Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Best Practices for a Successful Middle School Classroom (6-8)

PDI Course Number: 17T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC41572

If you would like information about receiving post-baccalaureate (graduate) credit for completing this course, please click here.

Course Timeline

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

Course Description

Do you need help managing your middle school classroom? This online course is designed for teachers of grades six through eight who are interested in exploring best practices for developing and managing a successful junior high or middle school classroom. This course covers strategies for implementing the grade level standards and learning standards, while managing time so that all content is covered. Issues common in grades six through eight such as time management, organizational skills, and lack of motivation are covered along with overall classroom management techniques. Teachers learn how to maximize the resources which are available to them as well as find innovative ways to gain more resources at little-to-no cost. This course also explores successful strategies for gaining students' attention and interest, and truly engaging them in lessons. Teachers will also learn how to respond to a variety of teaching challenges, including how to effectively reach their most at-risk populations such as students with special needs and those living in poverty. Mainstreaming English language learners and techniques for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students is covered as well. Finally, tips for working with parents are also shared. By the end of this course, teachers will feel better prepared to successfully manage a middle school classroom.

Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will have a better understanding of the Common Core State Standards and learning targets.
2. Teachers will learn how to manage their time, organize priorities, and ensure deadlines are met.
3. Teachers will learn how to handle all types of behavioral issues and implement an effective plan for managing the classroom.
4. Teachers will learn how to combat bullying.
5. Teachers will understand how planning and being proactive will help them use their time more effectively and get the most out of their time with students.
6. Teachers will learn exciting ways to gain students' participation and interest in lessons.
7. Teachers will learn new ways to develop engaging lessons.
8. Teachers will understand how to analyze classroom and student needs and establish lesson plans accordingly.
9. Teachers will learn how to use curriculum mapping strategies to help ensure all content is covered in the school year.
10. Teachers will learn how to use resources, activities, and lesson plans that integrate the use of technology.
11. Teachers will learn how to make the most out of the resources they currently have, and how to find or create resources that cost little to nothing.
12. Teachers will learn how to understand the needs of each individual student and how they can best serve students based on the information they have collected.
13. Teachers will learn how to differentiate instruction in order to effectively teach students of all levels and abilities.
14. Teachers will learn how to deal with issues pertaining specifically to students of grades six through eight.
15. Teachers will better understand challenges facing students who live in poverty, and some of their unique needs.
16. Teachers will gain strategies for mainstreaming English language learners and students with special needs.
17. Teachers will learn how to utilize PLCs for formative assessment.
18. Teachers will gain strategies for working with students who require intervention.
19. Teachers will better understand the role and benefits of summative assessment.
20. Teachers will learn how to effectively communicate with parents and encourage their involvement in the classroom and their child's learning.

Instructional Media

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites

- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

Evaluation

- Test #1 (5% of final grade)
- Test #2 (5% of final grade)
- Test #3 (5% of final grade)
- Test #4 (5% of final grade)
- Test #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article/Video Reflection (15% of final grade)
- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Cumulative Assignment/Project: Develop a Plan to Use Strategies from the Course to Improve the Classroom or Classroom Practices (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- The Most Common Challenges in Middle School Classrooms
- The Perfect Junior High or Middle School Classroom
- The Teacher's Role in a Successful 6 – 8th Grade Classroom
- **Assignment #1**
  Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about the best middle school practices. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Test #1**

Unit Two

- Effective Time Management and Organizational Strategies
- The Best Methods for Managing Behavior
- Motivation Matters!
- Anti-Bullying Strategies for 6 – 8th Grade Classrooms
- **Assignment #2**
  As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article and video that are relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Test #2**

Unit Three

- Differentiating Instruction to Meet the Needs of All Students
- Helping English Language Learners to Succeed
- Understanding and Helping Students with Special Needs
- Working with Students Who Live in Poverty
- **Assignment # 3**
  Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to effective practices for the middle school classroom and will make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs and detailed enough for another teacher to easily follow. This is a great opportunity to share and collaborate with other teachers at your grade level around the country. Take time to review and respond to other postings that are relevant to your classroom population in order to gain effective ideas to use immediately in your classroom.
- **Test #3**

Unit Four

- Essential Standards and Learning Targets
- Using PLC Formative Assessment with Intervention to Support Learning
- Strategies for Summative Assessment for Student Comprehension
- **Test #4**

Unit Five

- Addressing a Lack of Classroom Resources
- Making the Most of Technology
- **Test #5**

Unit Six

- Working with Parents
- Maintaining the Classroom You've Created
- Resources for the Successful 6 – 8th Grade Classroom
- **Assignment #4**
  Using at least two of the strategies provided in the course, begin by writing about your current classroom, or what your classroom (or a classroom you have been in) was like in the past, noting any specific challenges you had. After learning many valuable strategies, you should be able to answer two of the questions below with a minimum two-paragraph response each to explain how you will use the strategies to make changes to your classroom or classroom practices. Your final assignment should include a total of five paragraphs once complete. Keep in mind that this assignment is a cumulative project and therefore, you are expected to demonstrate the knowledge you gained from the course and your ability to apply what you have learned in a practical setting.

- **Assignment #5**
  The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection describing a student you have or have had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.

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