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# Investing in Innovation (i3)

National Forum to Accelerate Middle–Grades Reform  
*Schools to Watch: School Transformation Network*

Tues., Oct. 26, 2010, 2:00 PM, EDT

# Welcome

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*Introduction:* Robert Mahaffey, Director of Communications



*Presented by:*

Debby Kasak, Executive Director, National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Kay Johnson, Former Principal, Escanaba Middle School

Peter F. Murphy, Executive Director, California League of Middle Schools and High Schools,  
Immediate Past President of National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Joseph Casarez, Assistant Superintendent, Coalinga-Huron Joint Unified Schools District

# National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

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- Alliance of 50 organizations, leaders, and key members speaking with a collective voice
- *Vision: In order to prepare students to be lifelong learners ready for college, career, and citizenship, the National Forum seeks to make every middle grades school academically excellent, responsive to the developmental needs and interests of young adolescents, and socially equitable*

# National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

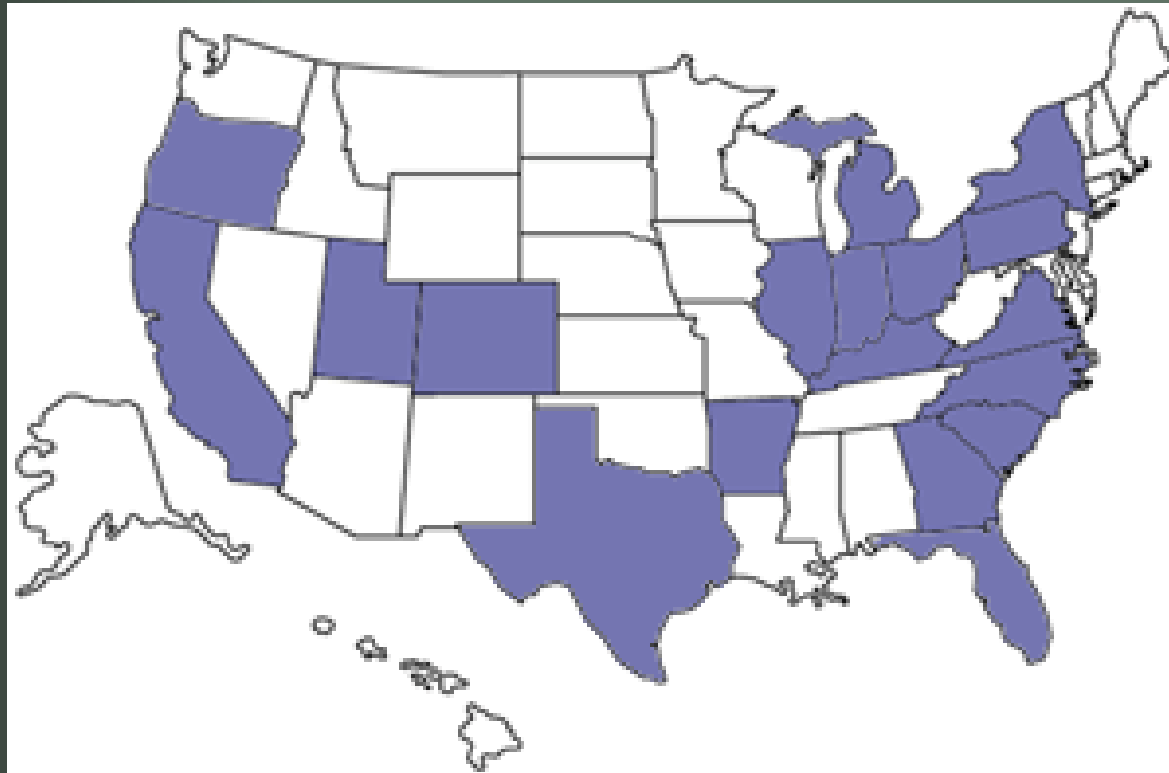
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- *Work: Forge sustainable partnerships, train leaders at state, district, and school levels to assess school performance using rigorous criteria, provide exemplars and inspiration for schools seeking to improve their performance*
- **Schools to Watch:** Academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and strong organizational supports with a set of criteria
- State level initiative started in 2002 with 3 states--19 states today
- 242 schools as of June 2010 with grade spans e.g. k-8, 5-8, 6-8, 7-8, 7-9
- Enrollment ranges 300 to more than 3,000
- Rural, urban, and suburban communities with diverse student bodies

19 States

# Schools *to* Watch<sup>®</sup>

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# Escanaba Middle School—2009 STW

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## About the school

- Rural Upper Peninsula MI town 533 enrollment
- Grades 6-8
- Student Demographics: 1% Hispanic, 90% White, 1% African American, 1% Asian, 7% Native American, 69% Free/Reduced Lunch

## STW Results

- Current and future community resources
- Online professional development and ITV student classes
- Additional afterschool options and extension to Chamber of Commerce
- Indian Education Program cultural activities

# Why i3?

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- Every state fielded STW inquiries
- CA, IL and NC had been trying out “on-the-ground” strategies with promising results
- Opportunity to deepen our work and test school improvement model through STW



# Why i3?

- Create regional hubs building capacity, sustainability, and scale-up through a larger STW network of states
- Chance to systematically gather evaluation data
- Apply early indicators strategies to keep students on pathway to graduation

# National Forum Application

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- 16<sup>th</sup> highest-scoring application
- 4-Year \$4.9 million i3 grant
- 20% private match of more than \$1 million
- Walmart Foundation in partnership with Rural School and Community Trust, Stuart, Z. Smith Reynolds and JP Morgan Chase

# Schools to Watch: Regional Hubs

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- NC: Turn-Around Schools Initiative – 40 schools including rural
- CA: Principals to Watch in LA County
- IL: Chicago Public Schools Math & Science Initiative and Comprehensive School Reform Experience
- Consortium of 18 schools, **6 rural in NC & CA**, 12 urban, 6 per state
- Academy for Education Development—Early Warning Indicators
- Center for Prevention Research and Development--Evaluation

# i3 Multi-Layer System of Interventions Supports and Networking

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- STW-trained coach visits the school at least twice per month
- STW comprehensive self-assessment, set of SMART goals, and integrated action plan
- STW mentor school for cross-site visitation, observation, and peer mentoring
- School and hub-based professional development, institutes, workshops, and school-based training

# i3 Multi-Layer System of Interventions Supports and Networking

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- Principal coach on leadership issues to set high expectations, bring coherence, share decision-making, and foster collective responsibility for student learning
- Peer support from the STW network through online discussion groups, state and national STW conferences and webinars
- Focused professional development to create a learning community
- 3-tiered progressive intervention process keeping students on high school graduation path
- School-based monitoring and assessment

# Coalinga-Huron School District, CA

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- Coalinga-Huron School District, Southwest corner of Fresno County
- CHUSD serves two communities: Huron and Coalinga, separated by 20 miles of farmland and grazing pasture
- Grades 6-8 and students will attend Coalinga High School
- Coalinga Middle serves approximately 600 students and Huron Middle serves 350
- CMS approximately 70% Hispanic/Latino and 30% White
- HMS 98% Hispanic/Latino

# Insights on i3 Competition Proposal Strengths

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- Long-term track record of implementing a variation of the proposal
- Regional system (hubs) to build upon national initiative with potential for sustainability and scale-up
- Heightened awareness of the role of middle-grades in preparing students to be college and career ready
- Found way to tell complex story in relatively short amount of text
- High-level clarity with streamlined goals, objectives, and strategies while keeping the story vibrant

# Insights on i3 Competition Proposal Strengths

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- Degree of collaboration
- Many contributed through open calls, grant production team, writes/rewrites by those versed in STW
- Critical juncture for STW overall and powerful leverage point for middle-grades education
- Doing together what we couldn't do individually
- Evaluator with extensive experience in middle-grades research and school change wrote a strong research section



# Insights on i3 Competition Proposal Challenges

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- Formulating a plan of action was achievable given big ideas and desires of Forum members
- Having evidence each partner and the Forum as the grantee had the prerequisites for applying—promising innovation
- Keeping all partners unified and focused on the big picture

# Insights on i3 Competition Proposal Challenges

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- Developing a budget with 6 entities (CA, IL, NC, National Forum, Center for Prevention Research and Development, and Academy for Educational Development)
- Securing the required 20% match in a short timeframe
- Each step along the way posed greater demands so could not be overwhelmed for very long

# Lessons Learned

- Advantage of collaboration and partnerships
- Innovation vs. successful program
- Using a grant writer might be expedient, however, remember the passion comes through the voices of those creating and doing the work
- Complex and intense work provides learning on many levels

# Questions and Contacts

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## Presenters

Peter F. Murphy, Executive Director, California League of Middle Schools, [P\\_Murphy@clms.net](mailto:P_Murphy@clms.net)

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## National Forum Websites

[www.mgforum.org](http://www.mgforum.org)

[www.schoolstowatch.org](http://www.schoolstowatch.org)

[www.middlegrademath.org](http://www.middlegrademath.org) -- Mathematics Enhancement Tools for Reaching Diverse Learners, including Rural Education

Thank you

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**Rural School and Community Trust**

[www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org)

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