

REVIEW OF THE B.S., B.S.ED. IN MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 13.1203
Junior High/Intermediate/Middle School Education and Teaching

OVERVIEW

The B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Education program at Illinois State University is housed in the School of Teaching and Learning within the College of Education. The School of Teaching and Learning awards degrees in the following programs: Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Middle Level Education. A teacher candidate is able to earn additional endorsements on their professional education license. Early Childhood teacher candidates may earn the following endorsements: bilingual, reading teacher, and/or English as a second language (ESL). Middle level candidates must choose two of the following endorsements for their plans of study: language arts, math, science, social science, or English as a second language (ESL). In addition to the above-mentioned endorsements, Early Childhood candidates may pursue a Special Educator Letter of Approval that is highly desired by Illinois districts, and they may also pursue a minor in bilingual education. The School of Teaching and Learning provides a professional educator sequence for many secondary education programs. Finally, the School offers graduate programs which include: a Master's in Teaching and Learning, a Master's in Reading, and an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning. The School also offers a post-baccalaureate program for the Library Information Specialist endorsement. The last review of the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Education program occurred in 2012-2013.

The completion of the Middle Level Education Program curriculum and the successful completion of the edTPA (state licensure test) meets the state requirements for obtaining a Middle Level endorsement on a professional educator's license (PEL). Upon the successful completion of their academic program, clinical experiences, edTPA (state licensure exam), and student teaching, Middle Level candidates are recommended by the university to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for licensing. Middle Level candidates at Illinois State University are required to complete two of the following endorsements: language arts, math, science, social studies, or English as a Second Language (ESL). The ESL endorsement option was added since the last university program review cycle due to demand in the field.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2012-2019 **B.S., B.S.Ed in Middle Level Education, Illinois State University** First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enrollments, fall census day	215	203	189	201	202	197	213	211
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	73	63	55	54	47	62	36	50

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The program goals were developed from the National Middle School Association (NMSA) standards which are held as true indicators of quality by the profession. These quality indicators include programs that produce strong Middle Level Education candidates prepared to meet the diverse needs of young adolescents and families. High quality programs also provide candidates an extensive variety of field-based experiences. The Middle Level Education program ensures that diversity training and technology are embedded in all coursework. Students receive clinical experience and student teaching, including opportunities across the country and abroad.

Students learning outcomes

The student learning outcomes for the program are the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards; the material included in the state content test for Middle Level teacher candidates; the constructs of edTPA (the state licensure test); and the Charlotte Danielson Framework. Middle Level program faculty will also be aligning coursework and performance assessments to the competency-based standards being developed at the state level for Middle Level educators and to the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTasc) standards and CAEP Middle Level standards in the next cycle of review.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

The graduation requirements for the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Education program consists of 22 credit hours of required major courses (which includes 12 credit hours of student teaching), 42 credit hours of professional education courses, 36 credit hours of general education courses, and complete 45-51 credit hours for two sets of endorsement courses. The final credit hour number for MLTE is rather complicated and depends on the two content endorsement areas students choose.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

The School of Teaching and Learning sponsors short-term cultural immersion experiences through partner institutions in United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Finland, Japan, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Ireland, and Panama.

Department faculty (Fall 2019)

42 tenure track faculty members (12 Professors, 16 Associate Professors, and 14 Assistant Professors)

75 non-tenure track faculty members (12 full-time, 63 part-time, totaling 35.50 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 22 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 40 to 1

Specialized accreditation

All teacher education programs at Illinois State University seek accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (now Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation). The program was reaccredited by CAEP in November 2019. The next review cycle is scheduled for 2025-2026. In addition, the review of individual programs is a review conducted by the state or electronically through NCATE/CAEP and the specialized professional organizations.

In addition, the review of individual programs is a review conducted by the state or electronically through NCATE/CAEP and the specialized professional organizations. The Middle Level Program review is conducted by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), the national specialized professional organization for Middle Level Educators. The Middle Level program received National Recognition and accreditation by AMLE in 2016. The program is also annually approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Changes in the manner in which students in the discipline are taught: Middle Level program faculty within the School of Teaching and Learning (TCH) have designed instruction to effectively address culturally responsive teaching, framing mindsets from an asset-based perspective of the learner, and effective instruction for diverse learners. Program faculty have designed instruction related to standards-based grading, strategies for engaging students in learning (as opposed to “classroom management”), reading and writing workshop, new science standards and STEM instruction (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and Common Core standards—all constructs that are now guiding the field.

Program faculty utilize flexible seating, collaborative learning opportunities, embedded technology expectations and requirements, and often forms of standards-based grading in their instructional methods for their college coursework.

Changes in the professions for which students are trained: Middle Level teacher candidates are now able to secure an endorsement in English as a Second Language instruction since the last cycle of program review. The coursework towards this endorsement was developed to meet the demand in the field for teachers who are able to effectively instruct children for whom English is not their first language. Many districts in Illinois are requiring applicants for teaching positions to have an ESL endorsement on their professional educators' license in order to secure an interview and to potentially be hired to teach in the district. TCH has met this demand through the creation of the ESL endorsement within the plans of study for Middle Level teacher candidates.

The Middle Level program at ISU is unique in requiring that teacher candidates complete two endorsement areas for graduation from the program. Students choose two endorsement areas from the following: language arts, math, science, social science, and English as a Second Language (ESL). (Currently, the state requires one endorsement area for licensure.) The program requires the two endorsement areas in response to the demand in the field for the additional endorsement area from principals, human resource directors, and other district personnel.

Changes in the demand for program graduates: Illinois is currently experiencing a teacher shortage. Demand for teachers (particularly in urban and rural areas) has increased while the number of Middle Level teacher candidates enrolled in Illinois universities has significantly decreased since the last cycle of program review.

Anecdotally, TCH administration believes the decrease in enrollment in Middle Level teacher preparation programs is due to a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the following: ongoing negative media publicity related to state workers' pension plans and compensation rates; the increased competition for students from out-of-state institutions; the cost of a higher education degree compared to the starting salaries of novice teachers; and the increased number of families/potential students moving out-of-state.

Graduates of the School of Teaching and Learning remain in high demand for hiring by Illinois districts as well as many districts in the United States due to their strong reputation as conscientious, highly professional educators with a solid knowledge of instructional strategies and theories that support children in today's classrooms. Anecdotally, principals, human resource directors, and school superintendents (among other district personnel) continue to share that they begin their hiring processes with graduates from the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University.

Changes in the demand for the program by prospective students: Per available PRPA data, prospective Middle Level educators are choosing the School of Teaching of Learning (TCH) when they decide to matriculate as teacher candidates.

Since the last cycle of program review, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has changed the licensure band structure to create "specialists" in the following grade bands: Early Childhood (birth through 2nd grade); Elementary (1-6 grade); and Middle Level (5-8 grade). This has caused candidates to identify their chosen grade range early in the program.

An average of 58 applicants applied as freshman to the Middle Level program from 2011-2018. An average of 30 applicants enrolled as freshman from 2011-2018. The number of freshman student applicants has increased since 2011; however, the percentage of applicants who enroll continues to fluctuate for the same time period.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in five recommendations.

1. *Monitor program enrollment to stay in balance with the availability of placements in clinical experiences.* Middle Level program faculty have worked to establish additional partnerships as needed to accommodate the need for clinical placements and experiences.
2. *Continue to monitor “sculpted enrollment” for each of the undergraduate teacher programs.* TCH administration routinely work with academic advisors and the director for enrollment and transfer services for the College of Education to monitor the enrollment within the Middle Level program. The Middle Level program numbers remain consistent at an average of 200 students in the 2017 and 2018 academic years. (
3. *Examine and improve the scholarship process for middle level majors to recognize the most talented and dedicated students.* The School of Teaching and Learning uses the Greenebaum Foundations Account to award scholarship dollars to identified students. Working with the departmental administrative team, the director of the School of Teaching and Learning determines the individual awards using student data from the admissions office and/or the office of financial need. The following criteria have been used to identify the students who will receive the scholarship monies: first consideration is given to students majoring in middle level education or elementary bilingual education as those are high needs endorsement areas for Illinois schools; second consideration is given to students of color; and finally, overall financial need is considered.
4. *Continue to recruit for diversity in both the student population and faculty.* The School of Teaching and Learning works to attract a diverse population to the field of education. Working with the director of enrollment and transition services within the College of Education, TCH has begun building relationships with area high schools (particularly those within an hour’s drive of campus) to support the establishment of Future Teachers Clubs as well as to support the efforts of area school districts in their “grow your own” initiatives. The School of Teaching and Learning is primarily targeting school districts in Bloomington/Normal, Champaign, Decatur, and Peoria in these specific recruitment efforts, and we continue to work with the National Council for Urban Education in Chicago, Decatur, and Peoria supporting their efforts of recruitment, curricula redesign, and support for mentor teachers.
5. *Continue to collaborate with the college and department to provide students access to and experience with technologies students are likely to encounter in public middle schools.* Middle Level program faculty have consistently embedded new technologies in course curricula making them key components of requirements for assignments. Specific examples from master syllabi include, but are not limited to, the following: using technology to promote culturally responsive practices; using tech tools for formative assessment; cultivating diverse Englishes through online chat room discussions between pre-service teachers and urban high school youth; and helping students find their voices through inquiry, literature and technology.

Major findings

The Middle Level education program in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University is an exemplary program for candidates wishing to teach children in fifth through eighth grades. Faculty continue to engage in robust research implementing effective instructional strategies that maximize the learning of their students. Demand for the program remains strong even in the face of decreasing numbers of individuals choosing the field of education. (When individuals choose to become Middle Level educators, they are choosing this program over others in the state as evidenced by the earlier-cited data.)

Middle Level faculty have evidenced a robust research agenda related to issues of diversity, and they have infused content related to issues of diversity throughout their curricula. Program faculty remain committed to supporting students and faculty of color and continue to support the diversity initiatives of the School of Teaching and Learning and the College of Education.

The program’s cycle of assessment and redesigned curricula continue to effectively meet the state’s requirements for licensure. As indicated above, program faculty will be engaging in alignment work with newly developed state competency-based standards during the next cycle of review.

As a result of the self-study related to the recent CAEP accreditation process, the Middle Level faculty will be reinstituting an advisory board comprised of state and community leaders, teachers, and other school personnel to provide ongoing feedback, support, and guidance to program faculty and students. Members of the advisory board have already been identified, and the board will commence in October 2019. This advisory board is scheduled to meet twice during each academic year. Additional involvement will be determined at those meetings.

Recognizing the issues with the newly redesigned content test for Middle Level teacher candidates, the state board of education (ISBE) has announced that they will be redesigning content tests to better reflect current norms in the field and to address the problematic wording of the questions. However, as a result of the self-study related to program assessment, Middle Level faculty have begun embedding additional curricular support related to the state content test to support candidates while the re-design is occurring. Working with the undergraduate program coordinator, program faculty have targeted specific content areas and edTPA portfolio rubrics for designing embedded curricula that supports candidates towards licensure.

Also, Middle Level program faculty, School administration, and the placement coordinator for pre-student teaching clinical experiences will work to continually identify and secure quality placements for teacher candidates within the School of Teaching and Learning. Faculty and School administration recognize that quality placements are currently at maximum capacity and will seek additional placement partnerships to accommodate curricular needs.

Initiatives and plans

Middle Level faculty will work to do the following related to supporting diverse students in the next review cycle (to continue the work already begun and to build upon the work already begun):

- Work to increase the number of students of color who decide to be teachers through the work with Future Teachers Clubs and community colleges and the National Center for Urban Education
- Support students of color more effectively in coursework, clinical experiences, and campus life by:
 - Conducting annual student surveys to measure the department's effectiveness in this endeavor
 - Making this support a key element of program review and assessment
 - Forming a student committee/panel to examine the issues and to offer suggestions for support and ways of moving forward
- Ensure that the infusion of content related to issues of equity and diversity is measurable and comprehensive
- Continue conversations with faculty of color to determine how best to support them and their work
- Continue and increasing targeted support for clinical experiences and faculty research opportunities that relate to issues of diversity and equity
- Award more scholarship monies to diverse student populations
- Provide professional development related to supporting students of color for faculty
- Most importantly, better identify the challenges for students of color experience at Illinois State University and work more intentionally to support them in their coursework, clinical experiences, and campus life

Middle Level faculty will embed state-created and approved competency-based standards and InTasc standards to all program assessments during the next program review cycle.

The program will conduct a targeted campaign in the 2019-2020 academic year (and beyond) to make Middle Level teacher candidates more aware of the social media accounts of the School of Teaching and Learning and will engage more faculty and alumni in posting and updating the accounts.

Middle Level faculty will develop the role of the newly formed advisory council in the next cycle of review.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Education to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee commends the program on its efforts to engage in an ongoing review process and prepare a self-study report that included faculty input over a period of three semesters. The committee further recognizes the faculty efforts from their review that have resulted in the creation of advisory councils, the development of additional supports for the Elementary/Middle Grades content test required for licensure and administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the use of survey data from both students and faculty to determine areas of celebration and concern and to inform program planning and development. The committee commends the program receiving National Recognition by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) in 2016.

The committee also commends the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in their courses. This is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities and continues to set the program apart from other options at other institutions.

The committee recognizes that 90% of Illinois State Middle Level Education graduates scored at the "proficient" or "excellent" levels on their first-year performance evaluations administered by their school districts. These high evaluations are a reflection of the thorough preparation students receive while in the program. The committee also commends the program on the success of their graduates with respect to the increases in employment rates within the industry. The committee also recognizes the efforts of the program to continuously conduct assessments and redesign the curriculum to effectively meet the State's requirements for licensure.

The committee makes note of the numerous opportunities the program provides students to study abroad and commends faculty for remaining committed to providing a variety of these transformative experiences to students. The committee also makes note of the many outside-the-classroom opportunities for their students through participation in registered student organizations, tutoring, and other co-curricular opportunities.

The committee notes that in Fiscal Year 2016, 56.0% of first-time in college Middle Level Education students graduated within four years in comparison to the University-wide average rate of 63.9%; in Fiscal Year 2017, 70.6% graduated in four years (compared to 67.3% across the University); and in Fiscal Year 2018, 89.5% graduated in four years (compared to 72.0% across the University). The committee encourages faculty and staff to continue to monitor time to degree during the next program review cycle. The committee also notes that retention rates are at or above University averages over the period of review.

The committee commends the program's efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness through their varied activities related to diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching. The committee applauds the program's multifaceted plans to increase and support both student and faculty diversity and strongly encourages the faculty to pursue the self-identified areas of growth in these areas. The committee notes the leadership role that many of the faculty have taken with the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference held at Illinois State University.

Follow-up Reports.

Assessment Plan. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes faculty efforts in developing an assessment plan that aligns with the standards of external bodies, such as the AMLE and ISBE, and in implementing the assessment plan to address these standards and modify the curriculum. However, in its current form, there are no indirect measures of learning in the assessment plan, and the processes for using assessment information to revise the program are not specified. The committee notes that references to both of these components were made throughout the self-study report and asks that the program work with University Assessment Services to refine the existing plan so that it not only continues to align with the standards of external bodies, but also provides meaningful information to guide faculty in their program revisions. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to submit a revised assessment plan to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021.

Comparator and Aspirational Programs. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational programs in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee would like the program to revisit the aspirational section of the self-study. Although the faculty did discuss aspirational initiatives (including the creation of a Middle Level sequence at the master's level, a Grow-Your-Own partnership, and the creation of additional supports for state licensing exams), these did not appear to be by an analysis of other programs. In a

subsequent follow-up report, the committee asks the faculty to address this section through an expanded analysis of aspirational programs, including aspirational programs nationwide, that could help faculty develop strategies for addressing priority initiatives faculty has identified for the next review, such as increasing student-faculty research collaborations, expanding professional development opportunities for faculty members, and further increasing faculty scholarship. Studying aspirational programs might also help faculty with the exploration of alternate program delivery methods. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator and aspirational institutions and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty and staff of the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Middle Level Education program for the opportunity to provide input regarding middle level educator preparation at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with Middle Level Education faculty and staff. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2027, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. As indicated in the self-study, the committee encourages the program to pursue its goals related to further developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Complete a review of the curriculum. The committee encourages faculty to complete a comprehensive review of coursework in the Middle Level Education program to ensure it appropriately aligns with forthcoming competency-based InTasc standards. As part of the review of curriculum, the committee suggests a consideration of how the program might also focus on incorporating clinical placements in rural areas in order to broaden students' preparation for work in diverse settings. The committee also suggests continuing to explore ways to reduce student credit hour requirements (e.g., the average credit to degree hours for transfer students which are currently above the University average, overall credit hours for graduation are typically in excess of 124 hours).

Continue to monitor enrollment trends. In light of IBHE's concerns related to statewide teacher shortages, the committee encourages faculty to continue to actively evaluate the program's (and the School of Teaching and Learning's broader "sculpted enrollment") recruitment and retention plans to ensure that the needs of both the program and the State are met.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.