Introduction to Middle Level Education
Introduction to Middle Level Education

Sara Davis Powell
Belmont Abbey College

Fourth Edition
To my husband, Rus, who makes all aspects of our life together a delightful partnership.

To my sons, Jesse, Cody, Travis, and Noah, and their families, who continually give me so much pleasure and many reasons to be proud.

To middle level kids and teachers, who grow and learn together every day.
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About the Author

SARA DAVIS POWELL is a teacher—from the middle school classroom to teacher preparation as a professor—and chair of education at Belmont Abbey College in North Carolina. She is a young adolescent advocate who writes about middle level teacher preparation, emphasizing a balance of developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous practice. Actively involved in local classrooms and the middle school community through the facilitation of professional development, supervision of clinical interns, and research and writing about middle level issues, she is also a frequent speaker at regional and national conferences, where her enthusiasm for middle level education is contagious. Powell’s most recent books include Your Introduction to Education: Explorations in Teaching, third edition (Pearson, 2019) and Wayside Teaching: Connecting with Students to Support Learning (Corwin, 2010).

Married with four sons, four daughters-in-laws, and three grandchildren, she enjoys watching lakeside sunsets at home with her husband, Rus, and spending time with her sons and their families. When not on her dock, with her family, or writing at home, chances are she can be reached at Belmont Abbey College, 100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road, Belmont, North Carolina 28012; (704) 461–5059; sarapowell@bac.edu.
Preface

New to This Edition

*Introduction to Middle Level Education* offers a comprehensive and contemporary body of knowledge that speaks directly to teacher candidates in a voice that invites them into today’s middle level classrooms. The fourth edition is a compelling look at a variety of current issues and topics affecting young adolescents, their teachers, and their schools, including discussions of 21st century knowledge and skill requirements such as global awareness, civic engagement, information literacy, and ethical responsibility.

Yet, despite all the changes both students and teachers face, the developmental needs of young adolescents remain predictable. Relevant and challenging curriculum, engaging instruction, ongoing assessment that is growth-promoting, developmental responsiveness, and strategies for creating and maintaining a positive and productive learning environment—all of these and other vital components of middle level education must be firmly in place.

New Chapter

Chapter 11, “Citizenship and Civility in the Middle Grades,” is completely new and extremely timely. Our nation is faced with increasing levels of violence, divisiveness, and rancor never before experienced by the majority of today’s population. Now is the time to promote citizenship and civility among young adolescents who encapsulate the future of our republic. Topics in this new chapter include:

- Civic knowledge across the curriculum
- Current events
- Elections
- Civic skills across the curriculum
- Global citizenship skills
- Civic skills related to the Common Core
- Digital citizenship
- Civic dispositions
- Civic engagement
- Social consciousness and responsibility
- Service learning
- Civility.

An extensive list of resources available to help teach citizenship, civic engagement, and civility in our classrooms is provided.

New Features

*Making the Teaching and Learning Connection* consists of personal letters written directly to readers by outstanding teachers and middle level leaders. All include a photo of the letter writer and most include a video. The topics are pertinent to our relationships with young adolescents. It’s coincidental, yet worth noting, that *Making the Teaching and Learning Connection* includes the initials TLC, often recognized as standing for Tender Loving Care. This is what middle level teachers must provide for young adolescents as we help them grow and become healthy, happy, altruistic, and productive citizens.
• Chapter 1 TLC: John Lounsbury, a legend in middle level circles, and one of the finest gentlemen and teachers I have ever known, tells us about his philosophy of teaching that includes spiritual aspects of our profession.

• Chapter 2 TLC: Dani Ramsey tells us how she uses bio poems as an outlet for young adolescents to explore who they are and how their emotions and social experiences impact them.

• Chapter 3 TLC: Amy Goodwin understands that she teaches the whole child. She tells us how she addresses bullying through literature and class discussion.

• Chapter 4 TLC: Charlie Bull’s devotion to kids raised in poverty is evident as he describes his students and his teaching style.

• Chapter 5 TLC: Traci Peters tells us she thrives within structure and organization and that her middle level students do as well.

• Chapter 6 TLC: Derek Boucher writes about his commitment to teaching students to read with fluency and comprehension.

• Chapter 7 TLC: Macy Ingle tells us that she realized what she had missed in her own science education when she started using the 5E lesson plan—engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate.

• Chapter 8 TLC: Dee Lanier explains his school’s emphasis on solving real-world challenges and how he continually assesses student learning.

• Chapter 9 TLC: Kurt Hansen, an admitted science geek, tells us active engagement in the classroom is vital, as is linking lessons to curricular standards through careful planning.

• Chapter 10 TLC: Kadean Maddix writes about his journey toward the middle level math classroom and his devotion to his students.

• Chapter 11 TLC: Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s dedication to civic knowledge and skills shines through in this chapter’s TLC.

• Chapter 12 TLC: Nancy Ruppert, a true leader of middle level education and former president of the Association for Middle Level Education, gives heartfelt advice about the value and power of relationships.

New Concepts and Emphases

• In Chapter 1, increased emphasis is placed on middle level education philosophy as expressed by the founders of the middle school concept. Their legacy remains a driving force in how we interact with, and educate, young adolescents today.

• In Chapter 2, the concept of social-emotional learning (SEL) is examined. Executive skills, or executive function, comprise a set of mental qualities that help us get things done. These skills are applied to middle level classrooms.

• In Chapter 3, we explore issues revolving around gender and gender identity, including dilemmas involved with childhood gender nonconformity and transgender youth.

• In Chapter 4, statistics concerning young adolescent substance abuse are both updated and enhanced. Sleep, essential to productivity, is a new topic in the societal context of middle level education.

• In Chapter 5, emphasis is placed on common planning time as vital to effective teaching and learning in a middle level setting.

• In Chapter 6, strategies for helping young adolescents increase their memory capacity are included.
• In Chapter 7, an extensive section has been added addressing neuroscience research and implications for middle level teaching and learning. A section addressing the importance of choice and how to include it in the classroom is added.
• In Chapter 8, additional emphasis is provided on formative assessment, common assessments, and response patterns.
• In Chapter 9, the gradual release model has been added, along with the concept of academic language, a component of edTPA. In addition, SIOP: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol is addressed not only as beneficial for English learners, but for all learners.
• In Chapter 10, de-escalation strategies of the Crisis Prevention Institute are applied to middle level classrooms to help prevent behavior issues.
• Chapter 11 is entirely new.
• In Chapter 12, a major section addressing professionalism is added, including becoming a reflective practitioner, balancing professional and personal life, and maintaining positive dispositions.

New Accountability
Each chapter consists of three to six major topic sections. Each topic section is followed by four multiple choice items with explanations for each answer choice. Students can use the self-checks to make sure they are grasping the knowledge in the chapters.

New Videos
This fourth edition includes 10 videos from the third edition and 22 new videos illustrating concepts throughout the text. The Instructor’s Manual includes accountability questions for every video that may be used as study guides or as quizzes to make sure students are watching the videos when assigned.

Included in This Edition
To help prepare teachers who will consistently make the teaching and learning connection, the following features from the third edition are retained in this new edition:

• eText Access: As a Pearson eText this edition includes embedded access to websites and video features that invite readers to explore the personal stories of middle level teachers and students, as well as numerous resources that are valuable to teaching and learning.
• Association for Middle Level Education Teacher Preparation Standards: The 2012 AMLE teacher preparation standards are linked to chapter content throughout the text.
• This We Believe: The 16 tenets of effective schools for young adolescents are emphasized throughout the text.
• Goals for Young Adolescent Development (This We Believe): The 13 goals for young adolescent development as stated in This We Believe are prominent in each chapter as the content addresses them.
• Common Core State Standards: An emphasis on the Common Core State Standards that influence teaching and learning in middle level schools is prominent throughout and includes a valuable Q&A feature addressing the development and implementation of the standards.
• The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: Extensive coverage of bullying, those affected by it, and ways to both prevent and respond to it are included in Chapter 4 as we address the societal context of middle level education.
• **Social Media:** Each chapter contains references to the ever-burgeoning technology for teaching and learning, with increased emphasis on cybercitizenship and the avoidance of cyberbullying and sexting.

• **Virtual Field Experiences:** Throughout the fourth edition Pearson eText readers view videos of teacher interviews and room tours, student interviews, classroom lessons, a middle school tour, a principal discussing what she looks for in teachers, and a variety of stories about teachers making a difference.

• **PowerPoint Presentations:** In the Instructor’s Manual, each chapter is detailed in PowerPoint slides for classroom use.

The fourth edition of *Introduction to Middle Level Education* also includes:

**Activities.** Following each chapter are a variety of activities. Group activities require readers to work cooperatively to accomplish particular tasks. Individual activities give readers opportunities to explore middle level concepts on their own. The personal journal section asks readers to reflect on their own experiences.

**Glossary.** An evolving common vocabulary among educators allows us to talk about our profession with mutual understanding. Some words and phrases have specialized meanings and nuances when used within a middle level education context. Many of these terms are explained in the glossary.

**For instructors.** The following are provided electronically: a comprehensive Instructor’s Manual including author suggestions for exploration of text content, PowerPoint slide presentations for each chapter, and a chapter-by-chapter test bank.

**Organization**

*Introduction to Middle Level Education* includes 12 chapters. Separating the body of knowledge of middle level education into discrete chapters seems arbitrary, but it is efficient to do so. Given the limits of the written word, I have chosen to organize this book in a traditional way. Chapter 1 focuses on the philosophy and history of middle level education and the elements that have given it legitimacy and theoretical grounding. Chapter 2 is an overview of student physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and character development. Chapter 3 looks at the diversity among our students from cultural, to socioeconomic, to learning styles, and more. Chapter 4 addresses the societal context of middle level education. Chapter 5 delves into the structures of people, time, and place, including teaming, advisory, flexible schedules, and classroom/school facilities. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the middle level, and Chapter 9 details all levels of planning for instruction. Chapter 10 deals with the important topic of creating and maintaining a positive and productive learning environment. Chapter 11 addresses citizenship responsibilities and ways to promote civic engagement and civility. Chapter 12 explores some of the realities of teaching young adolescents, the relationships that are so crucial to successful teaching and learning, elements of professionalism, and the critical issues of transitioning into and out of middle grades.

**Author’s Note**

*Introduction to Middle Level Education* models the ideals of middle level education in that it is both academically rigorous and developmentally responsive—academically rigorous because it includes a comprehensive body of knowledge, and developmentally responsive because it approaches these topics without intimidating or boring the reader. I am an experienced middle level teacher speaking to other teachers whether they are teacher candidates completing bachelor or master’s degrees; career changers...
preparing to take their skills and backgrounds into the middle level classroom; elementary or high school teachers getting ready for the challenges and joys of spending their days with young adolescents; or teachers who desire to dig deeper into their profession, seeking insights and encouragement. Writing a book allows me only to speak, not actually converse. My hope is that readers will talk to each other about middle level education, prompted by my side of the “conversation.”

Teachers are my heroes. They make the minute-by-minute decisions on which student success and well-being depend. If knowledge is power, and I believe it is, the more we understand about the nature of early adolescence, with both its documented predictability and its absurd volatility, the more prepared we are to make the relatively insignificant, as well as life-changing, decisions. Yes, experience is the best teacher. However, opportunities to read, reflect, discuss, and speculate will sharpen our focus on, and widen our peripheral vision of, middle level education and all that is involved in teaching young adolescents. This book provides such opportunities.

The tenets of Turning Points (Carnegie Corporation, 1989), Turning Points 2000 (Jackson & Davis, 2000), and This We Believe (NMSA, 2010); the underpinnings of the Association for Middle Level Education; and the AMLE teacher preparation standards permeate every page. This strong conceptual foundation focuses us squarely on students and learning. As a unique phase of human development, early adolescence deserves continued concentrated research and study that will further deepen our understanding of how best to meet the needs of the students in our charge. The fourth edition of Introduction to Middle Level Education addresses the issues of teaching and learning with young adolescents in commonsense ways that infuse practicality with theory.

This book is a work of non-traditional scholarship—scholarly by way of knowledge base and non-traditional by way of personalization. I believe I best serve teachers, in whatever career stage, by speaking in first person from both a research base and my own and others’ experiences in the classroom. I welcome all readers to the adventure of exploring the landscape of middle level education!

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the teachers, students, and principals who allowed me to wander the halls of their schools, interview the people involved in middle level education, and take pictures of teachers and young adolescents in action.

Special thanks go to my editor Drew Bennett, production manager Yagnesh Jani, and Gheron Lising and Mohamed Hameed of Pearson CSC for their guidance and prompt responses to my questions and requests. I appreciate the time and suggestions given by four reviewers: