



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

2024 MIDDLE LEVEL SECTION ELECTIONS

The biographical information concerning the nominees' past and present service to NCTE was supplied by the candidates. Names on the ballot are presented in random order. Each year, nominations are made by a nominating committee elected by the membership in the spring.

The 2023–2024 NCTE Middle Level Section Nominating Committee members are:

Michelle Yang-Kaczmarek, Literacy Coordinator; DEI Teacher Leader (K–12), Dobbs Ferry, NY (Chair);
Donna Yvette Herrera, Teacher, Mercedes ISD, Mercedes, Texas; and
Kristie B. Williams, Birmingham City Schools.

MIDDLE LEVEL SECTION STEERING COMMITTEE

The Middle Level Section Steering Committee is responsible for the governance of NCTE's Middle Section and guides the affairs of the Section. All Steering Committee members serve four-year terms.

(Vote for two.)



Anna Osborn (she/her/hers). Reading Specialist, Jefferson Middle School; doctoral candidate, reading education, University of Missouri-Columbia; PBS9 St. Louis Teacher Champion.

Formerly: Secondary (6–12) language arts teacher for twenty-three years; Middle Section Nominating Committee (Chair); classroom representative, LLA; board member, MMLLA; regional NCTE representative. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Filipinx YA literature; graphic novels; adolescent readers.

Membership(s): NCTE, LLA, MMLLA, ILA, NEA. **Award(s):** Distinguished Alumni, Columbia College; CMNEA Teacher of the Year; Outstanding Middle/Junior High Educator of the Year, Columbia Fund for Excellence. **Publication(s):** Coauthored

pieces in *Talking Points*; *Reclaiming Literacies as Meaning-Making: Manifestations of Values, Identities, Relationships, and Knowledge*; and *Literacy Today*; student editor, *Literacy, Research, Theory, Method, and Practice*. **Program Contribution(s):** Presentations at NCTE, LLA, ILA, and Write to Learn.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

As my professional home, NCTE provides space for me to connect with and learn from colleagues. NCTE has consistently offered resources to help me advocate for students and teachers, nurturing my passions for literature and teaching. In recent years, I have turned to NCTE in my goal to be an antiracist educator. Whether through the Convention, service or

learning opportunities, or social media, NCTE provides support that helps me to be a better educator.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

NCTE's mission and vision provide me with clarity. Whether as a teacher-educator, in teaching middle schoolers, or as a district equity trainer, I work to model how I, as a co-learner in our learning communities, provide "access, power, agency, affiliation, and impact for all learners." I work to provide insight and strategies to our team and teachers to show diversity, equity, and inclusion can and must be a daily part of good language arts instruction.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

The Middle Level Section Steering Committee's work is crucial in NCTE's dedication to improve education for all. I would be honored to work with the Committee as I live the unique, important work of serving adolescents during this distinct time in their lives. I recognize the challenges and possibilities of this work. I strive to be a teacher-leader who helps the committee to develop policies and programming contributing to a more antiracist, equitable world for all students and educators.



Michael DiCicco (he/him) Associate Professor of Literacy Education, Northern Kentucky University, KY; Middle School Vice President, Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts (KCTE/LA). **Formerly:** Middle school ELA/reading teacher; co-director of Northern Kentucky Adolescent Literacy Project. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Middle level ELA teacher preparation; multimodal and art-based composition. **Membership(s):** NCTE Commission on Arts and Literacies (COAL), KCTELA, Kentucky Reading Association (KRA), Association of Middle Level Education (AMLE). **Award(s):** Collaborative Center for Literacy Development Adolescent Literacy Project grant, KRA grant.

Publication(s): *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *English Journal*, *Kentucky English Bulletin*, *Middle Grades Review*. **Program Contribution(s):** NCTE, KRA, AMLE AERA.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you? (75 words)

I first joined NCTE in 2007 as a student in my teacher preparation program. As a beginning teacher and now as a teacher educator, NCTE has always been my home for high-quality resources and support. *The English Journal* and *Voices from the Middle* were places for me to gain resources and help me grow as an educator. The Annual Convention gives me the space to engage with amazing educators and collaborate with colleagues.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession? (75 words)

Over the last 16 years equity and justice have been at the forefront of my teaching and research. Being literate is essential to being able to fully participate in this world, but literacy is

not only the written word. My teaching and research focus on using art-based practices and multimodal texts to engage both middle school students and future middle school teachers to express themselves, develop language arts skills, and become critical consumers and composers.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office? (75 words)

Being a middle level educator, I'm more than aware of the stigma of middle grades and middle grades education. I'm also aware that for a variety of reasons the middle level can get lost in, well, the middle. I strongly believe in community and collaboration, and my goals on the Steering Committee would be to help empower ELA teachers and their students, grow membership to the Section, and help build meaningful connections and networks of teachers.



Carol Aten Frow (she, her) 34 year ELA Teacher - Belle Vernon Area Middle School, drama/musical director, literary magazine sponsor; Western Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English (WPCTE) - Executive Director; National State Teacher of the Year - PA Chapter (NSTOY-PA) - TEACH Committee; Western PA Writing Project (WPWP) - Teacher Consultant; curriculum writer. **Formerly:** President – WPCTE. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Writing, theater, YA literature. **Membership(s):** WPCTE, PCTE (Pennsylvania Council for Teachers of English), NCTE; WPWP (67). **Award(s):** NSTOY-PA Teacher of the Year Finalist; Keystone Technology Innovator. **Publication(s):** *English Journal*; Contributor to *Eighth Grade Ready: Expert Advice to Help Parents Navigate the Year Ahead*; WPCTE blogs. **Program Contribution(s):** WPCTE, PCTE, NCTE, WPWP, university guest lectures.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

Throughout my career, NCTE has provided answers of how to be an engaging, innovative, successful teacher. Through journal articles, conferences, and online events, NCTE has been where I look to see mirrors of who I want to be in my classroom.

As an affiliate leader, NCTE is our guiding light helping us aspire to lead our local educators and connect them to the knowledge and insight that NCTE has to offer to all educators.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

Literary exploration and composition, lessons learned from NCTE's valuable resources, define my classroom. Students read texts featuring varied cultures and time periods before analyzing characters and situations to evoke connections to the students' current world. Students seek publication often and engage their community in actions to better their world.

WPCTE's leadership team constantly seeks to provide new professional development programs. Personally, I mentor preservice teachers and continue that relationship as they become teachers.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

I love learning; I love teaching literature and language. Most of my life has been devoted to these joyous activities. Being elected to the Steering Committee will allow me to join with and learn from knowledgeable, passionate educators who also thrive in the middle. My goal is to help this Committee to ignite educators' joy as we connect and collaborate with innovative teaching strategies for literature and composition!



Jayna Ashlock-Huston (she/her) 6–8 ELA instructional coach and PLC lead teacher; district ELA and AVID curriculum PD facilitator; AVID site coordinator; Washington State Literacy Leadership Team; and ELA Fellow. **Formerly:** 5–8 ELA teacher; 2–6 science/technology integration specialist; Teacher on Special Assignment, Department of Teaching and Learning; BEST Teacher Mentor; Washington State OSPI ELA/Science Content Integration Team; EdReports writer. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Developing PD for content integration; curriculum and instruction; teacher leadership; literacy instruction. **Membership(s):** NCTE, AERA, NCSS. **Publication(s):** Contributor *K-5 Resource Set for Teaching Science Integrating with ELA*. **Program Contribution(s):** Presentations at NCTE, NCSTA, AERA, and proposal reviewer for AERA.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

NCTE is my professional home. I know it is a safe place where I can find the most relevant and engaging lessons, relevant publications, and research that is significant. Participating in the NCTE OER Fellowship has provided a way for me to use my leadership and connect with colleagues not just on the project but hold essential conversations around the state of teaching ELA today which impacts my instruction and leadership.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

During my time as a teacher and leader I have always put the teaching of literacy first in all content areas. A large part of this work is to also be an advocate for texts that foster essential conversations around equity and justice while ensuring student voices, cultures, and opportunities for empathy are available and talked about.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

I am seeking this office so I can be on the forefront of providing opportunities for our members that will ensure there are collegial and collaborative experiences that encourage essential conversations that embrace the changing climate of English education while still reflecting the

mission and vision of NCTE. I hope to be a voice for middle school teachers and leaders within the membership and encourages an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for growth.

MIDDLE LEVEL SECTION NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee prepares a slate of candidates for vacancies that occur annually on the Middle Level Section Steering Committee and selects candidates for the succeeding year's Middle Level Section Nominating Committee. The candidate who receives the largest number of votes in the election will chair the committee.

(Vote for three.)



Katie Sluiter (she/her) Eighth-grade ELA teacher. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Doctoral candidate in English education, Western Michigan University focusing on Holocaust and human rights studies. **Membership(s):** NCTE, Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), ALAN, ELATE, ELATE Commission on Young Adult Literature, National Writing Project (NWP), The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights (TOLI). The Holocaust Educators Network of Michigan (HEN). **Publication(s):** *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, *Study and Scrutiny*, chapters in *Examining Images of Urban Life: A Resource of Teachers of Young Adult Literature* and *Teaching Girls on Fire: Essays on Dystopian Young Adult*

Literature in the Classroom. **Program Contribution(s):** NCTE, MCTE, Summit on the Research and Teaching of Young Adult Literature.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you? NCTE has always been a source of professional inspiration, affirmation, and connection for me. In 2016, I began presenting regularly at the annual conference where I developed important friendships and connections with other educators. Being able to pour into *English Education* as well as learn and grow from others is why I continually and joyfully renew my membership each year.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your professional strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession? As a veteran teacher and longtime NCTE member, I try to lead others in my district to create access and agency for both learners and teachers—particularly new teachers. New teachers need support and help finding professional organizations that help them be the best teachers for their students, but also feel a sense of community. NCTE's commitment to equity and justice makes them my number one resource for new teachers.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office? I would love to be able to give back to NCTE as part of the Nominating Committee for the Middle Level Section. It is crucial to provide leaders who will carry on the pursuit for equity

and justice in schools in the face of the tumult and political unrest that is putting so many of our marginalized students in danger. We need leaders to provide support and hope.



Nora Ramirez (she/her) Seventh-grade RLA teacher; mentor teacher, Mercedes ISD School District, Mercedes, Texas **Formerly:** Library Associate for the Reference Department and college writing tutor at the University of Texas – RGV. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Reading and writing for middle school, ESL/bilingual education. **Membership(s):** NCTE, TCTELA. **Program Contribution(s):** District professional development

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

Even residing in deep south Texas, NCTE feels like home, extending its reach to us. Since joining, I have felt its energy and engaging advocacy platform that serves and supports communities like mine dedicated to teaching English language arts to diverse populations. In an era marked by social challenges in education, having NCTE as a dependable resource is instrumental in accessing research-based knowledge and valuable networking opportunities, enabling me to share impactful insights with students.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

As a Latina RLA teacher in a community with a critical need for improved literacy, I am devoted to using creative approaches to inspire students' exploration of their inner voices through reading and writing, promoting autonomy in self-learning. Previous work with students at a refugee camp has also deepened my understanding of meaningful interactions as an educator. I am passionate about advocating for literacy as a fundamental human right.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in Office?

Having navigated the English classroom as both a minority and a teacher in a border town community, I am dedicated to advocating for and promoting awareness. I believe my experiences and insights can contribute significantly to fostering literacy mindfulness and inclusion. If chosen for the Middle Level Section Nominating Committee, I am enthusiastic about contributing to NCTE, leveraging my background to enhance the organization's impact, and providing support to the Rio Grande Valley.



Vanessa Heller (she/her): 6th-grade humanities; coordinator: DEI & GATE middle level; facilitator: DEI Councils 6th–8th; founder: #JEDI Book/Article Clubs. **Formerly:** K–8 teacher, Director: Teachers for Equity, Oak Park Inquiry Institute, Inquiry & GATE Demonstration Days; Technology Innovator; ELA Dept. Chair. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** DEI, inquiry & GATE, peer coaching. **Membership(s):** NCTE, CA. Assoc. for the Gifted, Tri County GATE, CUE. **Publication(s):** *Teaching for Racial Equity: Becoming Interrupters*; *Equity & Access* journal. **Award(s):** ACE-Ed Excellence in Equity Awards; CUE Gold Coast Outstanding ToY; 2x Tri-County GATE Distinguished Service Award, OPUSD Golden Oak

Award. **Program Contribution(s):** DEI, Inquiry, and GATE for NCTE, IWP, CA Assoc. of the GIFTED, CUE, League of Schools, Tri County GATE, JTaylor Education, Everyone Academy, districts.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

NCTE has allowed me to grow as a learner to be an advocate, an ally, and one who is actively working to create and uphold equitable and sustainable policies and practices for all students and education stakeholders. It was at NCTE where I met my mentor, networked with amazing educators across the country, and formed my writers' group. NCTE allows me to learn, to lead, and to grow as an educator.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

I am a believer in grassroots efforts to put positive pressure on entities to know better and do better (Angelou Approach). I'm a self-starter and an encourager of others to create equitable policies, practices, and opportunities to "do school" better. My DEI, inquiry, and gifted education advocacy embolden me to ask tough questions and do the hard work. My amazing sense of humor provides the balance needed for the hard work that needs to be done.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

As an attendee and then a presenter at NCTE, fulfilling a committee role for NCTE is a natural next step. I thrive while being involved with people who work together to create better, more equitable and diverse practices. As an advocate for DEI, gifted education, and authentic inquiry, I bring a unique perspective to NCTE members and intend to encourage the inclusion of NCTE members with diverse perspectives and talents as well.



Melissa Iamónico (she/her) School Librarian, Tuckahoe Middle/High School (6–12); doctoral candidate in educational leadership, Manhattanville College; consultant, Edith Winthrop Teacher Center, Hudson River Teacher Center .

Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise: Diverse and inclusive children's literature, curriculum development and planning, educating against book bans and censorship, school librarians. **Membership(s):** NCTE, Children's Literature Assembly, American Library Association, American Association for School Librarians, Association for Library Services to Children, National Council for the Social Studies.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

Over the past few years, NCTE has become a go-to source for materials, references, and resources regarding diverse literature, book bans, and censorship. NCTE took an early leadership stand in the fight against book bans and censorship and has remained committed to promoting diverse and inclusive literature. Just when we think the need for these materials and resources has peaked, they become more important than ever and NCTE continues to be a leader in the fight against censorship.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change in the profession?

As a librarian, I firmly believe that every person in the school (both students and staff) deserves to see themselves on the shelves in the school library and have a place in the library. I strive to make the library engaging not only for my school community, but also a place to build bridges to other community organizations to help make our students active members of their communities.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

My dissertation research is focusing on middle school librarians, and I am struck by the repeated reminders of the importance of middle school literacy. Middle school is a critical time for students to develop their identities as readers, and I hope to help place high-quality, passionate educators in leadership roles for NCTE. I hope to work with other educators who are also looking to utilize NCTE's vision to further literacy education and research to benefit all of our students.



NATALIE NASH (she/her). Coordinator of Secondary Language Arts and World Languages grades 6–12, Denton Independent School District, TX. **Formerly:** Professional development specialist for secondary language arts grades 6–12 for two years; English language arts educator grades 5–12 for 18 years; Advancement Via Individual Determination coordinator for two years; curriculum writer; mentor teacher; reading instructional specialist. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Book club curation; middle and high school level literacy instruction; curriculum design; Understanding by Design framework; theories of adult learning; professional development design and facilitation. **Membership(s):** NCTE,

ILA, Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (TCTELA), Learning Forward.

Program Contribution(s): District and campus presentations and professional development facilitation.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

Home connotes safety, comfort, and trust. For 21 years and counting in my career, NCTE has provided me with safety to gather information without fear of judgment, comfort to rely upon literacy colleagues, and trust to locate vetted lesson ideas as an ELA educator, to compile research for assignments during graduate coursework, and to lead teams in expanding our thinking by connecting to a larger community of educators.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

Providing equitable opportunities for all learners, honoring the professionalism of literacy educators, and supporting the craft of learners and educators as readers, writers, thinkers, and speakers are the focus areas of my current work, which align with widening possibilities for ALL. My strengths as an effective communicator, diplomatic negotiator, and approachable expert have created a path for my professional experiences in leading positive shifts of pedagogy and practices in four diverse school districts.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

As a beneficiary of the NCTE community for two decades, I would like to actively contribute to the community through service. I commit to elevate student and teacher voices and support leaders in the literacy community. During my time in office, I would also like to connect with a larger community and take an active role in implementing NCTE's mission and vision.



Sierra Gilbertson (She/Her) 7th- and 8th-grade English/ CIHS composition teacher, district curriculum co-director, Fosston, MN; Executive Secretary/NCTE Liaison, Minnesota Council of Teachers of English. **Formerly:** Middle Level Nominating Committee member, NCTE; Middle Level Chair and President, MCTE; 5th–8th-grade English teacher, Ponemah, MN; 8th-grade English teacher, Louisville KY. **Specialty Area(s)/Area(s) of Expertise:** Critical literacy, thinking routines, arts integration. **Membership(s):** MCTE, NCTE, ASCD **Publication(s):** Poetry in *Statement*; “The Impact of Critical Literacy on the Moral Reasoning of Adolescents.” **Program Contribution(s):** Presentations at NCTE, MCTE, NAEA, National Gallery of Art Summer Institute for Educators.

How has NCTE provided a professional home for you?

NCTE allows me to receive the support and collaboration that teachers in larger districts experience and more. Instead of feeling isolated in a small, rural school's English department of one or two teachers, I am able to meet with others around the country who make me feel seen and heard. These meetings have been critical to my mental health and continuous growth as an educator, ally, and advocate.

How does your current work in your career, community, and/or classroom contribute to NCTE's mission and vision, and demonstrate alignment with NCTE's commitment to equity and justice? How have your personal strengths and experiences contributed to making positive change(s) in the profession?

I learned about the Seven Generations when teaching for the Red Lake Nation, and that philosophy now drives all of my decisions. Diverse texts and critical literacy methods lead to conversations in my classroom that push students to listen, reflect, and grow to strengthen our community now and for future generations. I also helped develop and facilitate MCTE's Diverse Books Reading Group discussions and materials to promote the inclusion of diverse texts in K–12 classrooms across Minnesota.

What is your rationale for seeking this office? What would you like to accomplish while in office?

My students and I have benefited from NCTE, and I want to give back to the organization. Members of the Nominating Committee can create a ripple effect. Not only do they choose candidates for the Steering Committee, they also choose candidates for the Nominating Committee. I will advocate for candidates who take initiative and value reflection, long term thinking, and causing "good trouble." My decisions will be influenced by the Seventh Generation.