



Testimonials

“The Schools to Watch program has been a valuable experience for the staff, students and parents at our school. The four-part self-assessment tool helped the staff to find the strengths already in the school and identify areas of weakness. Being a ‘School to Watch’ has created a culture in which we continually analyze the needs of our middle school students. Through the program, we have the support to improve our school and share our journey with others.”

-Marcia Dains, Principal, Castaic Middle School, a Schools to Watch model school

“The Schools to Watch program has been an incredible tool in guiding the staff with a common focus: student achievement. But the most exciting thing has been the opportunity to network with schools across the state and country. We share the exemplary things in place at our school, and in turn learn from the exemplary things in place at other schools.”

-Carole Ferraud, Assistant Superintendent, Former Principal, John Glenn Middle School, a Schools to Watch model school

“The Schools to Watch program has been extremely beneficial for our school. The application process gave us the opportunity to identify our strengths and areas of need. Being a ‘School to Watch’ has afforded us the opportunity to meet and collaborate with educators from many different schools, including some from out of state. Schools to Watch has enabled Culver City Middle School to further its vision of striving for excellence for all students.”

- Patricia Jaffe, Principal, Culver City Middle School, a Schools to Watch model school

Partnerships with Funders

Although the member organizations of the California Middle Grades Alliance contribute valuable time and expertise to the Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program, only the California League of Middle Schools, a 501c3 nonprofit organization and the lead agency for the program, is responsible for its funding.

Financial partners make it possible to accomplish the goals of the program. If your organization would like to join us in brightening the futures of middle school students across California, we encourage you to contact us today at (800) 326-1880 or STWCAL@aol.com. Your generosity will be rewarded with targeted public relations, a fully tax-deductible contribution, and well-documented results. By supporting this program, you’ll be investing in the education of California’s children — for their future and our own.

**Thanks to Holt, Rinehart & Winston and
The Stuart Foundation
for their support.**

The Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program is affiliated with, and based upon, the criteria established by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

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CALIFORNIA
Schools to Watch
Taking Center Stage

SHARING WHAT WORKS FOR CALIFORNIA'S DIVERSE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage
is a student success program for
California’s middle schools provided by:

The California Middle Grades Alliance:
California League of Middle Schools (lead agency)
California Department of Education
Association of California School Administrators
California County Superintendents Educational Services Association
California Middle Grades Partnership Network
California School Boards Association
Selected “Schools To Watch”



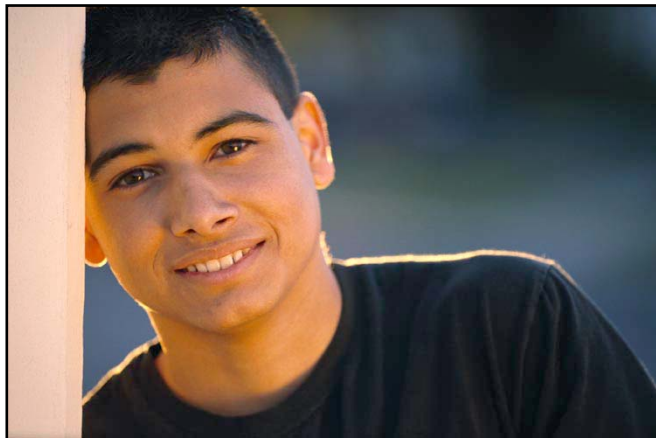
Meet Javier

Javier is part of California's new student majority. Born in the United States, he is Latino and the child of hardworking parents who never finished high school. Javier attends a large, impersonal middle school and is several grade levels behind in his reading and writing skills. With 180 students to see every day, most of Javier's teachers barely have time to memorize his name, let alone stop his downward spiral.

If the school does not improve soon and create a support system for all students, Javier will get used to failure. He will be more likely to miss school days or abuse drugs and alcohol. By the time Javier reaches high school, he may join the 43% of Latino ninth grade students in the state who do not graduate four years later. Lacking a high school diploma and basic literacy skills, Javier's future will be limited to dead-end, low-wage jobs.

Middle School: Last Chance for Struggling Learners

Javier's story is far too common. As a result of inequitable school funding and a shortage of programs based on students' needs, many poor and ethnically diverse middle school students do not succeed in school.



Compounding this academic crisis is extensive research showing that early adolescents form their lifelong value systems and undergo dramatic physical, emotional and social developmental changes in the middle school years.

In short, middle school students need strong academic and life-skills guidance if they are to choose a path that will lead to success in high school, college and the workplace.

Fortunately, there are high-performing middle schools in California that are not just succeeding in accelerating student learning and growth — they are thriving. Led by strong coalitions of staff, parents and community members, these schools have created their own instructional programs that engage all learners and drive student achievement.

Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage

What are the strategies used by these outstanding middle schools? How can less successful middle schools benefit from real-world, practical examples of what works?

The Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program — which is free to participating schools — was designed by a group of statewide education organizations committed to improving student achievement in California's middle schools. The goals of the program are to:

- ✓ Create a research-based definition of the characteristics shared by high-performing middle schools.
- ✓ Identify high-performing middle schools throughout California.
- ✓ Share the real-world strategies in place at these sites with educators from middle schools throughout the state via web-based school tours, school site visits, and phone or e-mail consultations.
- ✓ Provide a nationally proven "School Self-Rating" procedure via the Internet that all middle schools can use to evaluate and improve their school's instructional program.
- ✓ Establish a statewide network of high-performing middle schools, with every high-performing school actively involved in assisting struggling middle schools that share either a geographic region or student population characteristics.

Each year, the Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program identifies middle schools that are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and structured for success. In the words of State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, "These middle schools teach deeply to standards, assess ongoing student progress, and use data to make decisions. They develop confident and capable adolescent citizens, differentiate instruction for all learners, and provide effective interventions to struggling students and English learners."



Schools to Watch in Action

The sites selected to be Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage model schools meet the unique challenges of their student populations and share a strong, ongoing record of student achievement. Castaic Middle School is a demonstration site for the Los Angeles County Department of Education's at-risk readers' literacy program. At Alvarado Intermediate School, most students complete Algebra I and move on to Geometry in high school. All students at John Glenn Middle School of International Studies learn Spanish or French for all three years.

Thanks to the Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program, thousands of middle school educators have accessed free online professional development resources. Hundreds of phone calls and in-person visits have been made to model schools. Strategies are being shared that benefit thousands of middle school children.