

**THEORY AND PRACTICE IN MIDDLE GRADES CURRICULUM  
EDMS 9080**

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**Meeting Times:** Tuesdays, 5:00 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.  
Room 422-A, Aderhold Hall

**Course Description:**

EDMS 9080 is a doctoral seminar that examines curricular practices in the middle grades (grades 4-8), theories on curriculum development, and research on curriculum implementation.



**The University of Georgia**

**College of Education  
Conceptual Framework**

*The College of Education prepares exemplary, reflective professionals to serve a diverse global community; it seeks to achieve 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*

**NMSA/NCATE  
Doctoral Candidate Standards  
EDMS 9080**

*Standard 1. Young Adolescent Development*

Middle level doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to young adolescent development, and they apply the knowledge gained in their practice.

## **Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

1. Comprehensively understand the research underpinning of the major concepts, principles, theories, of young adolescent development--intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral--and their interrelationships.
3. Have a deep understanding of the context of classrooms, families, peer groups, communities and society on the development of all young adolescents as related in the professional literature.
4. Have an in-depth understanding of current research on the biological, psychological, and sociological range of differences among young adolescents and evaluate their effects on teaching and learning.
5. Comprehensively understand the current research on teaching/learning strategies that takes into consideration and capitalizes upon the developmental characteristics of all young adolescents.
6. Comprehend the implications of young adolescent development for school organization and components of successful middle level programs and schools as related in the current literature and other sources.

### ***Standard 2. Adult Development and Learning***

**Middle level doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to adult development and learning, and they apply the knowledge gained in their practice.**

## **Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

5. Are knowledgeable about the theories, research, and practice of developing middle level leadership roles for all stakeholders.

### ***Standard 3. Middle Level Philosophy and School Organization***

**Middle level doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the major concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical foundations and organizational components of highly effective middle level schools, and they apply the knowledge gained in their practice.**

## **Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

1. Comprehensively understand the research underpinning 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 body of scholarly literature dealing with the rationale and characteristic components of developmentally responsive middle level schools.

4. Based on scholarly literature, discriminate among 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 and that flexible scheduling provides the best context for teachers to meet the needs of all young adolescents.

***Standard 4. Middle Level Curriculum and Assessment***

**Middle doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to middle level curriculum and assessment, and they apply that knowledge in their practice.**

**Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

1. Understand that middle level curriculum should be relevant, inviting, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.
2. Select and adapt curriculum, instruction, resources, technology, and assessments that maximize students' learning.
3. Understand the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and how to explore and make connections to different subject areas and life situations.
5. Are very knowledgeable about middle level curriculum standards and models.
6. Know how to incorporate all young adolescents' ideas, interests, and experiences into curriculum.
7. Understand their roles in the total school curriculum (e.g., advisory program, co-curricular activities and other programs).
8. Understand effective curriculum assessment strategies.
9. Know how to assess and select curriculum materials that are academically challenging, culturally sensitive, technologically sound, and personally motivating for all young adolescent learners.
10. Know how to develop, implement, and assess advisory and other students' advocacy programs that attend to the social and emotional needs of all young adolescents.
11. Know essential theories and roles of assessment and their applications to middle level teaching and learning.

***Standard 6. Middle Level Instruction and Assessment***

**Middle level doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to effective instruction and assessment, and they employ a variety of effective strategies to meet the varying abilities, interests, and learning styles of all young adolescents and adult learners.**

**Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

1. Understand the principles of instruction and assessment and the theories and research bases that support them.

2. Know a wide variety of teaching, learning and assessment strategies that are developmentally responsive and culturally sensitive.
3. Know that teaching higher order thinking skills is an integral part of instruction and assessment.
4. Are knowledgeable of the research on teaching basic concepts, skills of inquiry, problem solving, collaboration, and communication.
5. Know how to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching/learning strategies.
6. Understand how to facilitate and motivate student learning through the use of a wide variety of developmentally responsive materials and resources (e.g., computers, Internet, manipulative materials).
7. Teach others how to plan, implement, and evaluate a range of technology resources (e.g., audio and video presentations, computers) that are appropriate for young adolescent learners.
8. Know effective theories and models of developmentally responsive classroom climate and management.
9. Teach curriculum in ways that encourage young adolescents to observe, question, and interpret knowledge and ideas from diverse perspectives.
10. Understand and analyze the multiple roles of assessment in the instructional process (e.g. monitoring learning, evaluating student progress, and modifying teaching strategies).
11. Know how to select and develop formal, informal, and performance assessment techniques based on their advantages and limitations.
12. Understand how assessment strategies should be used in various learning environments and for specific achievement goals.
13. Understand local, state, and national assessment systems and how they inform the instructional environment.
14. Understand state, regional, and national accreditation of school and university programs.

***Standard 7. Middle Level Research***

**Middle level doctoral candidates analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and conduct research related to middle level education, and they apply the knowledge gained in their practice.**

**Knowledge**

Middle level doctoral candidates:

1. Have a comprehensive knowledge of middle level scholarly research.
2. Understand how to collect, analyze, and share data from various sources related to improvement of middle level education.

## **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.

**Required Text and Readings:**

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Beane, J. A. (2005). *A reason to teach: Creating classrooms of dignity and hope*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Perlstein, L. (2003). *Not much just chillin': The hidden lives of middle schoolers*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In addition to these books, we will read from a variety of other sources related to curriculum theory and practice.

**Course Themes:**

In his foreword to Tanner and Tanner's book (1995) on curriculum in theory and practice, Larry Cuban commented on the difficulty of the task the authors had undertaken given "the stubborn disarray that marks the academic field of curriculum" (p. vii). That disarray in the field requires us to engage in identifying themes and connections, to both try to instill some order in the chaos and to guide our own study of curriculum in the middle grades. Below, I have outlined themes within which we will investigate curriculum theory and practice in the middle grades. I expect that we will also go outside these themes as the semester progresses and our shared and individual understanding of curriculum deepens. Generally speaking, these will be recurrent and interwoven themes, i.e., we'll read and discuss a topic but we won't really leave it. As we see connections and implications, we'll discuss those all along the way.

Course Themes:

- Overview of middle grades schools and curriculum issues
  - National recommendations for curriculum in the middle grades
- Purposes of schooling and impact on curriculum
- Curriculum Theories & Theorists
- Young adolescents and curriculum
- Unity through diversity in a multicultural society
- Curriculum design/development
- Assessment and accountability
- Curriculum in practice (e.g., case studies of educators and students implementing curriculum)
- Preparation of educators for curriculum development & Implementation in the middle grades
- Conducting research on curriculum

## **Course Requirements and Assessment:**

### Discussions & Readings

This course will operate as a seminar in which all participants share responsibility in developing our knowledge of the topics and themes we investigate. As a participant, you'll be asked to try to understand and think about what you hear and read—to ask questions, to agree or disagree, to connect it with other things that you have heard, read, or experienced, either as part of the class or outside of it.

Class discussions are obviously a major component of this course, and those discussions and related activities will be based on the assumption that you have prepared by reading the assigned material prior to the class meeting. You will also be responsible for any additional readings distributed in class. Readings will be drawn from the required texts and from articles and book chapters within the scholarly literature and, to some degree, outside it.

### Course Assignments

The assignments are designed to prepare you to read and discuss curriculum theory, design, and implementation and to write for and present to a variety of audiences.

- *Manuscript for a Journal Article or Book Chapter:* Based on a topic that you identify, you will prepare, in APA style, a manuscript for possible publication in a specific journal or edited book that you identify. Manuscript formats include a report of a study that you carried out; a practitioner-oriented piece for teachers, parents, and/or school administrators; a review of the literature; a theoretical piece; a position paper; or a research summary (e.g., for National Middle School Association). Various examples will be provided and discussed in class. You will turn in drafts of your manuscript (drafts will not be graded) throughout the semester for feedback from me. You will also have opportunities to provide feedback on your peers' works in progress.
- *AERA Prototype Proposal:* Based on data that you collect on your topic throughout the semester, you will prepare a prototype of a proposal for a research presentation at the American Educational Research Association (AERA). The required AERA format will be used. As is the case for the manuscript assignment, you will turn in drafts for feedback.
- *Research Presentation:* Based on the data you collect on your topic, you will make a research presentation to the class using an AERA format of your choice (e.g., poster, roundtable, paper). AERA guidelines and effective presentation strategies will be discussed in class.

- *Class Discussion Leader:* Working in pairs, you will lead a class discussion of 3-4 interrelated readings. A list of topics from which to choose will be developed based on the course themes, and effective discussion strategies will be discussed. Some class time will be set aside to plan your discussions.

*Journal Responses to Readings and Class Discussions:* You will be asked to write a journal of responses to the articles, chapters, texts, and/or class discussions. The journal entries are meant to demonstrate your thoughtful, informed critique and exploration of the readings and class discussions, not your ability to summarize arguments. The journals will be collected occasionally, not more than 4 times during the semester, on dates agreed upon by the class. I will focus on the quality of your ideas, but I will also be looking for correct grammar and mechanics and the appropriate use of APA style for citations. Journal entries should be typed, double-spaced, and stapled.

- Each journal entry should contain
  - An informal discussion of two questions you will pose related to the readings and/or topics for class discussion
  - At least one other thoughtful argument, reaction, discussion, expansion, or connection regarding points that struck you in the readings or class discussions

Grading Procedure for EDMS 9080

A total of 100 points can be obtained in the course, divided as follows:

Manuscript of article or chapter:	45 points
AERA proposal prototype:	20 points
Research presentation:	15 points
Class discussion leader:	10 points
Journals/participation:	10 points

A	=	93 and above
A-	=	90 – 92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76
C-	=	70-72
D+	=	67-29
D	=	63-66
D-	=	60-62
F	=	59 and below

**Course Policies:**

1. Regular, on-time attendance is expected and encouraged. According to UGA policies, any student who incurs an excessive number of absences will be administratively withdrawn from the course. For EDMS 9080 Fall semester 2006, an excessive number of absences is defined as missing more than 3 classes. You are responsible for all class meetings (e.g., assignments, explanations, etc.) If you are going to be absent, please discuss it with the instructor prior to your absence.
2. An incomplete will be given with prior approval of the instructor and only in the case of a documented medical emergency.
3. The University of Georgia's policies on academic honesty are strictly enforced in this class, and all academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Please see <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/index.htm> for the UGA policy on Academic Honesty. See also <http://www.gradsch.uga.edu/> for other applicable rules and policies.
4. The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.