

Standards for Middle Grades (6-9) Teacher Candidates

These standards reflect the consensus among middle level educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders that middle level teachers need specialized professional preparation to be highly successful. There is also widespread agreement that middle level teachers should be prepared in specialized teacher preparation programs that focus directly and exclusively on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully teach young adolescents (enrolled in grades 6-9 within various grade configurations). More than 100 years of experience and research have shown that completion of teacher preparation programs designed to prepare teachers of young children in elementary schools or older adolescents in senior high schools is not sufficient. Effective middle level teacher preparation programs place a high priority on providing and requiring early and continuing middle level field experiences for prospective middle level teachers. The priority given these middle level clinical experiences reflects the views of practicing teachers and other stakeholders about the essential components of professional preparation programs. Although candidates for middle level licensure are required to complete one teaching concentration in the core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies, preparation in two content areas is strongly encouraged.

Standard 1: Middle level teacher candidates understand and apply the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to young adolescent development that support student development and learning.

Middle level teacher candidates understand the unique characteristics and needs of young adolescents and use that knowledge to establish learning environments that result in high levels of student achievement. Middle level teacher candidates integrate multiple roles that include teacher, role model, coach and mentor.

- Create learning opportunities that reflect an understanding of the development of all young adolescent learners where differences are respected and supported and individual potential is encouraged.
- Use developmentally responsive (intellectual, physical, social emotional and moral) instructional strategies.
- Engage young adolescents in activities related to their interpersonal, community, and societal responsibilities.
- Evaluate the effect of societal changes, including the portrayal of young adolescents in the media, which impact the healthy development of young adolescents.

Standard 2: Middle level teacher candidates understand and apply the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools and the organizational structures that support young adolescent development.

Middle level teacher candidates understand and apply the major concepts, principles, theories and research surrounding the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive programs and schools, including flexible scheduling, common planning periods, and best teaching practices for the education of young adolescents. They will successfully work within interdisciplinary teams and with colleagues to maximize student learning and school improvement.

- Understand the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.

- Know 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)
- Are knowledgeable about historical and contemporary models of schooling for young adolescents and the advantages and disadvantages of these models.
- Understand the rationale and characteristic components of developmentally responsive middle level schools.

Standard 3: Middle level teacher candidates plan and teach interdisciplinary curriculum based on core and elective/exploratory curricula that are relevant, challenging, and exploratory.

Middle level teacher candidates use their knowledge of content integration to address and connect knowledge, skills and concepts across the disciplines within the standard course of study to develop interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum. They implement these plans in ways that enable young adolescents to integrate knowledge and generate deeper levels of understanding.

- Make connections among subject areas when planning interdisciplinary curriculum.
- Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the structure and knowledge of local, state, and national middle level curriculum standards and ways to assess the student knowledge reflected in those standards.
- Design and implement curriculum in ways that encourage all young adolescents to observe, question, and interpret knowledge and ideas from diverse perspectives and in integrated ways.

Standard 4: Middle level teacher candidates understand and apply the major concepts, principles, theories, and research unique to effective middle level instruction and assessment, and they employ a variety of developmentally responsive strategies to meet the varying abilities and learning styles of all young adolescents.

Middle level teacher candidates use a variety of teaching/learning strategies grounded in the principles of middle level instruction and resources that motivate young adolescents to learn. They create developmentally responsive learning experiences that encourage young adolescents to be actively engaged and successful in their learning.

- Motivate all young adolescents and facilitate their learning through the use of a wide variety of developmentally responsive instructional strategies, materials and resources (e.g. technological resources, manipulative materials).
- Understand the principles of middle level instruction and the middle school research base that supports them.
- Select, develop and apply a balance of authentic performance assessments, both formative and summative, related to the unique learning needs of young adolescents.