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State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Congratulates California's 2013 "Schools to Watch™—Taking Center Stage" Model Middle Schools

SACRAMENTO—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson today announced that 12 high-performing California middle schools have been newly designated as model middle grades schools in the Schools to Watch™—Taking Center Stage (STW–TCS) program. Another nine high-performing California schools will also retain their model middle grades schools status under the same program.

"My congratulations and admiration go out to these schools for continually striving to improve student performance," Torlakson said. "Their success is the result of effective and innovative practices that motivate their students to learn and excel."

STW–TCS middle grades schools are high-performing model schools that demonstrate academic excellence, developmental responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents, social equity, and organizational support. STW–TCS model schools host visitors from California and around the world who are looking for replicable practices that will help them improve their middle grades schools and close the achievement gap.

The 12 newly designated STW–TCS model middle grades schools are:

Fresno County

1. Fairmont Elementary K-8 (Sanger Unified School District, Sanger)
2. Quail Lake Environmental Charter K-8 (Sanger Unified School District, Sanger)
3. Sanger Academy Charter K-8 (Sanger Unified School District, Sanger)

The three schools are small, rural K-8 schools that have specific programs for middle grades students and have significantly closed the achievement gap. They act as one professional learning community frequently collaborating on better instructional strategies. (In 2011, Sanger Unified's Washington Academic Middle School was designated a STW-TCS.)

Los Angeles County

4. Frank J. Zamboni Middle School (Paramount Unified School District, Paramount) is an urban school whose Academic Performance Index (API) scores (on a scale ranging from 200 to 1000, with 800 established as the statewide target) in nearly every student group have risen from the 600's in 2006-07 to the 800's in 2011-12. Students who are English learners scored at 789, but made a significant 27-point growth last year. The staff has focused on poverty issues facing their students as part of their concern for the whole child.

Orange County

5. Pioneer Middle School (Tustin Unified School District, Tustin) has seen significant and sustained improvement over the past five years in student achievement, meeting all significant subgroup targets on state standardized tests. The school developed a successful program, Pyramid on Interventions, to assist all students in becoming proficient, as well as having been recognized as a national professional learning community model.
6. Thurston Middle School (Laguna Beach Unified School District, Laguna Beach) is a suburban school and has made all its growth targets every year on state standardized tests by supporting all students in using "Best First Practices" and "Response to Intervention" strategies.

San Bernardino County

7. Summit Intermediate School (Etiwanda School District, Etiwanda) is a suburban school that has made significant increases on state standardized tests over the past five years. Nearly every numerically significant student group is at or above the 800 statewide target. These diverse learners have had increased learning opportunities with "X-Time," a period where teachers provide additional support.
8. Vanguard Preparatory K-8 (Apple Valley Unified School District, Apple Valley) is a rural school with more than 1,000 students that is consistently closing the achievement gap. With a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the school offers family STEM nights to explore these areas.

Santa Clara County

9. Union Middle School (Union Elementary School District, San Jose) is a suburban school whose API score is a noteworthy 932 points and is ranked in the top 10 percent of state middle schools. Part of the school's success is due to the school's collaborative approach, "Intervention on a Page," that provides all the necessary information for student support.

Santa Cruz County

10. San Lorenzo Valley Middle School (San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District, Felton) is a rural school with a smaller population of about 500 students. The school has gained 46 points on the API since 2007, while the socioeconomically disadvantaged student population has gained 82 points. During the third week of the year, academic counseling and intervention is started so that no child is allowed to fall behind academically.
11. Scotts Valley Middle School (Scotts Valley Unified School District, Scotts Valley) is a suburban school with a growing diverse population and whose state's standardized test scores show a closing of the achievement gap. The support strategy is using the "Enrichment" period where many services are offered to meet individual needs.

Ventura County

12. Sinaloa Middle School (Simi Valley Unified School District, Simi Valley) is a suburban school that is closing the achievement gap with all of its student groups. The API scores for students with disabilities have increased 96 points on state standardized tests since 2007. The school has a plethora of strategies that the faculty has developed through collaboration to engage its students.

The redesignated model middle schools are:

1. **Canyon Middle School** (Castro Valley Unified School District, Castro Valley, Alameda County); a STW–TCS school for six years
2. **Edna Hill Middle School** (Brentwood Union School District, Brentwood, Contra Costa County); a STW–TCS school for six years
3. **Frank M. Wright Middle School** (Imperial Unified School District, Imperial, Imperial County); a STW–TCS school for six years
4. **Granger Junior High** (Sweetwater Union High School District, National City, San Diego County); a STW–TCS school for three years
5. **John Glenn Middle School** (Desert Sands Unified School District, Indio, Riverside County); a STW–TCS school for nine years
6. **Medea Creek Middle School** (Oak Park Unified School District, Oak Park, Los Angeles County); a STW–TCS schools for nine years
7. **Mistletoe School** (Enterprise Elementary School District, Redding, Shasta County); a STW–TCS school for three years
8. **Oliver Wendell Holmes Middle School** (Los Angeles Unified School District, Northridge, Los Angeles County); a STW–TCS school for six years
9. **Reyburn Intermediate** (Clovis Unified School District, Clovis, Fresno County); a STW–TCS school for three years

In order to be named a STW–TCS model middle school, school administrators must conduct a self-study evaluation and complete an extensive narrative application. Each site is then reviewed by a team of middle grades experts. In order to retain the designation, each school is re-evaluated every three years.

The nine redesignated schools named today were reviewed last October and are among 36 others selected in previous cycles since 2003 as STW–TCS designees. All of the schools will be formally recognized at the California Middle Grades Alliance annual luncheon on February 28, 2013, and during the California League of Middle Schools Conference on March 1-3, 2013. Both events will be in Sacramento. At that time, the schools will have an opportunity to showcase their accomplishments and network with other

middle grades educators from around the state.

For more information about the Schools to Watch™–Taking Center Stage model school program, visit the California Department of Education Web site at [California Schools to Watch -- Taking Center Stage](#).

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The California Department of Education (CDE) is a state agency led by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson. For more information, please visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov> or by mobile device at <http://m.cde.ca.gov/>. You may also follow Superintendent Torlakson on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/TorlaksonSSPI> and Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CAEducation>.

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