



VIRGINIA STW TIMELINE FOR SELECTION PROCESS

1-2 Year(s) before applying:

- review STW process and criteria on www.VMSA.org and middlegradesforum.org websites
- review school profiles about current STW; these are found on the middlegradesforum.org website
- identify areas of strength and areas in which to grow using the self-evaluation assessments
- develop a clear understanding of the four STW domains and individual criteria among staff members
- work through your school strategic planning process to align goals with targeted areas for growth
- begin to build your case for being a Virginia STW by collaborating among staff to identify evidence of school alignment with STW criteria
- remember that STW are not perfect schools; each designated school rarely aligns with every criterion among the four domains
- review and consider the expectations of schools designated as STW, including expected presentations at national STW conference and state VMSA conference and participation in STW designation process for other schools
- the heart of the STW application is a narrative describing how your school aligns with the STW domains; form a writing team to develop the narrative (you may have up to 3 pages on each of the 4 domains)
- in Spring and Summer before applying, draft the narrative to tell about your school

September 15: Submit the application and supporting material requested on the website to the STW director, and others as indicated in the directions. The electronic version must be submitted by the deadline with paper and CD copies to follow via regular post.

Mid-October: The principal is notified if the school has been selected for a one-day site visit and is asked to submit possible visit dates.

Late October: The principal is notified of the site visit date, visiting team members, and arrangements to be made.

November-December: One-day site visit is conducted. Visiting teams consist of 3-8 educators experienced with the STW criteria and middle grades best practice. Some non-voting team members may be educators interested in learning more about the process.

Mid-December: The principal is notified as to school being designated or redesigned as STW. The National Forum will make a formal announcement in April but the school may publicize the designation before then.

January-April: The school begins planning its school celebration and upcoming obligations as a designated STW. Among these are:

- A school celebration at which the school's STW banner will be presented. Newly-designated schools are encouraged to consult with previously-designated schools for ideas to make the celebration a special school and community-wide event. Consider scheduling the celebration to coordinate with a meeting of the School Board at which a STW representative may present the school with its certificate.
- Create a school profile for posting on the national STW website. See middlegradesforum.org for examples. You will receive email correspondence from the National Forum regarding the profile and conference preparations.
- Develop your concurrent session presentation at the National STW Conference held in Arlington in late June (Thursday morning through Saturday). Your presentation should describe how your school aligns with one of the STW domains. The conference will include a visit with your Congressman on Capitol Hill and a gala dinner at which your school will be recognized.

March-June: Each designated and re-designated holds its school celebration event. A VA STW volunteer will be available to assist in planning. Local officials, state officials, and other people important to your school should be invited to attend. A VA STW representative will attend to present your banner and acknowledge your selection in this prestigious process.

Late June: Every designated and re-designated STW sends representatives to the National STW Conference in Arlington. The National Forum will arrange for school representatives to visit Capitol Hill to meet with their Congressman. Each school will make a concurrent session presentation and attend a gala dinner along with hundreds of middle grades leaders from across the United States. Re-designated schools will also attend a special luncheon at which those schools will be honored.

Fall: Each STW should plan to attend the annual VMSA conference to be recognized. Each STW is expected to give a concurrent session presentation at the annual VMSA conference during the three-year designation period.

During the three-year STW designation: Each STW is expected to volunteer to read applications from new and redesigning schools, serve on teams visiting other schools outside its division, and present at the annual VMSA conference. STW are encouraged to be involved in networking and promoting the STW criteria by publishing articles in professional journals, hosting STW information meetings at your school for your region, hosting visits from other schools, sharing best practices on the VMSA.org website or in the newsletter, advocating for middle school kids, being proactive in publicizing your school as more than test scores, and encouraging others to apply for STW as a great professional activity for the staff.

In three years—start re-designation process by contacting VA STW Director to obtain re-designation materials.