

**Department of Educational Studies  
Feinstein School of Education and Human Development  
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE**

**Middle Level Education 310: Teaching Early Adolescents**

**Course:** MLED 310- 01

**Credits:** 3

**Associate Professor:** John M. Niska, Ph.D.

**Dates:** Spring 2009  
First Session – January 24  
Culminating Session – May 4

**Location:** HBS 205

**Class and Office Times:**

Class – Thursday from 4-6:30 P.M.  
Office – 222 Henry Barnard School  
Hours –Tuesday and Thursday  
12:30–1:30 or by appointment  
Phone – 456-4655 (office)  
Email address – [jniska@ric.edu](mailto:jniska@ric.edu)

**Prerequisite:** CEP 215

**Course Description:**

Students examine dimensions of teaching and learning as they relate to the developmental issues of early adolescents. Special attention is given to the physical, psychological, intellectual, and social needs of young adolescents and the educational implications of these developmental needs for teaching and learning practices in a middle level school.

**Relationship of Course to Programs:**

Teaching Early Adolescents is an undergraduate course and is the first of three courses required for those students seeking the middle level certification endorsement. Its course content focuses on understanding, encouraging, and supporting the developmental needs of students in the middle level grades.

**Relationship of Course to the Conceptual Framework of the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development:**

The guiding principles of the course are to develop students into becoming reflective practitioners who plan, analyze, and reflect on their learning. This course aims to provide a

foundation for best professional practice by instilling knowledge of early adolescent development and issues; theoretical and practical grounding in developmentally responsive pedagogy; sensitivity and responsiveness to differences in gender, class, and culture; and the appreciation for collaboration and teaming.

**Course Goals and Objectives:**

The major goals of this course will be to develop an understanding of the unique learning strengths and needs of the middle level student and to examine various pedagogical responses to these strengths and needs through reflection on practice. At the end of the course students will have attained four Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDOE) Middle Level Goals (Competencies).

Course Objectives	Topic/Activity	Assessment	Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards	RIBTS Indicators	Conceptual Framework
1. Students will create a learning environment that demonstrates understanding of the emotional, social, physical and psychological development of the middle level student.	Shadowing a Student for a day  Assigned Reading  Class discussions	Shadow Study Rubric  In-class discussions	1. Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the world in which we live.  3. Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop.	1.1 1.2 1.3  3.1 3.2 3.3	Knowledge: Human Learning and Development
2. Student will encourage and support the development of the middle level student through appropriate advising.	Purpose of Advisory Groups  Weekly participation in Advisory Group in class	Journal Entries  In-class discussions  Participate in Advisory Group	6. Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.	6.2 6.5 6.6 6.7	Pedagogy: Theory of Practice of Teaching and Learning
3. Students will work collaboratively with colleges, parents, and administrators.	Obtaining school information on the web  Communicate with teachers, principal through email and personal contact	Journal Entries  Email teachers, principal prior and after school visit  Participation in weekly Advisory Group	7. Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues and families to support students' learning.	7.1 7.2 7.3 7.4	Professionalism: Collaboration and Advocacy
4. Students will design and implement instructional programs and related activities which create a supportive learning environment for the middle level student.	Explanation of Part Four of the Shadow Study  Weekly Sponge Activities  Create special programs to support students  Class discussions	Part Four of the Shadow Study  Journal Entries  Advocacy Project	10. Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grown as professionals.  11. Teachers maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles.	10.2 10.3 10.4  11.1 11.2 11.3 11.4 11.5	Professionalism: Collaboration and Advocacy; Professional Development

**Required Texts and Readings:**

Knowles, Trudy and Dave F. Brown. *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know. Second Edition.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007.

Articles on additional middle level topics as provided by the instructor at the second class.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Readings assigned as indicated in Course Outline and Articles Provided By Instructor.
2. Prepare a STUDENT SHADOW STUDY. (Due Apr. 11).
3. Develop an ADVOCACY PROJECT. (Due May 2).
4. Read the Early Adolescent Book, *Our Last Best Shot*.
5. Participate in an in-class Advisory Group.
6. Prepare a Journal Notebook. (Due the last class session).

**Course Evaluation:**

- 20% Attendance and Quality of Class Participation
- 30% Student Shadow or Inquiry Study
- 30% Advocacy Project
- 20% Journal Entries

**Attendance and Participation:**

Students are expected to be in class. If a student is absent, Dr. Niska must be notified either prior to the absence or immediately afterward. As this is an interactive class, students are expected to contribute to the discussions on a regular basis. After two class absences, any further absence will drop the final grade.

**Shadow Study:**

Awareness through Shadow Studies,” from Stevenson’s Teaching Ten to Fourteen Year Olds, conduct a shadow study of a middle level student and a middle level teacher.

Following the chapter outline, carry out the shadow study using the following as guidelines:

- Ϸ Organize the study;
- Ϸ Choose a focus;
- Ϸ Make arrangements;
- Ϸ Exit interviews—tentative format; and
- Ϸ Arranging introductions.

Write an overview of your shadow study, observing the following framework:

- Ϸ Formulation of questions prior to shadow study regarding adolescent development and school climate;
- Ϸ Observations and documentation;
- Ϸ Student or teacher observations including comments and questions;
- Ϸ What you learned from the shadow study; and
- Ϸ Implications for teacher who work with your subject or for the teacher for whom you shadowed.

Assistance in preparation:

- Ϸ Students will be provided with a rubric to be used in evaluating their paper and also several copies of exemplar studies done previously in Dr. Niska’s classes will be made available for reading.

**Advocacy Project:**

Students are being asked individually or in pairs to study early adolescent issues and then to develop an advocacy project which will assist a student or small groups of students to deal with a specific issue. Time will set aside during the second week of class to discuss possible studies and provide guidance into what the project might look like.

In their final presentations students will be asked to Describe and/or Show their project; Explain why they chose this topic/project; Explain how to use this information/project in their teaching practice; and Questions form audience/participants. A rubric will be provided.

**Journal:**

Submit at the last class a “reflective” journal maintained throughout the semester. One entry is required each week. They should include, but not be limited to, challenges and strategies related to issues in class, discussions, assigned readings, and also what you learn about yourself. Dr. Niska will spot check your journal progress at least once during the semester. A rubric will be provided.

### Course Outline

Week I.	Course Overview	Jan 24
	<b>Topics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introductions</li> <li>▪ Review class assignments and requirements</li> <li>▪ List student key questions and issues to be addressed in course</li> <li>▪ Use of the Shadow Study</li> </ul> <b>Read</b> <u>What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know</u> , pages 8- 21 Chapters –“Awareness through Shadow Studies,” Stevenson and “Diversity Among Middle School Students, Powell” Articles- “You Want to Be a What?” Brown	
	<b>Prepare</b> Obtain picture of self between ages 10-15	
Week II.	The Middle Level Learner	Jan 30 and Feb. 1
	<b>Topics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share a picture of self</li> <li>▪ Discuss social issues impacting middle level kids</li> <li>▪ Determine advocacy project possibilities</li> <li>▪ Begin group presentation work on understanding the developmental stages</li> </ul> <b>Read</b> <u>What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know</u> , pages 21-23, 28-35. Article – “Using Personal Memoirs of Early Adolescence to Prepare for Teaching in the Middle Grades,” Bishop and Allen-Malley	

**Week III. Middle Level Developmental Stages Feb. 6 and 7**

**Topics**

- Presentations of the developmental stages
- Update on both Shadow Study Plans and Advocacy Project

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, pages 107-113.

Article – “How Does the Brain Develop,” D’Arcangelo and “Losing Your Mind: The Function of the Brain Cells,” Sprenger

**Week IV. Learning Process in School Feb. 13 and 15**

**Topics**

- The Thinking Brain: Basic Brain Facts
- Characteristics of Good Thinking

**Read**

Articles – “How Experts Differ from Novices,” National Research Council

**Week V. Knowledge in Thinking Feb. 20 and 22**

**Topics**

- “Beginner’s mind”
- Expert thinking
- Developing competence
- Thinking and Intelligence

**Read**

Article – “Implications of Brain research for Teaching Young Adolescents,” Wilson and Horch

**Week VI. Ability and Motivation Feb. 27 and Mar 1**

**Topics**

- Adolescent Goals
- Self-protective Attributions for Success and Failure
- Personal Efficacy

**Week VII. Changes in Behavior Mar. 6 and 8**

**Topics**

- From Contingency Management to Self-Management
- Social Modeling and Observational Learning
- Developing Cognitive Structures

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, pages 23-28.

*As the week of March 12<sup>th</sup> is RIC’s Spring Recess, there will be no classes.*

**Week VIII. Learning As Constructing Relationships Mar. 20 and 22**

**Topics**

- Family Relationships

- Parenting Techniques
- Peer Relationships and Friendships

**Read**

Article – “Alpha Girls Wield the Real Power in Middle School”, Sessions Stepp

**Week IX. Social and Cultural Influences Mar. 27 and 29**

**Topics**

- Nature of socialization
- Cross-cultural and socioeconomic comparisons

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, pages 114-123.

**Week X. The Teachers’ Roles Apr. 3 and 5**

**Topics**

- Teaching in a middle school
- Teacher as an instructional manager
- Teacher as expert learner
- Teacher as caring mentor

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, Chapter 4

**Prepare**

Student Shadow Study Paper

**Week XI. Sharing Shadow Studies Apr. 10 and 12**

**Topics**

- Share Shadow Studies in groups

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, Chapter 4  
and “Expecting, Accepting, and Respecting Differences in Middle School,” Olafson and Latta

**Week XII. Development of Ambience Apr. 17 and 19**

**Topics**

- The physical environment
- Nature of classroom discourse
- Developing a culture of caring

**Read**

What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know, Chapter 5, 7, and 8

**Week XIII. Developing Pedagogy Apr. 24 and 26**

**Topics**

- Components of a middle school
- Grouping for success
- Ensuring firsthand learning
- Organizing for responsibility and accountability

- Using technology in instruction
- Modeling a student-led conference
- “What assets do kids need? Research from the Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN

**Read**

“Living and Teaching Young Adolescents: A Teacher’s Perspective,”  
Wormeli

**Prepare**

Advocacy Project Paper

**Week XV. Wrapping It Up! May 1 and 3**

**Topics**

- Share Advocacy Projects
- Turn in semester’s journal entries
- Complete course and instructor evaluation

**Recommended References:**

Beane, James A. and Richard P. Lipka. *Self Concept, Self Esteem and the Curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers’ College Press, 1980.

Bergstrom, Ken, Penny Bishop, and Judy Carr. *Living and Learning in the Middle Grades: The Dance Continues*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association, 2001.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation, 1995.

Dupoux, Emmanuel. *Language, Brain, and Cognitive Development*. London, England: MIT Press, 2001.

Eccles, J., C. Midgley, A. Wigfield, C. Buchanan, D. Reuman, C. Flanagan, and D. MacIver. Development During Adolescence: The Impact of Stage-environment Fit on Young Adolescents’ Experience in Schools and Families. *American Psychologist*, 48, 90-101.

Gullotta, Thomas, Gerald Adams, and Carol Markstrom. *The Adolescent Experience*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2000.

Gurian, Michael. *Boys and Girls Learn Differently*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Howard, Pierce. *The Owner’s Manual for the Brain*. Atlanta, GA: Bard Press, 2001.

Jackson, Anthony and Gayle Davis. *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York, NY: Teachers’ College, Columbia University, 2000.

Kindlon, Dan and Michael Thompson. *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1999.

Lipsitz, Joan. *Growing Up Forgotten*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transition Books, 1980.

National Research Council. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000.

National Research Council. *How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000.

Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 1994.

Santrock, John. *Adolescence*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Stepp, Laura Sessions. *Our Last Best Shot: Guiding Our Children Through Adolescence*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2000.

Thompson, Michael and Catherine O'Neil Grace. *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2001.

Watson, Charles R. *Middle School Case Studies: Challenges, Perceptions, and Practices*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1997.

**Websites:**

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ASCD) [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)

Education Week. (Ed Week) [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

International Society For Technology In Education. (ISTE) [www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org)

National Middle School Association. (NMSA) [www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)

National Staff Development Council. (NSDC) [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org)

New England League of Middle Schools. (NELMS) [www.nelms.org](http://www.nelms.org)

Rhode Island Department of Education. (RIDE) [www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu](http://www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu)

Search Institute. [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)