



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**George W. Bush Institute Selects Etiwanda School District for
Middle School Matters Initiative**

Proven research to increase student achievement

DALLAS, Texas – Today, the George W. Bush Institute at the George W. Bush Presidential Center announced the selection of three school districts to receive intensive, district-wide support from nationally recognized educational researchers during the 2015-2016 school year through its Middle School Matters (MSM) initiative. Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District and San Angelo Independent School District from Texas and Etiwanda School District from Southern California have been chosen to receive expert assistance in implementing high-quality, research-based strategies in advanced reasoning, data management, dropout prevention, and in reading, writing, and math instruction.

The Middle School Matters initiative connects proven research with the classroom by providing middle school teachers and campus and district leaders with proven, research-based teaching strategies to increase student achievement and data systems to identify students at-risk of dropping out.

Leadership teams from each of the three districts have been invited, after a thorough interview process, to participate in the Middle School Matters Summer Conference held at The University of Texas at Austin this June. In the fall, the leadership teams will begin to implement what they learned at the summer conference into their everyday practice in multiple schools within each district. Throughout the school year, additional resources and ongoing support from a team of experts will be provided to help additional schools in each network.

The Bush Institute, in partnership with The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) at The University of Texas at Austin, convenes nationally-recognized educational researchers to translate research into practice and provide effective support to schools chosen to be a part of this select group. This is the first group of school districts to be selected for the Middle School Matters program, which has worked in 16 schools in four states: California, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas.

“At the George W. Bush Institute, we are excited to work with districts that have such a strong interest in increasing student achievement for every student using proven research-based strategies,” said Tracy Young, Education Reform Director, George W. Bush Institute, “We gather together some of the best experts in the field of middle grade education. Education researchers and educators both say middle schools are often forgotten, but it is a key point to ensure students are prepared for high school and post-secondary success.”

When asked about the news that the Etiwanda School District was one of three districts in the country selected to participate next year, Superintendent, Dr. Shawn Judson, said, “We are so grateful that the George W. Bush Institute and the Middle School Matters Initiative desires to partner with us in this amazing opportunity to improve the work that we do with our middle school students.” Judson continued, “The prospect of our staff members working closely all year with national middle school experts is exciting and we look forward to implementing proven best practices.” Judson also expressed his thanks to Janice Rutherford, San Bernardino County Supervisor for the second district, for the funds provided to help with travel expenses for the team of Etiwanda School District educators who will attend the conference.

Sharon Vaughn, Executive Director of MCPER at the University of Texas commented, “We are thrilled at having the opportunity to work with such progressive middle schools that are committed to using proven strategies for success in the middle grades with our teachers and school leaders across the nation.”

Middle School Matters, the Bush Institute initiative focused on middle schools and support for middle grade educators and leaders, compiles the best available research into teacher-friendly tools and trains campus leaders to use the strategies across the school and district. For more information on how Middle School Matters supports middle grade educators and other Education Reform Initiatives at the George W. Bush Institute, please visit www.bushcenter.org.

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About Middle School Matters

The Middle School Matters (MSM) initiative at the George W. Bush Institute seeks to increase the number of middle grade students who are prepared for high school and postsecondary success. Middle School Matters’ mission is to transform the middle grades by promoting high quality research-based strategies and practices to drive the development of policies that lead to better student outcomes. The two primary methods to help us achieve this are 1) using solid research to develop practical tools and support for middle grade reform initiatives, school districts, and middle school campuses to apply in their work, and 2) promoting the importance of research-based strategies and practices with individuals making decisions for middle grade students.

To ensure the future success of their students, K-12 institutions must prepare all students to graduate from high school equipped for success in college and/or career. There is a vast and still growing body of knowledge on how this goal can be supported in the middle grades, a crucial period when students gain the skills they need to succeed in high school. Educators can help students improve performance and put themselves on a path to high school graduation by improving instruction in reading, writing, and math, and by using data systems to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out.

Middle School Matters is possible because of the generous support of our funding partners: Bass Foundation; Meadows Foundation; Sid W. Richardson Foundation; the Brown Foundation, Inc.; and the Esping Family Foundation.

For more information on the Bush Institute’s Middle School Matters and how to support our efforts to help students successfully complete high school by improving the middle grades, please contact Gina Rodriguez at middleschoolmatters@bushcenter.org.

About the George W. Bush Institute

The mission of the Bush Institute at the George W. Bush Presidential Center is advancing freedom by expanding opportunities for individuals at home and across the globe. The Bush Institute is a non-partisan public policy institute committed to serious, independent research aimed at generating practical solutions to important public policy issues in the areas of education reform, human freedom, economic growth, and global health. Built on principles that guided President and Mrs. Bush in public life, the Bush Institute seeks to improve America’s public schools; foster the spread of democracy; save lives through global health programs; and promote free markets and economic growth.