



# WHEATON COLLEGE

*For Christ & His Kingdom*

## **Wheaton College Teacher Education Program (WheTEP) EDUC 405/507L Middle Grade Practicum 1 credit hour (Pass/Fail)**

Instructor: Steven L. Layne, Ed.D.

Office: Blanchard 483 (office hours cheerfully arranged by appointment)

Office Phone: 630-752-5179 / Mobile Phone: 630.251.2547

E-mail: [steven.layne@wheaton.edu](mailto:steven.layne@wheaton.edu)

### **Catalog Description**

Educ 405L/507L. Middle Grade Practicum. An optional teacher-aiding experience in the middle grades for a full-time, five-day period when the College is not in session, usually completed during the winter or spring break. Graded pass/fail. (1)

### **Relation to the Conceptual Framework**

The Wheaton Teacher Education program mission is *Preparing Educators Who Teach and Lead for Human Flourishing*. This involves *embodying justice, making ethical and reasoned decisions, and acting in a Christ-like manner*. The purpose of this practicum is to experientially increase the teacher candidate's knowledge base of the culture of middle level education so that *ethical and reasoned decisions* are more likely to be made when engaging student for instruction in these grades.

### **Course Objectives**

1. To enable the candidate to identify the developmental needs, abilities, and interests of young adolescents and to familiarize the candidate with curricular goals and expectations at this educational level. (INTASC 1, 4, 8)
2. To familiarize the candidate with the unique aspects of middle level educational philosophy, including teaming, collaborations, and emphasis on cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. (INTASC 1,4, 8)

### **Readings**

#### Required Text:

Barron, L. & Kinney, P. (2018). Middle school: A place to belong and become. Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.

### Required Additional Reading:

Armstrong, T. (2006). Middle schools: Social, emotional, and metacognitive growth. In *The best schools: How human development research should inform educational practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. [Chapter 5 only] – available at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/106044/chapters/Middle-Schools@-Social,-Emotional,-and-Metacognitive-Growth.aspx>

Choose one article to read from the Dec/Jan 2017 issue of *Educational Leadership*, 75(4) featuring the topic Mental Health in Schools. The link below should help you gain access. Library staff can offer help. [https://isharewhe.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CARLI\\_WHE/u36ljs/alma9990009313405903](https://isharewhe.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CARLI_WHE/u36ljs/alma9990009313405903)

### Supportive Readings (Check Buswell Library and ERIC data base):

- Adams, C. (2008). The scary world of middle school: How to be sure your kids are ready. *Instructor*, 117(6), 44-46.
- Brown, D. & Knowles, T. (2014). *What every middle school teacher should know grades 6-8*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Daniels, E. (2005) On the minds of middle schools. *Educational Leadership*, 62(7), 52-54.
- Edwards, S. (2016). *Active learning in the middle school classroom*. Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.
- Fagell, P.L. (2019). *Middle school matters: The 10 key skills kids need to thrive in middle school and beyond—and how parents can help*. Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Manning, M. L. & Bucher, K. T. (2012). *Teaching in the middle school* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Payne, R. (2013). *Achievement for all: Keys to educating middle grades students in poverty*. Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.
- Steinberg, L. (2011). Demystifying the adolescent brain. *Educational Leadership*, 68(7), 42-46. Alexandria, WV: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2015). One to grow on: Teaching that spurs thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 73 (1), 88-89.
- Tovani, C. (2015). Let's switch questioning around. *Educational Leadership*, (73 (1), 30-35.
- Wormeli, R. (2014). Motivating young adolescents. *Educational Leadership*, 72 (1), 26-31.
- Wormeli, R. (2011). Moving' up to the middle. *Educational Leadership*, 68(7), 8-53.
- Wormeli, R. (2006). Differentiating for Tweens. *Educational Leadership*, 63(7), 14-19.

## **Process**

### Purpose:

This practicum is intended for elementary education students who have not completed any WheTEP practica in a middle school and would like to earn an endorsement for the middle grades.

### Overview:

You will spend a full week in a middle school/junior high—observing and participating, primarily, in one classroom for the duration of the experience. Certain activities will require you to observe and research components of the school outside of your assigned classroom which may result in interviews with members of the building administration team and or teachers other than your primary cooperating

teacher. It is recommended that you spend one day at other grade levels to better observe the developmental stages of adolescents, the development of the curriculum, and different instructional strategies; however, the majority of the week should be spent with one grade level (and teacher) in order to observe the process of collaborative teaming.

Timing:

The one-hour credit is typically included in the registration for the semester of student teaching (there is no additional cost for the credit hour if it is registered for during the student teaching semester); however, the actual practicum is normally completed before or after that busy semester. Suggested times include during the month of May, immediately following the methods semester, the first week of class in January—prior to the start of the spring semester at Wheaton College, or during Wheaton College’s spring break.

Initial Arrangements:

As the teacher candidate, you will make the initial contact with your hometown middle school unless the school is in the Wheaton public school district. If your hometown middle school is in the Wheaton public school district, please contact Mrs. Karen Felker, Education Department Placement Coordinator at Wheaton, for her assistance. International students interested in securing a local placement for this practicum should contact Mrs. Karen Felker for assistance. International students interested in completing this practicum in their home country should make an appointment with the instructor for assistance in making these arrangements.

Candidates should provide a letter from the Education Department explaining the nature and purpose of the practica experience and a Wheaton College contract to the school. These documents can be obtained on the Department of Education website at

**\*The contract should be returned to Mrs. Karen Felker ([karen.felker@wheaton.edu](mailto:karen.felker@wheaton.edu)) and cc: to Dr. Layne ([steven.layne@wheaton.edu](mailto:steven.layne@wheaton.edu)) at least two weeks before the practicum begins.** Since you will be observing and under the direct supervision of a teacher at all times, this practicum should not require a background check (although you should have completed one due to previous practica).

Reading Requirements:

**Before the Practicum:** Read Chapter 5 of Armstrong’s book (see link at top of pg. 2 of this syllabus) to explore the development and philosophy of middle school education. Also, read ***and gloss*** Chapter 1 and one additional chapter of your choice in the required text (*Middle School: A Place to Belong and Become*) to explore current issues related to middle schools. These readings will be particularly helpful to frame your thinking prior to the beginning of the practicum, to prepare some of your interview questions, and to assist in the overall development of your paper. Glossing is a during reading metacognitive strategy that assists comprehension as the reader actually comments in writing in the white space of the pages while reading (this is not the same as underlining or highlighting). An exemplar of what a page of text that has been glossed looks like is available at the Department of Education website link for Practica <https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/programs/education/for-current-students/practica-forms/>

**During the Practicum:** Read and gloss three more chapters of your choice in *Middle School: A Place to Belong and Become*. Read any two articles from Dec./Jan. 2017 *Educational Leadership* 75(4) (see link on top of pg. 2 of this syllabus). The continued reading during the practicum in tandem with your observations will be of great assistance in the overall development of your paper and may also assist you in preparing for any interviews you have scheduled.

### Writing Requirements:

Within ten days of completing your time in the school, you are required to submit a final paper (13 pt., Times New Roman, 1-inch margins all around, double-spaced, word count must be provided and meet the range of 1,400-1,700 words) that synthesizes your findings and thinking from your readings, observations, and interview(s) into three sections as described below. The paper should include references (APA style). **This paper is to be sent to Dr. Layne as an email attachment in WORD. PDFs, Google links, or any other type of submission will be insufficient.**

#### **Section One**

Does the school *look and feel* more like a middle school or a junior high school, and does the look/feel match what the school *actually claims to be* (middle school vs. junior high)? Has there been a change in philosophy on this issue in the past for this particular school and if so, when did it happen and what was the rationale or impetus for the change? How did the change impact scheduling, instructional delivery, teaming, and coordination of resources? If there has been no significant change in philosophy, how does the schedule, team situation, instructional delivery, etc. reflect the type of school (middle school vs. junior high) it is and has always been? Explore your observations about the physical layout, structurally, and the way resources are organized and identify how they facilitate the cognitive, physical, social and emotional needs of young adolescent learners?

#### **Section Two**

While there may be information garnered from interviewing your cooperating teacher, other teachers in the building, and/or the principal that informed your reflections in Section One, the second section of the paper should be a reflection on a specific interview with your cooperating teacher. You may use some, all, or none of the questions below to structure your interview—and you are encouraged to prepare some of your own questions based upon your interests, the reading you have done on middle level education, and/or the knowledge needed to complete Section One of the paper. Please do not format this section of the paper in a bulleted Q & A manner. Your writing should be cohesive in terms of maintaining a similar structure of reflection as was used in Section One of the paper.

- What insights regarding the joy and challenges of teaching middle-level students have you experienced? How have they changed over the years?
- What do you perceive to be your greatest accomplishment in connecting with students and facilitating learning?

- How does the school/team embrace the concept of a professional learning community? What structures and goals facilitate this process of collaboration?
- How does the school elicit parents as partners in learning? What is the nature of parental involvement? What intentional efforts are made (at the grade level and as an entire school) to foster positive interaction and communication with parents?
- How is student growth communicated to parents? Does the school offer parent conferences? How are they structured? What is accomplished through these interactions?

### **Section Three**

Select any six of the twelve areas below to explore when observing teaching, learning, and interaction within the classroom and reflect upon what you have experienced in the final section of the paper.

- Teacher-to-student interaction
- Student-to-student interaction
- Classroom management
- Questioning techniques (essential questions, higher level thinking, engaging questions)
- Impact of Common Core State Standards on curriculum and assessment
- Collaboration among teachers
- Technology integration- use of tablets, Smartboards, etc.
- Social and emotional support and challenges
- Diversity (linguistic, cultural, gender, racial, economic)
- Differentiation of curriculum
- Reading across the content areas
- Use of data to shape instruction

#### *Required for Submission:*

Within ten days of completing this practicum, submit your final paper (adhering to all specifications) to the instructor and ensure the cooperating teacher has completed the EDUC 405L/507L Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Form (see website link on Pg. 3 of syllabus) and scanned/emailed it to the instructor for this course: [steven.layne@wheaton.edu](mailto:steven.layne@wheaton.edu). **Both the evaluation form and the paper must be completed, submitted, and received within the ten-day period;** it is your responsibility to see that this happens.

#### *Assessment:*

The Middle Grade Practicum (EDUC 405L/507L) will be assessed through the submitted materials (final paper and cooperating teacher evaluation) as related to INTASC Standards 1, 4, and 8.

- 1 = not acceptable for a beginning teacher candidate
- 2 = acceptable for a beginning teacher candidate but needs improvement
- 3 = acceptable for a beginning teacher candidate
- 4 = outstanding for a beginning teacher candidate

- identifies the developmental needs, abilities, and interests of young adolescents and is familiar with curricular goals and expectations at this educational level.

- understands the unique aspects of middle school philosophy, including teaming, collaborations, and emphasis on cognitive, social and emotional development.
- demonstrates adequate progress as a teacher candidate supporting the WheTEP conceptual framework, based on the evaluation of the cooperating teacher.

*Grading:*

Once the paper has been successfully completed and the teacher evaluation has been received, the student will be notified if she/he has passed the course. Registration for the Middle Grade Practicum is submitted during the semester of student teaching (no matter when the practicum is actually completed) and a grade of P (pass) will be assigned at the end of that semester.