



SCHOOLS TO WATCH – TAKING CENTER STAGE

MODEL SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



Torch Middle School



Designated in 2008

Torch Middle School • Bassett Unified School District •
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2009 School Statistics

(Sources: 2009 API Growth Report; 2009 AYP Report)

Community: Industrial
Enrollment: 733
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Six-period day; seventh and eighth graders blocked in two 104-minute periods per day

Student Demographics

- 95% Hispanic
- 2% Asian
- 1% African American
- 1% Filipino
- 1% White
- 0% American Indian/Alaska Native
- 0% Pacific Islander

- 76% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 37% English Learners

2008 Base: 783

2009 Growth: 800 (up 286 points since 1999-00)

2009 AYP: Met 17 of 17 criteria

(Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/index.asp> to view this school's data for prior years.)

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Seventh and eighth grade students are blocked into two 104-minute periods per day (math-science and English language arts-social studies), plus physical education (PE) and an elective. Sixth grade students are self-contained except for PE and the elective.
- Opportunities for movement into more rigorous classes are available to students throughout the school year.
- A common pacing calendar exists for all core subjects.
- Engaging lessons are created using labs for science, manipulatives for math, and PowerPoint presentations for direct teaching.
- A-G requirements are in each student's binder.
- Cornell notes are used schoolwide.
- Instruction is differentiated for all students.
- Students review rubrics and samples of previous student work before starting a new project.
- Students' writing portfolios are passed from one grade to the next.
- Pre- and post-level tests are aligned, scored, and analyzed using Edusoft software.

(Continued)

Developmental Responsiveness

- Students wear uniforms to discourage social competition.
- Common projects are assigned to small learning communities of 64 students.
- The college-going theme is pervasive in every classroom.
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes serve academically average students in advanced classes from minority, rural, low-income backgrounds without a college-going tradition in their families.
- All activities are open to all students including Spirit Squad, Associated Student Body, Yearbook, Anime, Drama Club, Culture/History Club, Intramural Sports, and others.
- Non-cognitive interventions are in place to reduce the number of suspensions. These include lessons on bullying, harassment, conflict resolution, and/or self-esteem.
- Business partnerships exist with Coca-Cola, Sunkist, the county library, Star Nursery, and others.

Social Equity

- Split block scheduling allows a student to be in an advanced math class while receiving English language arts interventions.
- All clubs and interest-based electives are open to all students.
- Staff creates rubrics for citizenship and work habits.
- The school's behavior management program has reduced suspensions to less than one percent.
- Cultural exposure is gained through projects, presentations, and visits to local museums.
- Teachers use Total Physical Response (TPR) for English language learners (ELL).
- Interventions are offered during study skills classes, AVID tutorials, and after-school tutoring.
- Parental involvement is emphasized.
- All students participate in a service-learning activity at school.

Organizational Support

- A summer learning institute for teachers provides in-depth professional development.
- Teachers collaborate during summer institutes, bi-monthly grade-level meetings, and monthly subject meetings.
- Small learning teams and grade-level teams meet regularly.
- Teachers developed a common teaching vocabulary which is used schoolwide.
- Fred Jones positive discipline guidelines are used for classroom management.
- Springboard consultants were used for creating pre-, post-, and common benchmark assessments.
- The leadership team developed a writing program which is now used districtwide and resulted in significant improvements on the STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) writing exam.