VIRGINIA SCHOOLS TO WATCH – Overview

A School to Watch is a high-performing, student-focused, middle grades setting in which four domains of characteristics are evident:

✓ **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE** All students are challenged to use their minds well.

✓ **DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS** Unique needs of young adolescents guide the planning and implementation of all school processes.

✓ **SOCIAL EQUITY** Every student is provided with high-quality teachers, resources, and supports in a democratic and fair setting.

✓ **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES** Established practices and methods are used to accomplish goals and ensure a healthy school climate.

Schools to Watch are vibrant settings where the interactions between teachers, students, staff members, and family and community are interesting and respectful. Students are actively engaged in a variety of learning experiences which stretch their curiosity, develop skills for learning, sharpen thinking processes, encourage questioning strategies, stimulate creativity, and accelerate the knowledge appropriate to their ages.

Schools to Watch are forward-focused problem solvers and value each student as a learner; STW are on a trajectory toward excellence!!!

In Virginia, those schools applying to be STW must:

✓ be fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education
✓ contain grade 7 and at least one other grade
✓ be institutional members of the Virginia Middle School Association
✓ have 3 years of SOL test data available for review at the DOE website
✓ actively participate in professional activities
✓ have certified staff complete an online rubric related to STW criteria

If selected as a Virginia School to Watch, representatives are **expected to:**

✓ attend the national STW Conference in Arlington in June and the state VMSA conference in the fall, and present at both
✓ host school visits from schools wanting to learn from them
✓ involve staff as readers of school applications and as members of site visit teams
✓ continue professional growth
✓ promptly respond to requests for information from state or national STW