

2020

Introduction to the Issue: Preparing the Next Generation of Middle School Leaders

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Recommended Citation

Wall, Amanda; Ruppert, Nancy B.; Coleman, Bridget K.; and Jones, Jeanneine (2020) "Introduction to the Issue: Preparing the Next Generation of Middle School Leaders," *Current Issues in Middle Level Education*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

DOI: 10.20429/cimle.2020.250101

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cimle/vol25/iss1/1>

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The articles in this issue of *Current Issues in Middle Level Education* are based on a Symposium that did not take place as planned. In May 2020, middle level educators and researchers from across the Southeast and beyond would have gathered in Asheville, NC, for a Symposium sponsored by the Southeast Professors of Middle Level Education (SEPOMLE). Due to COVID-19, however, the in-person Symposium was canceled, and accepted authors were invited to submit manuscripts based on their work for this issue.

These articles represent ideas on the Symposium theme of “Preparing the Next Generation of Middle School Leaders.” Across the articles, a theme of connection emerges. This idea of connection is linked to middle level concepts about curriculum and teaching, and it is also linked to a professional goal of meetings like the Symposium to connect with one another, share ideas, and build a community of learners. The idea of connection also relates to our national context and the importance of building bridges and looking forward together: to include diverse voices and perspectives, to connect across distances, to strengthen education. In the words of the late John Lewis, “You must be a headlight, not a taillight.”

We thank the authors of these articles for shining light on ways for middle level educators and researchers to connect and to prepare new leaders. SEPOMLE is planning a Symposium in 2021. Please check the website for the National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education (www.napomle.com) for information in the months ahead.