

Annual Conference for Middle Level Education

November 5–8, 2017 • Philadelphia, PA

Call for Presentations

Middle grades educators from around the world gather at the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) Annual Conference for Middle Level Education. This is the conference for dialogue, learning, and exploration of topics critical to schools, agencies, and individuals dedicated to the education, development, and growth of students ages 10-15 years old.

We are interested in sessions that include practical, hands-on solutions and theoretical, research-based presentations. Our goal is to offer a varied program selection in which the professional middle grades educator can find what they need to support their professional learning goals. Session types include Concurrent Sessions, Speed Learning Sessions, and Spark and Tell Sessions.

Session Types

Concurrent Sessions

These are 60-minute sessions dealing with a variety of current topics appropriate to middle level education. Innovative instructional methods, trends, and special programs are featured. Each concurrent session is assigned to a session room. Podium, microphone, LCD projector, audio sound patch, Wi-Fi, and screen will be provided. Additional AV can be purchased for each session.

Speed Learning Sessions

These sessions are quickly becoming the most popular session format at our conference. They allow for collaboration and interaction between the presenter and attendees, in an energizing environment. Each session will run concurrently with other speed learning sessions, within the same room. Each speed learning session is assigned to a roundtable. The physical roundtable will hold 8 to 10 people. It is estimated that there will be 40 roundtables set up in the room for this event. There will be (3) session rotations within 60-minutes, so you present the same 15-minute session three times in a row, each to a different audience. Attendees will have an additional (5) minutes to move to their next table selection between session times. The AMLE session facilitator will signal the attendees and presenters when each session begins and ends. Wi-Fi is provided. Other AV is not available.

Spark & Tell Sessions

These sessions are designed to be fast-paced and informative. They should spark or ignite an idea and provide resources to help attendees dive deeper on their own. Each presentation will feature an innovative idea, inspiration, or initiative happening right now in classrooms and schools. Presenters will provide a 10-minute PowerPoint, which will be preloaded with other Spark & Tell sessions. They will run back to back within 60-minutes, with time for Q&A at the end where attendees can ask a follow-up of any of the presenters.

Special Note: In our ever-changing world, it is crucial to prepare our students with real-world activities using real-world technologies and resources. We believe this is also important for adult learners. Special consideration will be given to sessions that engage and connect attendees in authentic ways. Presenting using technology, active engagement, and problem-solving skills is as important as teaching these skills.

Deadlines

AMLE must receive the completed proposal by **February 10, 2017**. Complete the proposal online at <http://www.amle.org/annual/cfp>. Selections will be made by **April 10, 2017** and applicants are notified via email of the selection status.

Please note that if you are accepted to present at the conference, you serve on a contributing basis and are required to purchase registration. You will not be reimbursed for registration, lodging, travel, audiovisual equipment rental, or additional costs.

Proposal Review Process

Proposals are read as part of a juried process by the Program Review Committee. Applicants will be notified of their proposal's status after the Program Review Committee's evaluation of all entries.

Applicants must:

- Develop a proposal to represent the selected strand.
- Make sure the proposal is relevant and significant to middle level education.
- Clearly describe the goals and rationale for the proposed presentation.
- Indicate the intended audience (e.g., teachers, administrators, professors).
- Make sure the title reflects the content of the proposal.
- Avoid pejorative references and discriminatory comments.

The Program Review Committee chooses presenters from a broad spectrum of geographical, racial, ethnic, and professional groups. In addition to the guidelines listed, evaluations from previous AMLE Annual Conference presentations and the number of proposals submitted per presenter are taken into consideration. Presenters are not guaranteed continuing slots on the program, even though past sessions may have been well received.

Proposals are graded based on the rubric on page 5.

Guidelines for Completing the Proposal

Presentation

Abstract content must be clear and contain the three listed requirements (goals, rationale, and activities). Presentations that contain negative references based on ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or beliefs will not be considered. Please make sure the title reflects the content of the session. Please review the Conference Strands, Session Selection Grading, and This We Believe information located on pages 2-7 for additional details to help you with the proposal process.

Speaker Profile

The speaker profile is included with the proposal during the review process. Please update the contact information and biography online at

<http://www.amle.org/annual/Presenters/SpeakerProfile>.



AMLE2017 Conference Strands

21st Century Skills

Many skills are needed by students to be successful in the 21st century. Today's students must have the skills to succeed in an ever-changing and increasingly global environment. To ensure 21st century readiness for every student, schools must ensure all students develop their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills while fostering creativity and innovation skills to help them meet the challenges of the future.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Cooperative learning
- Information, media, and technology skills
- Fostering curiosity, creativity, and innovation
- Flipped and blended learning
- Global ready competencies and skills
- Helping students become "big picture" thinkers
- Life and career skills
- Problem-solving and critical-thinking skills
- Teaching communication and collaboration

Advisory and Personalized Learning

Middle grades educators are advocates for all young adolescents. Educators serve their students well when they model inclusive, collaborative, and team-oriented approaches to learning. Interactions among staff members and between students reflect democracy and fairness.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Advisory programs, services, and curriculum
- Effects of personal culture in the school and in the classroom
- Equitable access to learning
- Student advocacy programs
- Student-directed learning
- Student engagement
- Student voice in developing and directing projects

Assessment

Both formative and summative assessments are important for a comprehensive assessment system within a school or district. Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment and evaluation provide information and evidence about a student's learning progress. Such information and data help students, teachers, and family members select immediate learning goals, evaluate growth, and plan teaching and learning strategies.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Authentic assessment methods and structures
- Balanced assessment systems—both formative and summative
- Communicating assessment results
- Connecting appropriate assessments with state standards
- Developing appropriate assessments for middle grades students
- Performance-based assessments
- Portfolios, rubrics, and performance assessments
- Student peer review
- Student-led conferencing
- Student goal-setting
- Using technology for assessment

Effective Leadership

Courageous, collaborative middle grades leaders are knowledgeable about the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. Leaders understand the theory and best practice of middle level education. They strive to educate colleagues, parents, policymakers, and community members. Courageous, collaborative leadership empowers people to make difficult decisions addressing the education and well-being of each young adolescent.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Advocating for young adolescents and effective middle grades practice
- Aligning all aspects of a middle grades school culture to student and adult learning
- Building capacity within the school and district
- Leading and maintaining positive school climate
- Developing teachers as leaders
- Establishing a shared vision for the school and communicating it
- Establishing collaborative leadership
- Funding structures and sources
- Leading health and wellness programs
- Hiring and retaining quality middle grades teachers
- Leading and monitoring school improvement
- Providing opportunities for staff input and leadership development
- Reflective leadership practices
- School-community partnerships
- Teacher evaluation and merit pay
- Teacher morale
- Using school-wide data for decision making

AMLE2017 Conference Strands Continued

Middle Grades Students and Support Services

Middle grades educators understand young adolescents and enjoy being in their presence. They are sensitive to individual differences and respond positively to the natural diversity present in middle grades classrooms. All middle grades students deserve to receive an education in a way that addresses their individual needs and learning goals. This may include an individually planned and monitored educational plan, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and/or other interventions designed to help all learners achieve a higher level of success in school and in the community.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Adolescent development
- Brain-based teaching and learning
- Closing the achievement gap
- Co-teaching models that support all learners
- Cultural competency for staff
- Gifted/Talented programs
- Guidance, family support, and social services
- Inclusion strategies
- Intervention strategies
- Library and educational resources
- Motivating students
- RTI (Response to Intervention)
- School-wide discipline plans
- Social Inclusion practices
- Student-led IEPs
- The diverse school community
- The young adolescent learner
- Understanding poverty and its effects on student learning
- Using and fostering the multiple intelligences
- Working with special needs students

Professional Preparation and Growth

Effective middle grades educators understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group and are thoroughly knowledgeable about their students, the content they teach, and effective instruction and assessment strategies. Educators need specific preparation before they enter middle grades classrooms and continuous professional development as they pursue their careers. In addition, schools and school districts have the prime responsibility of providing ongoing professional development focused on identified school and student needs.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Alternative licensure programs
- Field experiences and student teaching
- Induction, coaching, and mentoring
- Job-embedded professional development
- NCATE Standards
- Professional learning communities
- Professional learning tools and methods
- Providing teachers with the skills to be more effective
- Questioning and constructive feedback strategies
- Standards for professional learning
- Teacher preparation programs
- Teacher proficiency

Research

Each year the conference features current research related to the education of young adolescents. It is AMLE's intention that this research will assist middle grades practitioners and policymakers in adopting, advocating for, and implementing sound educational practices. The presentations featured in this strand include research studies that have employed quantitative, qualitative, mixed methodologies, and action research. Of particular interest are presentations that involve large-scale, longitudinal studies; mixed methodologies; experimental studies; and studies that examine, in an integrated fashion, more than one of the middle school reform components or practices.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

Middle grades teachers and curriculum developers recognize that covering and learning are not synonymous. In developmentally responsive middle grades schools, curriculum is designed to advance skills and knowledge and is clearly based on established standards—both content and performance. The curriculum of a successful middle level school must also be relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory. Curriculum must be integrative and coherent, must help students connect school experiences to their lives outside the school, and must encourage students to reflect on the totality of their experiences.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Character education
- Cross-content and disciplinary literacy
- Curriculum and Content Standards and appropriate middle grades practices
- Curriculum that is rigorous, challenging, and motivates students
- Differentiated instruction
- Environmental education
- Exploratory/Essentials curriculum
- Interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum
- Multicultural education in the middle grades
- Project-based learning
- Service-learning projects
- Social skills
- Standards-based curriculum
- STEM/STEAM in the middle grades
- Subject-specific curriculum (e.g., math, art, music, science, language arts, social studies, health, physical education, world language)

AMLE2017 Conference Strands Continued

Safe and Healthy School Environment

A successful school for young adolescents is an inviting and safe community that encourages learning. Teachers, staff, and students learn and put into practice the skills of direct feedback, healthy and appropriate confrontation, positive risk taking, and personal and collaborative goal setting. An emphasis on health, wellness, and safety permeates the entire school. Like young adolescents, the climate of developmentally responsive middle grades schools requires constant nurturing.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Bullying prevention and intervention
- Closing the Achievement Gap
- Communicating with non-traditional family units
- Creating a college and career-ready culture
- Creating a school-wide climate of support and acceptance
- Developing and nurturing the learning community
- Developing student leaders
- Dropout Prevention
- Family relationships, involvement, and programs
- Gender and middle level student achievement
- Healthy, supportive school climate
- Improving teacher working conditions
- Learning communities
- Parent liaisons
- Positive discipline and restorative justice
- Prevention programs and services
- School safety and security efforts
- Supporting parents of special education students
- Understanding cultural and language differences

Structures

School structures and organization have a great impact on student learning. Teams are often considered the heart of an effective middle grades school. Effective teams lead to improved student achievement, increased parental contacts, and enhanced school climate and student attitudes. Successful schools for young adolescents also evidence flexibility in scheduling, grouping, and staffing.

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Alternate school structures (e.g., single-gender classrooms, uniforms)
- Alternate student grouping (e.g., looping, multiage grouping)
- Extended learning time models
- Flexible school schedules and structures
- International Baccalaureate (IB) programs
- Learning communities
- Online education programs
- Professional learning communities (PLCs)
- School-within-a-school
- Student communities
- Teams and teaming
- Transitions (elementary to middle and middle to high)
- Upside-down school models
- Vertical alignment of the curriculum: elementary, high school, and post-secondary efforts

AMLE2017 Session Selection Grading Rubric

The following scales will be used to determine if a presentation should be included at the AMLE2017 annual conference. Each dimension is graded on a scale of 0-5.

Is content important/relevant or innovative/new to middle level education?



Does the content reflect the characteristics of *This We Believe*?



Are learning objectives clear, relevant, and realistic?



Does the presenter demonstrate expertise in the topic?



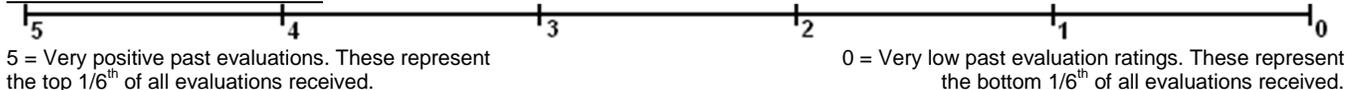
Is current technology being used to present the materials and engage/connect attendees?



Will the presenters demonstrate active engagement and effective educational practices in their session?



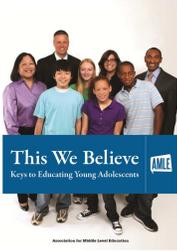
Past session evaluations



Expected session attendance



AMLE This We Believe Connections



This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents Summary of Essential Attributes and Characteristics

AMLE's position paper, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents* (2010), has an overarching framework of four essential attributes that connect with the 16 characteristics of successful middle grades schools, and each session at AMLE2015 should be aligned with the characteristics that are relevant to its content.

Essential Attributes

An education for young adolescents must be

Developmentally responsive

Using the distinctive nature of young adolescents as the foundation upon which all decisions about school organization, policies, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are made.

Challenging

Ensuring that every student learns and every member of the learning community is held to high expectations.

Empowering

Providing all students with the knowledge and skills they need to take responsibility for their lives, to address life's challenges, to function successfully at all levels of society, and to be creators of knowledge.

Equitable

Advocating for and ensuring every student's right to learn and providing appropriately challenging and relevant learning opportunities for every student.

Characteristics of Successful Schools for Young Adolescents

This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (2010), organizes the 16 research-based characteristics of effective middle grades education into three areas as follows:

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them. (Value Young Adolescents)

Effective middle grades educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents and advocate for them. They understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group, the appropriate curriculum, effective learning and assessment strategies, and their importance as models.

Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning. (Active Learning)

Instructional practices place students at the center of the learning process. As they develop the ability to hypothesize, to organize information into useful and meaningful constructs, and to grasp long-term cause and effect relationships, students are ready and able to play a major role in their own learning and education.

Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant. (Challenging Curriculum)

Curriculum embraces every planned aspect of a school's educational program. An effective middle level curriculum is distinguished by learning activities that appeal to young adolescents, is exploratory and challenging, and incorporates student-generated questions and concerns.

Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches. (Multiple Learning Approaches)

Teaching and learning approaches should accommodate the diverse skills, abilities, and prior knowledge of young adolescents, cultivate multiple intelligences, draw upon students' individual learning styles, and utilize digital tools. When learning experiences capitalize on students' cultural, experiential, and personal backgrounds, new concepts are built on knowledge students already possess.

Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it. (Varied Assessments)

Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment measures, including both formative and summative ones, provide evidence about every student's learning progress. Such information helps students, teachers, and family members select immediate learning goals and plan further education.

AMLE This We Believe Connections Continued

Leadership and Organization

A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision. (Shared Vision)

When a shared vision and mission statement become operational, middle level educators pursue appropriate practices in developing a challenging academic program; they develop criteria to guide decisions and a process to make needed changes.

Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices. (Committed Leaders)

Courageous, collaborative middle level leaders understand young adolescents, the society in which they live, and the theory of middle level education. Such leaders understand the nuances of teaming, student advocacy, exploration, and assessment as components of a larger middle level program.

Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration. (Courageous & Collaborative Leaders)

Leaders understand that successful schools committed to the long-term implementation of the middle school concept must be collaborative enterprises. The principal, working collaboratively with a leadership team, focuses on building a learning community that involves all teachers and places top priority on the education and healthy development of every student, teacher, and staff member.

Ongoing professional development reflects best educational practices. (Professional Development)

Professional development is a continuing activity in middle level schools where teachers take advantage of every opportunity to work with colleagues to improve the learning experiences for their students.

Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships. (Organizational Structures)

The ways schools organize teachers and group and schedule students have a significant impact on the learning environment. Interdisciplinary teams, common planning time, block scheduling, and elimination of tracking are related conditions that contribute to improved achievement.

Culture and Community

The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all. (School Environment)

A successful school for young adolescents is an inviting, supportive, and safe place, a joyful community that promotes in-depth learning and enhances students' physical and emotional well-being.

Every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate. (Adult Advocate)

Academic success and personal growth increase markedly when young adolescents' affective needs are met. Each student must have one adult to support that student's academic and personal development.

Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents. (Guidance Services)

Both teachers and specialized professionals are readily available to offer the assistance many students need in negotiating their lives in and out of school.

Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies. (Health & Wellness)

Abundant opportunities are available for students to develop and maintain healthy minds and bodies and to understand their personal growth through health-related programs, policies, and curricula.

The school actively involves families in the education of their children. (Family Involvement)

Schools and families must work together to provide the best possible learning for every young adolescent. Schools take the initiative in involving and educating families.

The school includes community and business partners. (Community & Business)

Genuine community involvement is a fundamental component of successful schools for young adolescents. Such schools seek appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission.



More information about the four essential attributes and 16 characteristics can be found in This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents, published by the Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, available at www.amle.org/store