



## What are the Benefits of Being Re-designated as a STW School?

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### Presenters

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**Facilitated dialogue between two principals from schools re-designated for the 4<sup>th</sup> time.**

#### 1. What keeps you applying for re-designation?

The challenge and desire to keep moving forward keeps you applying for re-designation. It focuses and encourages staff to reflect on best practices. STW provides the umbrella for what we do for kids as well as a validation of what we do well.

#### 2. How does the STW process facilitate change?

The process forces you to continually look at and examine what you are doing and how you do it. It gives you the opportunity to reflect on what you've done, how it worked, and what you need to do to grow. It forces you to ask the question, "Is what we are doing right for kids?" The feedback from the visit team allows you the opportunity to reflect and develop stretch goals. Having the visit team meeting and discussing the process with teachers is very powerful and delivers a consistent message.

#### 3. What keeps the process exciting and new?

Every re-designation is like the first time. We stress, we review, we regroup and we celebrate! Re-designation allows us to feel good about what we've done, but continues to present direction for future initiatives. It validates to us the relevance of what we've done and gives us the opportunity to reflect on the future. STW creates an expectation for collaboration among all staff.

#### 4. How have you continued to get financial support?

You need to get district buy-in. We involve the district in the application (re-designation) process. We ask for their support in dollars, resources and personnel. For example, in this year's application, peer coaching was one of our stretch goals we identified in the application. Working with our Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, she offered one of the district's Teachers on Assignment to help facilitate the initiative. It's important to keep the district informed throughout the process.

#### 5. How does being identified as a STW affect your staff?

It builds a sense of confidence as we are acknowledged for what we do. The staff understands that being a STW comes with some responsibilities - staying on the cutting edge, maintaining the desire for continued improvement, and sharing with others what we do. Teachers are very proud to talk about what they do and share with others.

## **6. How do you know what initiatives to include in the application?**

We review what we've done since we were initially identified. We examine our progress toward our stretch goals, as well as our direction of staff development. The STW application guides us with some direction. We utilize it as a map with the four domains keeping us focused. Another idea is to organize all the different initiatives you've done over the years and share the list with your staff. It is very eye opening as to the amount of work and effort teachers put in to support their students.

## **7. Why do we want to keep the STW recognition year after year?**

Once you get it, it becomes a responsibility. If you go into the process as recognition for what your school does to support students on a daily basis, it makes sense to be recognized for continuous improvement. If you approach the process as an award, once you achieve recognition, you are done. The community recognizes and acknowledges the results we get. STW recognition validates who we are and why we focus on particular areas of growth.

## **8. How does the principal facilitate the process year after year, especially when you have new people involved?**

A great way to keep staff members engaged in the STW re-designation process is by asking different members to serve on the writing team each re-designation period. Everyone is involved in the overall process through completing the self-rating rubric, collecting the data, setting yearly goals, and implementing what we say we do on a daily basis. By doing this, you allow a variety of staff members to share leadership roles.

## **9. As a school leader, how do you guide your staff to stay on track between the re-designation periods?**

Visits from other schools remind us of our initial commitments. We reaffirm what we do in a variety of ways – participating in staff development activities, deliberately sharing best practices, continuing to focus on growth and needs, collecting and using data, and collaborating through our PLCs. We work with other middle schools in our area and share ideas. Being a STW becomes who we are and guides a lot of our goal setting. Keep your vision in the forefront!!

## **10. How do you introduce new staff members to the STW process?**

In our yearly school-wide goals, we revisit our STW commitment through what we plan to do and achieve annually. The STW process needs to be embedded in your new teacher induction program. You need to discuss the four domains and 37 criteria and how your school addresses each. Make sure everyone understands the meaning of Social Equity and Developmental Responsiveness, and that STW is not just about Academic Excellence. Staff needs to understand how the Organizational Structures and Processes of the building tie everything together. Also, celebrate with your staff on a regular basis.

## **11. How has STW recognition affected your community?**

STW re-designation has provided a sense of stability within the community. There is a sense of pride within the community because this is a national program based on research-based criteria on how to address the needs of middle schoolers. Because community involvement is addressed in the criteria, it helps schools to actively involve parents and community members in the school. The continued commitment to earning the STW designation and the celebrations each time brings trust and confidence in the schools within the community.