

The Chester School District in Chester, New Jersey is honored to announce that Black River Middle School has been re-designated as a National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform "School to Watch." This is the 3rd time that Black River Middle School has received this unique distinction and one of the few schools in the state to reach the re-designated status for a third straight time. Black River Middle School has been a School to Watch since 2009, due in large part to the dedicated staff that continually integrates innovative strategies to meet the needs of all students. The student body is to be commended for continually taking academic risks, being kind to others, and striving to make sense of their learning in their own unique ways. Over the past several years Black River Middle School has held site visitations for over thirty middle schools who want to learn more about the student-centered programs offered in the following areas...

- **Academic Excellence:** Dedicated, full grade level teams, 1:1 Chromebook initiative, STEM and Makerspace programs, and differentiated approaches to learning
- **Developmentally Responsive:** Peer Leaders, advisory, small and large group counseling, personalized student learning, and service to community
- **Socially Equitable:** Anti-bullying programs, U-Matter initiative, Summer School opportunities, and school improvement committees
- **Organizational Structures:** Common planning time, family and community partnerships, and social media branding

Mr. Mullen, the principal at Black River Middle, recently stated, "Our students are wonderful. They are hard-working and kind to each other. We are fortunate to have a Superintendent and a Board of Education that only want the best for our students. The backbone of our school is our staff. They do a phenomenal job on a daily basis. Our PTO and Educational Foundation are major contributors to our success."

Additionally, Dr. Christina Van Woert, Superintendent of Schools for the Chester School District, commented "I am not at all surprised by the re-designation of Black River Middle School as a national School to Watch for the third time. Mr. Mullen and Mr. Currie are exemplary in their leadership and in their ongoing commitment to our students. The faculty, office and custodial staff of Black River also work together at the highest level of integrity, energy and ingenuity as they continue to provide our students with an educational program of exceptional quality and innovation. This Schools to Watch designation is well deserved by all!"

Black River Middle School will be honored at the annual NJAMLE Conference at Kean University on March 10 and at the 13th Annual Schools to Watch Conference in Arlington, Virginia.