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## **JAMES DARIN POPE ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

NEWARK, Del. (May 15, 2026) — **James Darin Pope**, deputy superintendent of teaching and learning for Alabama’s Tuscaloosa City Schools (TCS) district, has been elected vice president of the International Literacy Association (ILA) Board of Directors. Pope begins his term July 1 and will assume the presidency in July 2027.

Pope’s career spans nearly thirty years and a dozen different roles across the K–12 spectrum, experience that has shaped the way he leads. He focuses on building systems that support educators at every stage of their careers. The initiatives he and his team at TCS have implemented—including targeted professional learning for new and emergency-certified teachers—have yielded significant results. For example, when Pope became TCS’s director of elementary education in 2015, third grade reading proficiency was 39 percent; 9 years, 2 positions, and 1 pandemic later, it has risen to 90.

Pope first joined the ILA Board in 2023, inspired by ILA’s mission and how it aligns with his own educational philosophy. He currently chairs the organization’s Administrator Collaborative, a member-run group of school, district, and state education leaders that helps inform ILA’s work and develops practical resources on a range of topics.

“James Pope understands what teachers need and values what they do,” said ILA Executive Director Nicola Wedderburn. “He never loses sight of the practitioner perspective, and I am confident that he will continue to lead as a steward of the organization and a champion of educators everywhere.”

“Literacy is the foundation of opportunity, empowerment, and lifelong success,” Pope said. “It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every child, no matter their location, has access to high-quality instruction. Working together is how we accomplish that.”

Three new Board members-at-large were also elected for the 2026–2029 term:

- **Patrick Burke**, assistant professor at Dublin City University, Ireland
- **Tanya Christ**, Spangler Distinguished Professor at East Carolina University
- **Cheron H. Davis**, associate professor at Florida A&M University

These newly elected leaders each have exemplary records of service to ILA, and together they reflect the collaborative and interconnected nature of the organization’s vibrant community.

Davis has mentored rising leaders later named to ILA’s biennial 30 Under 30 lists—a recognition that Burke, a past president of the Literacy Association of Ireland, received in 2019. Christ is an active member of ILA’s Children’s Rights to Read Coalition, developing practical resources and leading advocacy campaigns. In 2023, she joined the same administrator group that Pope now leads.

All three have made significant contributions to ILA through webinars, committee service, and publications—writing, reviewing, and, in Burke’s case, guest editing an issue of *Literacy Today* magazine.

“These are members who consistently invest their time, talent, and expertise in the organization,” said Wedderburn. “Their deep commitment to advancing ILA’s mission makes us that much stronger.”

Pope agreed. “The global community of educators, researchers, and leaders who call ILA their professional home are doing amazing work,” he said. “I’m proud to serve as their vice president.”

### **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](http://literacyworldwide.org).

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