Schools to Watch ™ —Taking Center Stage

School Self-Study and Rating Rubric

(Revised) 4/30/2007

Use the School Self-Study and Rating Rubric as a baseline and roadmap for middle school improvement.

This School Self-Study and Rating Rubric may be used as a continuous improvement tool. It is fully aligned with California's Taking Center Stage—Act II (TSCII) recommendations for middle grades education. Self-study and rating is a requirement for schools interested in applying for a state Schools to Watch™ —Taking Center Stage designation, and is highly recommended by the California Middle Grades Alliance as a tool for school improvement in all schools with middle grade students.

The Self-Study and Rating Rubric is divided into four components: **1) Academic Excellence, 2) Developmental Responsiveness, 3) Social Equity**, and **4) Organizational Structures and Processes**. Under each component there are general criteria followed by concrete, detailed, expected examples of evidence. Through a collaborative process, schools should study their data and practices and rate themselves for each **criterion**. The ultimate goal is to rate a well-evidenced score of four points in every criterion (general and detailed) of every component. Schools applying for a state Schools to Watch™ —Taking Center Stage designation should be consistently **averaging** scores of 3 and above.

What a score point means:

A four **(4)** in either a general or a detailed criterion means the practice is highly and completely implemented, systemic, and coherent in every classroom and by every teacher across the school.

A three **(3)** in either a general or a detailed criterion means that there is a high degree or maturing quality of implementation that is systemic. It may not be coherent or of the highest quality in every classroom and by every teacher, but certainly by most—75 percent or better.

A two **(2)** in either a general or a detailed criterion means that there is a mixed, fair, or immature quality of implementation. A two (2) also means that practices may include many teachers, but not the majority. The program may be too new to have realized measurable results or to be evaluated as effective.

A one **(1)** in either a general or a detailed criterion means that the practice may just have gotten started, is very immature, or is only practiced by a handful of practitioners.

To Compute the Average Score:

To calculate the "Average" score for each criterion, add the general criterion score with the detailed evidence score(s), then divide by the number of criteria. Calculate to no more than one decimal point.

The Schools to Watch™ —Taking Center Stage program is a partnership program with the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform and the California Middle Grades Alliance which includes the California Department of Education and California League of Middle Schools, the lead agency for implementation of the Schools to Watch™ —Taking Center Stage program. Schools to Watch™ is a copyright and trademark protected program of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. Criteria established by the National Forum are used as the basis for the Schools to Watch™ program. The Self-Study and Rating Rubric may be used freely by any middle grades or secondary school to study and rate its practices. No adaptations to this Self-Study and Rating Rubric may be made without written permission from the Schools to Watch™ Committee and the Board of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. ***Commercial use of any kind is strictly prohibited.***

School Self-Study and Rating Rubric
Schools to Watch ™—Taking Center Stage

District: *School:*

Academic Excellence: High-performing schools with middle grades are academically excellent. They challenge all students to use their minds well.

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				
1. All students are expected to meet high academic standards.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 1	• Expectations are clear for students and parents.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Prior to students beginning an assignment, teachers supply students with exemplars of high quality work that meet the performance standard or level.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students know what high quality work should be like.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students revise their work based on meaningful feedback until they meet or exceed the performance standard or level.	4	3	2	1	
2. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 1, 2	• Standards provide a coherent vision for what students should know and be able to do.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Students, teachers and families understand what students are learning and why.	4	3	2	1	
	• In any class and at any time, students can explain the importance of what they are learning.	4	3	2	1	
	• The curriculum is rigorous, non-repetitive, and moves forward substantially.	4	3	2	1	
	• Work is demanding and steadily progresses.	4	3	2	1	
3. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 2, 4	• Teachers make connections across the disciplines to reinforce important concepts and assist students in applying what they have learned to solve real-world problems.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• All teachers incorporate academic and informational literacy into their course work (i.e. reading, writing, note taking, researching, listening, and speaking).	4	3	2	1	

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School Self-Study and Rating Rubric
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District: *School:*

Academic Excellence (Continued)

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 2	• To reach students, all teachers draw from a common subset of instructional strategies and activities such as: o Direct instruction	4	3	2	1	_____
	o Cooperative learning	4	3	2	1	
	o Project-based learning	4	3	2	1	
	o Simulations	4	3	2	1	
	o Hands-on learning – integrated technology	4	3	2	1	
	o Other	4	3	2	1	
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).		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 2	• All teachers use common, frequent assessments to benchmark key concepts and the achievement of their students.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Students learn how to assess their own and others' work against the performance standards, expectations, or levels.	4	3	2	1	
6. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 3	• Students are provided more time to learn the content, concepts or skills if needed.	4	3	2	1	
	• Flexible scheduling enables students to engage in academic interventions, extended projects, hands-on experiences, and inquiry-based learning.	4	3	2	1	_____
7. Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 1,3,4	• Teachers know what each student has learned and still needs to learn.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students have multiple opportunities to succeed and receive extra help as needed, such as: o Co-teaching or collaborative resource model	4	3	2	1	_____
	o Support and intervention classes	4	3	2	1	
	o Before- and after-school tutoring	4	3	2	1	
	o Homework centers	4	3	2	1	
	o Other	4	3	2	1	
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 3, 10	• They collaborate in analyzing student achievement data and making decisions about rigorous curriculum, standards-based assessment practice, effective instructional methods, and evaluation of student work.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The professional learning community employs coaching, mentoring, and peer observation as a means of continuous instructional improvement.	4	3	2	1	

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School Self-Study and Rating Rubric
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District: *School:*

Developmental Responsiveness: High-performing schools with middle grades are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				
1. The staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 5	• Adults and students are grouped into smaller communities (i.e. teams, houses, academies) for enhanced teaching and learning.	4	3	2	1	
	• These small learning communities are characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships.	4	3	2	1	
	• Every student has a mentor, advisor, advocate, or other adult he/she trusts and stays in relationship with throughout the middle school experience.	4	3	2	1	_____
2. The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 8	• Teachers are trained to recognize and handle student problems.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students with difficulties, and their families, can get help.	4	3	2	1	
	• The school houses a wide range of support—nurses, counselors, resource teachers—to help students and families who need special assistance.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The school staff-members offer parent education activities involving families.	4	3	2	1	
3. Teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 2, 7	• All Teachers: o enhance standards-based learning by using a wide variety of instructional strategies;	4	3	2	1	
	o incorporate well-developed procedures and routines for effective classroom management;	4	3	2	1	_____
	o facilitate learning by deliberately teaching study and organizational skills;	4	3	2	1	
	o integrate creative activities in the lessons, e.g., current technologies, visual and performing arts, etc.	4	3	2	1	
4. The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 4	• Students talk about daily issues in their own lives, their community and their world.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students take action, make informed choices, work collaboratively, and learn to resolve conflicts.	4	3	2	1	_____

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District: *School:*

Developmental Responsiveness (Continued)

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				
5. Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 4, 5	• For example, students may read a historical novel for language arts and history and then study music from the same time period in music class.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Students can work on the same project in several different classes.	4	3	2	1	
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 4, 7, 8	• Teachers and counselors push students to challenge themselves and set high academic and career goals for their future.	4	3	2	1	_____
7. All students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 7	• All students have a real say, or have legitimate representation, in what happens at school.	4	3	2	1	
	• School staff members have an "open-door" policy to encourage student involvement and connection.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Students take an active role in school-family conferences.	4	3	2	1	
8. The school staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 12	• Parents are more than just volunteers or fund-raisers; they are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the school.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Parents are informed, included, and involved as partners and decision-makers in their children's education.	4	3	2	1	
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 7, 12	• Students take on projects to improve their school, community, state, nation, and world.	4	3	2	1	_____
10. The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 4, 7	• Student co-curricular activities cover a wide range of interests—team sports, clubs, exploratory opportunities, service opportunities, and a rich program in the visual and performing arts.	4	3	2	1	_____

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District: *School:*

Social Equity: High performing schools with middle grades are socially equitable, democratic, and fair. They provide every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. They keep positive options open for all students.

General Criteria	Detailed Evidence of Criteria	Self-Rating				
1. To the fullest extent possible, all students, including English learners, students with disabilities and gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 3, 4, 7, 10, 11	• Faculty and administrators are committed to helping each student produce proficient work.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Evidence of this commitment includes tutoring, mentoring, enrichment assignments, differentiated instruction, special adaptations, supplemental classes and other supports.	4	3	2	1	
	• Accelerated, short-term interventions for students with similar needs are fluid and do not become low-level or permanent tracks.	4	3	2	1	
2. Students are provided the opportunity to use many and varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 2	• Teachers know each student's learning style.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Teachers differentiate instruction in order to give each student equal opportunity to comprehend the standards-based curriculum.	4	3	2	1	
3. Teachers continually adapt curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling to meet their students' diverse and changing needs.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 10,11	• The faculty is always seeking ways to improve programs, curriculum, and assessment to better meet student needs.	4	3	2	1	_____
4. All students have equal access to valued knowledge in all school classes and activities.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 4, 7	• All students use technology to do research and analyze data, read more than textbooks, and understand how to solve complex problems.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• To the fullest extent possible, students with disabilities are in regular classrooms that are co-taught by special education professionals.	4	3	2	1	
	• All students have access to participate in interest-based classes, activities, or opportunities.	4	3	2	1	
5. Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 4, 7	• The school values knowledge from the diverse cultures represented in the school, community, and our nation.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Materials in the media center represent all of the cultures of the students.	4	3	2	1	
	• Families often come and share their traditions and beliefs.	4	3	2	1	
	• Teachers use multi-cultural materials and methods.	4	3	2	1	
	• Multiple viewpoints are encouraged.	4	3	2	1	

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District: *School:*

Social Equity (continued)

General Criteria	Detailed Criteria	Self-Rating				
6. The school community knows every student well.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 5, 8	• Each student is appreciated and respected.	4	3	2	1	
	• Staff members do not use negative labels or discuss students in negative ways.	4	3	2	1	
	• Every student has an adult advocate and supporter in the school.	4	3	2	1	_____
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:		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 12	• Transportation, meals, childcare, and translation support are provided so all families of diverse cultures and languages can attend school events.	4	3	2	1	_____
8. The school's reward system is designed to value diversity, civility, service, and democratic citizenship.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 5, 7	• The faculty recognizes the contributions of all its students.	4	3	2	1	
	• Awards are not limited to sports and academic honors.	4	3	2	1	
	• Students' success and good deeds are always noticed.	4	3	2	1	_____
9. Staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of their students.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 10	• The school recruits a culturally and linguistically diverse staff.	4	3	2	1	
	• The staff members are a good match to the school's community.	4	3	2	1	_____
10. The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 8, 11	• Students and parents are informed of school rules and know exactly what will and does happen if students break the rules.	4	3	2	1	
	• The school's suspension rate is low.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Staff members routinely analyze and act upon referral and suspension data to make sure that no one group of students is unfairly singled out by classroom and school staff.	4	3	2	1	
	• The school's disciplinary referrals and suspension rate are low as a result of proactive interventions that keep students engaged, resilient, healthy, safe, and respectful of one another.	4	3	2	1	

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District: *School:*

Organizational Structures and Processes: High-performing schools with middle grades are learning organizations that establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

General Criteria	Detailed Criteria	Self-Rating				
1. A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does drives every facet of school change.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCS1II Recommendation: 9	• The shared vision drives constant improvement.	4	3	2	1	
	• Shared, distributed, and sustained leadership propels the school forward and preserves its institutional memory and purpose.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Everyone knows what the plan is and the vision is posted and evidenced by actions.	4	3	2	1	
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 9	• Lines of leadership for the school's improvement efforts are clear.	4	3	2	1	
	• The school leadership team has the responsibility to make things happen.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The principal makes sure that assignments are completed.	4	3	2	1	
3. The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and reflection are the norm.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 9, 10, 11	• School leadership fosters and supports interdependent collaboration.	4	3	2	1	
	• Expectations of continuous improvement permeate the school culture.	4	3	2	1	
	• Everyone's job is to learn.	4	3	2	1	_____
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 10	• Professional development is intensive, of high quality, ongoing, and relevant to middle-grades education.	4	3	2	1	
	• Teachers get professional support to improve instructional practice (i.e. classroom visitations, peer coaching, demonstration lessons, etc.)	4	3	2	1	_____
	• Opportunities for learning increase knowledge and skills, challenge outmoded beliefs and practices, and provide support in the classroom.	4	3	2	1	

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District: *School:*

Organizational Structures and Processes (continued)

General Criteria	Detailed Criteria	Self-Rating				
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 6, 9, 12	• There are deliberate vertical articulation and transition programs between feeder elementary schools and destination high schools.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The district supports (funding and time) its schools' participation in best practice networks, associations, learning communities, and professional development focused on middle grades improvement and achievement.	4	3	2	1	
	• School and district work collaboratively to bring coherence to curriculum, instruction, assessment, intervention, data collection, analysis, and accountability for student achievement.	4	3	2	1	
6. The school staff holds itself accountable for the students' success.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 11	• The school collects, analyzes, and uses data as a basis for making decisions.	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The administrators and faculty grapple with school-generated evaluation data to identify areas for more extensive and intensive improvement.	4	3	2	1	
	• The staff delineates benchmarks, and insists upon evidence and results.	4	3	2	1	
	• The school staff intentionally and explicitly reconsiders its vision and practices when data call them into question.	4	3	2	1	
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.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 9, 11	• The faculty and administrators see barriers as challenges, not problems.	4	3	2	1	_____
8. The school and district staffs work with colleges and universities to recruit, prepare, and mentor novice and experienced teachers.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendations: 10,12	• Principals insist on having teachers who promote young adolescents' intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ethical growth.	4	3	2	1	_____
9. The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.		4	3	2	1	Average
TCSII Recommendation: 12	• The administrators and teachers inform families and community members about the school's goals for student success and the students' responsibility for meeting those goals	4	3	2	1	_____
	• The administrators and teachers engage all stakeholders in ongoing and reflective conversation, consensus building, and decision making about governance to promote school improvement.	4	3	2	1	

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