



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

**TONY THURMOND**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • WWW.CDE.CA.GOV

April 3, 2024

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and Middle School Principals:

## **Invitation to Participate in the 2025 California Schools to Watch Program**

I am pleased to announce that the California Schools to Watch (STW) application for 2025 is now open. This program identifies model middle-grade schools that are academically engaging, developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and have a culture of collaborative leadership.

The California STW program is led by the California League of Educators and supported by the California Department of Education (CDE). The CDE has supported the STW program since 2002, and the California STW is aligned with the national STW program provided by The National Forum (<https://www.middlegradesforum.org/>).

The minimum eligibility requirements include:

- Junior high schools, middle schools, and kindergarten through grade eight schools—whether traditional schools or public charter schools—are welcome to apply.
- The school must serve young adolescents and house any combination of grades five through nine.
- The school must provide equitable opportunities and whole-child support (that is, physical, mental, and social–emotional health support) as necessary to enable all students to experience social equity and pursue academic excellence.
- There are no civil rights violations or adult testing irregularities at the school site.

After eligibility is secured, the final selection of schools will be based on how well each school meets the STW criteria. STW middle schools serve as models and mentors for other schools and educators seeking best practices so all young adolescent students may experience whole-child success. Please visit the California League of Educators California STW web page at <https://www.leagueofeducators.org/school-profiles> to see over 180 model school profiles.

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**The 2025 applications are due on October 1, 2024.** Application information is available on the California League of Educators California STW Advancing Excellence in the Middle Grades web page at <https://www.leagueofeducators.org/stw>.

If you have any questions regarding the California STW program, please contact Scott Steele, Director of California STW, at [ssteele@leagueofschools.org](mailto:ssteele@leagueofschools.org) or 800-326-1880, extension 105.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Thurmond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" being more prominent than the last name "Thurmond".

Tony Thurmond  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction