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EQUITY IN EDUCATION TAKES CENTER STAGE AT ILA AND DSU EVENT

ILA's first in-person event post-COVID brought together educators from across the Mid-Atlantic Region and beyond

DOVER, Del. (May 19, 2023) — Educators and school leaders from across the United States and from as far away as Trinidad and Tobago came together today for “Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Through Literacy,” held at Delaware State University (DSU) in Dover, Del. The event, developed by the International Literacy Association (ILA) in partnership with DSU, focused on literacy teaching and learning practices that create inclusive sites of belonging and yield more equitable student outcomes.

The face-to-face event, ILA's first since COVID-19, featured an impressive slate of Delaware educators and administrators in addition to literacy leaders from across the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond. Among them: DSU alumnus Jahsha Tabron, Delaware's 2022 Teacher of the Year.

Tabron, like fellow keynote speakers Michele Myers, an author and Wake Forest University professor, and Stephen Peters, education consultant and past president of the ILA Board of Directors, delivered the message that what students need more than anything is to be *seen*.

“We tend to notice everything we think [students] are missing instead of the wonderful things they are coming with,” Tabron said. “We don't need to change our students to see their assets and visualize their success. We don't need to change students to teach them. We don't need them to fit into our boxes. We need to get them to see themselves and be proud of themselves and live and grow beyond their boxes so they don't continue to fit into small expectations.”

“It's good to know pedagogy and curriculum, but it's better to know your students,” Peters noted, while Myers encouraged educators to reflect on why they had chosen the profession in the first place: “It's not just what we do; it's not just a job. It is our purpose.”

Topics covered during the all-day event included planning lessons that centers today's diverse student population; building foundational literacy skills through diverse, authentic children's literature that honors backgrounds, identities and cultures; using think-alouds to better understand students and promote comprehension growth; and coaching as a means of supporting equitable outcomes for students.

Kenneth Kunz, president of the ILA Board of Directors and a session presenter, was thrilled to see the room filled with attendees who share in ILA's mission of equitable access to literacy around the world.

“When literacy changemakers intentionally enhance teaching to prioritize equity through access, [affirm] students’ identities, and [design] inclusive lessons, it is not at the expense of others,” he said. “In fact, we all become better together in this beautiful, diverse and globally connected world.”

For more information about the event, visit literacyworldwide.org.

About the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization of literacy educators, researchers and experts spanning 112 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.

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