

# Illinois Horizon Schools: Schools to Watch

## 2012-2013 Application for Re-Designation of a Current School to Watch

Association of Illinois Middle-Grade Schools (AIMS)  
and  
Illinois State University (ISU)

in collaboration with

The National Forum to  
Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Campus Box 5390  
Normal, IL 61790  
(309) 438-4510

**ILLINOIS HORIZON SCHOOLS**



**SCHOOLS TO WATCH**

**THE  
NATIONAL  
FORUM**



**TO ACCELERATE  
MIDDLE-GRADES  
REFORM**



**Illinois Horizon Schools: Schools to Watch**  
in collaboration with  
*The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform*

The Illinois Horizon Schools: Schools to Watch Program affirms that exemplary schools are schools involved in an on-going journey of excellence. To this end, Illinois Horizon Schools: Schools to Watch, in coordination with the National Forum, has established a program of continuous evaluation for all schools designated as a School to Watch. In order to maintain status as a School to Watch at the end of three years it is necessary to submit an application for re-designation and have a one day site visit to ascertain the progress of the school since the original designation.

The application portion of the re-designation process asks for the following specific information:

A narrative reflection of school progress and programs in each of the four criteria areas

An explanation of any significant changes that have occurred since the initial designation, specifically in the areas of leadership, school size and/or demographics, district mandates, program, structure, and test data

Suspension data for the 2011-2012 school year

A list of any special recognitions awarded to your school since your designation as a School to Watch

A description of any research projects, grant awards, articles, and projects of which your school has been the subject or recipient in the past three year

The identification of several "stretch goals" that will move your school to the next level. Goals may be, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Efforts to move from teacher-directed to student-centered classrooms
- Institution of more authentic and varied measures of student progress
- More integrative approach to learning
- More effective use of data in planning instructional improvement
- The establishment of instructional coaches
- Transitions in and out of the middle school
- Increased involvement in the arts and humanities

Inter-school Collaboration Stretch Goal

A summary of standardized testing data since the original designation

The report is to be completed by a team of administrators and teachers chosen by the school and signed to certify their participation in preparing this application.

Please submit **no later than October 31, 2012**, to the following address:

*AIMS  
Illinois Horizon Schools  
ISU, Campus Box 5390  
Normal, IL 61790-5390*

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Note: Applications must be postmarked no later than October 31, 2012

## **Part One**

Please provide a narrative reflection of progress and programs in each of the following criteria areas:

- Academic Excellence
- Developmental Responsiveness
- Social Equity
- Organizational Structure & Support

Narratives, in 12-point type double-spaced, one to two pages per area, should reflect the indicators involved in each area (a copy of the criteria is attached to this application to assist the faculty in assessing growth in each area). If you prefer, you may use a “bulleted” format and describe how you are continuing to grow as a school.

## **Part Two**

Describe any significant changes that may have occurred in the school since in the past three years in

- Leadership
- Size
- Student demographics
- District mandates
- Overall program and structure
- Test data—Please provide the last three years of AYP data with subgroups and the last three state ISAT Reports

## **Part Three**

### **Suspension Data**

To provide information on the suspension rate for your school for the past year, please fill out the attached chart. Numbers should reflect the **cumulative total suspensions** for the past year.

## Suspension Data

**School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

2011-2012	In-School Suspensions				Out of School Suspensions			
	1-10 Days		10+ Days		1-10 Days		10+ Days	
	Number of Different Students (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Cases (Duplicated Count)	Number of Different Students (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Cases (Duplicated Count)	Number of Different Students (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Cases (Duplicated Count)	Number of Different Students (Unduplicated Count)	Number of Cases (Duplicated Count)
African American								
Asian								
Latino(a)/Hispanic								
Native American								
Caucasian								
Other								

Given these data on suspension, what is your school's plan to address your school's suspension rates? Has there been a change in suspension rates over the last three years? (maximum length, one page)

## **Part Four**

What special recognitions have been awarded to your school or faculty members since your designation as a School to Watch three years ago? You may use either narrative or “bulleted” formats (maximum length, one page).

## **Part Five**

**Please provide a description of any research projects, grant awards, articles, and projects of which your school has been the subject or recipient in the past three years. You may use either narrative or “bulleted” formats (maximum length, one page).**

## **Part Six**

Please identify several “stretch goals” that will move your school to the next level as you continue on your journey to being a high-performing middle grades school. In other words, “What’s next?” Goals might include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Efforts made to move from teacher-directed to student-centered classrooms
- Increased use of authentic and varied measures of student progress
- Integrative approach to learning
- Effective use of data in planning instructional improvement
- Establishment of instructional coaches
- Transitions into and out of the middle school
- Increased involvement in the arts and humanities

Please briefly describe how you intend to meet these “stretch goals” in the coming years (maximum length, one page).

## **Part Seven**

### **Inter-School Collaboration Stretch Goals for Re-designation Application**

**Each Horizon School to Watch clearly provides a vision or model for any middle grades school to follow. However, it is also important to remember that each Horizon school has developed and honed strengths that are often related to its unique population, setting, administration, and faculty. Simply put, while all Horizon Schools are exemplary examples of middle level practice, they are certainly not the same and each school has particular traits in which they excel.**

**An additional stretch goal involves explaining how your school has shared its expertise with larger middle level audiences and/or in assisting at least one new applicant school with its efforts at becoming a Horizon School. There are many ways to provide others with professional growth experiences or help new applicants, and the following list is by no means exhaustive:**

- Hosting site visits for staff from applying schools to observe practices**
- Providing staff development activities at applying schools**
- Sharing curricular, administrative, pedagogical materials**
- Proof reading and editing Horizon applications**
- Presenting at AIMS/NMSA conferences to a larger body of middle level professionals**
- Publishing articles in professional journals related to exemplary middle level work**
- Political involvement in middle level issues**

**In this section of the application, please describe any activities that occurred during the past three years in which staff from your school provided assistance or education to others that related to the mission of AIMS or the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.**



## THE SCHOOLS TO WATCH CRITERIA

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.** The school is academically excellent. It challenges all students to use their minds well.

1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards.
2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.
3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.
4. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts, and skills being taught.
5. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess and monitor the progress of student learning (e.g., tests, quizzes, assignments, exhibitions, projects, performance tasks, portfolios).
6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.
7. Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.
8. The adults in the school are provided time and frequent opportunities to enhance student achievement by working with colleagues to deepen their knowledge and to improve their standards-based practice.



**DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS.** The school is sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

1. The staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.
2. The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.
3. Teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment.
4. The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.
5. Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.
6. Students are provided multiple opportunities to explore a rich variety of topics and interests in order to develop their identity, learn about their strengths, discover and demonstrate their own competence, and plan for their future.
7. All students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.
8. The school staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children.
9. Staff members provide all students with opportunities to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support.
10. The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment.



**SOCIAL EQUITY.** The school is socially equitable, democratic, and fair. It provides every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. It keeps positive options open for all students.

1. To the fullest extent possible, all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations.
2. Students are provided the opportunity to use many and varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards.
3. Teachers continually adapt curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling to meet their students' diverse and changing needs.
4. All students have equal access to valued knowledge in all school classes and activities.
5. Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures.
6. The school community knows every student well.
7. The faculty welcomes and encourages the active participation of all its families and makes sure that all its families are an integral part of the school, such as:
8. The school's reward system is designed to value diversity, civility, service, and democratic citizenship.
9. Staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of its students.
10. The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied.



## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES.**

The school is a learning organization that establishes norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

1. A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does drives every facet of school change.
2. The principal has the responsibility and authority to hold the school-improvement enterprise together, including day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning, and communication.
3. The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and time and opportunity for reflection are the norm.
4. The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional development, which is connected to reaching and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.
5. The school is not an island unto itself; it is a part of a larger educational system, i.e., districts, networks and community partnerships.
6. The school staff holds itself accountable for the students' success.
7. District and school staff possess and cultivate the collective will to persevere, believing it is their business to produce increased achievement and enhanced development of all students.
8. The school and district staffs work with colleges and universities to recruit, prepare, and mentor novice and experienced teachers.
9. The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.



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**Re-Designation Application Cover Sheet**

*Please type or print all information*

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

School System: \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

School Web Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Configuration (6-8, K-8, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures of Application Writing Team & Position in Your School:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Report Deadline:                      October 31, 2012**

*Mail completed application to:*

Association of Illinois Middle-Grade Schools  
Illinois Horizon Schools  
ISU, Campus Box 5390  
Normal, IL 61790-5390  
(309) 438-4510