

Good Morning,

My name is Campbell McClellan, and I am a senior at the University of Vermont, studying Middle Level Education. I am from Queensbury, New York, and I plan on teaching 7th and 8th-grade math at Edmunds Middle School in Burlington, Vermont, next year. It is with extreme gratitude and many thanks to the chair, vice-chair, and committee for the opportunity to speak here today.

People always tell me that it takes a “special” person to teach middle school, and I believe my education at the University of Vermont has prepared me to take on the unique nuances of middle grades and the young adolescents I will educate.

What makes the Middle Level Education program at The University of Vermont special is our distinct focus on students in grades 5–9; a group of more than 21 million young adolescents in the U.S. who are navigating one of the most dynamic and formative stages of development. These students are often overlooked and underheard, yet their experiences, identities, and growth deserve focused attention and advocacy. The Middle-Level program prepares future educators to understand both the academic and social-emotional needs of adolescents, which feels different from a traditional elementary or secondary pathway.

This program gets us into middle schools early and often. From my very first semester at UVM I have had practicums at middle schools throughout VT, giving me insight into the realities of middle school classrooms and the confidence to teach at this level. As I gained more classroom experience, feedback from mentors, and opportunities to reflect, I became more comfortable adapting lessons, managing behavior, and building relationships with students. The preparation program creates space to make mistakes, reflect, and improve before becoming fully responsible for a classroom. That gradual development is something a fast-track route may not provide in the same depth. This educator preparation program has also helped me understand that teaching is more than delivering content. Effective teaching involves understanding students’ developmental needs, creating inclusive environments, collaborating with families and colleagues, and continuously reflecting on practice. Having structured preparation at UVM has made me feel more prepared not only to teach lessons, but also to respond thoughtfully to the real challenges and responsibilities of being a middle-level educator.

One thing I wish had been available during my educator preparation experience was stronger financial support during student teaching. Student teaching is essentially a full-time job, but many teacher candidates are unpaid while also balancing tuition, transportation, housing, and other living expenses. That financial pressure can make the experience stressful and can even discourage some students from entering or completing teacher preparation programs. Having

stipends, paid student teaching opportunities, or additional financial aid would allow future teachers to focus more fully on developing their practice and supporting students.

Thank you again for your time.

I am happy to answer questions now or at the end of all presentations.