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PATRICIA EDWARDS NAMED RECIPIENT OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION'S WILLIAM S. GRAY CITATION OF MERIT *Nine other veterans of the field and emerging scholars honored in 2024 awards and grants program*

Newark, DE (July 1, 2024) – The International Literacy Association (ILA) announced today that **Patricia A. Edwards**, University Distinguished Professor of Language and Literacy at Michigan State University, is the recipient of the ILA 2024 William S. Gray Citation of Merit.

The Citation of Merit is reserved for those who have made outstanding contributions to multiple facets of literacy development, including research, theory and practice. [Recipients](#) have decades of impactful research to their name, making the honor akin to a lifetime achievement award.

Edwards is renowned for her extensive work in parent involvement, multicultural literacy and family literacy and for her leadership in the field. She was the 2010–2011 president of the International Reading Association (IRA, now ILA) and the first Black president of the Literacy Research Association (LRA), in addition to being named the first Black recipient of LRA's Oscar S. Causey Award.

Throughout her distinguished career, Edwards has authored and coauthored numerous influential publications, including two nationally acclaimed family literacy programs. She is the author or coauthor of numerous books including *Change Is Gonna Come: Transforming Literacy for African American Students* (which won the LRA Edward B. Fry Book Award), *Children's Literacy Development: Making It Happen Through School, Family, and Community Involvement*, and *Partnering With Families for Student Success: 24 Scenarios for Problem Solving With Parents*.

A 2012 inductee of the Reading Hall of Fame, Edwards has received the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Scholars of Color Distinguished Career Contribution Award and was elected as a 2024 AERA Fellow.

In addition to serving the field, Edwards has been a dedicated member of ILA since 1976. Before she was the organization's president, she served on the Board from 1998 to 2001. She has also served on awards and grants committees and, for *The Reading Teacher* journal, she has been a peer reviewer and department editor and was coeditor for the 2020–2024 term.

"I am deeply honored and thrilled that I have been selected as the recipient of the William S. Gray Citation of Merit award. This recognition holds profound meaning for me, as it celebrates the legacy of William S. Gray, a pioneering figure whose contributions to literacy and education have left an indelible mark on countless lives," Edwards said. "As a young child, I grew up reading Dick and Jane books [which Gray cocreated]. Those books ignited my passion for reading and laid the foundation for my lifelong love of literature. To be honored with a citation bearing the name of the scholar who played such a pivotal role in my early reading experiences is both humbling and exhilarating."

Edwards added: “Receiving this award is not only a personal milestone but also a tribute to the enduring impact of Gray’s work. It inspires me to continue advocating for literacy and to contribute to the field with the same passion and dedication that William S. Gray exemplified.”

The ILA awards committee praised Edwards’ trailblazing support for literacy development, particularly for families of color, stating that she “exemplifies the pinnacle of achievement in literacy and education.”

“Dr. Edwards has consistently broken barriers and fostered inclusivity,” they wrote, “and she has also played a significant role in public service and teaching, influencing national educational policies and ensuring that children of color see their experiences reflected in educational materials. Her distinguished career highlights her excellence and profound influence on our profession and society.”

Joining Edwards as recipients in this year’s ILA awards and grants program are nine other educators and literacy leaders:

- **Gwynne Ellen Ash**, Texas State University, San Marcos | Jerry Johns Outstanding Teacher Educator in Reading Award
- **Carol Hryniuk-Adamov**, Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg and Manitoba Council of Reading Clinicians | Maryann Manning Special Service Award
- **Jonathan M. Kittle**, University of Delaware | Jeanne S. Chall Research Fellowship for “Reading Specialists’ Knowledge of Spanish to English Cross-Linguistic Transfer and Instruction”
- **Tobias Kroll**, Texas Tech University | Elva Knight Research Grant for “Cognitive-Linguistic and Auditory Subskills in Struggling Elementary-Age Readers”
- **Amber Lawson**, Michigan State University | Dina Feitelson Research Award for her Reading Research Quarterly article “We Can Draw and Think About It Ourselves: Putting Culture and Race in Phonics Instruction”
- **Xiaomeng Li**, Western Washington University | Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award for “The Effects of L1 Writing System and L2 Linguistic Knowledge on L2 Word Recognition”
- **Caroline Rabalais**, Georgia State University | Helen M. Robinson Grant for “Critical Literacy in Action: Taking Back Power and Control in the English Language Arts Classroom”
- **Barbara Wasik** and **Annemarie Hindman**, Temple University | Diane Lapp & James Flood Professional Collaborator Award

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 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.