



# **National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education**

## **Spring 2026 Newsletter**

### **Presidential Ponderings**

**A letter from the President**

Kristina Falbe - NAPOMLE President

As we move into another semester, I want to begin by simply saying thank you. Thank you for your continued commitment to middle level education, to NAPOMLE, and to the young adolescents and teacher candidates whose futures are shaped by the work we do together.

This year, I find myself returning again and again to a question that I suspect many of you are sitting with too: *What happens to the distinct voice of middle level education when the structures that have traditionally housed it begin to shift?*

Across the country, standalone middle level programs in higher education are changing. In many institutions, our work is being folded into broader K-8 or 6-12 preparation programs, our courses consolidated, program identities are blurred, and faculty lines absorbed into departments where middle level is one priority among many.

Despite this, I continue to be impressed by the resilience, creativity, and commitment that so many of you demonstrate in navigating these changes. In the conversations I have had with many of you, I am continually struck by the ways you are sustaining the distinctive work of middle level teacher education while continuing to meet the needs of young adolescents both nationally and globally.

In this moment of change, I see a call for renewed intentionality in our advocacy, our research, and our collective voice. A call to articulate, clearly and persistently, why the developmental distinctiveness of young adolescents demands preparation that reflects it. A call to ensure that when middle level gets folded into a larger program, it does not get quietly erased from it.

Dr. John Lounsbury reminded us that no other age level carries more importance for the future of individuals and of society. That was true when he wrote it. It is true now. The structural pressures our programs face, whether through integration, consolidation, or declining enrollments, do not diminish that truth, but they make this work more urgent.

This is why NAPOMLE matters. This is why your voice, actions, and participation in NAPOMLE matters. When you are the only middle level voice in your department, or one of very few, I hope NAPOMLE is a community that reminds you that you are not alone. Our scholarship, our conversations, and our collective presence at gatherings like the AMLE conference are how we carry forward our shared commitment to young adolescents and to the educators who will serve them.

As we move through this year together, I am committed to centering several key questions in our work as an organization:

- How do we support one another as advocates within our institutions?
- How do we make the case for middle level preparation to deans, provosts, and accreditation bodies?
- How do we ensure our teacher candidates, regardless of program structure, receive what they need to truly understand and serve young adolescents?

These are not easy questions, and there are certainly no simple solutions. But I am confident in this community and look forward to engaging in this work together with thoughtfulness, persistence, and purpose. I also look forward to continuing these conversations and hope to see many of you at AMLE (see the [call for presentations](#) below), where we will no doubt deepen this dialogue and our shared commitment to the field.

With appreciation and purpose,  
Kristina





**NAPOMLE Best Practice Session - AMLE 2026  
Nashville, Tennessee - November 4-7, 2026**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**Proposals may be submitted through Friday, June 12, 2026.**

We invite teacher educators to share insights into preparing the next generation of middle grades educators to serve diverse young adolescents. Submit a proposal for the NAPOMLE Best Practice Roundtable Session that highlights your MLE work, research, innovations, and/or successes of your middle grades teacher education program. Presentations related to the following current NAPOMLE goals are encouraged, but all relevant proposals regarding young adolescents, middle grades education, and middle grades teacher education will be considered.

**NAPOMLE Goals**

1. Communicate the needs of young adolescents to a broader audience, including community groups, professional groups, and retirement associations.
2. Disseminate middle level education research and best practice in user-friendly ways to a variety of groups including young adolescents, teachers, parents, and community groups.
3. Address the global nature of young adolescents by broadening the diversity of the NAPOMLE membership and meeting the needs of a more diverse young adolescent community.
4. Disseminate the critical importance of having a teaching workforce that is committed to and specifically trained to teach the young adolescent to school districts, state departments of education, federal government organizations, and boards of education.
5. Engage in political outreach to key stakeholders on behalf of young adolescents and middle level education.

Contact the NAPOMLE President Kristina Falbe [atknfalbe@ilstu.edu](mailto:atknfalbe@ilstu.edu) with questions or for more information.

Link to submit proposal:

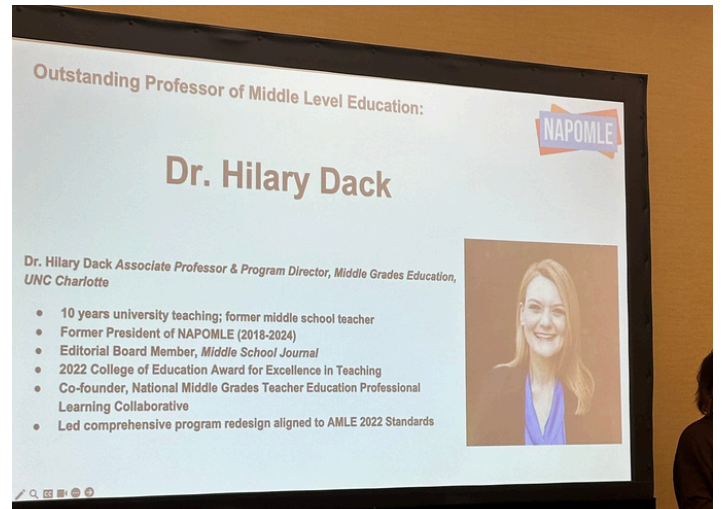
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeOtzB9QSlIRuyVs-gOUZIGFBuYtzGVZ-4RyTuDrFcE54towA/viewform>

# Best Practices Session - AMLE 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana



# NAPOMLE Business Meeting - AMLE 2025 Indianapolis, Indiana



## Membership Reminder - Renew Online



Remember that you can pay your dues online! See the link on our main page of our website or click [here!](#) Contact Elizabeth at [goundeliza@sfasu.edu](mailto:goundeliza@sfasu.edu).

# Outstanding Middle Level Professor Winners - AMLE 2025 Dr. Toni Williams & Dr. Hillary Dack

**Congratulations to Drs. Toni Williams and Hillary Dack for being the 2025 NAPOMLE Outstanding Middle Level Professor award winners.**



Dr. Toni Williams is a Professor in the Teacher Education Department at the University of South Carolina, where she serves as the middle grades education program coordinator. Toni is an AMLE Board of Trustees member, past president of the South Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education, contributed over 40 middle grades publications to the field of middle level education, and is a tremendous advocate for her students. Dr. Williams impact has been felt by many in the field of middle level education. Congratulations Dr. Williams!



Dr. Hillary Dack is an Associate Professor in the Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education Department at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, where she also serves as the program director for the B.A. in Middle Grades Education. Hillary is a former president of NAPOMLE, an editorial board member for *Middle School Journal*, co-founder of the National Middle Grades Teacher Education Professional Learning Collaborative, and strong advocate for middle level education and teacher development. Congratulations to Dr. Dack!

## Nominate a Colleague for a NAPOMLE AWARD

Consider nominating a colleague and/or program for recognition at the AMLE conference in November 2026. NAPOMLE has five awards that recognize outstanding contributions made to middle level education. The criteria for each award can be found on our website. Please send your nominations/letters of support and a current vita to Christopher Weiler, [cweiler@kutztown.edu](mailto:cweiler@kutztown.edu) by September 1, 2026.

- 1) Outstanding Middle Level Teacher Education Program
- 2) Outstanding Professor of Middle Level Education
- 3) Outstanding Middle Level Teacher Education Candidate
- 4) Honorary Professor Emeritus Award
- 5) Outstanding CMLA Chapter

## Program Highlights - Submit a feature for the NAPOMLE Newsletter

Is your middle level program participating in something exciting? Do you have successful approaches for student recruitment and retention? Do you have a colleague whose work is positively impacting middle level education? Have you engaged students in a meaningful and unique field experience? Please consider sharing the wonderful things being accomplished to celebrate middle level education across our different colleges and universities.

Feature articles should be between 250-1000 words. Please include a description of the person/program and how they/the program has impacted the middle level education community. Including pictures of the person or program in action is also helpful.

Article submissions can be sent to Chris Cook at [cookcm5@appstate.edu](mailto:cookcm5@appstate.edu).



## Current Issues in Middle Level Education Journal

NAPOMLE's Current Issues in Middle Level Education journal is available to highlight your work in middle level education. Reach out to Editor Amanda Wall with ideas, for support, and to submit manuscripts.



**NAPOMLE**

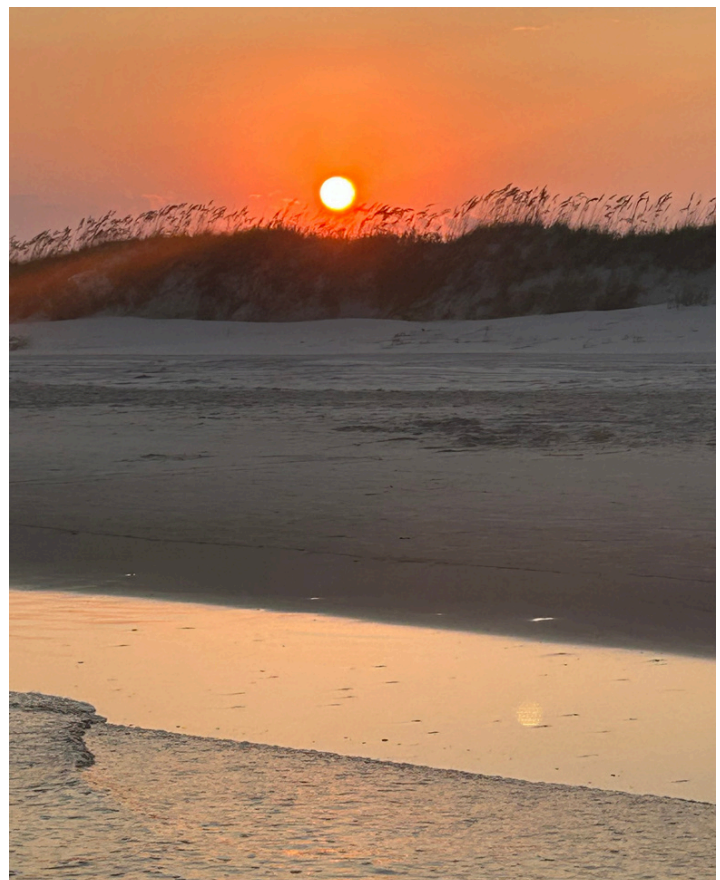
**Upcoming Events**



AMLE Annual Conference  
November 4-7, 2026  
INashville, Tennessee

Please make plans to attend!

**Have a safe  
and  
relaxing  
summer  
break!**



All of the officers who serve our organization give graciously of their time, energy, and expertise.

Members of the Executive Council are listed here and may also be found in the [About Us](#) area of [NAPOMLE.com](http://NAPOMLE.com)

**Kristina Falbe - President (2024-2026)**  
Illinois State University  
[knfalbe@ilstu.edu](mailto:knfalbe@ilstu.edu)

**Bridget Coleman - Past President (2024-2026)**  
University of South Carolina at Aiken  
[BridgetC@usca.edu](mailto:BridgetC@usca.edu)

**Robin Mis - President Elect (2024-2026)**  
Kent State University  
[rmis@kent.edu](mailto:rmis@kent.edu)

**Elizabeth Gound - Treasurer (2024-2026)**  
SFA State University  
[goundeliza@sfasu.edu](mailto:goundeliza@sfasu.edu)

**Sarah Pennington - Secretary (2025-2027)**  
Montana State University  
[sarah.pennington2@montana.edu](mailto:sarah.pennington2@montana.edu)

**Christopher Weiler - Director, Eastern Region (2025-2027)**  
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania  
[cweiler@kutztown.edu](mailto:cweiler@kutztown.edu)

**Rachel Askew- Director, Southern Region (2025-2027)**  
Appalachian State University  
[Askewr@appstate.edu](mailto:Askewr@appstate.edu)

**Christy McDowell - Director, Southern Region (2025-2027)**  
University of Arkansas - Little Rock  
[cmcdowell1@ualr.edu](mailto:cmcdowell1@ualr.edu)

**Carolyn Weber - Director, Northern Region (2025-2027)**  
University of Northern Iowa

**Michelle Schwartze - Director, Northern Region (2025-2027)**  
Missouri University of Science and Technology  
[schwartzem@mst.edu](mailto:schwartzem@mst.edu)

Consider nominating a colleague or yourself for positions that will be open this year!

Eastern Region Director  
(1)  
Western Regional Director  
(2)