



The Future of Illinois Middle Grades

Reference Guide

UPDATED October 2018

This document provides a reference for Institutions of Higher Education, stakeholders, administrators and educators as Illinois transitions from the current middle school endorsement structure to new middle grades programs and endorsement requirements. The document will outline the charge behind the transition, frequently asked questions and example scenarios.



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Why the change?

In 2011, Illinois stakeholders began working to identify ways to meet the need for better prepared middle grade educators in Illinois. Due to updates to Illinois and national learning standards, all teachers were required to teach more in-depth content than ever before at all grades. Students were expected to know more by the time they got to middle grades. Therefore, strong content educators were needed in middle grade classrooms, and robust preparation programs specifically focused on this unique age group of students were needed to prepare these educators. The middle grades programs and requirements are designed to work within the framework of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards while including strong preparation in middle grades pedagogy (including pedagogy to address specific psychological and social/emotional needs), differentiation, diversity and cultural awareness (geographical, cultural, etc.), and literacy and numeracy (including statistics) throughout all content areas.

As middle grade education has evolved, so has the Illinois licensure structure. The field frequently uses the words “Junior High”, “Middle School”, and “Middle Grades” interchangeably. These terms describe different requirements, and consequentially define different endorsements. Before reviewing this guide, it is important to understand the terminology that has been utilized for licensure throughout the years. The following table clarifies historical licensure terminology.

“Junior High” Endorsements	
Date	Requirements
Until June 30, 1997	Junior high endorsements were issued until June 30, 1997, and could be attained by completing content-specific coursework. The endorsements allowed educators to teach specific content areas in grades 5-8 and 6-8.

Dates to Remember



January 31, 2018

Candidates can no longer be issued a middle school endorsement by completing 18 semester hours of middle school content and 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework.

February 1, 2018

New middle grades (5-8) educator preparation programs become effective.

Educator Licensure

217-557-6763

Center for Educator Effectiveness

Illinois State Board of Education

www.isbe.net



“Middle School” Endorsements	
Date	Requirements
On or After July 1, 1997- Until January 31, 2018	<p>Middle school endorsements have been issued since July 1, 1997, and will continue to be issued until January 31, 2018. Middle school endorsements differ from the previous junior high endorsements because they require of six additional semester hours of Middle School professional education coursework, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 semester hours of coursework in middle school philosophy, curriculum, and instructional methods for designing and teaching developmentally appropriate programs in middle grades, including content area reading instruction; and • 3 semester hours of coursework in educational psychology focusing on the developmental characteristics of early adolescents and the role of the middle grade teacher in assessment, coordination, and referral of students to health and social services. <p>These endorsements allow educators to teach specific content areas in grades 5-8 and 6-8.</p>

“Middle Grades ” Endorsements	
Date	Requirements
On or After February 1, 2018	<p>Middle Grades endorsements are currently being issued to educators who complete an Illinois approved middle grades program.</p> <p>Beginning February 1, 2018:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All “New” middle grades endorsements will be earned by completing an Illinois approved middle grades program; and • All “Subsequent” middle grades endorsements will be earned by completing 21 semester hours of content-specific coursework, 3 semester hours of content-specific methodology coursework focused on the middle grades, and passing the applicable content area test(s). <p>Also, beginning February 1, 2018, middle grades endorsements will be available to educators prepared as middle grades educators at out-of-state institutions.</p> <p>These endorsements allow educators to teach specific content areas in grades 5-8.</p>

When does the transition take place?

The transition from the current endorsement structure to the new Illinois approved middle grades preparation programs and subsequent middle grades endorsement requirements is currently underway.

Current rules allow educators to add a middle school endorsement by completing 18 hours of middle school content and 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework, but this option will expire January 31, 2018.



What will the grade range be for the new middle grade endorsements?

On or after February 1, 2018, all middle grades endorsements will be added to the professional educator license for grades 5-8.

What is the difference between current and new endorsement requirements for new middle grades endorsements?

For purposes of this document, a “new” middle grades endorsement means the first middle school or middle grades endorsement an educator has ever earned.

Until January 31, 2018, educators generally may add their first middle school endorsement by completing 18 semester hours in a content area and 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework.

On or after February 1, 2018, each educator seeking his or her first middle grades endorsement will need to complete a full or focused program at an Illinois institution of higher education that offers an approved middle grades preparation program or meet applicable requirements for educators prepared out-of-state.

What is the difference between current and new endorsement requirements for subsequent middle grades endorsements?

For purposes of this document, a “subsequent” endorsement refers to an additional endorsement added by an educator who already holds a junior high, middle school or middle grades endorsement.

Until January 31, 2018, an educator who currently holds a middle school endorsement may add a subsequent middle school endorsement by completing 18 semester hours in a content area, because the middle school professional education coursework requirement has been fulfilled.

On or after February 1, 2018, an educator who currently holds a junior high, middle school or middle grades endorsement may add a subsequent middle grades endorsement by completing 21 semester hours in a content area, 3 semester hours in a content-specific middle grades methods course, and the appropriate content area test(s). Middle grade content specific method courses must cover the middle level grade range. Therefore, content specific method courses that may cover additional grade ranges including the middle level may be honored.

New state licensure tests for middle grades mathematics, science, social science, and language arts became available spring 2017.

For all other content areas, educators must pass the current Illinois Licensure Testing System (ILTS) content tests in addition to a new test (referenced as “General Middle Grades test” in this document) that will cover the state literacy standards for all middle grades educators and national content standards. The General Middle Grades test will be available spring 2018. Candidates required to take the General Middle Grades test may elect to take the Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test instead, until the 110 test sunsets August 31, 2018.

The general middle grades test may be waived with either successfully passing the Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test or with verification that the educator has taught in any of the grades 5 through 8 for at least one year.



Where can this information be located in administrative rules?

Information regarding the requirements for middle grades endorsements can be found in the following sections of administrative rules:

- 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Part 1, [Section 1.720](#) (Public Schools evaluation, recognition and supervision-Requirements for Teachers of Middle Grades)
- 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Part 21, [Section 21.10 & 21.100-21.150](#) (Standards for endorsements in the Middle Grades)
- 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Part 25, [Section 25.99](#) (Educator Licensure-Endorsements for the Middle Grades(Grades 5 through 8))

Who can enter an entitlement for a middle grades endorsement?

Currently, all Illinois institutions of higher education may enter entitlements for middle school endorsements. No approved program is required. Institutions can continue this practice until January 31, 2018.

On or after February 1, 2018, only Illinois institutions of higher education that offer Illinois approved middle grades (5-8) programs may entitle educators for new middle grades endorsements.

- Institutions that have approved middle grades (5-8) programs will indicate 5-8 in the “approved program” field upon entitlement.

On or after February 1, 2018, all Illinois institutions of higher education may entitle for subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsements (for an educator who already holds a junior high, middle school or middle grades endorsement.)

- Institutions that entitle educators for subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsements will not indicate any grade range in the “approved program” field upon entitlement.

Institutions able to enter entitlements for subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsements are not limited only to those institutions that have approved middle grades programs. Such a limitation could burden educators who are unable to complete coursework at an institution offering an approved program due to geographic location, course scheduling or other factors.

Likewise, coursework for all subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsements may be taken at any Illinois or out-of-state institution of higher education that is regionally accredited.

- At their discretion, institutions of higher education offering approved middle grades (5-8) programs may accept coursework taken at other institutions as credit toward program completion.

Where can I find supplemental material regarding middle grades endorsements in Illinois?

The Educator Effectiveness Division at ISBE maintains current licensure requirements [online](#) for educators seeking middle school endorsements before and on or after February 1, 2018. The website provides a thorough



overview of every content area available for middle school and middle grades endorsements and the specific requirements for each.

Example Scenarios

The following example scenarios are provided to offer clarity as Illinois transitions to the new middle grades endorsement structure. These scenarios are all examples of situations that could occur **on or after February 1, 2018**.

Please see the middle grades requirements tables that follow for further clarification.

Scenario #1

Kristi is an elementary education teacher (K-9) who holds a middle school (5-8) endorsement in biological science. Kristi teaches 7th grade biology. Kristi is interested in teaching middle grade math next year.

Q) What options does Kristi have to attain a middle grades (5-8) Math endorsement?

A) Because Kristi already holds a middle school science endorsement, she would need to complete the following requirements to attain a subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsement in math.

- 21 semester hours in math
- 3 semester hours in methods of teaching **math** in middle grades.
- Middle Grades (5-8) Math (202) test

Kristi may either contact an institution of higher education to audit her transcripts to ensure she meets the above requirements to be entitled, or apply through her ELIS account and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.

Scenario #2

Seth is a 7th and 8th grade physical education (PE) teacher who holds a professional educator license (PEL) endorsed in K-12 PE. Seth is interested in adding a middle grades (5-8) health education endorsement to his professional educator licensure (PEL).

Q) How can Seth attain a middle grades (5-8) Health Education endorsement?

A) Seth's K-12 PEL allows him to teach PE to students in middle grades; however, he does not hold a middle grades (5-8) endorsement. He would need to complete the following requirements to attain a new middle grades (5-8) endorsement in health education.

- 21 semester hours in health education
- 3 semester hours in methods of teaching **health** in middle grades
- Health Education (142 or 211) test
- General Middle Grades test
 - Seth will waive this test as he has evidence of one year of teaching in middle grades.



Seth may either contact an institution of higher education to audit his transcripts to ensure he meets the above requirements to be entitled, or apply through his ELIS account and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.

Scenario #3

Amy is a secondary education English teacher (6-12) who holds a professional educator license (PEL) endorsed in English Language Arts (9-12). Amy is interested in a teaching position that has just opened up at a neighboring middle school to teach drama to 5th through 8th grade students.

Q) How can Amy attain a middle grades (5-8) Theater/Drama endorsement?

A) Because Amy is seeking a new middle grades (5-8) endorsement and does not currently hold a middle school or middle grades endorsement, she must complete a full or focused middle grades (5-8) Theater/Drama program offered at any Illinois institution with an approved middle grade (5-8) Theater/Drama program.

- How will Amy know if she needs to complete a full or focused program?
 - Amy will seek the advice of the Licensure Officer at the Illinois institution where she plans to attend.
 - An institution may, at its discretion, compare the coursework and clinical experiences Amy has already completed to the standards for the endorsement sought. This comparison may identify Amy for a focused program consisting of coursework, testing, and experiences that she must complete in order to meet those standards.

The institution where Amy completes the middle grades (5-8) Theater/Drama program will entitle her for the endorsement once she completes all program requirements.

Scenario #4

Last year, Emily graduated from an Illinois approved middle grades (5-8) program in Art and she just completed her first year of teaching art to 6th grade students. The administration at Emily's school would like Emily to also teach music next year.

Q) What options does Emily have to attain a middle grades (5-8) music endorsement?

A) Because Emily already holds a middle grades Art endorsement, she would need to complete the following requirements to attain a subsequent middle grades (5-8) endorsement in music.

- 21 semester hours in music
- 3 semester hours in methods of teaching **music** in middle grades.
- Music (143) test

Emily does not need to complete the General Middle Grades test because of two reasons:

- 1) Emily completed the General Middle Grades test as part of her approved middle grades (5-8) Art program.
- 2) Emily has completed one year of teaching experience within 5 through 8 grade span.

Emily may either contact an institution of higher education to audit her transcripts to ensure she meets the above requirements to be entitled, or apply through her ELIS account and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.



Scenario #5

Bess graduated from an Illinois approved program, receiving her initial license in Elementary Education (1-6). She is now interested in attaining a Reading Teacher endorsement in order to teach reading in the middle grades.

Q) What requirements must Bess meet in order to attain a Reading Teacher endorsement?

A) Because the Reading Teacher endorsement is available for the full PK-12 grade range, Bess does not need to complete coursework or testing specific to middle grades. She would need to complete the following requirements to attain a Reading Teacher endorsement.

- 24 semester hours of reading teacher coursework with a [distribution](#)
- And
- Reading Teacher (177) or Reading Specialist (176 or 221)

Requirements for additional endorsements issued in the PK-12 grade range may be found on page 12 of this document.



Middle Grades Requirements Tables

Requirements for educators seeking new or subsequent Middle School endorsements **prior to February 1, 2018**

I am a	REQUIREMENT
Early Childhood Education Teacher (B-2 or B-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood education teachers currently do not qualify to add a middle school endorsement as it is outside their grade range.
Elementary Education Teacher (K-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 semester hours in a content area • 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. <p><i>Middle School Endorsement will be issued for grades 5-8</i></p>
Elementary Education Teacher (1-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 semester hours in a content area • 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. <p><i>Middle School Endorsement will be issued for grades 5-8</i></p>
Secondary Education Teacher (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 semester hours in a content area • 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. <p><i>Middle School Endorsement will be issued for grades 6-8</i></p>
Special Teaching Educator (K-12 or PK-12) <i>Ex: Music, PE, Visual Arts, Reading Specialist, etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 semester hours in a content area • 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. <p><i>Middle School Endorsement will be issued for grades 5-8</i></p>
Special Education Teacher (PK-21) <i>Ex: Learning Behavior Specialist I, Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 semester hours in a content area • 6 semester hours of middle school professional education coursework. <p><i>Middle School Endorsement will be issued for grades 5-8</i></p>

Until January 31, 2018, educators may request institutions of higher education enter the endorsement into their ELIS account through the entitlement process.

- Educator would have one year to apply for the entitlement.

Or, until 11:59 pm CST on January 31, 2018, educators may apply for a middle school endorsement in their ELIS accounts and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.

- Educators would have two full fiscal years to satisfy any deficiencies identified during ISBE transcript evaluation.



Requirements for Educators seeking a new Middle Grades (5-8) endorsement **on or after February 1, 2018**

I am a	REQUIREMENT	
Early Childhood Education Teacher (B-2 or B-3)	Complete a full/focused middle grades program offered at any Illinois institution with an approved middle grades program.	<p><u>What is a “focused” Program?</u> Institutions may, at their discretion, compare the coursework and clinical experiences already completed by the applicant to the standards for the endorsement sought and, based on this comparison, may identify the applicant for a “focused” program consisting of coursework, testing and experiences that he or she must complete in order to meet those standards.</p> <p><u>Full Programs:</u> Educators completing a full program would be required to complete a test of basic skills and the edTPA (for initial licensure).</p>
Elementary Education Teacher (K-9)	Complete a full/focused middle grades program offered at any Illinois institution with an approved middle grades program.	
Elementary Education Teacher (1-6)	Complete a full/focused middle grades program offered at any Illinois institution with an approved middle grades program.	
Secondary Education Teacher (6-12)	Complete a full/focused middle grades program offered at any Illinois institution with an approved middle grades program.	
<p>Special Teaching Educator (K-12 or PK-12) <i>Ex: Music, PE, Visual Arts, Reading Specialist, etc.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p><u>TESTS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 OR -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test 	
<p>Special Education Teacher (PK-21) <i>Ex: Learning Behavior Specialist I, Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, etc.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p><u>TESTS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test 	
<p><i>The General Middle Grade test has not yet been created. ISBE is working with the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson to develop the test, and additional information regarding dates of availability will be forthcoming.</i></p>		

Educators may request institutions of higher education enter the new middle grades endorsement into their ELIS account through the entitlement process.

- Educator would have one year to apply for the entitlement.

Educators may apply for a new middle grades endorsement on their ELIS account and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.

- Educators would have two full fiscal years to satisfy any deficiencies identified during ISBE transcript evaluation.



Requirements for educators seeking subsequent Middle Grades (5-8) endorsements **on or after February 1, 2018**

I am a	REQUIREMENT
Elementary Education Teacher (K-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p>TESTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 OR -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test
Elementary Education Teacher (1-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p>TESTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 OR -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test
Middle Grade Teacher (5-8) <i>Completed IL/OOS approved MG program</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods • Content test
Secondary Education Teacher (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p>TESTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 OR -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test
Special Teaching Educator (K-12 or PK-12) <i>Ex: Music, PE, Visual Arts, Reading Specialist, etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p>TESTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content test • General Middle Grades test (<i>only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts</i>) <p><u>Waived if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 year teaching in grades 5-8 OR -Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test
Special Education Teacher (PK-21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 semester hours in a content area • 3 semester hours in content specific middle grades methods <p>TESTS:</p>

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Ex: Learning Behavior Specialist I, Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, etc.

- Content test
- General Middle Grades test (only required if educator is seeking endorsement outside the 4 core Middle Grade areas: Math, Science, Social Science & Language Arts)

Waived if:

- 1 year teaching in grades 5-8 **OR**
- Elementary/Middle Grades 110 Test

The General Middle Grades test has not yet been created. ISBE is working with the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson to develop the test, and additional information regarding dates of availability will be forthcoming.

Educators may request institutions of higher education enter the new middle grades endorsement into their ELIS account through entitlement.

- Educator would have one year to apply for the entitlement.

Educators may apply for a new middle grades endorsement on their ELIS account and undergo transcript evaluation through ISBE.

- Educators would have two full fiscal years to satisfy any deficiencies identified during ISBE transcript evaluation.

Available Middle Grades (5-8) endorsements **on or after February 1, 2018**, including corresponding content tests

Available Endorsement	Content Test
Art	Visual Arts (145)
Dance	Dance (140)
Health Education	Health Education (142 or 211)
Language Arts	Middle Grade Language Arts (201)
Learning Behavior Specialist I	LBSI (155)
Mathematics	Middle Grade Math (202)
Music	Music (143)
Physical Education	Physical Education (144)
Science	Middle Grade Science (203)
Social Sciences	Middle Grade Social Science (204)
Social Science-Geography	Geography (113)
Theater/Drama	Drama/Theater Arts (141)

- The General Middle Grades Test may be required in addition to the content tests identified above. Please see requirements table (pages 8-11)

On February 1, 2018, secondary career and technical education program areas (agricultural education; business, marketing, and computer education; business, marketing, and computer education [computer programming]; computer applications; computer science; family and consumer sciences; health science technology [health careers]; and technology education [industrial technology]) grade ranges will extend from grades 9-12 to grades 6-12. This is to combat potential shortages in these areas in the middle grades.



Exception to the Middle Grades (5-8) requirements on or after February 1, 2018.

On or after February 1, 2018, **all** educators (EC, ELED, MG, SECD, K-12, PK-12 & PK-21) seeking Middle Grades endorsements in the following area need to meet the requirements below. This includes those educators seeking a new (first) or subsequent (additional) endorsement in the 5-8 level. Additionally, educators holding only Jr. High endorsement would be eligible to attain these endorsements under the requirements listed below.

The following endorsement is considered an exception to other available middle grades endorsements, as educators are not teaching specific content to students but utilizing best practices and differentiation strategies to assist students with the content they are learning.

I am a seeking Middle Grades endorsement in ...	REQUIREMENT
Learning Behavior Specialist I (4 areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Middle Grades specific coursework or testing is required to qualify for an LBS I endorsement. Educators completing the requirements for the LBS I endorsement will receive LBS I endorsement in the grade range of the endorsement held.

PK-12 Endorsements

Effective July 7, 2017, the endorsements listed below will be issued/entitled using the **PK-12** range instead of separate and exclusive grade ranges, no matter the grade range an educator holds. Candidates must meet all requirements for the below endorsements prior to receiving licensure. This policy change is necessary insofar as many students are unable to access educational opportunities due to a shortage of appropriately endorsed teachers. Changing the grade range of these endorsements supports ISBE’s efforts to ensure equity of opportunities for each and every child in Illinois, as schooling is a primary way in which young people are introduced to content areas in which they may not otherwise be aware. Educators who already hold a grade band specific endorsement in the areas below may apply for the PK-12 grade range; ISBE will not issue the endorsements retroactively. Additionally, educators may add additional endorsements to the PK-12 grade range.

PK-12 Endorsements*
Foreign Languages
Library Information Specialist
Technology Specialist
Reading Teacher
English as a Second Language
Bilingual Education
Gifted Teacher

*Requirements (including distribution areas) for the above endorsements may be found [here](#).