Laurie Halse Anderson is the New York Times bestselling author who writes for kids of all ages. Known for tackling tough subjects with humor and sensitivity, her work has earned numerous national and state awards, along with international recognition.

Dennie Palmer Wolf is a principal researcher at WolfBrown, focusing on the design, implementation, evaluation, and research that help communities examine and improve how young people and their families gain access to learning, culture, and creativity in and outside of formal institutions.

Steven Holochwost is a research scientist at the Science of Learning Institute and a visiting assistant professor at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University.

Naomi Shihab Nye’s most recent books are The Turtle of Oman (Greenwillow) and Famous (Wings Press), illustrated by Lisa Desimini. Two of her poems have been streamed during U2 concerts on the 2017 Joshua Tree tour. Her forthcoming book is Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners (Greenwillow).

Penny Kittle is a high school English teacher and president of the Book Love Foundation. She spends half of the year teaching and half of the year traveling to work with teachers. Most days she writes in the early morning and falls asleep with a book in her hand.

Robert C. Probst is professor emeritus of English education at Georgia State University. He is the author of Response and Analysis, coeditor with Kylene Beers and Linda Rief of Adolescent Literacy (Heinemann), coauthor with Kylene Beers of Notice and Note and Reading Nonfiction (both Heinemann), and Disrupting Thinking: Why How We Read Matters (Scholastic).

Katherine Sokolowski has taught for 21 years—from kindergarten through seventh grade—and currently teaches seventh grade in Monticello, IL. Her thoughts about the power of relationships to engage readers and writers have appeared on NPR and Choice Literacy.

Robyn Seglem, a former middle level language arts teacher, is an associate professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University, where she teaches language arts methods courses to middle level preservice teachers, as well as graduate level literacy and educational technology courses.

Melissa VanZant, a former special educator, is a National Board for Professional Teaching Standard–certified language arts teacher at Trailridge Middle School in Shawnee Mission, KS, and a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University.

Sarah Bonner is an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Heyworth Junior High School in Heyworth, IL, and a doctoral student at Illinois State University.

Alyssa Fontela and Chris White began their first year as classroom teachers in 2017. They are both graduates of the MAT English Education program at the University of Georgia.

Jeffrey D. Wilhelm is Distinguished Professor of English Education at Boise State University in Boise, ID, and founding director of the Boise State Writing Project. He is the author or coauthor of 37 books about literacy teaching and learning and has won NCTE’s Promising Research award for You Gotta Be the Book and the David H. Russell Award for research for Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys and for Reading Unbound.

Heather D. Anderson is an eighth-grade pre-AP English teacher at Stillwater Jr. High School and is a graduate student in the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership: Curriculum Studies program at Oklahoma State University.

Cathy Fleischer is a professor of writing and English education at Eastern Michigan University and Special Imprint editor for NCTE’s Principles in Practice series. Cathy works with teachers at all levels on issues of advocacy, teacher research, and writing pedagogy and presents and publishes widely in these areas.

Donalyn Miller, Colby Sharp, Cindy Minnich, and Katherine Sokolowski are the facilitators of the Nerdy Book Club blog (www.nerdybookclub.com), a community-based blog that invites teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, booksellers, and families to celebrate the artists who write and illustrate for young people and share ideas for engaging children with reading through their caring adults.

Linda Rief, eighth-grade teacher at Oyster River Middle School in Durham, NH, crafts Student Voices, writing alongside her middle school students to show the beauty and possibilities that lie within the words our students use to make sense of their world. She can be reached at editlin@comcast.net.

Lisa Scherff teaches English and AP Research at Cypress Lake High School in Fort Myers, FL.

Christopher Lehman, chair of the Middle Level Section Steering Committee of NCTE and founding director of the Educator Collaborative, explores the struggles, successes, and dreams of early-career Middle Level Educators, from preservice through sixth year, in each New Voices column.

Amy Gutierrez Baker is the digital teacher-librarian at West Jefferson Middle School in Conifer, CO, and a member of the NCTE Middle Level Section Steering Committee.
Twenty-five years ago, Voices from the Middle began with what seems on the surface to be a simple charge. Maureen Barbieri and Linda Rief, the founding editors, wrote in their first editorial that “Voices from the Middle is an invitation to teachers to think with us about what matters most in our classrooms” (p. 1). Further, in the first Call for Proposals, they remind us that “Voices from the Middle is based on the premise that middle school teachers face a unique set of circumstances and challenges, and that hearing from other middle school teachers about their successful solutions or concerns begins an ongoing process of conversation and reflection” (p. 1). This is a journal deeply rooted in teachers’ stories and struggles, students’ discoveries and triumphs, and our many responses to shifts in the contexts and policies impacting our middle level classrooms, curricula, standards, and learning.

As such, this very special issue has been crafted to honor where we have been—and to look with wonder and hope toward where we are headed. The pages of the previous twenty-four volumes of Voices from the Middle have inspired curricular shifts, challenged our thinking on what makes the middle level unique, captured moments of teachers and students working and writing and learning together, and connected us as a community. As Kylene Beers wrote early in her editorship, “writing must be for something, for someone” (2000, p. 4). This issue proves that teacher writing moves our practice, speaks blunt and honest truths, enacts joy, and enriches the lives of the adolescents it leads us to see anew.

In honor and recognition of this work, this issue brings us back to several seminal texts that have appeared in Voices over its run and either pairs them with “updates” from the original authors or amplifies them with the voices of writers and teachers who have grown and become better because of the ideas these pieces offer. Beginning with Naomi Shihab Nye’s response to an early article from Maureen Barbieri, these are pieces that indulge, inspire, and excite. Among these, Penny Kittle revisits her first practitioner article and reminds us now of the power and importance of a teacher’s writing. Bob Probst revisits his seminal article, “Difficult Days and Difficult Texts,” and challenges us to action in “Impossible Days and Simple Texts.” And Jeff Wilhelm reminds us why the middle level is marked with true possibility. We hope you’ll delight in revisiting the many pieces we’ve returned to and explore the responses and updates as possibilities in seeing things with new eyes.

We are indebted to the guidance and assistance of each of the former editors of Voices, as they played a role in helping us to identify which stories and articles needed to be revisited, but they also were instrumental in guiding and crafting the journal to speak to the readers it serves. They include Maureen Barbieri and Linda...

This issue also introduces two new columnists to the Voices team. Cathy Fleischer will guide us in each issue to consider how we raise our voices in advocacy for our students, our classrooms, and our communities. We also welcome Lisa Scherff, who will use her column to unpack recent research and help us see how to meaningfully use it in practice. The YA Lit author for this issue truly needs no introduction within a community of teacher-readers. Laurie Halse Anderson returns to the pages of Voices to invite us to take a leap—and to bravely use our voices.

Twenty-five years from that starting point, our constant remains the same—our unabashed and dazzling love for the readers and writers who fill our middle school classrooms. We take delight in their energy, their brilliance, and their youthful spark. As we’ve explored in earlier issues under our editorship, we teach now in a time that feels uncertain. Despite this, it is also a time of acts and moments of great hope. So, as we look to the next twenty-five years of Voices, we renew our commitment to the roots of our journal—to sharing teachers’ stories of practice, of struggle, of belief, and, most importantly, of hope. We have much to do.

References


Voices from the Middle

The NCTE Voices from the Middle podcast is a radio show featuring middle level ELA teachers from across the United States, practitioner-leaders in our field, YA and middle grades authors, and other surprise guests. All podcasts tie to a specific issue or volume year of the NCTE print publication Voices from the Middle. Find it on the NCTE website http://bit.ly/2wx0di3 or subscribe via iTunes http://apple.co/2vTm5bP or SoundCloud http://bit.ly/2wME0xt

Call for Voices from the Middle Cover Photos

Have you got an eye for a great photograph?

Voices from the Middle editors are looking for compelling digital images to feature on our four journal covers during each of our volume years. We are looking for color photos that highlight our classrooms, our students, and the unique and important work that we do as Middle Level teachers.

Images should align with the themes for each issue and deadlines are the same.

Photos should be at least 300 DPI in either jpg or tiff formats. Published photos will be full color. Please do not submit previously published photos.

If you choose to include people in your submission, you are responsible for obtaining the necessary releases from all of the individuals depicted (and parent/guardians, where appropriate) and must be able to provide copies of those releases prior to publication. For more information contact voices@ncte.org.