

EDMS 7030
The Middle School
Maymester 2007

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John Dewey (1938/1997) on democracy being the best of all social institutions...

Can we find any reason that does not ultimately come down to the belief that democratic social arrangements promote a better quality of human experience, one which is more widely accessible and enjoyed, than do non-democratic and anti-democratic forms of social life? (p. 34)

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to explore the concept of a separate organization and program for young adolescents, 10-15 years of age, and to critically reflect upon how this middle grades concept might inform and be informed by teachers' practice.

Our Project – Knowledge for Teaching

Our work in this course will be imagined much like Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) imagine a knowledge base for teaching - "...one that is not drawn exclusively from university-based research but is also drawn from research conducted by teachers, one that is **not designed so that teachers function simply as objects of study and recipients of knowledge but also function as architects of study and generators of knowledge**" (p. 2).

My Pedagogy

My pedagogy assumes the following:

1. All people theorize about living in the world. Whether we want to or not we are constantly trying to figure out what the world means to us (and what we mean to the world).
2. A teacher's primary responsibility is to facilitate her or his students' theorizing.

For me, this theorizing means my teaching is informed more by theories of social learning than by any one teaching method or set of teaching methods. I identify strongly with what Paulo Freire would call a problem-posing education – a place in which student and teacher work together in identifying problems to be solved together. Furthermore, I think about learning experiences much as John Dewey did. For Dewey, a meaningful experience (as opposed to a random collection of experiences) moved in a direction toward fulfillment.

Guided by these theories means that I will try to allow our (student-teacher) relationship to become more fluid, moving in and out of control in a rhythm that (hopefully) allows each of us to have experiences that lead toward fulfillment as a group and as individuals.

From a methodological perspective then, I will attempt to exercise a pedagogy that focuses on dialogue - allowing for divergent viewpoints and shared learning. In a practical sense, this pedagogy will include some presentation, a significant amount of small group and large group dialogue, and workshop-oriented segments.

Required Readings

Jackson, A. W., & Davis, G. A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century*. New York: Teachers College Press.

National Middle School Association (2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

National Middle School Association (2003). *Research and resources in support of this we believe*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Note: There will also be required readings during the second half of the course. These readings will be based on the questions/concerns/ideas raised during the first half of the course.

Tentative Schedule

(Note: This syllabus is a guide for the course. It is subject to change as we progress through the semester. Students will be notified in advance of any changes.)

Foundational Aspect of the Course

Date	Guiding Questions/Topics	Class Preparation/ Assignments Due
May 15	*Introduction to the Course – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a middle school? • Who are you as a learner? • What do you hope to learn in this course? * Syllabus	
May 16	What beliefs/commitments guide the middle grades concept?	Read: TWB (pp. 1-34, 43-51) Reflection #1 Due – Who are you as a learner? What do you hope to learn in this course?
May 17	How might middle grades education be designed?	Read: TP2000 (chapters 1 and 2)
May 18	What might it mean to teach a curriculum grounded in standards, relevant to adolescents' concerns, and based on how students learn best -- and what does it mean to use a mix of assessment methods?	Read: TP 2000 (chapter 3) Reflection #2 Due

Date	Guiding Questions	Assignments Due
May 21	What might it mean to organize relationships for learning?	Read: TP 2000 (chapter 6)
May 22	What might it mean to use instructional methods that prepare all students to achieve high standards?	Read: TP 2000 (chapter 4) “Gist of the Research” due.
May 23	What might it mean for a school to govern democratically and involve all school staff members?	Read: TP 2000 (chapters 7)
May 24	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Teachers for Middle Grades Schools: Pre-service Preparation and Professional Development • Providing a safe and healthy school environment • Involving parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development 	Read: TP 2000 (Chapters 5, 8 or 9) Prepare summary notes for jigsaw activity

Practical Application Aspect of the Course

May 25	What questions/concerns/ideas do you have about the middle grades concept and its relationship to your practice? * Experience co-construction of curriculum.	
May 28	Question/Concern/Idea #1	
May 29	Question/Concern/Idea #2	
May 30	Ideal Middle School Workshop	First Draft of “Ideal Middle School” assignment due.
May 31	Discussion Facilitator	
June 1	Discussion Facilitator	
June 4	Discussion Facilitator	
June 5	No Class	Final Draft of “Ideal Middle School” assignment due (midnight)

Summary of Assignments

Contributions to our Learning Community

Active participation is essential in this course. Participating in class dialogue will help you reflect upon what you know and believe. Engaging with each other's ideas by questioning and generating alternatives will enhance your and the group's learning. Please come to each class prepared to engage in the readings and your classmates' ideas. There is only one written aspect to this "assignment" (see summary notes for jigsaw activity on May 25). The summary notes will not be evaluated, but they will be collected and you will receive credit toward the overall point total (10) for "Contributions to our Learning Community."

Reflections (2 total)

The purpose of the reflections is to cultivate the questions/ideas/concerns/wonderings/reactions you have and to provide you with a space to explore your thinking in preparation for the "Ideal Middle School" assignment. Each reflection should be 1-2 single-spaced word processed pages.

The "Gist" of the Research

As the name of this assignment suggests, the purpose of this assignment is to explore an aspect of research on middle grades education and to describe the "gist" of that research. For this assignment, everyone will read pages 1-12 of *Research and Resources in Support of This We Believe* in order to get a sense of the larger research picture. Then, each of you will choose 1 of the 6 programmatic components included between pages 13 and 53 or "Courageous Leadership: Teachers and Administrators" (pp. 55-67) to explore. You will be asked to describe the "gist" of the research summary, to locate two pieces of literature referenced, and to describe how those particular pieces of literature might inform your practice. The paper should be 3-5 double-spaced pages.

Discussion Facilitator

The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to explore a topic/question/idea/concern of interest to you and your colleagues (based on our co-construction of curriculum on May 25). You will work in pairs to lead a group discussion/activity. You will assign the class readings and facilitate a 45 (approx.) minute discussion/activity.

Your "Ideal Middle School"

The purpose of this assignment reflects the overall purpose of the course, meaning that it is an opportunity for you to explore the concept of a separate organization and program for young adolescents, 10-15 years of age, and to critically reflect upon how this middle grades concept might inform and be informed by your practice. The description or creation of your "ideal middle school" can take on many forms (e.g. formal paper, PowerPoint presentation, fictional writing) as long as it meets the following expectations.

- 1) It responds directly and thoroughly to each of the 7 recommendations in the Turning Points 2000 design for improving middle grades education.
- 2) It demonstrates critical reflective thinking about your current and/or future practice.

First Draft – due May 30 (This draft will not be evaluated, but I will provide you with feedback.)

Final Draft - due June 5

Evaluation of Student Performance

My goal will be to provide you with useful and meaningful feedback on assignments. The criteria for each assignment will be made explicit during class sessions. Generally speaking however here is what I will be looking for in all written assignments.

1. Is there evidence that you were fully engaged in the work (i.e. exploring the concepts, applying what you are learning to your practice, treating issues in a critical manner)?
2. Is there evidence that you communicated your arguments/critiques in a clear and cogent manner?
3. Have you formatted your paper using APA (5th edition) guidelines?

Your final grade will be calculated as follows. A total of 100 points is available in this class. EDMS 7030 is graded with an A-F designation.

Contributions to Learning Community	10 points
Reflections (2 total, each worth 7.5 points)	15 points
Discussion Leader	20 points
The Gist of the Research	20 points
The Ideal Middle School	35 points

TOTAL POINTS

100 points

93-100 = A

90-92 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

0-72 = F

Extra work submitted to enhance a course grade will not be accepted.

Late Assignments – Points may be deducted for assignments not submitted by the due date.

Attendance Policy

Student attendance is imperative for your learning.

1. According to UGA policies, any student who incurs an excessive number of absences will be *administratively withdrawn* from the course. For EDMS 7030, an excessive number of absences is defined as *missing more than 3 of the 15 class meetings*. Notify the instructor prior to any absence.
2. Being late to class or leaving early three times is equivalent to missing one class meeting.
3. Students are excused for religious holidays.
4. You are responsible for all class meetings (e.g. assignments, content) whether present or not.

Academic Honesty

The University of Georgia's policies on academic honesty are strictly enforced in this class (see the UGA Graduate Bulletin). Please familiarize yourself with these policies.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and require specific instructional adaptations you must notify me prior to the beginning of the second week of class. Your notification must be accompanied by written documentation from the UGA Office of Disability Services or the Regents Center for Learning Disabilities.



The University of Georgia

College of Education Conceptual Framework

The College of Education prepares exemplary, reflective professionals to serve a diverse global community; it achieves that end through teaching, scholarship, outreach, and partnership at the local, national, and international levels.



NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

...devoted to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents

**National Middle School Association
NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
MASTERS LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION STANDARDS**

We will work toward meeting several of the National Middle School Association's standards for master's level candidates in this course.

NOTE: The following definition is used for the term "all young adolescents" throughout this standards document:

The middle level standards interpret “all young adolescents” to be inclusive, comprising students of diverse ethnicity, race, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, regional or geographic origin, and those with exceptional learning needs.

Standard 1. Young Adolescent Development

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to young adolescent development, and they apply that knowledge in their practice.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

1. Comprehensively understand the major concepts, principles, theories, and research of young adolescent development B intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral B and their interrelationships.
2. Have practical professional knowledge of health and sexuality issues of young adolescents.
3. Comprehend that the development of all young adolescents occurs within the context of classrooms, families, peer groups, communities and society.
4. Understand the range of individual differences of young adolescents and evaluate their effects on teaching and learning.
6. Comprehend the implications of young adolescent development for school organization and components of successful middle level programs and schools.
7. Are knowledgeable about how the media portrays young adolescents and comprehend the implications of these portraits.

Standard 2. Middle Level Philosophy and School Organization

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical foundations and organizational components of highly effective middle level schools, and they apply that knowledge in their practice.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

1. Have a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.
2. Have practiced professional knowledge about historical and contemporary models of schooling for young adolescents and the advantages and disadvantages of these models.
3. Comprehend the rationale and characteristic components of developmentally responsive middle level schools.
4. Distinguish best practices for the education of young adolescents in a variety of school organizational settings (e.g., K-8, 5-8, 7-12 organizational plans).
5. Understand that the team process is the most effective strategy for school improvement and student learning.

6. Understand that flexible scheduling provides the best context for teachers to meet the needs of all young adolescents.

Standard 3. Middle Level Curriculum and Assessment

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to middle level curriculum and assessment, and they apply that knowledge in the practice.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

1. Understand that middle level curriculum should be relevant, inviting, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.
3. Understand the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and how to explore and make connections among subject areas and life situations.
9. Know how to develop, implement, and assess advisory and other student advocacy programs that attend to the developmental needs and interest of young adolescents.

Standard 5. Middle Level Instruction and Assessment

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to effective middle level instruction and assessment, and they apply a variety of effective strategies to meet the varying abilities, interests, and learning styles of all young adolescents.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

6. Understand how to motivate all young adolescents and facilitate their learning through the use of a wide variety of developmentally responsive materials and resources (e.g., technological resources, manipulative materials)
7. Know how to establish and maintain a fair, effective, and developmentally responsive classroom environment.

Standard 6. Family and Community Involvement

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to working collaboratively with family and community members, and they provide leadership in helping all stakeholders offer high quality learning opportunities for all young adolescents.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

1. Understand the implications of the variety of family structures for effective teaching and learning.
2. Have a comprehensive understanding of ways prior learning, differing experiences, and family and cultural backgrounds influence the learning of all young adolescents.

5. Understand that middle level schools are organizations within a larger community context and are aware of the implications of these relationships for effective teaching and learning.
8. Understand the importance of following school district policies and protocol regarding interagency partnerships and collaboratives.

Standard 7. Middle Level Professional Roles

Middle level masters candidates understand and analyze the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to their professional roles in middle level education, and they apply that knowledge in their practice.

Knowledge

Middle level masters candidates:

1. Understand their role as middle level education professionals.
2. Understand the importance of their influence on all young adolescents.
3. Understand their responsibility for upholding high professional standards (e.g., school, community).
4. Understand the interrelationships and interdependencies among various professionals that serve young adolescents (e.g., school counselors, social service workers, home-school coordinators).
5. Understand advisory/advocate theories, skills, and curriculum.
6. Have a comprehensive understanding of teaming/collaborative theories and processes.
8. Understand the need for continual reflection on young adolescent development, the instructional process, and professional relationships.
9. Are knowledgeable about the skills of research/data based decision making.

**Belief Statements About Diversity for the EDMS
Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

Beliefs About Students

- All students can learn.
- All children deserve respect and caring.
- The similarities and differences among students should be honored.

Beliefs About Appropriate Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- Children's experiences in and out of school should be a foundation for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Teachers should adapt their practices based on the diverse needs and characteristics of students.
- Teachers should utilize a variety of curriculum resources to meet diverse students' needs.
- Teachers should utilize a variety of teaching and learning strategies to meet diverse students' needs.
- Teachers should utilize a variety of assessment strategies to meet diverse students' needs.

Beliefs About Teachers and Teacher Candidates

- Teachers and teacher candidates should continually examine their beliefs about diversity based on research and school practice.
- Teachers and teacher candidates should continually examine their attitudes and assumptions about diversity.
- Teachers and teacher candidates should help their students value diversity.

Beliefs About Family and Community

- Teachers should know the communities from which their students come and use those communities as a resource for curriculum and instruction.
- Teachers should engage their students in learning about and taking action to improve their communities.
- Teachers should engage families of diverse students in classroom and school activities.

Beliefs About Field Experiences

- Teacher candidates should interact with students from diverse backgrounds in diverse settings.

References

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1993). *Inside outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience and education*. New York: Touchstone. (Original work published 1938)