

## From the Editors

Dear Readers,

With the arrival of fall and the beginning of a new academic year, we are pleased to share with you the latest edition of the *NCMLE Journal*. This season's cover image, a small, emerging plant, was chosen as a symbol of the new growth and fresh possibilities that surround each new school year. Our aim is for this image to capture the spirit of growth and development so essential to middle level education, where hope and potential take root each year in classrooms across our state.

This edition brings together an inspiring collection of research, reflection, and practice. The opening article offers a timely investigation into the professional dispositions middle level educators need, asking what it truly means to teach in ways that honor the human elements of education. Another piece invites us to think deeply about perspective-taking, reminding us of the critical role empathy plays in both civic life and adolescent learning. A third contribution highlights the urgent importance of connection, arguing that in an era of rapid change and digital complexity, relationships remain the "missing link" in student success.

Our column contributions also offer valuable insights. The Topics, Tech, and Trends column provides a practical guide to navigating the shift "from chalkboards to chatbots," offering tips for teachers to consider how emerging technologies can enhance learning without losing sight of student needs. In the Between Teachers column, readers will find thoughtful reflections on lessons learned throughout a teaching journey, and the Community Connections column concludes by highlighting the essential role that certified media specialists serve in middle schools across North Carolina.

As always, we are grateful for the commitment of our authors, reviewers, and editorial team, who dedicate their time and expertise to advancing the field of middle level education in North Carolina and beyond. Their work ensures that the journal continues to be a resource for preservice and in-service teachers, administrators, and all who support young adolescents in our classrooms.

We encourage you to engage with the concepts presented, and also invite you to consider contributing your own work to future issues. Each article, case study, and reflection strengthens our collective capacity to serve middle grades learners well.

Thank you for your continued support of the *NCMLE Journal*. May this edition inspire you to cultivate growth, connection, and possibility in your work with students and colleagues this year.

Warm regards,



Daniel Maxwell and Joey Lord