

## **Middle Grades Teacher Education at Appalachian State University**

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Appalachian State University (ASU) was the first institution of higher education in North Carolina and one of the first in the nation to offer specialized professional preparation for middle grades teachers and has a long-standing commitment to excellence in middle level teacher preparation. When middle level teacher preparation programs were created at ASU in 1975, successful candidates received degrees in Elementary Education with a specialization in Middle/Junior High School Education and licensure in grades 4-9. In the early 1980s, North Carolina middle grades licensure was changed to grades 6-9 and made subject specific (i.e., middle grades mathematics). The UNC system also created options for separate degrees in Middle Grades Education during the 1980s. In 1985, ASU began offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in Middle Grades Education. Candidates could then earn undergraduate degrees in Middle Grades Education and receive grades 6-9 teaching license in two subject areas chosen from language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Those receiving the master's degree in Middle Grades Education received graduate level grades 6-9 license in one

subject area. Approximately 665 undergraduate and 710 graduate students have received middle grades education degrees from Appalachian State University. For more information about the history of the program, particularly the efforts of Dr. Ken McEwin to develop the program, see the feature article in this issue entitled, "C. Kenneth McEwin: North Carolina Middle Grades Education Groundbreaker, Trailblazer, and Caretaker."

Early in the history of specialized middle level teacher preparation, ASU faculty organized summer institutes that focused on middle school education. These institutes were attended by graduate students as well as by middle level practitioners from across North Carolina. Consultants for these institutes included noted middle school authorities such as William Alexander, Paul George, and Nancy Doda as well as successful middle school teachers, principals, and other educators. At that time in the history of middle school education, such training and collaborating were critical because middle schools were still a fairly new phenomenon.

In 1996, ASU decided to adopt a performance-based, standards-guided teacher preparation model. To accomplish this, a Middle Grades Advisory Board was established. This Board included middle grades teachers and principals, district administrators and curriculum coordinators, professors from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education, recent graduates, and other stakeholders. In addition to developing major curriculum and program revisions, the Advisory Board also wrote standards to guide the new middle grades teacher preparation program. Program standards incorporate all standards from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as well as the National Middle School Association/National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards. These program standards and their accompanying program level assessments were created by middle grades faculty members and the Middle Grades Advisory Board. All degree candidates must successfully present comprehensive graduation portfolios that exemplify their mastery of all program standards. Beginning with the 2004-2005 academic year these portfolios have been created and shared in electronic formats.

On-campus undergraduate degree candidates are organized into a cohort plan. A new cohort begins once per year at the beginning of the spring semester. Middle grades teacher candidates take 21 credit hours of courses in the middle grades major as well as 24 credit hours in each of two concentration areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies). Middle grades courses are sequenced into “blocks” of related courses taken during the final three semesters. Block I courses generally focus on fostering in teacher candidates a deep understanding of the needs of young adolescents and an

examination of school programs and practices that are appropriate and verified by research as appropriate for the age group. Block II courses focus on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and content knowledge in the disciplines – and how teachers design learning experiences to meet the needs of young adolescent students. Specialized middle grades courses are listed and described in the Appendix. Middle grades teacher candidates complete three field experiences in middle level classrooms. All middle grades internships and student teaching are located in a system of professional network schools. We have developed a strong network of partnership teachers and schools who are dedicated to middle grades teacher preparation. They host our interns and student teachers in their classrooms, provide professional development in the form of face-to-face and virtual seminars, and generally provide the laboratory for our students to learn the teaching craft of teaching young adolescents.

In addition to the on-campus programs, the middle grades program offers part-time evening graduate and undergraduate programs at off-campus locations. At any given time, we generally have three Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Education off-campus cohorts and two or three Master of Arts in Middle Grades Education cohorts. Programs of study for the off-campus undergraduate students are the same; however, the pacing of their courses is a bit slower since they are taking their courses part-time. We have had undergraduate and graduate cohorts in Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Surry/Yadkin, and Wilkes Counties. Additionally, we have had graduate cohorts in Statesville, Winston-Salem, and Rutherford County.

## **ASU Middle Grades Program Faculty**

**Dr. Ken McEwin** is Professor and graduate coordinator for Middle Grades Education at Appalachian State University. He has held this position since 1973. He was also the undergraduate coordinator for middle grades education until 2008. He is a former sixth grade teacher and principal, and has been a consultant to schools, school districts, universities, and policy-making groups in over 80 North Carolina school systems and in school systems and state departments of education in more than 30 other states, as well as in Germany, England, and Belgium. He is a past-president of National Middle School Association and author of more than 150 journal articles, book chapters, books, research reports, and other professional publications. For more than 20 years, he has served as National Middle School Association (NMSA) coordinator for the national review of middle level teacher preparation programs seeking national recognition as part of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accreditation process. McEwin is also a founder of the North Carolina Middle School Association. In 1988, the North Carolina Middle School Association awarded its first Distinguished Service Award to McEwin and designated it as The C. Kenneth McEwin Distinguished Service Award. He is also of the National Middle School Association John H. Lounsbury Distinguished Service Award.

**Dr. Tracy W. Smith** is an Associate Professor and coordinator for the undergraduate middle grades program at Appalachian State University. In 2005, she was the recipient of both the Reich College of Education Outstanding Teaching Award and the Appalachian State University Student Government Association Outstanding Teacher Award. She has been

involved in middle level education on the national, state, and local levels. Her service includes work as Executive Director of the South Region for National Professors of Middle Level Education (NAPOMLE), secretary of the North Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education, member of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* editorial board, lead reviewer and auditor for the National Middle School Association/ National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Program Review Board, and advisor for the Appalachian State University Collegiate Middle Level Association. In 2001, she received the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Her research interests include performance-based middle level teacher preparation, the history of the middle school movement, the relationship between teaching expertise and student learning, and evaluating the depth of student understanding. She has had articles published in journals such as the *Middle School Journal*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Clearing House*, and *Teacher Education and Practice*.

**Dr. Melanie W. Greene** is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University. She completed her doctoral program at East Tennessee State University in the field of Educational Supervision and Leadership. Prior to coming to Appalachian State University, she worked as a reading specialist for middle grades students in the Watauga County School District in northwestern North Carolina. Currently, Melanie serves as the program coordinator for the Curriculum Specialist graduate program and as a faculty member in the middle grades undergraduate and graduate programs. She teaches a variety of courses

in these programs and is also involved with supervising field experiences that accompany them. At the undergraduate level, she teaches introductory level courses to teacher candidates as well as middle level curriculum, instruction, and assessment courses. At the graduate level, she teaches a variety of curriculum courses in addition to courses related to supervision of instruction and research-based pedagogy. She was the advisor of the Collegiate Middle Level Association for ten years and is a former national advisor for this organization. Melanie has articles published in the *Middle School Journal* and the *Journal for Adult and Adolescent Literature*. She has published research monographs and studies in the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* and for the North Carolina School Health and Education Program Center. She is a Program Reviewer for the National Middle School Association and serves on the Board of Examiners for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. She was selected as the winner of the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2007 at Appalachian State University and the Reich College of Education's Outstanding Teacher in 2001. She is a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the American Educational Research Association, the National Middle School Association, the North Carolina Middle School Association, the North Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education, and the National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education. Her research interests include middle level curriculum, health education, effective teaching strategies, technology integration, and teacher leadership.

**Dr. Robert Heath** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University.

He served as a high school and middle school English/language arts and social studies teacher for six years in South Carolina, then as a middle school assistant principal and principal for twenty-two years. For the last seven years he served as principal of a Professional Development School in Rock Hill, SC, associated with Winthrop University. In 1999 he earned his Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policies from the University of SC, and subsequently served as an adjunct professor in educational leadership at the University of SC and Winthrop University. Dr. Heath has served as president of the SC Middle School Association and SC Association of Middle Level Principals, and currently serves on editorial boards for National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin and National Association of Elementary School Principals publications. He is nationally certified as a principal mentor by NAESP. He was named a National Distinguished Principal and SC Middle Level Principal of the Year. His research interests include the development of teacher leadership through learning communities, and the creation of a climate of continuous improvement in schools to close the achievement gap and improve student performance.

**Dr. Laurie A. Ramirez** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University. Prior to coming to Appalachian State, she taught middle school Spanish, English language arts, world languages, and English as a second language for over ten years in Salt Lake City, Utah. While working in Utah, Dr. Ramirez earned her Master's degree in Linguistics with an emphasis on second language acquisition. She then earned her Doctorate in Teaching and Learning, with an emphasis on teacher education for diverse contexts, both at the University of Utah. While completing her

doctorate, Dr. Ramirez also taught in the secondary teacher education program at the University of Utah. She has taught a variety of courses ranging from introductory undergraduate to advanced graduate courses, including courses in methods, curriculum, assessment, classroom management, and research. She advised and mentored students throughout their year-long preparation program and worked as a field supervisor for student teachers in their culminating field experiences. She has also assisted on a number of large national grants that focus on improving education across the U.S. Currently, she works in the A.S.U. Middle Grades Program, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses focused on issues of diversity in education. Her research interests include middle level teacher preparation, critical reflection on issues of diversity in education, self-study of teacher education practices, and pre-service teacher development and change.

**Dr. Holly Thornton** is Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University. She taught middle school for thirteen years and acted as a teacher leader in establishing Professional Development Schools at the Ohio State University, where she earned her PhD. She taught at Augusta State University in Georgia, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and acted as a department chair in middle/ secondary education at

Armstrong Atlantic State University in Georgia. She has received National Board Certification as an Early Adolescence Generalist. Holly has served on the board of examiners for the National Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and as a lead reviewer and auditor for the National Middle School Association/ National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Program Review Board. She served on the executive board of the Georgia Middle School Association, acted as Executive Director of the South Region for National Professors of Middle Level Education (NAPOMLE) and is currently president with the North Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education. She established the Collegiate Middle Level Association chapters at Augusta State University, the University of North Carolina Greensboro and currently serves as CMLA advisor at Appalachian State. She is a member of multiple editorial boards including *Research in Middle Level Education*, the *North Carolina Middle School Journal*, and the *Journal of Teacher Education*. She has multiple publications related to educating young adolescents and teacher dispositions and has published in journals such as *Middle School Journal*, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, and *Current Issues in Middle Level Education*. Her research interests include teacher dispositions, responsive pedagogy, school reform, and collaboration with school partners.

## Appendix

### Specialized Middle Grades Courses

#### Block One (Offered in spring term only)

##### CI 3900 Middle Grades Internship (3)

Prospective middle grades teachers are introduced to middle level classrooms and school communities through field experiences in professional network schools. Observation, participation, and teaching experiences ranging from individual to large group settings are included. Reflection, analysis, and discussions of practicum experiences are integrated into regularly scheduled seminars. Students will complete inquiry projects, and participate in interdisciplinary teaming while developing rapport with young adolescents and examining the context of effective middle level learning environments.

##### CI 3910 Middle Level Education (3)

Prospective middle grades teachers will have the opportunity to learn about effective middle level programs and practices. Emphasis is placed on an historical perspective of middle level programs and schools, components of highly successful middle level schools and programs, current trends and issues in middle level schooling, and middle level research. prospective middle grades teachers examine the implications of shifting demographics on middle level education, including the study of urban and rural middle level schools and programs. there is an emphasis on the study of exemplary programs and practices for meeting the needs of young adolescents and their families.

##### CI 3920 Teaching Young Adolescents (3)

Prospective middle grades teachers will have the opportunity to learn about the educational implications of the developmental period of early adolescence. The course focuses on applying what is known about young adolescents to models of effective middle grades teaching, learning, and schooling. Particular attention is paid to issues of ethnicity, race, gender, class, and ability and how these factors influence the developmental needs of young adolescents. The role of middle grades teachers in working with family and community members is also emphasized.

#### Additional courses from academic concentrations

#### Block Two (Offered in fall term only)

##### CI 4490 Middle Grades Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (4)

Middle grades teacher candidates select, implement, and evaluate approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are designed to improve student learning. Candidates work collaboratively with university faculty, master teachers, and interdisciplinary teams in university cohorts and professional network school settings to improve and expand their professional knowledge. Emphasis is placed on integrative curriculum practices, understanding diversity, assessment of teaching and student learning, and the use of technology. In the field experience, emphasis is placed on implementing teaching and assessment practices that are responsive to diverse students' needs, management of students, time, and resources, and participation in reflective practices. Candidates have opportunities to participate in professional association meetings, seminars, and conferences.

##### RE 4630 Reading in the Content Area (2)

This course prepares content area teachers to utilize reading as an instructional process in their classrooms. in addition, reading is used to gain perspective on broader learning processes. course topics include: (1) classroom assessment procedures, including textbook evaluation and selection, and classroom diagnostic techniques; (2) accommodating individual differences; (3) general lesson and unit planning strategies; (4) focused instructional strategies, which include specific teaching activities

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### **RE 4630 Reading in the Content Area (2)**

This course prepares content area teachers to utilize reading as an instructional process in their classrooms. In addition, reading is used to gain perspective on broader learning processes. Course topics include: (1) classroom assessment procedures, including textbook evaluation and selection, and classroom diagnostic techniques; (2) accommodating individual differences; (3) general lesson and unit planning strategies; (4) focused instructional strategies, which include specific teaching activities for reading and learning. (This course may be used to meet licensure requirements for secondary (9-12) and special subject (K-12) teachers who teach subjects such as English, social studies, math, science, biology, health and physical education, sociology, geography, business, music, art, and so on.)

### **CI/RE 4300 Literacy, Language, and Culture in the Middle Grades (3)**

Prospective middle grades teachers will have the opportunity to learn about the foundational and current issues and methods of instruction regarding literacy education at the middle grades level. Emphasis is placed on the politics of language and identity, socio-cultural contexts for adolescent literacy development, diverse literacy learners, and effective instructional strategies. Students enrolled in the course learn to assess students' literacy needs and acquire knowledge of a range of practices that support the literacy development of young adolescents. Prospective middle grades teachers will work with cooperating public school teachers to plan and implement literacy strategies and assessments in middle grades classrooms.

**Select two, depending on concentrations:**

### **CI 3060 Social Studies in the Middle Grades (3)**

This course focuses on the comprehensive study of social studies, instructional strategies, resource materials, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, national standards, and the assessment of student learning. Other key topics include: using technology, changing demographics, integrative curriculum and instruction, and community service.

### **CI 4040 Mathematics in the Middle Grades (3)**

This course focuses on the comprehensive study of instructional strategies for teaching middle grades mathematics. Emphasis is placed on utilization of resource materials, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, national standards, technology use, integrative curriculum and instruction, and the assessment of student learning.

### **RE 3150 Language Arts in the Middle Grades (3)**

A study of communication skills (speaking, reading, composition, and related components) where the language arts are viewed as the core of middle grades curriculum. Students learn how to design learning environments which promote meaningful engagement in developmentally appropriate communication skills. Emphasis is given to instructional activities that focus on a process approach to learning. This course includes internship experiences in professional development schools.

### **GS 4403 Teaching Science in the Middle and High Schools (3)**

