

Candidate for Vice President of the Board



Dana A. Robertson

Associate Professor
Virginia Tech

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? ILA has recently put forth a strategic plan and vision seeking to expand the organization's work and connect people globally who are supporting and advocating for literacy teaching and learning. With these initiatives, ILA is expanding its membership base, providing valuable resources educators need such as the Literacy Learning Library, and re-establishing in-person events to bring members together in networking and collaborative contexts. ILA has been refining and consolidating the types of thought leadership it provides to its global members, and in doing so, expanding member engagement and bringing multiple perspectives to the conversations. These are starting points that I would like to see really take root and multiply over the coming years so that ILA is seen as an organization that matters to its members and shows that its members matter too. In doing this, I would like to see the organization continue to highlight the "I" in ILA. There is a keen awareness and growing attempts to have broader representation and reach, yet we need to continue to advocate for work that is reflective of global needs and understandings of literacy teaching and learning to bring more voices to our efforts toward literacy worldwide!

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance, Berklee College of Music; Master's in Elementary Education, University of Massachusetts; EdD in Developmental Studies: Literacy and Language, Boston University

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? I am currently completing my term as an ILA Board member-at-large. During this time, I have chaired the ILA Research Committee and served on the National Recognition Commission, Global Committee, and Finance Committee. Additionally, I was a writer for the *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals, 2017 Edition* and a reviewer for the ILA Certificate of Distinction. I have served on the Nominations Committee, written for *Literacy Today*, been a frequent presenter at IRA/ILA annual conferences and digital events, and been published in and a peer reviewer for *The Reading Teacher* and the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? I have been involved with ILA for many years and, most recently, I have been a close part of its efforts with a new executive director, a new strategic plan, and actionable steps to expand its offerings and thought leadership globally and grow membership. It has been an honor to be part of this work and to help ILA refine, adapt, and grow, bringing multiple perspectives to the table, to support and advocate for literacy worldwide. As vice president, I would be able to continue supporting these forward-looking initiatives and expand ILA's potential for being a leading voice globally.

Candidates for At-Large Member of the Board



Kimberly Eckert

Dean of Oxford Teachers College at Reach University

[in Kimberly Eckert](#)

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? The International Literacy Association (ILA) stands at the forefront of transforming literacy education and access worldwide. My vision for ILA's growth is to amplify its global footprint and enhance its visibility and relevance among educators across the United States. I also believe that empowering teachers ignites the most profound change. By bolstering opportunities for teacher advocacy, I aim to help ignite more voices declaring that every child's right to read and receive excellent literacy instruction are essential and inalienable rights.

To advance these goals, I'll turn to my beautiful networks garnered from educational relationships I've built in Kenya, South Africa, and Japan, as well as through my recognition as a Global Teacher Prize Ambassador through the Varkey Foundation. Having been an educator for 16 years, a state Teacher of the Year, and an active member of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, I can significantly broaden ILA's impact. By leveraging these relationships, I aim to strengthen ILA's standing as an essential resource for literacy educators. Every child deserves to thrive, learn, and be heard in a literate world. Through this strategic outreach, I aim to help continue forging a path to this world, upheld by ILA's resources and support.

Education: Currently a Doctoral Student (PhD in Learning, Instruction, & Innovation); Specialist in Reading; Bachelor of Social Work; certified K-12 special education, 6-12 ELA

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? I've published in *Literacy Today* and presented at national/state-level ILA conferences. While teaching, I designed collegiate programs for student athletes with literacy gaps and facilitated/coached countless pre-K-12 spaces in instructional practices. However, my passion and biggest contribution is joining literacy with real-world engagement and 21st-century skills. I integrate problem-based learning and civic engagement into literacy instruction, fostering environments where students see themselves as empowered participants in their narratives. This has allowed me to forge multidisciplinary partnerships with organizations such as Educating for American Democracy, NCTE, NCLD, and ISTE, showcasing literacy education as an interdisciplinary field extending far beyond classroom boundaries.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? Just being nominated to serve on the ILA Board was a call to action. Someone believed I embodied ILA's commitment to literacy as a fundamental right and its global mission to empower educators and learners. That belief is precious. My experiences have equipped me with a deep understanding of the challenges

and opportunities in literacy education, from grassroots advocacy to international collaborations. Serving ILA would allow me to pay so much forward for all that was done in support of me and my students. I'm eager to support ILA's efforts, ensuring every individual's right to literacy is realized.



Sonja Ezell

Associate Professor, Clinical Assistant Professor, College of Education, University of Texas Arlington

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? As an experienced teacher educator, I would collaboratively work with Board members to achieve mutual goals that would strengthen our ties with preservice teachers, classroom teachers, and literacy leaders to enhance our local and global impact on educational systems and practices.

I believe in the power of strong communities and professional networks, so I would support hosting regional conferences to foster connections between ILA chapters and affiliates to make resources more accessible to educators, parents, and partnership agencies.

My experiences in national, state, and local organizations will support the knowledge I bring on evidence-based practices in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and leadership to the ILA Board. I would like to increase the number of undergraduate and graduate students within ILA, enhance membership packages, and steward growth-oriented, positive-revenue trajectory models of practice.

I will champion the joy of reading across all age groups; continue to advocate for mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors literacy experiences; and promote research studies and resource accessibility for all stakeholders.

Overall, as a mentor, teacher educator, and advocate, I have a strong commitment to the teaching profession and to literacy. It would be a privilege to contribute to ILA's mission of literacy for all!

Education: Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, Texas A&M University-Commerce; Master of Science in Reading, Texas A&M University-Commerce; EC-6 Teacher Certification, Region 12-Education Service Center; Bachelor of Science in Social Work, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? I am a teacher educator at the University of Texas at Arlington in the Curriculum and Instruction Department.

I am grateful for my rich career in literacy as an early childhood and elementary teacher, reading coach, literacy ambassador for a state literacy organization, and a presenter at multiple literacy conferences.

I am the chair of ILA Children's and Young Adult Book Awards Committee, and I have hosted two ILA Webinars focused on promoting literacy engagement, reading, and new authors.

I have presented at ILA's conferences and served as a peer reviewer for *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? I believe in ILA, its members, and its leaders, and I would be honored to support future endeavors of this organization.

Serving on the Board would provide a platform to share expertise, elevate the work of educators, and connect global initiatives.

ILA continues to serve as the leader in literacy and I am interested in obtaining donations and grants to fund innovative practices within classrooms, schools, and educational systems.

Ultimately, I believe all learners should have access to equitable literacy strategies and resources and my engagement with diverse students, families, and communities can contribute to expanded literacy outcomes for all.



Delilah Gonzales

Associate Professor, Texas Southern University

[in Delilah Gonzales](#)

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? As a prospective member of the Board of Directors for ILA, I am committed to fostering the organization's growth in several key areas. First, I envision ILA expanding its global reach by strengthening partnerships with literacy organizations and educators worldwide, promoting cross-cultural collaboration, and offering resources tailored to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Additionally, I believe ILA should continue to embrace innovation in literacy instruction, leveraging technology and research-based practices to meet the evolving needs of learners in the digital age. As a member of the Board, I plan to contribute by advocating for initiatives that promote literacy equity and inclusion, such as providing access to high-quality literacy resources for underserved communities and supporting professional development opportunities for educators from diverse backgrounds. By prioritizing collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, I am committed to helping ILA advance its mission of empowering educators and transforming lives through literacy. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on literacy education globally.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education/Early Childhood Education, University of Tennessee at Martin; Master of Science in Instruction and Curriculum, Early Childhood, University of Memphis; Doctor of Education in Instructional Curriculum Leadership, Reading, University of Memphis (Research Area: Early Literacy and Language Development)

Candidates for At-Large Member of the Board

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? As a dedicated ILA member, I have contributed to literacy through conference participation, sharing insights, and collaborating on research. My scholarly articles and books focus on effective instruction and equity in literacy. Additionally, I support community literacy initiatives by organizing events and tutoring. Committed to professional growth, advocacy, and making a global impact, I strive to promote literacy awareness and access.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? I am eager to serve ILA in this leadership role due to my profound passion for literacy education and commitment to advancing its mission. With a lifelong dedication to learning and teaching, I recognize the transformative power of literacy, and I am devoted to promoting equity and access for all learners. Serving presents an exceptional opportunity to contribute to the field on a broader scale, collaborating to shape policies and initiatives that positively impact educators and learners globally. Inspired by ILA's dedication to excellence and advocacy, I am excited to leverage my skills and experiences to further its goals.



Aileen P. Hower

Associate Professor, Graduate Coordinator, MEd Language & Literacy, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? I believe that ILA needs to continue to support literacy research and provide evidence-based resources and professional learning to educators to ensure that high-quality literacy skills are accessible for all.

To do this, ILA should continue to foster partnerships with a variety of literacy organizations to provide all populations with access to literacy resources and skill development. This is a key component of my work as ILA coordinator for the Keystone State Literacy Association (KSLA) and our university partners. Strategic partnerships can build ILA's capacity to ensure everyone's right to literacy.

ILA can strengthen advocacy efforts so literacy leaders have clear support to make policy changes. As a teacher educator and advocate in a state that has made critical literacy decisions, I have experienced how ILA can provide timely, respected, and relevant information, with decades of the best voices that advocate for literacy.

ILA will need to continue to advocate for diverse learners as well as continued efforts to diversify the teaching and literacy professional workforce. My 29 years of experience as an educator, administrator, mother, and a current researcher in culturally relevant and sustaining education supports my passion to help ILA continue to embrace its role across the world to have an even greater impact on promoting literacy.

Education: Bachelor of Arts in English, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania; Master

of Arts in American Studies, University of Wyoming; Master of Arts in Teaching English, The College of New Jersey; EdD in Reading and Language Arts (Leadership), Widener University; Reading and ESL Specialist, Literacy Coach, National Writing Project Fellow

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? I have been an ILA member since 2014. I was invited to copresent with Mwenyewe Dawan and Lynne Dorfman at the ILA in-person event Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Through Literacy in May 2023 at Delaware State University. I am an ILA National Recognition reviewer for the Reading/Literacy Specialist and the Elementary/Intermediate Classroom Teacher preparation programs and an ILA Administrator Task Force member. I served as an ad hoc reviewer for *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, a member of the Technology in Literacy Education Special Interest Group of ILA, an ILA Jeanne S. Chall/Helen M. Robinson/Steven A. Stahl Grants Committee member, and an annual Conference Review Committee member.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? It would be a privilege to serve on the ILA Board of Directors. It is my honor to contribute to ILA's mission by working with KSLA since 2009 and on various ILA initiatives. I value the opportunity to work with educators, families, and literacy leaders to ensure that literacy is accessible to all. As a former teacher, reading specialist, and current teacher educator, I understand how the power of and critical need for access to effective literacy instruction will define quality of life for generations. My service, leadership, and research support ILA's commitment to positively impact the global literacy stage.



Darl Kiernan

Professional Learning Leader, Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program

How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? ILA sets the standard as the professional home for literacy educators worldwide. As a Board member, I will drive forward ILA's mission to improve the quality of literacy learning for all as a basic human right and a matter of social justice. My goal is to involve stakeholders across state, regional, local, and global systems to advance ILA's mission to connect research to practice and to advocate for equitable literacy instruction.

It is important that ILA be a leader in a number of areas including navigating artificial intelligence, understanding dyslexia, partnering with families, and meeting the needs of multilingual learners. These are areas in which ILA can grow and lead the way for educators by developing additional resources and professional learning experiences.

I bring a strong commitment from past service and collaboration in urban and rural instructional settings as a teacher, teacher educator, and

professional learning leader. I would like to contribute to ILA's efforts to support educators' instructional practices through professional learning opportunities that connect research to practice. I have also provided statewide oversight of English language arts, and I can contribute to ILA's organizational planning and commitment to financial stability. I would be honored to serve ILA.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Special Education; Master's in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Language Arts; PhD in Literacy Studies; certification as Reading Specialist K-12, School Administrator K-12, and Special Education Generalist K-12

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? During my 29 years as an educator, I have served as a special education teacher, reading specialist, coordinator, and university instructor, and I have provided oversight for K-12 English language arts at the state level for Nevada. I currently serve as a regional professional learning leader. As a Board member of my local ILA council, I coordinated conferences and chapter events. I have presented at many of ILA's international conferences and published in *The Reading Teacher*. I cofounded the Nevada Adolescent Literacy Network, and I recently coedited a book on professional learning in literacy published by Guilford in which I coauthored three chapters.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? I am an energetic literacy leader who understands the issues we face as literacy educators, and I value the work that ILA does. I have the knowledge and motivation to represent my fellow literacy educators, and I would like to contribute my time and expertise to the Board of Directors. I have experience forwarding organizational goals, and I am committed to advancing ILA's mission to advocate for equitable access to literacies among diverse communities as a human right. Serving on the ILA Board is an opportunity to participate in collaborative decision making that will improve the quality of literacy learning globally.



Katina Zammit

Associate Professor, School of Education, Western Sydney University

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How would you like to see ILA grow, and how will you contribute to these efforts as a member of the Board? ILA is an international organization supporting the teaching and learning of literacy in a range of contexts and in socio-economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities. These communities are not just located in English-dominant speaking countries but also include countries where literacy in more than one language is essential. ILA needs to reach out to educators outside of the U.S., U.K., and Europe connecting with those in the Asia Pacific region, Africa, and South America. I also see ILA drawing on academics outside the U.S. to develop resources, provide

Candidates for At-Large Member of the Board

professional learning, contribute to position statements relevant to greater diversity of communities acknowledging that literacy practices are not just for English language learners. This may include translanguaging pedagogies and/or revitalization of indigenous languages.

As an academic in the Oceania and Pacific region, I have extensive professional connections to advocate for ILA within Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, and South-East Asia and promote the benefits of ILA membership. New national literacy associations affiliated with ILA could be supported by seed funding, personnel from ILA, and myself to create their constitution and governance structure and support context-based professional learning in their time zones and languages.

Education: PhD, University of Western Sydney; Master of Education (with merit) (MEd), University of Sydney; Bachelor of Education (Hons), University of Sydney

What contributions have you made to ILA and the literacy profession? I have been a member of ILA for years, utilizing its resources in my courses, research, and publications to inform teaching practices. I have contributed to Literacy Research Association, on the Publications Committee, Research Committee, chair of the International Innovative Consultative Committee, co-chair of Area 12: International Research on Teaching and Learning and conference. As president of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association, I support teachers, parents, and teacher educators with professional learning and access to evidenced-based practices in three professional journals in which I have published. I also serve on

the International Development of Oceania Committee, supporting literacy projects in Pasifika countries.

Why do you want to serve ILA in this leadership position? Being literate in English-speaking and multilingual countries is essential for each society's economic, social, and cultural growth. It also receives a great deal of media attention, mostly focused on a narrow view of practice. ILA should advocate for literacy practices that meet community needs, pushing back against those who promote one approach, one language. As a member-at-large, I want to advocate for literacy instruction that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and represent those from countries outside of the U.S., U.K., and Europe in ILA decision making, strategic directions, and resources so that ILA is truly an international organization.

INTERNATIONAL
LITERACY
ASSOCIATION

ABOUT THE ILA 2024 BOARD ELECTION

The opportunity to vote for candidates in the ILA 2024 Board Election is open to every individual member of the International Literacy Association whose membership was in good standing at the start of the election at **9:00 a.m. ET on April 1, 2024**.

Election information appears on ILA's website at literacyworldwide.org/vote.

Please review the information about each candidate carefully, discuss the merits of the candidates with other members, and then make your decision and vote. Ballots must be submitted by **5:00 p.m. ET on April 30, 2024**.

Ballot Count Procedures

The ILA 2024 Board Election will be conducted online. This means that individual ILA members in good standing with valid email addresses will receive an emailed link to vote using their online ballot. Members in good standing who do not have email addresses or whose email addresses are not current may find voting instructions at literacyworldwide.org/vote.

The ILA 2024 Board Election will be handled by Election Buddy, an independent firm whose staff members oversee the distribution of electronic ballots, receive the electronically returned ballots, count the ballots electronically, and certify the results.

As an organization, the International Literacy Association disallows campaigning for office by candidates, other individuals, or chapters or affiliates. All candidates in this election have agreed to this policy. If you received campaign materials or solicitations, please keep this in mind when you vote.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization of literacy educators, researchers, and experts spanning 128 countries. For more than 65 years, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated, connecting research and practice to improve the quality of literacy learning across the globe. Through its *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals*, ILA provides an evidence-based benchmark for the development and evaluation of literacy professional preparation programs. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, which include three peer-reviewed and edited journals—*The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*. Learn more at literacyworldwide.org.