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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION ISSUES BRIEF ON IMPORTANCE OF HOME LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN LITERACY EDUCATION

NEWARK, Del. (September 12, 2017) — In our increasingly globalized world, teachers and educators must be prepared to serve a linguistically diverse population of students and families. Although many immigrant and refugee families are quick to embrace the language of their new country, there are “compelling cognitive, cultural, linguistic, psychological, and social reasons” for families to maintain home languages, states the International Literacy Association (ILA) in a [brief issued today](#).

“When students gain a new language, it’s too often at the cost of their native language and important cultural, historical, and familial connections,” says ILA Executive Director Marcie Craig Post. “Without a strong home–school relationship, students and their families often feel disconnected and unsupported by the school system. Educators have a role in keeping those connections alive.”

According to ILA, children who possess well-established literacy strategies and skills in their native language experience a range of cognitive benefits and are better prepared to become literate in a second language. Bilingualism also enables children to communicate with their immediate and extended family members.

The brief states that children feel more comfortable in classrooms that support the practice of “codeswitching,” or alternating between two languages in the context of a single utterance or sentence. Through codeswitching, students grasp concepts and construct meaning in one language and then apply that learned knowledge to a second language. Research indicates that knowledge transfers across the written codes of two languages.

By maintaining their native language, families can provide the best academic and emotional support possible for their children. Educators have a responsibility to help parents understand the importance of their role in their children’s literacy development.

A longer version of this brief can be found [here](#).

About the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers and experts across 78 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught and evaluated. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students and inform policymakers. ILA publishes *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and *Reading Research Quarterly*, which are peer reviewed and edited by leaders in the field. For more information, visit literacyworldwide.org.

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