April 26, 2007

Dear District Superintendents and Middle School Principals:
**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE**
**2007- 08 SCHOOLS TO WATCH™-TAKING CENTER STAGE PROGRAM**

I am pleased to inform you that the Schools to Watch™-Taking Center Stage (STW-TCS) application process for 2007-08 has begun. The application deadline is October 5, 2007. To get a head start, schools will want to begin their school's self-study and application now.

All middle schools are encouraged to complete the Schools To Watch™ Self-Study and Rating Rubric developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. This self-study is aligned with the California Department of Education's (CDE) recommendations for improving middle schools (enclosed) that I released in October 2006. After completing the self-study, middle schools interested and eligible in becoming a model middle school may complete and submit the application to become a California STW-TCS model. You may download the STW-TCS Self-Study and Rating Rubric by visiting the CDE Web site at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/mg/documents/criteria.doc - REVISED (DOC; 413KB; 9pp.; 30-Apr-2007).

Since 2003, 18 schools have been designated as STW-TCS models by the California Middle Grades Alliance.1 These STW-TCS model schools are open for both physical and virtual visitations from educators who are searching for ideas and answers. For a virtual tour of the STW-TCS model schools or for a telephone consultation with a TW-TCS principal, visit the California League of Middle School's (CLMS) Web site at http://www.clms.net (Outside Source).

Schools selected for the STW-TCS model designation are geographically, programmatically, and demographically diverse. What these STW-TCS models have in common is a passion for academic excellence, practices that are developmentally responsive and socially equitable, a culture of strong shared leadership, and a willingness to share with others. Each year, a limited number of schools are selected for the STW-TCS model designation.

The 2007-08 **minimum eligibility requirements** to submit an application are as follows:

- **API**2 **Median or Above** - A school has attained a 2006 base API of 7243 (the state's middle school median) and has met its overall growth target

**Or**

- **API Below the Median** - A school has met all of its API growth targets for the previous three years (i.e., 2004, 2005, and 2006) with good indication that the current year will also show expected growth.

Schools currently being monitored by the state as part of the Public Schools Accountability Act or schools in Program Improvement are not eligible to apply for the STW-TCS model designation.

If your school meets the minimum eligibility requirement listed above, is implementing all dimensions of the STW-TCS Self-Study and Rating Rubric to a high degree, and is interested in becoming a STW-TCS model school, you may download the application, principal's checklist, and supporting materials from the CLMS Web site at http://www.clms.net (Outside Source). Submit the completed STW-TCS applications to CLMS by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 5, 2007.

Thank you for your continuing efforts in school improvement and striving to become a model for others. If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact the Middle and High School Improvement Office, at 916-322-1892.

Sincerely,

Original signed:

Jack O'CONNELL

JO:rw
Enclosure

cc: County Superintendents

1The California Middle Grade Alliance is a cross-organizational collaborative dedicated to providing policy support for California's 1.5 million middle grades students. It is comprised of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California League of Middle Schools (CLMS), California School Boards Association (CSBA), California Teachers Association (CTA), California Middle Grades Partnership Network (CMGPN), California Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) of California, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association's Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee (CCSESA/CISC) Secondary Subcommittee, and the California Department of Education (CDE).

2 API – Academic Performance Index

3 Elementary schools with middle grades may apply to become a STW-TCS, however, the elementary median of 758 is required as minimum eligibility.