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## **INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION SUSPENDS CHOICES READING PROGRAM FOR 2020–2021**

*Organization cites impact of COVID-19 on schools and book access as decision driver*

NEWARK, Del. (June 23, 2020) — The International Literacy Association (ILA) announced today that, as a result of uncertainty around school reopenings for the fall, it will suspend the Choices reading program for the upcoming 2020–2021 term. This decision marks the first time the program has been paused.

The Choices reading lists, published annually on May 1, present titles selected by students and educators across the United States. The three lists—Children’s Choices, Young Adults’ Choices and Teachers’ Choices—serve as trusted and anticipated resources for connecting students to books that will help foster their love of reading.

The school-based projects are volunteer driven; ILA members serve as team leaders charged with distributing thousands of publisher-supplied books to classrooms; recruit participants to read, review and vote on their favorites; and annotate the final selections. As a result, hundreds of newly published titles end up in the hands approximately 25,000 readers across the United States each year.

The unprecedented spread and subsequent ramifications of COVID-19 have called into question the feasibility of moving forward with the project. Considerations of participant safety, book delivery and receipt, routing of materials to readers outside of a centralized participating school and uncertainty of schools even opening in the fall all factored into the difficult decision.

ILA did consider shifting the program to include e-books, but ultimately, along with Children’s Book Council (CBC), cosponsors of the Children’s and Young Adults’ list, felt the move could prove inequitable.

“When the pandemic forced closures to schools and libraries, cutting off physical book access, the world turned to digital solutions,” said ILA Executive Director Marcie Craig Post. “But for those without devices and internet access, digital is another barrier, not a solution.”

The organization is currently developing resources to address the challenges around access in the post-COVID climate.

The 2020 Choices reading lists, published this May, were completed prior to COVID-related closures. The current lists, including titles and annotations, can be downloaded for free at [literacyworldwide.org/choices](http://literacyworldwide.org/choices).

***About the Choices Project***

Each year, thousands of children, young adults, and educators around the United States select their favorite recently published books for the International Literacy Association's Choices reading lists. These lists are used in classrooms, libraries, and homes to help readers of all ages find books they will enjoy. Both the Children's Choices and the Young Adults' Choices reading lists are cosponsored by the Children's Book Council. The annotated lists for the current year are posted online in May and are available for free download at [literacyworldwide.org/choices](http://literacyworldwide.org/choices).

***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 146 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught and evaluated. ILA's Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017 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, 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](http://literacyworldwide.org).

***About the Children's Book Council***

The Children's Book Council (CBC) is the nonprofit trade association of children's book publishers in North America, dedicated to supporting the industry and promoting children's books and reading. To learn more about the CBC, visit [cbcbooks.org/about](http://cbcbooks.org/about).

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