, must be submitted online to the New Jersey Department of Education. Please note that your application package must be submitted by **4:00 pm on October 14, 2011.**

Please do not send copies of curricula, videos, student work, student handbooks, or other documents other than those requested in the application. They will not be considered as part of your application. Should your school be selected for a site visit, other materials may be requested for review. We strongly suggest that as you

complete the application process you note all sources of documentation so they will be readily available should the site visit team request them for verification.

ACCESS TO ONLINE APPLICATION

APPLICANTS IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. Schools without an account for this application must contact their district's [Web User Administrator](#) (WUA) to establish an account.
2. This is a **school** level application; make sure that the account created for your school is unique to the school (schools cannot share accounts).
3. Create **only one** account for your school.
4. Do not attempt to use a **district** level account. A district level account will be rejected by the log-on mechanism.
5. Once you have established an account you may proceed to the [Log-On page](#).
6. Accounts established last year remain valid and may be used again.

SUBMISSION OF YOUR ONLINE APPLICATION

The NJSTW application, which includes the completed Self-Study and Rating Rubric and narrative, must be submitted online to the New Jersey Department of Education by **4:00 pm on October 14, 2011**. Late applications will not be accepted. The online submission process will be closed after the deadline. Please remember to complete the following steps prior to submission of your application:

- Print out Part G: Conditions and Agreements, obtain the required signatures and fax to the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education at (609) 984-5347; and
- Print out a copy of the completed application for your records.

Once all sections have been completed, your application will be ready for submission and **“Submit Application to DOE”** will appear at the bottom of the application home page. Double click the icon to submit your application.

After a review of the application materials, select schools will be contacted to schedule a preliminary site visit. Site visits will take place between December 2011 and January 2012 with NJSTW being announced by the department in March 2012. We realize that this timeline is tight; however, we are bound by the constraints of the national program.

If you have any questions, please contact the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education at NJSTWapps@doe.state.nj.us or (609) 633-0665.

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2011-2012 Application Form

PART A: CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal's E-mail: _____

Years as Principal at this school: _____

School Fax: _____

School/District Website: _____

Name of Board President: _____

**School's Coordinating Team
Team Information**

In the space below, please indicate the name and title of the school's coordinating team for the NJSTW process.

Name: _____ Title: _____

PART B: NARRATIVE

Develop a narrative that describes the school and explains why it is worthy of designation as a NJSTW. Please detail your school's strengths and explicitly address what plans are in place to address any weaknesses. Enter your response to each question in the space provided. Please limit your responses to 800 words or less.

1. Discuss how the school is academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable. Use the results from the Self-Study to support the narrative. In the narrative, address the following:
 - a. Why is the school applying to become a NJSTW?
 - b. What process was used to analyze data, conduct the self-study, and prepare the application? Note the specific involvement of teachers, counselors, administrators, local board of education members, parents, students, the school leadership team, and any others in the application process.
 - c. What organizational structures and processes support change in the school? (e.g. smaller learning communities, school-within-a-school structure, houses, teams, and looping) How long has the administrative staff (e.g., principal, assistant principals) been at the school and how does the team foster and support interdependent collaboration?
 - d. What overall progress has been made in improving student achievement over the last 3-5 years? Please explain what has made the difference in the school. How and why did improvement occur? Reflect and include a discussion of state assessment information as well as any locally implemented assessments such as end-of-course exams, projects, or portfolios. (See question #2).
 - e. What makes the school special for middle-level students? What unique characteristics or practices make the school a place where students can grow, learn, and succeed? How do you meet the developmental needs of all students in the school?
 - f. Describe the school. Include information on student enrollment, the school calendar, specialized curricular or extra-curricular programs for students, and the availability of student support services such as counseling services and health and social services.
 - g. How are instructional minutes organized for each grade level (e.g., periods per day, block schedule, self-contained, departmentalized)? You may provide sample schedules as an addendum to the narrative. How does the schedule contribute to student achievement? (Additional file can be uploaded).
 - h. What courses are required for ALL students? What courses are included (e.g., core, elective, exploratory) for each grade level?
 - i. What instructional strategies have most improved student achievement in your school? Why have these strategies been effective?

2. NJSTW must show evidence of academic achievement, particularly an upward trajectory. Review three years of state assessment data (2009, 2010, and 2011) for language arts, mathematics, and science for total students and each subgroup in grades 6, 7 and/or 8, as applicable. State assessment data from the NJ School Report Card, for school years 2009 and 2010 is available in Part C. State assessment data for 2011 is not available in this application, but must be reviewed when it is released by the NJ Department of Education. Please note that the format for the state assessment data in Part C is different from the NJ School Report Card. In addition, we also encourage you to submit any other assessment data used to assess student progress and learning in grades 6, 7, and 8.
 - a. Describe any recent, significant changes or trends that have impacted the school's academic achievement data across all subgroups. Discuss the possible root causes of these trends and the school's current and planned responses. (Additional file can be uploaded).
 - b. Discuss what the school has done and will continue to do to improve student attendance. Use the data contained in Part D as the basis for this discussion.
 - c. Include in the narrative a brief discussion of your school's suspension data, addressing any discrepancies between subgroups. Describe the interventions in place to meet the needs of students suspended either in or out of schools. If the school does not suspend students, what disciplinary measures are used? Use the data contained in Part F as the basis for this discussion.
 - d. Discuss how the school engages families, parents, and the community to support student achievement.

PART C: STATE ASSESSMENT DATA

Review and analyze state assessment data for each grade level, as applicable.

PART D: STUDENT ATTENDANCE

What was the average student attendance rate (percent) for all students in your school during the 2010-2011 school year? _____

Student attendance rate reflects the grade-level percentages of students on average who are present at school each day. They are calculated by dividing the sum of days present in each grade level by the sum of possible days for all students in each grade. The school and state totals, as reflected on the School Report Card, are calculated by the sum of days present in all applicable grade levels by the total possible days for all students.

PART E: STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Provide the following information and complete the table detailing student enrollment as of the submission date for this application. (Shaded cells do not require data entry – figures calculated automatically).

Grades in the School: _____
 Total School Enrollment: _____
 Total District Enrollment: _____

Total # in Grade	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Total # of Students	% of Total Enrollment
American Indian or Alaska Native					
Asian					
Black or African American					
Hispanic					
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander					
White					
Two or more races					
Male					
Female					
Limited English Proficiency					
With Disabilities					
Economically Disadvantaged					
Totals					

PART F: SUSPENSION DATA

What was the school’s suspension rate for the 2010-2011 school year? _____

These are percentages of students who were suspended at least once during the school year. Students suspended more than one time are counted once. The percents are calculated by dividing the total number suspended by the total student enrollment.

Complete the following table detailing your school’s 2010-2011 enrollment and suspension data.

	(a) Number of Students Enrolled as of the last day of school or June 30, 2011		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions	
	(b) Percent of Total Enrollment		# Suspended for 1-5 Days	# Suspended for 6-10 Days	# Suspended for 1-5 Days	# Suspended for 6-10 Days
American Indian or Alaska Native	a	b				
Asian	a	b				
Black or African American	a	b				
Hispanic	a	b				
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	a	b				
White	a	b				
Two or more races	a	b				
Male	a	b				
Female	a	b				
Limited English Proficiency	a	b				
With Disabilities	a	b				

PART G: CONDITIONS AND AGREEMENTS

We certify that a collaborative process was used to conduct the School Self-Rating and application and that our application was not developed and written by a paid or unpaid consultant.

We understand and agree that:

1. A NJSTW: Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program team may conduct a preliminary and/or full site visit to the school between December 2011 and January 2012. We agree to gladly host these visits.
2. During the site visit(s), the team will gather further information about the school, including, but not limited to, photographic or videotaped documentation. District and school staff will obtain any necessary releases and will be informed in advance of the visit(s) of any special requests or information for the site team.
3. The site visit team will ask to view curricula, policies, and evidence of student work. We will make every effort to have those materials available on the day(s) of the visit(s) or make them available as soon as possible as requested by team members.
4. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to permit other educators to visit the school and to share our knowledge and experience in order to accelerate middle grades reform. We agree to document those mentorship experiences using forms provided by the state program directors.
5. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to permit members of the press and other media to visit our school to showcase middle grades reform.
6. If selected as a NJSTW, we give permission to the NJSTW: Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program to publish the information and materials included in this application on the New Jersey Department of Education website in order to help other schools improve student achievement.
7. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to participate as presenters/panel members at one statewide conference with a focus on middle level reform (e.g., NJMSA) and one conference addressing broader educational issues (e.g., NJEA, NJASCD, NJPSA).
8. We understand that the school is required to send at least one representative to the National Schools to Watch[®] Conference held in Washington, DC in June 2012. Travel expenses to attend the national conference are the responsibility of the local board of education.
9. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to have a school representative serve as a member of the NJSTW: Growing, Learning, and Succeeding Program

implementation team, which may involve screening applications, participating in site visits, advising the core team, or coaching future applicants.

10. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to submit in a format determined by the state program directors, an annual summary of the year's activities, citing any changes that have occurred as a result of being designated a NJSTW.
11. If selected as a NJSTW, we agree to notify the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education within thirty days if there is a change of principal leadership at the school. In order for the school to continue its NJSTW designation, the new principal must agree to fulfill the obligations of the program set forth in this agreement and must participate in a NJSTW orientation session at the earliest possible date.
12. If selected as a NJSTW, we understand that identification as a NJSTW is for three years from the date of designation and that at the end of the three years, the school must reapply for designation.
13. We also understand that a school cannot use the NJSTW name or logo or that of the National Forum without expressed written permission from the New Jersey Department of Education and the National Forum.
14. We also understand that at the discretion of the New Jersey Department of Education, in consultation with the program directors, the program partners, and the National Forum, a school can be removed as a NJSTW should serious concerns arise about the capacity of the school to fulfill the requirements of this agreement.
15. We certify that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) does not have any outstanding findings of civil rights statute violations by the school or district which may affect the school and that there are no pending suits by the Department of Justice against the district alleging that the school or district as a whole, has violated one or more civil rights statutes.

Date: _____

Principal's Name (please print): _____

Principal's Signature: _____

Superintendent's Signature: _____

Board of Education President's
Signature: _____

