

**Contact Information:**

S.C. Association for Middle Level Education  
scamle@scamle.org

**South Carolina Announces New Schools to Watch for 2022**

Leslie M. Stover Middle School in Kershaw County, Dr. Phinnize J. Fisher Middle School and Northwood Middle School both in Greenville County School District are the latest South Carolina middle schools to be named *Schools to Watch* by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. The schools' emphasis on strong academics, sensitivity to young adolescents' needs and interests, and commitment to providing all students equal access to a high-quality education resulted in the well-deserved recognition.

Schools are recognized for a three-year period, at the end of which they must apply for re-designation and demonstrate that they are continuing to meet the National Forum's rigorous criteria. The following 4 South Carolina middle schools were re-designated as *Schools to Watch*:

- Lugoff Elgin Middle School (Kershaw County School District) has been re-designated for the fifth time, first recognized fifteen years ago and the first school in South Carolina to be designated.
- Dutchman Creek Middle School (Rock Hill School District)—first recognized nine years ago—was designated for a third time.
- Springfield Middle School (Fort Mill School District) ---first recognized six years ago—was re-designated for the second time.
- Camden Middle School (Kershaw County School District)—first recognized three years ago--- was re-designated for the first time.

S.C. Schools to Watch Co-Director, Dr. David McDonald said, "These principals, teachers and staff members along with their communities have dedicated themselves to being strong exemplars for sustaining growth and development of their students. Schools are required to submit an extensive application, undergo a site review, and display a strong commitment to the thirty-seven criteria for high performing middle schools identified by the National Forum. Their success has earned them this highly sought after designation. Each of these schools have made a commitment to the Schools to Watch Framework for continuous school improvement."

To date, South Carolina currently has named 38 schools and 31 have continued to maintain their designation and twenty schools who have received this designation. Nationwide there are just over 500 schools who have earned this designation.

To be selected as a *Schools to Watch*, schools need to be:

- **Academically Excellent.** Is the curriculum rigorous and relevant to the real world?
- **Developmentally Responsive.** Do students have a safe, healthy and personalized learning environment that is responsive to the unique needs and interests of young adolescents?
- **Socially Equitable.** Do all students have access to high-quality classes and the support they need to achieve at high levels?
- **Organized with Supportive Structure.** Is there shared leadership, collaborative learning communities, targeted professional development and effective organizational structures?

These schools are available for interested educators to visit and learn about the application and see first-hand what made them a *Schools to Watch*. They also will be showcased as models throughout the state and the nation to promote their approaches to instruction, parent and community involvement, and professional development. The schools will be recognized at the South Carolina Middle School Conference in Myrtle Beach on March 5, 2022 and will be recognized this summer in Washington, DC at the National *Schools to Watch* Conference in June 2022.

In 2006, South Carolina became a state Schools to Watch state by the National Forum to replicate the *Schools to Watch* program as a way to identify high-performing middle grades schools to serve as models of excellence for other schools. Currently, 17 states are involved in this school reform and recognition initiative. The program is sponsored by the South Carolina Association for Middle Level Education and the Center and the South Carolina Middle Grades Initiative.

For more information about the state's *Schools to Watch* program, please contact SCAMLE at scamle@scamle.org