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BAUMANN AWARDED 2026 GRAY CITATION OF MERIT

NEWARK, Del. (July 1, 2026) — The International Literacy Association (ILA) announced today that **James F. Baumann**, Chancellor’s Chair for Excellence in Literacy Education Emeritus at the University of Missouri, is the recipient of the ILA 2026 William S. Gray Citation of Merit.

The Citation of Merit, first issued in 1957, is ILA’s highest individual honor, awarded annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to literacy education. [Recipients](#) represent some of the most influential voices in the field.

A former elementary school teacher, Baumann’s work on vocabulary and reading comprehension has advanced the field’s understanding, while his leadership and commitment to mentoring emerging scholars has left an equally enduring mark on the profession.

“I am honored and humbled to be the 2026 recipient of ILA’s William S. Gray Citation of Merit,” said Baumann, expressing gratitude for “those who have supported and encouraged me throughout my career.”

That list includes P. David Pearson, Baumann’s longtime colleague and friend, who said that Baumann’s work “is as highly regarded by fellow researchers for its integrity as it is admired by teachers and teacher educators for its instant classroom applications.”

The Gray selection committee felt similarly; in their evaluation, they noted Baumann’s consistent emphasis on “the essential connection between research and classroom practice.”

“Jim’s most enduring legacy...rests in the thousands of teachers who have rethought their literacy instruction and the multitude of graduate students who have launched fulfilling, socially conscious careers thanks to his mentorship,” Pearson said. “One cannot overstate his role in shaping the next generation of reading scholars and educators.”

For a full list of this year’s awards and grants recipients, visit literacyworldwide.org. More information can be found on ILA’s [awards and grants page](#).

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 70 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 globally. Through its *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals*, ILA provides an evidence-based benchmark for developing and evaluating literacy professional preparation programs. ILA collaborates worldwide to produce high-quality resources, including its peer-reviewed journals—*The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*. Learn more at literacyworldwide.org.

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