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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION ISSUES BRIEF ON CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

NEWARK, Del. (August 14, 2017) — Deficits in digital literacy can lead to lower levels of social advancement, poor academic achievement and long-term career immobility, states the International Literacy Association (ILA) in a new brief issued today.

Despite rising rates of mobile phone ownership and use, stark disparities remain between the “haves and the have-nots and the cans and the cannots” when it comes to technological proficiency and Internet access. ILA attributes this gap to a confluence of socioeconomic, racial, gender, geographic and familial factors as well as variances in use and instruction.

“Almost everywhere we go, we see smartphones—even in the most remote regions of developing countries. This is misleading.” says ILA Executive Director Marcie Craig Post.

“It’s the type of device, and how you use it, that matters. Can you write an essay on a smartphone? Can you fill out a job application or apply for health care? How can you do your homework if your home doesn’t have Wi-Fi?” She adds, “Access is just the first step.”

According to ILA, the solution lies at the intersection of equipment and education; equitable access to devices accompanied by meaningful instruction that supports “exploration, knowledge work and connections between people.” Without strong digital pedagogy, students are not able to harness the academic potential and the social and economic benefits of these tools.

The brief also recognizes limitations imposed by the types of devices available, location, gender inequality and parenting behaviors.

ILA provides four critical actions educators can take to close the digital divide: increase funding, critically frame 21st century skills, provide resources and advocate for government support and policy changes.

Starting August 21, ILA will be issuing a four-part, weekly blog series on how to tackle each of the four steps. These posts will offer clear action items based on peer-reviewed research and firsthand conversations with experts.

“We can’t just leave this job to policymakers or corporations or private funders,” says Post. “We hope these guides will help anyone—administrators, teachers, parents, students, anyone who cares about advancing educational equality—to take action.”

Read the full brief [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 75 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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