Part II: Teaching and Learning

A. Educator Development

Group Members

Virginia Jagla (co-chair), *National Louis University*

Kim Winter (co-chair), *Western Carolina University*

Amanda Wall, *Georgia Southern University*

Dana Bickmore, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Heather Rogers Haverback, *Towson University*

Kriss Kemp-Graham, *Texas A&M University*

Definition of Research Area and Terms

For the purposes of this project, we understand *educator development* to include both teacher candidate preparation and inservice professional development for teachers and for administrators. We used the following terms in recommended research questions and ground them in the following definitions.

Effective middle grades educators: Teachers of young adolescents need specialized professional preparation to be highly successful. Effective middle grades teachers understand and value young adolescents, have content knowledge and know how to teach that knowledge to young adolescents. In *This We Believe*, National Middle School Association (2010) contended that these teachers employ teaming, integrated learning, interdisciplinary work, and connecting content to real-world situations to motivate and challenge students. In *Turning Points,* the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) provided a framework which stated, in part, that middle grades teachers acquire, understand, and advocate for adolescents and that they "are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject matter they teach" (p. 13). According to National Middle School Association's (2010), position statement, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents,* effective middle grades educators serve as role models who understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group, the appropriate curriculum, effective strategies for learning and assessment.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The ESSA is a law passed in December of 2015 that governs the United States K-12 public education policy.

National accreditation: National accreditation is a status granted to an institution and its programs that meet stated criteria of quality. The criteria outline curriculum and experiences, which are closely associated with professional associations and aligned to standards in the field.

Middle grades philosophy: Middle grades philosophy includes a rationale for developmentally responsive programs and practices such as interdisciplinary teaming and advisory programs that can be applied across a range of school settings; a commitment to developmentally responsive organizational structures that foster socially equitable programs and practices that enhance the education and well-being of all young adolescents; and a commitment to successfully demonstrating best practices that are supported by the middle grades knowledge base in a variety of school settings.

Service learning: The concept of service learning has been defined as "an educational experience involving an organized service activity with structured reflection to guide students' learning" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995).

Community partnership: A community partnership is a formal arrangement between a school and an individual, business, corporation, public institution, association, or organization to provide a program, service, or resource in an effort to support student achievement.

Literature Review Process

We reviewed the literature on initial teacher preparation, professional development for inservice teachers, preservice administrator preparation, and professional development for administrators. We drew on the idea in *This We Believe* that effective middle grades teachers "value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them." To begin the literature review, we reviewed key documents including *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 2010), Association for Middle Level Education's Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards (2012), *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), *Research and Resources in Support of This We Believe* (Caskey, Andrews, Bishop, Capraro, Roe, & Weiss, 2010), and *Research to Guide Practice in Middle Grades Education* (Andrews, 2013) to familiarize ourselves with key themes and practices for middle grades educator development. Next, members concentrated on three areas: teacher candidate preparation, professional development for inservice teachers, and administrator development (both preservice and inservice as there is much less research on middle grades administrators). Each sub-group reviewed the relevant literature via database searches, reviews of recent publications in middle grades journals, and seminal works in each subtopic. After expanding the questions considerably, we combined and condensed the topics using the 2012 AMLE Standards and *A 21st Century Research Agenda* (NMSA, 1997) as guides.

Research Questions

Practices

1. What are the common curricular, instructional, and assessment practices of effective middle grades educators?
    a. How does the implementation of standards affect curricular, instructional, and assessment decisions
        i. at the school level?
        ii. at the classroom level?
    b. How does implementation of standardized assessments associated with state/national standards affect curricular, instructional, and assessment decisions
        i. at the school level?
        ii. classroom level?
    c. How do curricular, instructional, and assessments decisions made at the school and classroom levels as a result of standards and assessments compare to those outlined in middle grades literature such as *This We Believe* (NMSA 2003, 2010)?

Policy

2. How does policy affect middle grades teacher candidate preparation and inservice professional development for teachers and administrators?
    a. In what ways do alternative certification/licensure policies affect middle grades educator preparation?
    b. In what ways do alternative certification/licensure policies affect practices associated with middle grades education?
    c. How do accountability policies such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affect middle grades educator preparation and development?
    d. In what ways does the Association of Middle Level Education recognition and national accreditation affect middle grades educator preparation?

Middle Grades Philosophy

3. How are middle grades teachers prepared and developed to understand young adolescent development and implement curricular, instructional, assessment, and organizational practices associated with middle grades concepts, initiatives, and standards?

a. What courses do teacher candidates take that align to middle grades philosophy?

b. How many courses relate to middle grades philosophy?

c. What courses make up an entire middle grades education degree program?

4. How are middle grades administrators prepared and developed to lead and manage curricular, instructional, assessment, and organizational practices associated with young adolescents, middle grades concepts, initiatives, and standards?

a. What programs exist that prepare administrators specifically for the middle grades?

b. What courses are there to prepare administrators for middle grades education?

c. What inservice development is offered for practicing administrators regarding middle grades education?

5. What is the status of universities and colleges with middle grades preparation programs?

a. In what ways can studies such as Howell, Faulkner, Cook, Miller, and Thompson (2016) be replicated or expanded to include more institutions?

b. Which states require middle grades certification/licensure?

i. What are those certification/licensure requirements?

ii. How do these requirements compare with the 2012 AMLE Standards?

iii. How do individual institutions within each state meet the requirements?

c. What are state and university requirements related to the preparation of middle grades administrators?

Partnerships

6. How are middle grades community partnerships affecting the preparation and development of middle grades educators (e.g., field experience/clinical placement, service learning, professional development)?

a. What community partnerships exist and how are they formed?

b. How do field and clinical experience placements affect the preparation of middle grades teacher candidates?

c. In what ways do teacher placements affect development of middle grades educators?

d. How do service-learning experiences affect the preparation of middle grades teacher candidates and/or the development of middle grades educators?

e. How do school-community partnerships affect the development of middle grades educators?

Recruitment & Retention

7. How are middle grades educators recruited, supported, and retained?

a. Why do teacher candidates choose middle grades preparation?

b. What is the career path of a middle grades administrator?

c. What supports and practices impact teacher and administrator retention?

Influential Readings

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