The Oklahoma Middle Level Education Association (OMLEA) is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents by providing vision, knowledge and resources to all who serve them in order to develop healthy, productive and ethical citizens. OMLEA maintains a current set of resolutions that cover a multitude of issues that impact public schools and school leadership. The following issues have emerged as priorities for OMLEA and have been identified as focus areas during the 2017 legislative session.

1. School Funding – The 2016-2017 school formula remains critically underfunded by approximately $225.60 less per weighted student than in 2009. OMLEA supports full funding of the Oklahoma School Funding Formula and restoring state appropriated per-pupil funding to pre-recession levels. OMLEA also seeks a commitment from the legislature to provide funds for professional learning which supports ongoing growth opportunities designed to equip administrators in successfully implementing state mandated initiatives.

2. Recruitment and Retention of High Quality Teachers – OMLEA is extremely concerned about an impending shortage of high quality teachers. OMLEA opposes legislation that would intensify the issue by limiting local control over teaching and learning, increasing the influence of high-stakes testing, reducing retirement benefits or incentives, and continuing the underfunding of teacher salaries. OMLEA endorses high school programs that educate and encourage students into the teaching profession.

3. Teaching and Learning – OMLEA supports the new Oklahoma Academic Standards as a comprehensive, rigorous and vertically aligned framework for student learning. In addition, OMLEA supports professional learning on the new state standards to increase educator effectiveness, goal alignment, and student achievement. Careful consideration should also be given to the implementation of a quality curriculum that ensures fidelity to the standards and meets the academic needs of the young adolescent.

4. Accountability and Teacher Leader Effectiveness (TLE) – OMLEA supports an accountability system that is statistically sound; relevant to students, parents and educators; fair to schools of varying sizes, and fully represents the complexity of educating all students. Additionally, OMLEA believes in the uniform application of accountability measures and standards to any Oklahoma school receiving financial support from state revenues. OMLEA also encourages continued state support a of the teacher leader evaluation system (TLE) to ensure that each classroom and building is led by an effective educator.

5. Assessments – OMLEA supports state-mandated assessments aligned to the Oklahoma Academic Standards and used primarily for determining gaps in district curriculum and instruction. Results should be considered a “snapshot” of student performance in each content area. OMLEA opposes the use of student performance data from the state assessment as a significant factor for determining teacher or principal effectiveness. In addition, OMLEA would like to see the State Board of Education determine if there are alternate ways that students on an Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP) can demonstrate knowledge in some other way than they would otherwise demonstrate on a state assessment which would allow more flexibility to the Individualized Education Program Team.