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NMSA is now the Association for Middle Level Education

After years of research by several task forces that gained feedback from thousands of stakeholders, followed by a resounding vote from membership, National Middle School Association (NMSA) is now the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE). In spring 2011, the new name was placed on the ballot and passed by more than the two-thirds majority vote required for a constitutional change. The Board of Trustees certified the new name at its June 2011 meeting.

National Middle School Association evolved from university professors and researchers in the early 1970s who were passionate about promoting the understanding of the developmental changes taking place in young adolescents and reforming the schools in which those students were being educated. Over the years, the organization has continuously strived to serve the field of middle level education and help people identify with and stay connected to the organization. At times, the discussions revolved around the association's name.

The prior name, National Middle School Association, carried an implication that the organization served only middle schools. While being founded by individuals who developed the middle school concept, which remains the foundation of the associations' work today, this concept is being used in all types of schools by various names and grade configurations across the world.

According to Executive Director Dr. William Waidelich, "The new name better represents the work of the organization, its members, and the entire field of middle level education. We support all who reach and teach kids in grades 5 through 9, regardless of the name or grade configuration of the schools that house them."

"It's important to have an organization name that allows all who work with 10- to 15-year-olds to see us as a partner in their work," according to AMLE President Joan Jarrett. "As we continue to influence policies and practices, a name that is more inclusive will open new doors."

An additional benefit of the new name is that it does not limit the organization by geographic boundaries. The association has been international in reach for decades and currently has members and affiliates in more than 40 countries.

The important work of facilitating a smooth transition to the new name has already begun for the board and staff. The transition activities will be apparent this fall as the organization starts to make changes in print and online.

"The name National Middle School Association has served the organization well for more than 35 years," says Waidelich, "but our students, the schools, and the education world are changing, and we need to make sure our name and brand continue to move