

**MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**PROGRAM REVIEW**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION – MIDDLE GRADES**  
**(for teachers certified grades 5-8 or 5-9)**

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# INTRODUCTION

The graduate programs in education of Morehead State University are based on the conception that the mastery of the discipline of teaching is an on-going, life-learning process. The university's role in this process is to provide graduate education programs designed to: 1) extend experienced teachers' knowledge in their chosen area of specialization; 2) increase their understanding of the developmental and learning needs of their students in a pluralistic society; 3) empower teachers through recent trends and research to make good decisions about the experiences of the learners with whom they work. The Master of Arts in Education-Middle Grades encompasses this process as it focuses on extending the learning of teachers certified to work with students enrolled in grades 5-9.

Empowering teachers, in compliance with current trends, in educational experiences to lead all young adolescents to have the opportunities to succeed in the middle grade programs is the premise for this program. Within this premise is the operative concept of "all" students, thus, the empowerment is centered on those educational experiences that will lead middle school students to be life-long learners in the academic and social arenas.

Recent research has characterized the significant changes that occur in preadolescent years and societal changes that affect these learners. These changes affect learners causing uniqueness from previous generations, thus in-service teachers need to be appraised of the academic and societal needs to insure life-long learning. The Master of Arts In Education-Middle Grades empowers teachers in the educational community with the knowledge to make good decisions in transforming the middle school programs for the education of "all" learners.

## I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Master of Arts in Education-Middle Grades is integrated into the conceptual schema provided by the College of Education's framework of *Educators as Architects: Designing environments where students construct knowledge and develop skills*. Within this conceptual model the graduate programs in the Department of Elementary, Reading, and Special Education build on the foundation of teacher preparation to nurture the development of mature and effective experienced teachers. Central to this developmental process is demonstrated growth in mastery of the areas of knowledge and skills outlined in the Experience Teacher Standards (Kentucky Department of Education, 1994). These standards provide a valuable framework for the ongoing professional development of teachers by underscoring that the best teachers:

1. Provide professional leadership within the school, community, and education profession to improve student learning and well being;
2. Demonstrate content knowledge within their own discipline(s) and in application(s) to other disciplines;
3. Design/plan instruction that develops student abilities related to the core academic expectations;
4. Create/maintain learning climates that support the development of student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge;
5. Introduce/implement manage instruction that develops student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge;
6. Assess learning and communicate learning results to students and others with respect to student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge;
7. Reflect on and evaluate teaching and learning
8. Collaborate with colleagues, parents, and others to design, implement, and support learning programs that develop student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become

self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team member, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge;

9. Evaluate their own overall performance in relation to Kentucky's learner goals and implement a professional development plan; and
10. Use technology to support instruction; access and manipulate data; enhance professional growth and productivity; communicate and collaborate with colleagues, parents, and the community; and conduct research.

To perform these complex and interrelated functions, a range of knowledge and experiences are required. The program is structured around three areas designed to develop the experienced candidate's base of knowledge:

1. Professional Education: Studies dealing with research, curriculum, adolescent development and practices, and foundations.
2. Discipline: Studies designed to contribute to substantial growth in the academic and social components in these areas; English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and/or Special Education.
3. Supportive Courses: Studies that support learning theory and integrate that knowledge with current trends related to the development and growth of the early adolescent.

The program fully embraces the concepts underlying the theme of the Conceptual Framework: *Educators as Architects: Designing environments where students construct knowledge and develop skills*. Enabling middle grade learners to construct knowledge is imperative at their stage of development. Arranging the learning environment so students may interact openly with both their teachers and peers as they construct and question new knowledge and build upon old knowledge capitalizes on the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual characteristics preadolescents. While teaching from a constructivist viewpoint is vital for learning to occur with students of all ages, it is particularly important for middle grades learners as they begin to move from concrete to abstract thinking.

## II. PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

Graduates of this program must demonstrate substantial growth in the skill and knowledge base of the Experienced Teacher Standards for Preparation (Kentucky Department of Education, 1994) and the goals and objectives of the National Middle School Association (NMSA). In conjunction with these standards, the experienced middle school teacher demonstrates growth of the applicable standards in the candidate's chosen discipline(s). It is the summation of the candidate's course work, research, personal growth, critical reflections, and technology integration that nurture the full spectrum of behaviors that promotes growth in the Master of Arts in Education-Middle Grades Program. This comprehensive program includes not only knowledge regarding current and important research in these areas, but the necessary ability to appropriately and effectively apply this knowledge in the middle grade classroom to encourage academic and social learning for "all" students. This application, field experiences, is crucial to the academic and social life-long learning of the adolescent learner.

Field experiences are important components of this Master of Arts in Education-Middle Grades program, enabling middle grade teachers to focus on how they share knowledge with students in their classrooms. The subsequent reflection on these teaching/learning experiences brings the learning situation full circle as emerging questions and concerns can be addressed through further inquiry into research and best practices in the various disciplines.

## Field Experiences

Field experiences are an integral part of this program; candidates are required to implement, in their classrooms, the practices they are learning in the methods courses they take. Candidates who are not currently practicing classroom teachers are required to find classrooms in which they can implement practices. Because the university's service region spans twenty-two counties in Eastern Kentucky and some classrooms are more than two hours from campus, lesson plans, in-depth self-reflections, student work samples, logs, and sharing in class are used as means of supervising and documenting these experiences. Through both in-class participation as the instructor models strategies and best practices and application in their middle grade classrooms, 23 hours of field experiences are required.

The two methods courses in the program are EDEL 677 Reading in the Content Areas and EDEL 640 Contemporary Instructional Practices in Grades P-9; both provide the opportunity for candidates to integrate and apply knowledge and practice from their course work in their classrooms.

The following matrix outlines the field experiences in the program.

### FIELD EXPERIENCES

| Course: Experience/Amount of Time   | Supervision/Documentation  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>EDEL 677 Reading in the Content Area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content area strategies are modeled throughout the course: <b>7 hours</b></li> <li>• Candidates write five lesson plans to implement interactive strategies with content area text: metacognition, vocabulary development, prior knowledge, study guide, cognitive map/matrix. Plans are implemented with their students: <b>5 hours</b></li> </ul> | <p>Participation and reflection</p> <p>Lesson plans, reflections, student work samples, sharing with peers</p>                             |
| <p><b>EDEL 640 Contemporary Instructional Practices in Grades P-9</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly classroom application of various aspects of the current Model of Instruction being studied: <b>5 hours minimum</b></li> <li>• Implementation Plan to fully implement one Model of Instruction from three families of models: <b>6 hours</b></li> </ul>  | <p>Plans of implementation, reflections, sharing with peers in class</p> <p>Plans of implementation, reflections, student work samples</p> |

Other experiences in candidates' schools, while not directly tied to improving and analyzing their instructional practices, involve them in analyzing developmental characteristics of students (EDF 611 Adolescent Development) and analyzing their school's curriculum (EDMG 636 Middle School Curriculum).

It must be noted that each course in this graduate program has a point of emphasis, which enables the student to focus a bit more discretely on growth in the skills associated with specific standards. Courses or program components that place a particular emphasis on specific Experienced Teacher Standards are identified in the following matrix. The flexibility associated with certain aspects of graduate education means it is not always feasible to associate growth on a standard with a particular course. In these cases there is a range of opportunities for professional growth that will be available through a group of elective courses. The course options are outlined in the program planning check sheet included at the end of this review.