Teaching in the middle is unique, difficult, and important. The charge of the middle level section of NCTE is to support that very specific and unique work. We believe that teaching and learning in the middle MATTERS.

When we come together at the 2016 NCTE Annual Convention in Atlanta, we gather around the theme of "the faces of advocacy." While we often consider advocacy something we do beyond our classrooms in political spaces, it is also true that we should advocate for our work and our students to other educators. The Middle Level Section Steering Committee saw the theme as an opportunity to change up our programming structure, designing a full day of programming meant to bring about a more cogent awareness of the work you, the middle level practitioner, and your students do every single day. This year’s Annual Convention should inspire you and ignite new possibilities in your classroom. Each session will explore how and why our work as middle level teachers MATTERS.

The day starts with Why Middle Matters: A Conversation on Powerful Teaching for our Quirky, Amazing Middle Schoolers. This session brings together a diverse panel of some of the nation’s most respected middle grades educators for a moderated conversation about what it means to teach and learn in our middle level English classrooms.

In Why Middle Matters: Teachers Voices, attendees will meet invited middle level teachers sharing the best approaches, methods, and projects they have used in their classrooms. These showcase teachers have been tapped by their local NCTE affiliates as innovative, impactful, and deserving of our notice. This session will be rich with models, examples, student work, and discussion of what best practice looks like in the middle level.

Because we value opportunities for teachers to tell their stories, Why Middle Matters: Teachers as Writers will be a facilitated writers’ workshop for teachers. Led by Voices from the Middle coeditors Shelbie Witte and Sara Kajder and contributing editor Christopher Lehman, this practical, hands-on session will be formatted much like a professional writing workshop to capture the moments that have marked your own classroom work alongside middle level learners. In addition, this workshop format mirrors what you might do in your own classroom writer’s workshop.

Often underrepresented in a convention space, middle level students’ voices will be heard in Why Middle Matters: Students Advocate for Next Steps in Middle Level Teaching and Learning, a special session where middle school students from the Atlanta area take the lead and show us how they are advocating for better teaching and learning in their schools.

The Middle Mosaic will be the culminating event of this day about Why Middle Matters. This dynamic session will bring together the conversations emerging across the day and fold in the voices of YA and practitioner authors.

In addition to the Middle Level Meet-Up and the Middle Level Luncheon, these are sessions you do not want to miss. Look for them in your Conference Program and join us as we celebrate the energy, drive, and creative purpose we all share in the middle. Because, we know that Middle Matters.

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