



Wendy Peabody

Envision Science Academy

I am one of those people that was fortunate enough to always know that I wanted to be a teacher. It all started with instructing my stuffed animals to reading with my little sister. My journey as an educator started as a camp counselor, to a daycare worker, and moved into the classroom once I was licensed. As a “seasoned” teacher with over 20 years of experience, I keep growing and changing to meet the needs of students that I have the pleasure of sharing my days with each year.

Several years ago, a colleague shared Donolyn Miller’s book *The Book Whisperer* with me. Her message about the importance of students being able to choose their own books and spend quality time with text really spoke to me, and I began implementing these key components into my classroom. I rekindled my love for reading and devoured the latest and greatest recently published books, and some timeless classics, for the grade I was teaching. I wanted to be able to recommend books that met the interests of my students, so they would begin to find joy in reading. I noticed right away that if I could find an author, genre, or series that engaged a child, his or her time with text would increase. Increased time with text, without fail, prompted substantially more reading growth. Therefore, it has always been crucial for me to help students find the “perfect” book, so they too can cultivate a love for reading, which leads inevitably to academic success.

Four years ago, I left our large county district to join a local charter school and teach 5th grade ELA. This project-based STEAM school allows teachers to create their own curriculum to teach the NC Standards. Here, I’ve been able to incorporate daily independent reading time into my classes, and I’ve continued to see a correlation in academic growth and *daily choice reading*. I’ve found that the skill and drill practices for teaching reading have a time and place but seem to be robbing children of a love, or even like, of reading. My hope is to one day have solid research data to demonstrate daily independent reading as a powerful intervention for struggling readers.

Currently, I made a change from an ELA classroom to science. The Book Love Foundation grant came at the right time as our school has limited nonfiction texts. We do not have a school library, and there are only a handful of science texts. With the grant, I will be able to create a science library for our standards. I will be adding more engaging texts from local authors. I can diversify my library, so students of all races see themselves represented in our class library. I’ll also have the opportunity to choose texts that showcase leaders in engineering and science. I am excited about all the possibilities this funding will bring to my students. I also plan to incorporate Jillian Heise’s #classroombookaday challenge with a science twist. While students may be entering a science classroom this year, literacy will be an integral part of our curriculum.

