

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
MIDDLE GRADES POLICY	2.102

Middle grades include grades five through eight (5-8) or any combination of grades five through eight (5-8) as determined by the local school board. This policy sets forth the requirements and expectations for students in those grades.

Policy Sections

- (1) Coursework Requirements
- (2) Plan of Study
- (3) Assessment
- (4) Other relevant policies

Coursework Requirements

- (1) All students shall have access to a rigorous education that prepares them for high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. All coursework shall be aligned to the State Board of Education (State Board)-approved Tennessee Academic Standards for that subject and course.
- (2) Students may take coursework for high school credit. If students complete any of the State Board-required high school credits prior to grade nine (9), they may receive graduation credit for that coursework.
- (3) Each local education agency (LEA) shall inform all students in grades seven through twelve (7-12) of the Juvenile Offender Act compiled in T.C.A. Title 55, Chapter 10, Part 7 in compliance with T.C.A. § 49-6-451.
- (4) Academic Requirements.
 - (a) Each year, all middle grade students shall complete coursework in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.
 - (b) All LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades four through eight (4-8) pursuant to T.C.A § 49-6-1028.
 - 1. “Project-based” means an approach that engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through a student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.
 - 2. The project-based assessment shall be developed by the LEA, measure the civics learning objectives contained in the social studies standards, and allow students to demonstrate understanding and relevance of public policy; the structure of federal, state, and local governments; and both the Tennessee and the United States constitutions.
 - 3. LEAs shall submit verification of implementation of the project-based assessment to the Department of Education.

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- (c) The course of instruction in all public schools for kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) shall include art and music education in pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-1025.
- (d) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-412 a career interest inventory shall be administered to all students in grade seven (7), the results of which must be used to inform future course planning decisions.
- (5) High school and middle grades faculty shall collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school, especially in relation to coursework expectations and vertical alignment of academic standards.

Plan of Study

- (1) At age fourteen (14), or prior to grade nine (9), all students, including students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), shall develop an initial four (4)-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study.
- (2) The initial plan of focused and purposeful high school study shall be jointly prepared by the student, parent or guardian, and school counselor or faculty advisor.
- (3) The plan of focused and purposeful high school study shall:
 - (a) Cover either grades nine through twelve (9-12) or grades eight through twelve (8-12);
 - (b) Connect the student's goals for high school to the courses or training that equip the student with the skills necessary to meet his or her goals after high school;
 - (c) Consider a variety of indicators, such as student academic strengths and needs, attendance, behavior, and course grades;
 - (d) Include information regarding programs of study, a student's readiness for specific early post-secondary courses (EPSOs), and elective focuses aligned to the student's interest inventory results;
 - (d) Provide students with opportunities to begin building technical skills in a field of interest, in addition to employability skills required to be successful in that job; and
 - (e) If applicable, identify possible transition service needs of a student under the applicable components of the student's IEP.

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- (4) The plan of study shall be reviewed annually by the student and school counselor or faculty advisor and revised based on the student's academic progress and changes in the student's interests and career goals.

Assessment

- (1) The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessment shall be administered annually in the following subjects: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- (2) Students shall complete the TCAP assessment during the school year in which they complete the relevant course work.
- (3) Students with disabilities shall be provided necessary accessibility supports to participate in assessments. If a student has an IEP, or a section 504 Plan, then their IEP or 504 team must determine their participation in the general assessment, with or without accommodations, based on the unique needs of the student.
- (4) To participate in an alternate assessment, a student must demonstrate a significant cognitive disability that results in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications. The student shall also possess current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction and practice in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of skills necessary for application in school, work, home, and community environments. The IEP team shall rule out that the inability to achieve the state grade-level expectations is the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences. A student who meets the eligibility criteria and whose IEP team determines participation in the alternate assessment is appropriate shall be assessed in all four content areas: ELA, Math, science, and social studies.
- (5) Results of individual student performance from all administered TCAP examinations shall be provided in a timely fashion to facilitate the inclusion of these results as part of the student's grade. If an LEA does not receive its student TCAP examination scores at least five (5) instructional days before the scheduled end of the course, then the LEA may choose not to include student TCAP examination scores in the students' final course grades. The weight of the TCAP examination on the student's final average shall be determined by the local board of education within a range of zero percent (0%) to no more than twenty five percent (25%) for grades three through five (3-5), and within a range of no less than ten percent (10%) and no more than twenty-five percent (25%) for grades six through eight (6-8) in the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter.
- (6) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-6007, all LEAs shall annually include in each school's student handbook or other policy guidebook, and post to the district website, a local assessment policy. The assessment policy shall be posted to the district website by July 31 of each year and shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

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- (a) The names of all state- and locally-required assessments that shall be administered in the upcoming school year;
- (b) The purpose and use of each assessment;
- (c) Information on how each locally required assessment complements and enhances student instruction and learning and how each local assessment serves a purpose distinct from required state assessments;
- (d) The grade or class for which the assessment is to be administered;
- (e) The tentative date or dates on which the assessment shall be administered;
- (f) The local policy on the inclusion of TCAP scores into a student's grade, including the percentage that TCAP scores shall be weighted for each grade level, the methodology by which the grades shall be calculated for inclusion in student grades, and the policy on excluding TCAP scores if they are not received at least five (5) instructional days before the end of the course;
- (g) The anticipated timeframe when parents and students shall receive results from the assessment; and
- (h) Information on how parents can access the items on the student's state-required summative standardized assessments and the student's answers.