Introduction

The primary objective of this middle school course is to examine the evolution of middle schools with particular emphasis on the rationale. Why are we, as middle school educators, doing the things we do, and how well is it working? How has our knowledge better assisted the needs of our early adolescent students?

This course will look at the historical and philosophical background of middle level education. Our focus will be on the roles teachers and administrators play in incorporating this guided, interdisciplinary, and collaborative team approach that assists students during these fundamentally transformative years. We will look at the necessary components of organization (teaming, advisor/advisee, exploratory, and learning communities) and instruction (cooperative learning, student grouping, and teacher strategies and student learning styles) that create a unique middle school environment. We will explore contemporary issues associated with the middle school as well as the adaptations necessary for special circumstances affiliated with middle schools.

Teaching and Learning Conceptual Framework

The teacher education programs at the University of North Dakota are grounded on constructivist principles. Through our programs, we support the development of teachers who are learners, active agents of learning, and articulate visionaries.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you should be able to accomplish the following objectives:  (Numbers after each objective indicate corresponding National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS]. You will find the NBPTS listed at this link [http://www.nbpts.org/the_standards/standards_by_cert].)

1. Explain the evolution and rationale of a developmentally responsive middle school. (NBPTS 1 and 5)
2. Identify the importance of and ways to accommodate the developmental needs of early adolescent students. (NBPTS 1 and 3)
3. Discuss the issues and topics associated with middle school theory and practice. (NBPTS 1, 2, and 4)
4. Examine the organizational components and curricular issues that influence middle school education. (NBPTS 5)
5. Reflect upon the process of learning, collaborating, and assessing of their professional roles and responsibilities. (NBPTS 3, 4, and 5)
6. Identify effective ways to facilitate and assess learning for all students, including all areas of special needs (gifted to the lower functioning), multicultural, and diversity. (NBPTS 2 and 3)

Required Textbook and Materials


Selected articles from *Middle School Journal*, and *Middle Ground: The Magazine of Middle Level Education*, publications of National Middle School Association, Westerville Ohio. Please Note: The instructor will provide information to access the articles in each lesson that will be required reading in addition to your textbooks.

Assignments

There are six assignments in this course: four reading summaries/reaction papers, one position paper, and one project.

You will complete the assignments and submit them to your instructor for grading and instructor feedback. *Your grade options for the course are S/U grading or a letter grade.*

In each reading summary/reaction paper, you will synthesize required reading, using the reading concepts and your previous experience to provide a reaction to readings. The reaction paper is a two-part response. First, you need to write a concise summary of the selected readings for the particular lesson. The summary portion should reflect your clear understanding of the content. The second part is your reaction to the reading material. This portion should reflect how the middle school concepts presented relate to your involvement with middle school education and your reaction or opinion to the presented material.

You will research, develop, and submit a position paper on a critical middle level topic. Guidelines for your position paper are in lesson 3. Possible topics include authentic assessment, achievement gaps, grouping/tracking, year-round schooling, character education, high stakes testing, NCLB, standardization, teaching to the test, health/risks, competitive sports programs, social promotion, and homework. Additional topics include student-led conferences, affective curriculum, parental/community involvement, advanced teaming, exploratory; integration/interdisciplinary, teacher empowerment, relationship building (allied arts), classroom management, motivation, technology, block scheduling, authentic teaching strategies (cooperative learning, differentiated instruction), appropriate grouping, listening skills, site based management, diversity, and self-esteem.

You will organize and construct a project regarding middle school strategies. Guidelines for your project are in lesson 6. Possible topics include:
- Developing an approach to using differentiated instruction
- Conducting a pilot study on a critical issue in your classroom (action research)
- Forming focus groups to evaluate our middle schools
- Developing a staff development plan for your team
- Developing a service learning unit
- Developing a series of cooperative learning lessons
- Conceptualizing an interdisciplinary unit for your team
- Researching a contemporary middle school issue: e.g., appropriate grouping, high stakes testing,
achievement gaps, classroom management, motivation, character education, homework, social promotion, parental/community involvement, or influence of No Child Left Behind

**Grading**

You have the option of selecting the type of grading for this course – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or Letter Grading (A – F). Please be aware that once you’ve selected the type of grading option, you cannot request a change after the course has begun.

Grades will be determined by the following points:

- Reading Summary/Reaction Paper (4 @ 10 points each) 40
- Position Paper 20
- Project 40

**Total Points 100**

If choosing S/U grading option, seventy (70) or more points earns an S grade:

- 70–100 Satisfactory
- Below 70 Unsatisfactory

If choosing a letter grade, the following scale will be implemented:

- A - 90 – 100
- B - 80 – 89
- C - 70 – 79
- D - 60 – 69
- F - Below 60

**Scholastic Dishonesty**

Students enrolled in this course are expected to be aware of the seriousness of scholastic dishonesty. Unacceptable behavior such as submitting someone else’s work as your own, cheating on exams, or plagiarizing can result in failure of the course or other sanctions. For a more detailed description of these policies, please refer to the UND Code of Student Life; Appendix IIIa-3, at: [http://und.edu/student-affairs/code-of-student-life/](http://und.edu/student-affairs/code-of-student-life/)