University of North Carolina at Wilmington  
The Donald E. Watson School of Education  
Spring 2004

EDN 549  
Middle School Education  
Wednesdays, 5:00-7:45p.m.  
King Hall, room 206

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910/962-7195  
roneyk@uncw.edu

Course Description [as stated in UNCW Graduate Catalogue]

Study of educational programs for upper elementary education (junior high, middle school, intermediate school). Review of learning, physical, and social characteristics of “transescents” and historical and current approaches to their education. Comparison and contrast of curriculum, instruction, administration and organizational features of exemplary and typical intermediate, middle and junior high schools.

Course Rationale

Providing a strong understanding of the developmental characteristics of young adolescents coupled with examples of exemplary practices in middle grades education help guide educators in making age-appropriate instructional decisions. This course is a comprehensive examination of middle schools and the middle school movement. Topics to be studied include: the history, philosophy, and reform of middle level schools; characteristics of effective middle schools; teaming; advisory and transition programs; integrated curriculum; flexible block scheduling; characteristics of young adolescents; and, the characteristics of effective middle level teachers.

Course Objectives

Education is, broadly speaking, a social science. It is, therefore, important that we combine what we are learning through relevant research with the cumulative experiences of thousands of middle level educators so that the critical work of reforming and improving middle level education will continue to move forward. Through a combination of reading, discussion, presentation, demonstrations, peer coaching, and group activities, each graduate student will be able to:

1. trace the historical development of the middle school
2. describe the goals and characteristics of middle schools
3. identify organizational patterns and procedures that might prove helpful in working with young adolescents
4. demonstrate an understanding of middle school students in terms of their physical, cognitive, psychological, moral, and social development
5. identify characteristics of successful classroom instructional behaviors at the middle level as they relate to positive self-concept as well as student achievement and explain the theoretical base for the appropriate use of these instructional strategies
6. summarize major research related to middle level reform
7. analyze current research influencing teaching, learning, and organization in the middle school
Course Texts  [N.B. The instructor may assign other readings.]

Required
Research Committee, National Middle School Association. (2003). *Research and resources in support of This We Believe*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association

Recommended

Suggested Journals
*Middle Ground* (NMSA Publication)
*Middle School Journal* (NMSA Publication)
*Research in Middle Level Education* (NMSA Publication)
*Schools in the Middle* (NASSP Publication)
*The Clearing House* (Heldref Publications)

Selected Websites
Center for Middle Level Leadership
http://www.mllec.org/home.htm
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
http://www.emcf.org/
Middle Grades Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform
http://www.mgforum.org
Middle Level Education Special Interest Group of AERA
http://www.rmlle.pdx.edu/
National Middle School Association
http://www.nmsa.org
North Carolina Middle School Association
http://www.ncmsa.net/
TeacherTalk Forum
http://education.indiana.edu/cas/ttforum/ttforum.html
Course Requirements

1. As an educator you accept the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards and commit to serving students, the profession, and pursuing professional development. The North Carolina Educators’ Code of Ethics (http://www.ncpublicschools.org/teacher_education/conductcode.htm) and the professionalism standards listed on the Watson School of Education Program Evaluation Scale both serve to guide you in your professional development.

2. As a UNCW graduate student you adhere strictly to the UNCW Honor Code (See Student Handbook, Code of Student Life) http://www.uncwil.edu/stuaff/doso/code/code.pdf

3. Attendance Expectations and Reminders about Participation: (Grade point penalties will be applied for failure to do any of the following)
   - Attendance at each class meeting is required. Students should be on time for each class meeting and stay until the class is dismissed.
   - Assignments must be ready to turn in, or for presentation, at the beginning of the class on the date due.
   - Students are expected to participate in each class session in a collegial, thoughtful manner; asking questions, offering comments and personal insights, engaging in discussions and providing critiques for classmates when invited to do so.

4. Papers are to be typed in 12-inch font. Please double space your work. Insert page numbers and include your surname as a header on each page. Paper clip (no staples), and no page protectors are necessary.

Course Assignments

1. Presentation and Facilitation of Discussion:
   - Organization of Presentation - flow, pace, timing
   - Efforts to Make Interesting (e.g., enthusiasm, use of varied methods, creativity, etc.)
   - Gets Class Involved
   - Keeps to time limit

2. Critical Friends. Often professional development in schools is attained through communications with other teachers. Given the reality that middle level educators need a wide variety and repertoire of strategies and knowledge in teaching young adolescents, it is especially helpful to middle level educators when they engage in the sharing of ideas. This assignment is intended to encourage you to discover some new ideas available through the World Wide Web. Many web sites exist to support middle level practitioners with lesson plans, activities, etc. Prepare an annotated bibliography of 3-5 web sites. Comment upon the usefulness of the sites to middle level educators. Include web address with your commentary.

3. Case Study Log.
   - Using the existing research and best practices available in middle level education, write a 1-2 page reflection on how you would respond to the given situation in Cases 1 and 2. http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0136271677/ref=sib_rdr_ex/104-2371911-8059145?%5Fencoding=UTF8&p=S005#reader-page
   - Original Case Study. Drawing from your experience as a middle level educator, prepare a case study. Include at least 3-5 questions that you will raise during class discussion.
Write and present orally (approximately 20 minutes) your professional response to the information presented in the case.

4. **JOURNAL CLUB** is a concept borrowed from The U. S. Scientists in which they meet on a regular basis to stay current with the literature in their field. The model consists of weekly meetings focusing on a current topic. Members of the club are responsible for running sessions on a rotating basis. When members of the club are asked to facilitate sessions, they are expected to select an appropriate current article, see that the appropriate materials are sent/photo copied for members prior to the meeting, and facilitate the session leading a discussion of the members.

A critique is a discussion of a reading. Experience in making critiques of the works of authors is required in order to:

a) Help the student achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts included in the course;

b) Aid one in becoming a more discerning consumer of the literature in the field;

c) Assist the student in the comprehension of the implications of the reading content to particular course interest and concerns; and,

d) Help the student develop the act of effective written communication.

**Assignment:** Article Critique and Presentation. Review one (1) published article (reporting on an empirical study) in a professional journal and/or chapter in a related book. The piece should be **at least 8 pages in length.** Be sure to use scholarly journals, i.e., reviewed by a publisher/publishing board. Present the article/chapter and your critique of it. Facilitate a discussion of your critique; include time for questions & responses (**20 minutes tops**). Late paper will be downgraded one point per day late.

*A written critique includes four basic essentials:*

- Identification of the material read (use APA guidelines for referencing)
- An abstract of the major ideas, points of view, conclusions of the author (What is the gist of the article/study/book chapter?)
- Your commentary upon the central ideas, contentions, conclusions, points of view (What are your professional reactions to the article?)
- An analysis of how one might plan in order successfully to put the ideas of the author into practice.(What would one need to consider if one were going to put the ideas expressed into practice?)

4. **Final Paper/Project:** The final project/paper is your opportunity to focus on an issue of importance to middle level reform and of practical interest to you. Choose from one of the options [see suggestions below, or, originate your own topic or project with permission of the instructor]. These final projects will be 10-15 pages in length—typed and double-spaced, 1-inch margins around, 12-inch Times Roman font. Citation format must be in accord with APA publication manual 5th edition guidelines. Late papers will be downgraded one point per day late.

Presentation of final paper/project is required. Prepare a 20-minute presentation of the highlights of your paper/project. Options for final project/paper and presentation follow:
Option #1: Faculty In-Service. Because staff development ought to be tailored to a specific situation, for purposes of this assignment, assume that you are a member of the staff development committee at a school identical with the one of which you are very familiar. Your task is to prepare in writing a description of a direction you believe your school should take on a major issue facing your middle school. Include an outline of the way that you would present this to your colleagues in a 45-minute faculty meeting. Support for your position should be shown from appropriate, scholarly literature describing empirical research. Some of the issues you should address are those discussed in class and articulated in This We Believe (NMSA, 2003).

Option #2: Research Paper. The purpose of educational research is to develop new knowledge which can then be applied to the improvement of educational practice. Select a topic that addresses a current issue in middle level education. Research the topic (minimum of 8-10 scholarly articles describing empirical studies—be sure to use scholarly journals on your topic). Look for major recurring themes to compare and contrast. Design a presentation format that actively engages the class in exploring multiple perspectives related to the issue.

Option #3: Debate. Choose one of the below issues to debate. Present the “pro” side of the issue and the “con” side. Read the theoretical literature, including the texts, and research studies related to your issue. Be sure to distinguish among theory, research findings, and opinions. The use of opinions should be limited. Use enough literature to support each side of your topic (perhaps 5 + 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Advisory programs</th>
<th>2. Integrated Curriculum</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Exploratory programs</td>
<td>4. Student Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>6. Certification/Licensure</td>
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Course Evaluation
Assessment is based upon a point scale. Assignments are each worth a specified number of points. Your point total determines your course grade. The following section provides a framework for monitoring your progress in this course. All submitted work should reflect your best thinking and effort. The instructor may return assignments for revision prior to final evaluation. The chart that follows summarizes the course assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>POINT VALUE</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Jasper” reflection</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1/28/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Friends</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3/24/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Club critique</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>When presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Log</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/4/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/11/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Case</td>
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<td>3/31/04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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<td>4/28/04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Club</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sign-up: 2/18, 3/3, or 3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Case</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sign-up: 2/25, 3/17, or 4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS</td>
<td>250</td>
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**Proposed Schedule**

**Week one: January 7, 2004**
Introduction; Course Overview

**Week two: January 14, 2004**
Topic: The Importance of Middle Level Education
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. ix-8
- Jackson & Davis, Chapters 1 & 2
- *Research and Resources*, pp. 1-12

**Week three: January 21, 2004—7:00p.m. Kenan Auditorium**
Topic: *Two Towns of Jasper* film and discussion

*Option*: January 22, 2004—7:00p.m, Kenan Auditorium. Lecture: *Juan Williams*. “Eyes on the Prize: The Truths of American Race Relations,” examines race relations, culture, and society as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. the Board of Education. Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. commemoration event.

Assignment: Write a 2-page reflection to be discussed during week four.

**Week four: January 28, 2004**
Topic: Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so
Readings & Activities:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 9-10
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 5
- Learning Styles Survey: complete online; bring results to class http://www.trenholmtech.cc.al.us/lec/LearningStyles.htm
- Discussion of film

**Week five: February 4, 2004**
Topic: Courageous, collaborative leadership; a shared vision that guides decisions
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp.10-12
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 7
- Case Study 1 reflection

**Week six: February 11, 2004**
Topic: An inviting, supportive, and safe environment; high expectations for every member of the learning community
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 12-15; pp. 43-51
- YOUR TOP STUDENTS: Strategies and Activities to Meet the Needs of Gifted Programs, Chapters 3 & 5
Case Study 2 reflection

**Week seven: February 18, 2004**
Topic: Students and teachers engaged in active learning; an adult advocate for every student
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 15-17
- Jackson & David, Chapter 4
- Journal Club presentation/s

**Week eight: February 25, 2004**
Topic: School-initiated family and community partnerships
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 17-19
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 9
- Original Case/s

**Week nine: March 3, 2004**
Topic: Curricular issues
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 19-24
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 3
- *Research and Resources*, pp. 13-20
- Journal Club

**[Week ten--Spring Break: March 10, 2004]**

**Week eleven: March 17**
Topic: Instruction and Assessment
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 25-26
- *Research and Resources*, pp. 20-27
- Original Case/s

**Week twelve: March 24, 2004**
**NCMSA**
Suggested Readings:
- [http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl/casestudy/Glynn.pdf](http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl/casestudy/Glynn.pdf)
- [http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl/casestudy/Tippins.pdf](http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl/casestudy/Tippins.pdf)
Activity:
- Critical Friends

**Week thirteen: March 31, 2004**
Topic: Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning
Readings & Activity:
- *This We Believe*, pp. 27-29
- Research and Resources, pp. 28-34

TAKE THE STING OUT OF STUDY: Get Organized, Manage Your Time, and Conquer Exam Anxiety! Any chapter.

Journal Club

Week fourteen: April 7, 2004
Topic: Support structures
Readings & Activity:
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 6
- This We Believe, pp. 29-31
- Research and Resources, pp. 35-41
- Original Case/s

Week fifteen: April 14, 2004
AERA
Topic: Pulling it together

Week sixteen: April 21, 2004
Topic: School-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety; multifaceted guidance and support services
Readings & Activity:
- This We Believe, pp. 31-34
- Jackson & Davis, Chapter 8
- Co-Curricular Physical Activity and Sport Programs for Middle School Students: A Position Statement by The National Association for Sport and Physical Education's (NASPE) Middle and Secondary School Physical Education Council (MASSPEC)

Week seventeen: April 28, 2004
Exam week:
- Final Presentations
- Final Papers/Projects due

Final Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250-235</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>199-193</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>234-225</td>
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<td>93-90</td>
<td>192-185</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>224-218</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>184-175</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>73-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>217-210</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-84</td>
<td>174-150</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>69-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>209-200</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83-80</td>
<td>149 or below</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 or below</td>
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</table>
Important UNCW and WSE Procedures

Instructor Availability

Scheduled office hours (and exceptions to them) are posted on my office door. I am also usually available to students whenever I am on campus, so please come by even if you do not have an appointment. If you come by to see me and I am not in my office, please leave a note with your phone number. Or, you can email me. I will get back to you as soon as possible. You may also phone me at my home: ____________________________

University Disability Policy (See Student Handbook, Code of Student Life):
http://www.uncwil.edu/stuaff/doso/code/code.pdf

Watson School of Education Mission Statement
The primary mission of the Donald R. Watson School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington is to develop highly competent professionals to serve in teaching and other educational leadership roles in southeastern North Carolina, the state, and nation. The Watson School is committed to achieving excellence in teacher and administrator preparation in all of its programs. Course offerings at the baccalaureate and advanced levels are based on the conceptual framework of teacher as decision maker and reflective practitioner. To realize the mission of the Watson School, thorough grounding in theoretical and empirical bodies of knowledge is provided, the educator's capacity to utilize knowledge to improve schools and enhance learning by children and youth is developed, and commitment to personal, professional and institutional development is fostered.

Middle Grades Education: Conceptual Framework
The program leading to the Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) in middle grades education provides advanced professional training for individuals holding, or qualified to hold, North Carolina Class “A” teacher licensure in one or more areas of middle school education. Based upon the view of the professional as a decision-maker and reflective practitioner, the program addresses the needs for conceptual and procedural bases for decisions-making and specific alternatives within the student’s anticipated area of professional practice.