

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES  
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE**

**MLED 320: Middle School Organization  
and Integrated Curriculum**

**Course:** MLED 320-01

**Credits:** 3

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

**Dates:** Spring 2010  
First Session – January 26  
Culminating Session – May 6

**Location:** 205 Henry Barnard

**Times:** Tuesday and Thursday - 2:00 – 3:20 P.M.  
Office – 220 Henry Barnard  
Hours – 12:30 – 1:30 TU and TH or by appointment

**Communication:** RIC Office Phone - 456-4655  
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**Prerequisites:** CEP 315 and MLED 310

**Course Description:**

This course examines the emergence and development of the middle school in America and the curriculum trends and issues associated with middle level education. Specific attention is focused on interdisciplinary teaming and its organizational structure. The development of middle level curriculum and the design, development, implementation and evaluation of integrated curriculum are also stressed. A field experience in a Rhode Island middle school is part of the course requirement.

**Relationship of Course to Programs:**

MLED 320 is a three credit undergraduate course and is the second course of four required for those students seeking the middle level certification endorsement. This course follows MLED 310 - Teaching the Early Adolescent.

**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 to become reflective practitioners who plan, analyze, and reflect on their learning. The course aims to provide a foundation for best professional practice by instilling an understanding of the emergence of the middle school, the organization of a true middle school, components of an effective interdisciplinary team, and the integration of an interdisciplinary unit. Students will be part

of an interdisciplinary team when they construct their integrated unit as part of their course requirement.

### Course Goals and Objectives

The main learning goals of this course will be to develop an understanding of the organizational structure of a middle school and of the meaningful and appropriate curriculum, assessment, and instruction employed within. At the end of the course students will have worked to attain six goals or Middle Level Competencies as determined by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDOE).

Course Objective	Topic Activity	Assessment	Rhode Island Teacher Standards	RITS Indicator	Conceptual Framework
2. Students will work effectively as a member of an interdisciplinary team.	Team Training Module  Observing an Effective Team  Researching Effective Teams  Working as a Team in class on the Integrated Unit	Field Service and Research Rubric  In-class discussions and sponge activities	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
3. Students will encourage and support the development of the middle level student through appropriate advising.	Presentation of Advisory Models  In-class discussions	Field Service and Research Rubric	Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motion.	6.2 6.3 6.5 6.6 6.7	Pedagogy: Theory of Practice of Teaching and Learning
4. Students will work collaboratively with colleagues, parents, and administrators.	Decision-making model simulation  Explanation of Parent Partnerships  Consultancy Protocol	Evaluation of decision-making model  Parent Letter In Integrated Unit  Consultancy Protocol Evaluation	7. Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues and families to support student's learning.	7.2 7.2 7.3 7.4	Professionalism; Collaboration and Advocacy
5. Students will facilitate student learning within and across disciplines through the integration of curriculum.	Presentation of Curriculum Models  Jim Beane's Student Class Simulation	Integrated Unit Rubric	1. Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live.	1.1 1.2 1.3  5.1 5.2 5.3	Knowledge: Human learning and Development and Area of Specialization  Diversity

	Consultancy Protocol		5. Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.	5.4 5.5	
6. Students will utilize organizational and grouping strategies to provide for the needs of the middle level student	Presentation of Differentiation of Instruction Models  Class Simulation	Lesson plans in Integrated Unit  Class Discussion	5. Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.	5.4 5.5	Pedagogy: Theory of Practice of Teaching and Learning and Instructional Uses of Technology
7. Students will use a variety of instructional and assessment strategies which accommodate the diverse needs and strengths of all students and which are responsive to gender, language, and cultural differences.	Assessment and Culminating Activity materials	Assessment in Unit Lesson Plans  Culminating Activity in Unit	6. Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.	6.2 6.3 6.4 6.5 6.6 6.7	Pedagogy: Assessment as an Aid to Practice

**Required Texts and Readings:**

Powell, Sara Davis. *Introduction to Middle School. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc, 2005.*

Articles on middle level topics will be provided by the instructor and other articles will be available on-line.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Readings assigned as indicated in COURSE OUTLINE and ARTICLES PROVIDED BY INSTRUCTOR.
2. Provide a written response on a mid-term examination.
3. Participate in FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT. (Due April 8)
4. Develop a TEAM INTEGRATED CURRICULUM UNIT. (Due last class on May 6)
5. Respond to Four Journal Prompts (Due weeks two, four, six, and nine on Thursdays)
6. Attend the RIMLE Conference at Exeter-West Greenwich Junior High on January 30 or the RIMLE Advisory Roundtable at Scituate Middle School on April 14.

**Course Evaluation:**

- 15% Quality of Class Participation
- 15% In-class mid-term examination
- 25% Field Project and Research
- 20% Four Reflective Journal Prompt Entries
- 25% Team Integrated Curriculum Unit

**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. Beginning with a third absence, a student's final mark may be dropped one whole grade. As this is an interactive class, students are expected to contribute to the discussions on a regular basis.

**Field Service and Research Project:**

By the second week of class students should identify and coordinate a middle school setting in which they will spend their field component. Dr. Niska will assist students with the selection.

A time period of no less than six hours over a course of at least five visits is required. The time will be spent observing the personalization aspect of the school that is visiting and learning about an interdisciplinary team and, if possible, the school's advisory program. In gathering information on how the team and advisors function and meet the needs of its students on the team, students (you) are to interview at least three educators including the team leader, an advisor, other team members, and possibly a student or two.

Upon completion of these visits, students are to write a six to ten page paper summarizing their observations and interviews. Also use at least five research articles in support or not of your experiences. Attach the notes to the paper and include a bibliography.

**Personal Journal Entries**

Students will be required to address at least four of the following ten questions or prompts which they are to draw from their own experiences. Entries should be one to two pages typed. Students are asked to submit prompts weeks two, four, six, and nine (on Thursdays).

At what point in your life did you decide to be a teacher? Was it an "Ah-ha" moment or a gradual realization?

Think back to your middle grade years. Was there tracking in the school? If so, was it obvious or was it covertly arranged and just understood by the students? How did you feel about it?

Why have you chosen the particular subject area(s) you want to teach? What influences led to your decision?

Do you recall any cooperative learning experiences in your middle grade years? Write about your participation in, and reactions to, the experiences.

Do you think your teachers during your middle years had high expectations for you? If so, how were they expressed? If not, what attitudes or actions gave you the impression that their expectations were low?

What motivated you as a student? Can you remember teachers, projects, or other circumstances that prompted you to achieve?

Can you recall any time as a student when having a choice in your academic work made a task more meaningful for you? When would options from which to choose have made an experience more productive?

Think back to a very effective assessment that was employed by a teacher. Explain it. Could you use it in your teaching today?

Did you experience an interdisciplinary unit when you were in your middle grade years? If so, describe its impact. Did you feel accepted as a member of a caring community in your middle school? If so, what did feeling accepted feel like? If not, what made you feel like you were not accepted?

Do you recall your emotional security ever being jeopardized by something a teacher may have done or said? Write about the memory.

#### **Team Integrated Curriculum Unit:**

Through consensus, the team assigned by Dr. Niska will cooperatively develop the following components for an integrated unit lasting from four to six weeks.

1. Write an Introduction to the Unit.
2. Formulate a Vision and Mission Statement.
3. Introduce team members and create team norms and roles.
4. Construct a schedule including advisory, four or five periods of academics, and one period of both team and individual planning time (scheduled during two periods of unified arts).
5. Select a concept (theme) using student input.
6. Devise two or three guiding questions.
7. Compose a letter to parents explaining the unit and include homework plans.
8. Create a day-by-day plan on what will be taught and by whom.
9. Select and list standards (grade level expectations) that the unit will address - what are students expected to learn and know after this collaborative effort by the teachers?
10. Determine a culminating activity in which all students demonstrate what they have learned and are assessed on the standards.
11. Devise a rubric for the CA in assessing performance on new standards.
12. Build sample lesson plans (task plans) to include:
  - a. a cooperative learning exercise;
  - b. one using the tiered learning.
13. And explain how the unit itself will be evaluated.

## Course Outline

<b>Week I.</b>	<b>Course Overview</b>	<b>Jan. 26 and 28</b>
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**Topics**

- Introductions
- Review the course requirements
- Endorsement requirements to be addressed through project outcomes
- Listing issues to be addressed in course
- Definition and framework of the modern middle school; Turning Points as an organizational framework

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

<b>Week II.</b>	<b>What is Middle School?</b>	<b>Feb. 2 and 4</b>
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**Topics**

- Rationale for the Modern Middle School
- Discussion of the contributions to the model
- Review of the development of early adolescents
- Share plans for field work and research
- Determine sections for the binder

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 4

Article – “Defining the Effectiveness of Middle Grades Teachers,” Anfara

<b>Week III.</b>	<b>The Middle Level Teacher</b>	<b>Feb. 9 and 11</b>
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**Topics**

- The roles of effective middle level teachers
- The New RI Middle Level Regulations

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 5

Articles – “What Difference Does Teaming Make?” Erb and Stevenson and  
“Advisor-Advisee programs: Important But Problematic,” Anfara

<b>Week IV.</b>	<b>Middle Level Structures</b>	<b>Feb. 16 and 18</b>
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**Topics**

- Examine the teaming components of Visioning, Organization, Communication, Identity, Curriculum, and Accountability
- Determine the purpose of types of advisory

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 6

<b>Week V.</b>	<b>Middle School Curriculum</b>	<b>Feb. 23 and 25</b>
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**Topics**

- Curriculum development in middle level schools
- Curriculum mapping- its value
- Use of curriculum planning model

- The role of a co-curricular program

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapters 7 and 10

Articles—“What is a Good Guiding Question?” Traver

“Block Classes Change Instructional Practices,” Wormeli

**Prepare**

Integrated Unit Sections 1-8 for review

**Week VI. Integrated Curriculum Mar. 2 and 4**

**Topics**

- Considerations for creating integrated units
- Developing guiding questions which direct the students’ search for understanding

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 8

Article– “Backward Design and Forward Action,” McTighe and Thomas

Prepare

For Mid-term Examination

**Week VII. The Standards-Based Challenge Mar. 9 and 11**

**Topics**

- Applications of new standards
- Explanation of grade level expectations (GLE’s)
- Mid-term examination

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 9

*As RIC’s Spring Break begins March 15, there is no scheduled class on the 16th and 18th.*

**Week VIII. Performance Assessment Mar. 23 and 25**

**Topics**

- The grading debate
- Performance-based instruction and embedded assessments
- Portfolio and performance assessments; demonstration of knowledge and skills by adolescents; looking at student work: checklists, matrices, and rubrics

**Read**

Articles - “Cooperative Learning Is a Brain Turn-On,” Willis

“For Integration and Differentiation Choose Concepts Over Topics,”

Tomlinson

**Week IX. Strategies of Instruction Mar. 30 and Apr. 1**

**Topics**

- Heterogeneous vs. homogeneous grouping

- Addressing the needs of diverse populations through cooperative learning, tiered learning, technology, and multiple intelligences

**Prepare**

Lesson Plans for Content Group Review

**Week X. Lesson Plan Review Apr. 6 and 8**

**Topics**

- Examine and revise lesson plans
- Work on unit

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 12

**Week XI. Family and Community Involvement Apr. 13 and 15**

**Topics**

- Parent involvement strategies to support adolescents
- Modeling a Consultancy Protocol

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 11  
Article – “Student-Teacher Relationships”

**Week XII. Creating a Safe Environment Apr. 20 and 22**

**Topics**

- Building relationships with kids
- Developing classroom, team, and school expectations
- The value of a peer mediation program
- Conduct Consultancy protocol

**Read**

Introduction to Middle School, Chapter 11

**Prepare**

Field Research Project Paper

**Week XIII. Sharing of Field Experiences Apr. 27 and 29**

**Topics**

- Share field and research project with class members
- Work on integrated units

**Prepare**

Integrated Unit Presentation

**Week XIV. Share and Wrap Up May 6**

**Topics**

- Taking action: middle level challenges and opportunities
- Present Integrated Units
- Complete Course and Instructor Evaluation

**Recommended Readings:**

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994.



Arnold, John and Chris Stevenson. *Teachers' Teaming Handbook*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Corporation, 1989.

Chamberlain, Kathleen. *Middle Schools for a Diverse Society*. New York, NY: Peter land, 2002.

Center for Collaborative Education. *Turning Points: Guide to Curriculum Development*. Boston, MA: Center for Collaborative Education, 1999.

Felner, Robert D., Anthony Jackson, Deborah Kasak, Peter Muhall, Steven Brand, and Nancy Flowers. "The Process and Impact of School Reform and Restructuring for the Middle Years: A Longitudinal Study of AS Network Engaged in *Turning Points*-Based Comprehensive School Transformation." *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 1997, pp. 528-532, 541-550.

Forte, Imogene and Sandra Schurr. *The Definitive Middle School Guide*. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications, 1993.

Knowles, Trudy and Dave F. Brown. *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*. Portsmouth, NH: Hinemann, 2000.

Lasley, Thomas J., Thomas J. Matczynski and James B. Rowley. *Instructional Models: Strategies for Teaching in a Diverse Society*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth-Thompson Learning, 2002.

National Middle Schools Association. *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Schools*. Columbus, OH: NMSA, 1995.

Niska, John M., Julia Steiny, Diane Devine, Antionette Favazza, and Roy Seitsinger. In *The Middle! From Margins to the Middle Eight Years Later: A Status Report on Middle Grades Education in Rhode Island*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Middle Level Educators Network, October 2000.

Niska, John M. and Sue C. Thompson. *Launching a Successful Advisory Program*. Westerville, OH: NMSA, 21007.

Peterson, Kent and Terrence Deal. *The Shaping of School Culture Fieldbook*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2002.

Rottier, Jerry. *Implementing and Improving Teaming*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1996.

Rottier, Jerry. *Taking Teaming to the Next Level: The Principal's Role*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 2002.

Schurr, Sandra L., Julia Thompson, and Max Thompson. *Teaching At The Middle Level*.  
Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1995.

Wheelock, Anne. *Safe To Be Smart: Building a Culture for Standards-Based Reform in the Middle Grades*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1998.

Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

**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)

Rhode Island Middle level Educators (RIMLE) [www.rimle.org](http://www.rimle.org)

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