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**EXCEPTIONAL MIDDLE-GRADES  
'SCHOOLS TO WATCH' ANNOUNCED IN TEXAS**

**Austin, Texas** – Seven exemplary middle-grades schools in Texas have been named “Schools to Watch” as part of a recognition program developed by the **National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform**, three have been re-designated for the second time, and four have been re-designated for the first time. In 2011 Texas became the 16<sup>th</sup> state to partner with the program when the **Texas Middle School Association (TMSA)** became the sponsoring organization of the **Texas Schools to Watch®** (<http://www.texasschoolstowatch.com>) program.

Each school was selected for its academic excellence, its responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents, and its commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement.

These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools have a clear focus on academic growth and achievement. They also recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensuring that each and every child has access to a rigorous, high-quality education. The state of Texas is proud to have these schools serve as models from which others can learn.

Selection is based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the Forum. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by state teams who observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and looked at achievement data, suspension rates, quality of lessons, and student work. Schools are recognized for a three-year period, and at

the end of three years must repeat the process in order to be re-designated. The schools vary in size from several hundred to several thousand students and represent urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle-grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 criteria developed by the Forum. In 2002, the Forum began working with states to replicate the Schools to Watch program as a way to introduce the Forum's criteria for high-performance and identify middle grades schools that meet or exceed that criteria.

For 41 years, the **Texas Middle School Association** (<http://www.tmsanet.org>) has been the premiere association for young adolescents in the state of Texas. Envisioning all middle level students as fulfilled, productive and healthy citizens of their communities and of a global society, TMSA is dedicated to implementing student-centered programs and highly effective practices for young adolescents.

Congratulations to the 2017 **Texas Schools to Watch®** campuses:

Acton Middle School, Granbury ISD

Decker Middle School, Manor ISD

Harwood Junior High, HEB ISD

Hernando Middle School, Socorro ISD

Melillo Middle School, Pasadena ISD

Scoggins Middle School, Frisco ISD

Timberview Middle School, Keller ISD

Congratulations to the 2017 **Texas Schools to Watch®** Re-Designation I Campuses:

Beverly Hills Intermediate School, Pasadena ISD

Hudson Bend Middle School, Lake Travis ISD

Murphy Middle School, Plano ISD

Simon Middle School, Hays CID

These campuses were originally designated in 2014 and have fulfilled all the requirements to be re-designated for the next three years.

Congratulations to the 2017 **Texas Schools to Watch®** Re-Designation II Campuses:

Chapa Middle School, Hays CISD

**Chisholm Trail Middle School, Northwest ISD**

Lone Oak Middle School, Lone Oak ISD

These campuses were originally designated in 2011. Of the original 11 campuses designated that year, they are the only ones that have fulfilled all the requirements to be re-designated for the next three years.