



BOOKLOVE

F O U N D A T I O N

Choice Inspires Reading

2019 PRESS RELEASE

The Book Love Foundation awarded **66** classroom library grants totaling \$130,000 to teachers in the United States and Canada this year. Since 2013, the Book Love Foundation has given away \$500,000 in grants to more than 200 teachers from 41 states and five provinces. Each one works to create a lasting love of reading in all students. We continue to receive generous support from BookSource and Heinemann, as well as hundreds of individual donors to support this work.

The Book Love Foundation reviewed (and were inspired and moved by) four hundred applications this year. Our 2019 grant winners are extraordinary teachers who work at local, state, and national levels to inspire their colleagues. If you have any doubt about engaging today's busy students in reading, these teachers will convince you it is not about time, and not about technology, but it *is* about putting the best books you can into students' hands and then giving them time to read them. Every one of these teachers is on the path to creating a future generation of readers.

Please help us celebrate our 2019 grant winners:

Selma Agic and Jessica Madden co-teach English at Hamtramck High School in Hamtramck, MI. Their students come from Yemen, Bangladesh and Bosnia as their families escape poverty and war. Despite the language, learning and cultural obstacles, Selma and Jessica have built a small, culturally relevant library and a community of readers. Not only are they impacting their students, but they have been instrumental in coaching colleagues to integrate elements of workshop into their classrooms. Selma and Jessica are models, through their lives and their teaching, of how the right books and the right classroom community can have a lifelong impact on students.

Jami Allen has a clear passion for literacy and learning. Given the fact that she lives in rural Nebraska, it is impressive that she has taken the initiative to develop her professional learning to include practitioners that are not as widely known, such as bell hooks and Brené Brown. Jami currently teaches at North Platte High School, and her classroom library of around 200 books engages all of her students in reading. Jami centers her reading instruction on choice and strives to provide her students with opportunities to learn about a variety of life experiences and perspectives through books. Jami's work helps students see lives, ideas, and experiences far beyond Nebraska.

Tiara Beard is a fifth grade English Language Arts teacher entering her sixth year of teaching. She teaches 63 readers and writers to be their best literate selves at the Prospect Elementary School in Oberlin, Ohio. Tiara subscribes to a multitude of professional associations, accesses online resources, attends Teachers College Reading and Writing Institutes, and studies the work of social justice organizations such as Teaching Tolerance, Facing History in Ourselves, and Rethinking Schools. She is passionate about culturally responsive teaching as a curricular framework, and matching students to diverse books is a focus for her. Tiara views the foundation's investment as an investment in her students. She seeks to create a space where students have the opportunity to experience the world around them, as well as a place that affirms their identity and values them.

Joseph Belknap's classroom library is the go-to place for a book at Greendale High School. In a school without a librarian and only a skeletal library, it has to be. His students use his self-funded library enthusiastically, responding to book talks, goal-setting and conversations with their teacher and each other. Wisconsin's Greendale High School is a diverse school that has had some hard conversations about race in the past school year. Joe wants to advocate for literacy as a human right and make certain that he is including many voices and many stories in the books in his classroom library.

Amy Biggert has twenty-three years of teaching experience. She is currently teaching fourth grade at Cielo Vista Charter School in Palm Springs, California. After professionally reading and attending literacy conferences, Amy transformed her classroom library and is now a leader in creating a school culture that is committed to giving students choice and voice in their reading lives. Amy inspires all the students and teachers in her school by hosting events like March Madness and Book Tastings. Amy's passion for reading and dedication to her school community has sparked a schoolwide shift in the value of lifelong reading. One of her students said it best when he wrote her a letter while she was home sick, "We read to remember you." This is the legacy Amy wants to leave behind in her students.

Allison Blackwell teaches 7th grade strategic reading classes at T.H. McDonald Junior High in Katy, TX and has many ways of connecting her students to books. She leverages Half Price Books, First Book Marketplace, Donors Choose projects, and Scholastic points to acquire books, and also gives students several ways to access digital texts. In her third year of teaching, Allison has built a library with 900 books where 100% of her students utilize her library. She recognizes that her library lacks diversity in characters and authors that connect with the diversity in her students, however, and will remedy that with this grant. Allison is an avid reader of young adult novels, and has made a significant personal investment in professional development. Allison's deep commitment to learning is evident.

Tamara Brown is a teacher at Windham High School in a small town in Ohio with a limited town library, no school library, and 100% of the students receiving free or reduced lunches. Being the only English teacher at the school, grades 10-12 for the past three years, she has created a reading revolution. Her superintendent stated, "Our students went from highly disliking reading and not valuing the power of language to legitimately craving books, all because of Tamara's dedication to her students and literature." Tamara has pursued opportunities outside of her district to increase her professional development, and we are certain, will continue to lead and inspire her colleagues.

Melinda Buchanan has been teaching for 21 years and just finished her third year at Krum High School in Krum, TX. She has always been committed to providing reading choice for her students. Over the summer, Melinda curates a stack of books for each of her incoming freshman based on a survey they take at the end of their 8th grade year. Melinda helps her students connect with authors of young adult books by facilitating author/student connections, including a trip to the North Texas Teen Book Festival. Her reach goes beyond the classroom, connecting with students during the summer and working with parents to encourage a reading life at home.

Ryan Buck has been teaching for 15 years at Mundelein High School in Mundelein, IL. Ryan stated, "I used to be a non-reader, like many of my students in my first twelve years of teaching, until one summer I read about choice reading and I knew I had found a better way." Ryan found validation when a student with dyslexia, who had no relationship with reading, completed 20 books in 18 weeks because of his emphasis on making choices in reading. His endorsements from students emphasized how they found joy in reading, which increased the volume of their reading throughout the school year.

Melissa "Molly" Castner teaches 8th grade English at Marshall Middle School in Wexford, PA and is dedicated to helping all students see themselves in the books they read. Molly is a Project LIT Community leader and hosts "First Chapter Fridays" to get her students hooked on reading that is relevant and revelatory. She has focused on developing a classroom library around authors of color, indigenous authors, and authors representing the LGBTQ+ community. Molly is an educator who will continue this work no matter what, because she knows that through high interest books, students feel validated and seen.

Gabrielle Cervantes teaches a Dual Immersion Class of third graders at Rorimer Elementary School in La Puente, California. She is committed to professional learning and has a particular interest in creating a flexible learning environment that emphasizes student voice and choice. Gabrielle believes that literacy is the vehicle that will propel all students forward in life and a determining factor in their success. Gabrielle felt invisible in the books she read as a child and wants to use this grant to find quality mentor texts in Spanish and diversify the books in her library. Her students have limited access to books at home and the public library, so Gabrielle believes the classroom library is critical to giving her students the opportunity to develop the habits of a lifelong reader.

Megan Davidhizar is an English teacher at Fairfield Junior-Senior High School in the rural town of Goshen, IN. In the past two years, her classroom has been gradeless, which Megan said "Started as an experiment and has brought new life to my instruction. I am no longer bound by rubrics and point values, but free to connect with my students as people." Megan has an impressive reading and writing life, with consistent "YA cravings" and even wrote her own young-adult fantasy novel inspired by her students and classroom notebook entries. She said, "Reading more YA fiction and writing it myself has solidified that these stories have immeasurable value in creating lifelong readers and writers."

Lisa Desberg has committed to placing student joy at the center of her reading workshop. She works to ensure that her students can find themselves as well as others reflected in themselves--including texts such as Rupi Kaur's *Honey* and Tara Westover's *Educated: A Memoir*. Lisa started the #WHSReaderLeader campaign on her campus at Wilmington High School in Wilmington, MA, to develop the reading lives of all students in her school, not just those who are fortunate to have her as a teacher. Through #WHSReaderLeader campaign over 100 books were given to students before summer vacation last year.

Kara Downs is in her twentieth year of teaching at Centennial High School in Champaign, IL. She draws on her wide knowledge of young adult and professional literature to find the best resources to meet the needs of her diverse students. She states, "Every year, every day, my students come into my room carrying so much weight, and giving them the time to read for pleasure and the book that provides them with a mirror into their lives, or a window into a different world, lifts some of that burden." With her seniors, Kara spends time talking to them about the place that reading might hold in their lives, bringing in other adults from the school and surrounding community to share their experiences with reading.

Tara Drone clearly sees the need to connect reading to the development of a critical consciousness in young adults. She has a book club for racial equality. Her library includes Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* and Kiely and Reynolds' *All American Boys*. Tara has taught English for 14 years and is currently teaching 10th – 12th grades at River Ridge High School in rural Wisconsin. She has built a classroom library of 424 books which most of her students rely on for their independent reading choices. For Tara, having a current and relevant library will always be her top priority and she will continue to use all means available to

acquire books for her students.

Shannon Fee teaches at the Glendale Secondary School in Ontario, Canada. Her biggest professional revelation came from reading *180 Days* by Gallagher & Kittle and realizing she was doing too much of the work students should be doing. Shannon states, “I was tired of apathy and disengagement, making decisions for the students, telling them instead of teaching them, worrying about covering the curriculum, being afraid of change ... and then I found books: sad books, inspiring books, exciting books, mysterious books, true stories, old stories ...” Now Shannon gives all students choice in their reading, has regular conversations with them, encourages creativity, makes time to read herself, and is committed to a love of reading for all. With a small, but established classroom library, Shannon is making the difference for kids who need time, space and encouragement to find their own book love.

Sarah Fleming has been teaching for 18 years and is currently teaching English at Westhill High School, in Syracuse, NY. For her doctorate in literacy education Sarah is researching adolescent and critical literacy, young adult literature, and the disruption of the traditional English language arts curriculum as it specifically relates to suburban, predominantly middle-class, mostly-white schools. Sarah sees her job as assisting students to be the readers they deserve to be and is eager to collaborate with other educators. 100% of her students have made use of her classroom library of 640 books and Sarah works hard to be sure that YA literature she is acquiring is representative of varied voices and lived experiences.

Cara Foley is committed to spreading book magic everywhere she goes, especially in Perry Hill School located in Shelton, Connecticut. Cara started out teaching third grade 20 years ago and now has access to every child and every educator at Perry Hill as the building's reading specialist. From book clubs, to used book drives, and everything else in between, Cara doesn't let a budget freeze get in the way of putting books in children's hands. She has shared her love of reading inside and outside her school building. From One School, One Book projects, author visits for her school, and lending libraries placed throughout the school, Cara has a wide influence on the love of reading at both home and school. It doesn't matter who you are, Cara knows just the book that will get you hooked.

Michael Guevara teaches 9th and 10th grade students in a high school surrounded by grassy fields and auto repair shops on the outskirts of San Antonio, TX. Michael is a 20-year veteran who has created a culture of reading in his classroom, and one where students make sure that it quickly transfers to new students who arrive mid-year. Lots of reading and lots of student-to-student talk takes place in Michael's classroom and his students appreciate his passion for reading. His recommendation letters assert that “Michael is an efficient and effective teacher who leads his colleagues in workshops presented at the local, state, and national levels.” We celebrate Michael's leadership and vision.

Karen Hable is exceptionally committed to the youth she teaches at Mauston High School in Mauston, WI. She has successfully led the freshman English team to a Reader's and Writer's Workshop model and has created a population of students who see themselves as readers. Her work has fostered a culture of reading in her school. Karen was awarded the Kohl Teaching Fellowship in 2019 that recognizes and awards teaching excellence in the state of Wisconsin. She started a summer classroom library, a "Once Upon a Book Club" and a Project LIT book collaboration in her community. She designed and led a Novel Experiences class that serves disengaged readers. Her mission is to not only help them improve their reading ability, but also to rekindle in each a love of reading.

Jeannette Haskins is a 28-year veteran, currently teaching 12th grade at West Jefferson High School in Ohio. Jeannette is knowledgeable of Young Adult literature and has written an article about YA literature for *English Journal*. Her recent independent reading included 30+ books. She reads book reviews and journals to stay current on books to recommend to her students as well as to explore new ideas for her instruction. Jeannette has built a strong classroom library, but knows she needs to continuously study its gaps and improve the range of titles students have access to. As Jeannette states, "Curating a classroom library is not a one-and-done event. It not only changes as older books are weeded but as my students change."

Tina Hayes has been teaching for 23 years and is currently teaching 6th grade at Oliver Winch Middle School in South Glens Falls, NY. Tina has a robust list of learning opportunities that have expanded her teaching. Her library with 250 books was built using her own funds, some school funds, multiple Donors Choose projects and Scholastic bonus points, and she is constantly working to add high interest books. Tina is a pioneer in her school and other teachers visit her classroom to see the workshop model and independent reading in action. One of Tina's students stated "Mrs. Hayes has inspired me to be an avid reader through 6th grade and beyond ... I love reading now and it's all because of her."

Amy Hill was recently hired as a Pre-K teacher at All Stars Academy in Newnan, Georgia. She previously taught first grade at Lamar Elementary in Mineral Wells, Texas. Amy has taught for fifteen years and in that time, she has served as a district leader for curriculum and a mentor to first-year teachers. She has a passion for reading and believes all children can thrive as readers. Amy knows choice is essential to instill the habits of a lifelong reader and believes books help her teach far more than the curriculum. Books help her make connections and build relationships with her students. A former colleague said a quote by Dr. Seuss describes Amy perfectly. "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world." Amy is that teacher to her students.

Heather Jennings is a 10th and 11th grade English teacher at The Rosedale Center for Alternative Study in Rosedale, MD. Her transient students only attend for one or two grading periods. Many of them report disengagement and negative experiences with

reading. The Rosedale Center does not have an on-site library, and Heather knows that by giving more current, relevant and engaging texts, all students will read. We support her determination to do whatever she can to provide her students with engaging reading experiences in spite of the limited time she has with them.

Crystal Kelley will enter her 17th year teaching 9th and 10th grade English and AVID at San Marcos High School in San Marcos, TX. Crystal believes that standardized testing and the perpetual mobility of poverty result in her students lacking engaged reading experiences. Being the first in her family to graduate high school, Crystal is motivated to break the cycle. She has 300 books in the classroom library, which is the “heart of her instruction.” She works diligently to offer choice and diverse stories and experiences in her classroom library. 90% of her students choose books from those shelves. Crystal says, “Not a day goes by in my classroom where we are not reading for ourselves or writing in our notebooks.”

Jennifer Kieren teaches at Ellsworth High School in rural Wisconsin. While she has been teaching for 26 years, her teaching changed dramatically after attending NCTE three years ago. She came back from that conference energized to change her teaching and those around her. Jennifer is the secretary of the Wisconsin arm of NCTE and presents at local CESA and at WI-CTE about choice reading. Her passion for choice reading influences her state, her school, and her classroom. Jennifer’s library of 500 books is almost exclusively self-funded and has had a significant impact on her instruction. Her student’s testimonials validate her practice and how they have become engaged, committed readers.

Sally Kneifl brings a love of reading to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders on the Omaha Nation Indian Reservation in rural Nebraska. She began building her classroom library at thrift stores and now uses community book drives to build her library, but needs many more books to satisfy the hungry readers who return to her classroom years later for books. Sally is currently working on a doctorate in education focused on identifying Native American bias in adolescent literature. She says, “When books enter my classroom, it is not an investment in me, but an investment in my students as productive members of the community and our future leaders.”

Cassie Kriefall is a Title 1 reading intervention teacher and has been teaching for thirteen years. She teaches at Wilson Elementary School in Janesville, Wisconsin. She says, “A classroom library of 250 books makes my heart beat faster.” She believes that it is important to provide a variety of texts to meet children where they are in terms of emotional needs and connections to a diversity of life experiences. “The texts I need are ones that look like the children I serve. I need books the children can see themselves in, like a mirror.” Cassie believes that having options to choose makes the difference between creating a lifelong reader and a student who reads just because we said so. And while books cannot change the world for everyone, they can change the world for a few.

Linda Kroger teaches at Graham Middle School in Graham, NC. She has been employing practices introduced in *Book Love*, but also has deepened her practice after reading *180 Days*, saying, "I started rereading these conference notes, looking for patterns to help me get closer to those ultimate conferences where the reader leaves with an appreciation and love for how reading can enhance his life." Linda is mindful of building a diverse library that reflects her student body consisting of 50% Latinx, 30% African American, and 20% Caucasian children. She wants her classroom library to give her students a deeper outlook on the world.

Danielle La Pan teaches 9th grade ELA at Metropolitan Business Academy, a public magnet school in New Haven, CT. Danielle has established a well-developed program of choice reading. She has about 300 books in her classroom library, with about 70% of high interest and is committed to continue building her library through several organizations. Her students volunteer to pre-read new books and give book talks. Danielle is leading her colleagues, so that all students in the school can make choices about their reading. She has created a book-study program for the teaching staff where they jointly choose a professional book to read each fall and discuss together.

Aimée Lajeunesse teaches 9th–12th grade English, history, and special education at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute in Ontario, Canada. Aimée says, "Books are a direct portal to building empathy and finding a connection to the larger world. Books help students become critical thinkers and voters ... and they help students become informed global citizens." In just one year she has created a high interest classroom library of hundreds of books, with 100% of her students finding books that engage them. Aimée is part of a small team of English teachers who are redesigning the grade 9 English course where 75% of material read in class is based on student choice. Aimée has inspired every English teacher at her school to build a classroom library.

Anne Marie Longpre teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute in Ontario, Canada and has an impressive list of online mentors she follows and strong knowledge of professional texts. Anne Marie believes that her students deserve doorways into other worlds, mirrors into themselves and windows into the lives of others. She has made significant financial investment in her own library, giving her students constant access to books, which has become a game changer especially for those who did not immediately identify themselves as readers. Anne Marie has a clear passion for literacy and is developing passion in students.

Kim McLean teaches fourth grade at Glen Hills Middle School in Glendale, Wisconsin. Originally a classical musician, she decided to become a teacher because she wanted to share her love of reading and books with students. Kim has taught for twelve years and believes the classroom library is the "heart of my classroom and the heart of my reading instruction." She receives no regular funding for books, but she's always on the hunt, raiding little free libraries, Goodwill, garage sales and used book stores. Her school has been

focused on equity training, and her goal is to increase her classroom library with books that reflect the diversity of her students. Kim also subscribes to a number of blogs, keeps up to date with teachers on Twitter, and attends local professional development and webinars.

Elizabeth Mee is in her fourth year of teaching, and is currently teaching 11th grade English in Los Angeles. Her school has no library. She has 417 books in her classroom, of which 50% are of high interest, and yet, 100% of her students read books from her library. Elizabeth has been supplying books for her classroom out of her pocket for years and is determined to grow her library with titles that will erase deficits in her collection. Elizabeth said, “I want students to love coming to class, to feel like their concerns and voices are heard, and to leave at the end of the year feeling armed with the necessary tools to meet whatever is in front of them.”

Angela Mills is a 10th and 11th grade English teacher at Central Catholic High School, a private school in Toledo, OH. Angela recently finished a master’s degree in Reading (K-12) where she researched culturally responsive teaching. She has been a member of ILA, NCTE, and OCIRA. Her students have been disengaged with reading, but Angela regularly confers with students to remedy that. She has found that a lack of resources prevents many students from finding the books they want to read. Angela has built a library with 212 books through her own funds and donations and is driven and committed to building an engaging reading community for her students.

Chrissy Molfino teaches English at Silver Creek High School in San Jose, CA. She is in her ninth year of teaching and has been emphasizing choice reading for several years. She has recently started incorporating significantly more writing into her classroom. Chrissy’s passion for student-centered teaching and the impact it has on her students as readers is found throughout her classroom. Her application contained many compelling stories about students who she managed to reach through getting the right book in their hands. Over 95% of her students read books from Chrissy’s library, which was built using her own funds, gifts from family and friends, and small grants from PTSA. We are thrilled to become one of her supporters.

Cathy Nicoletti has been teaching for 18 years. She currently teaches 10th grade English and is the Academic Leader for ELA K-12 which helps develop literacy curriculum and support teachers. Advanced Technology Academy in Dearborn, MI is a Title I school with 1350 students and does not have a library. In addition, many of her students live in neighboring Detroit, and so they cannot access the Dearborn library system. Not only is Cathy’s classroom library the only option for many students, she is working to open it up for students during the summer. Cathy has the reputation as the “school reading geek” and with our support, she will be able to expand the library and replace some outdated or damaged books with better, more diverse titles.

Ayla Olson is a teacher of six years, currently teaching English and creative writing at North Powder Charter School in North Powder, OR. She is a member of the Oregon Council of English Teachers and the National Council of Teachers of English. Ayla embraces the workshop model of teaching, and describes her class as student-centered, “providing as much choice as the books I have allow.” She loves reading and loves teaching reading. Her favorite conversations with her students center on what they have read. Ayla opens every class with independent reading, conducts book clubs, and provides digital readers for group projects. She has built her classroom library through a Donor Choice project and her own funds.

Kurt Ostrow is in his fourth year of public high school teaching in Fall River, MA, and is a staunch social-justice activist who sees lifelong literacy as a key to civic engagement. Calling himself “a Linda Christensen fangirl,” (as are many of us at the Book Love Foundation,) Kurt is an avid reader of professional texts that emphasize radical teaching and engaged literacy instruction. At Durfee High School, Kurt has designed a new course in LGBTQ Studies and created a YA Book Club, while extending his reach beyond the school by running a queer book club called Reading Rainbow in Providence. His teaching fosters the development of informed, strategic, engaged, and reflective readers from his mostly working-class, text-hungry students.

Kim Ouellette has taught twelve years in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, and currently teaches kindergarten there. She actively pursues learning opportunities in order to develop and enhance her teaching skills and leadership capacities. Kim has promoted a range of classroom initiatives to make the world a better place, including the adoption and support of endangered animals, helping children in Africa, and creating an Outdoor Classroom with play spaces to promote movement, awareness, and experiential learning. Kim calls kindergarten her “heart song” and children have opportunities all day long to explore, read, and talk about books. Her goal is to include more books in her classroom library that reflect the diversity and interests of her students.

Veronica Peña teaches high school English at Sun Valley Magnet School in Los Angeles, CA. She works Saturdays, summers, and extra periods each year to make sure she has enough money to buy books and expand her classroom library for her students. Veronica said, "My heart is in expanding the reading lives of my students. I want them to enjoy the power of storytelling to shape their lives and prepare them for scenarios that they may presently be experiencing or might encounter someday in their future." Veronica longs to teach the tough topics of life with the hope that she may be able to expose adolescents to life-changing stories.

Lauren Petri is heavily involved in the Iowa Writing Project and Iowa Council of Teachers of English, which have shown her the importance of being a reader and a writer alongside her students. She has read many professional development text from authors such as Newkirk, Romano, Moffet, Kittle, Britton, etc. and attends national conferences to stay connected

and further her instructions. Lauren teaches sophomore and senior English at a Dike-New Hartford High School in rural district in Iowa. Her 500-book library is the cornerstone which she helps students navigate their challenges, grow in their passions and see the world through new eyes.

Melissa Pilon has 19 years of experience and is currently teaching 8th grade ELA and Intervention classes at New York's Depew Middle School. She is incredibly involved at her district, helping with everything from student council and the spelling bee to the safety committee and being the yearbook advisor. Her classroom library is organized by genre and 100% of her students have used her library this year. Melissa uses the reader's workshop model in her classroom and individual conferences to assesses her students' reading growth. She also encourages her students to visit the public library to extend their reading lives outside of the school.

Sarah Pritchett is a veteran teacher with 21 years in the classroom and a Swiss Army Knife skillset. She has taught various grades from K through 8, including a 7th-8th class for students with dyslexia, prior to her current assignment of 8th grade ELA and ESL at Moorhead Junior High in Conroe, TX. Sarah is an avid reader and well-informed about current YA literature as well as professional texts on literacy and pedagogy. She actively participates on Twitter to connect with the thinking of other professionals. She has a growing classroom library with an open-door access policy, ensuring that any student needing a book can get it right when it's needed. She emails her students and parents weekly with resources that help them understand the value of her classroom culture and practices.

Marianne Richardson is entering year three of teaching freshmen at Mifflin High School – an urban, high-needs school in Columbus, OH, although she is in her 12th year of teaching. Marianne has embraced the pedagogy of choice as a foundation for English instruction with energy and passion. Her familiarity with YA literature and professional literature is growing and she has made a substantial commitment to independent reading in her classes. Marianne's willingness to rethink time-honored practices and make change in a district that emphasizes reading whole class novels selected from the canon with on-line assessments is impressive. She is a mid-career teacher who is unwilling to settle for what has always been done because she knows that choice and a teacher's commitment to understanding individual readers engages more students in regular reading.

Jen Rosewarne teaches grades 9-12 and is a department chair at Huntsville High School in Ontario, Canada. Her professional development reading choices range widely and she finds a broader network of educators interested in change via Twitter. While her current library is small, it is clear that it has been carefully cultivated, and all of her students have read books from it. She is determined to grow her library in volume and scope with an emphasis on diversity and states, "Having books at my disposal isn't just about literacy. It's about the human need to understand and connect with each other." Jen also spends time coaching other teachers in her district and hopes to see bigger changes as she spreads book love

from her students to the larger school and community.

Julia Ross teaches 8th grade Language Arts at Oakland Middle School in Columbia, MO. She credits a professional development opportunity to learn from Kelly Gallagher as a pivotal moment that has transformed her teaching and helped her to re-evaluate her instruction. Julia writes, “Each year I hone my craft, further push myself to get better at the reading/writing workshop model, and grow more confident that this was the path I was meant to take all along.” Julia is dedicated to connecting her students with engaging reading experiences and understands how book talks can lead to positive and powerful reading experiences for all students.

Janet Sanders has taught for 29 years in a variety of grades and capacities. She currently teaches 10th grade and English Language Development at Sierra High School in Manteca, CA. Janet is fully invested in continuous professional development that helps her grow and keeps her inspired. She is committed to growing her classroom library in scope, volume, and efficiency. Janet gives kids a place to land, a place to feel valued, and then helps them find the books they need. A former student stated, “Mrs. Sanders makes her students feel comfortable and worthy . . . If I am being honest, that’s the first time I was interested in reading a book. From there on I was obsessed.”

Denise Scarfi teaches English at Urban Assembly Media High School in New York, NY. When speaking of her students she said, “For a few, the persistent need for food, shelter, and other basics completely and understandably overshadows the desire to read. And yet I don’t want to imply that these challenges always directly compete with reading, as I have witnessed students in the most challenging circumstances find inspiration and comfort in a book -- especially when given time to read during school.” Denise has built a classroom library and started a course called Introduction to Literature, an independent reading workshop where ELA teachers co-teach with special education and ELL teachers.

Sarah Shepherd teaches at Martensville High School in Saskatchewan, Canada. As teachers do, she wears many hats. Sarah has built sound practices into her English classes with the help of her enriched classroom library, and she plans to insert independent reading and book clubs into her Life Transitions and Native Studies classes in the future. She knows that the ability to read analytically rests on a foundation of wide reading and that wide reading only comes with choice. She is entering her tenth year of teaching with her enthusiasm for excellence fully intact. She has built trusting relationships with her students that allow them to risk being enthusiastic about something as (seemingly) uncool as reading.

Mimi Silk says, “Some students do not see themselves as readers when they arrive in my classroom. My role is to steer them towards books that will ignite their belief in themselves as readers and in the utility and magic of reading.” Mimi, a 7th grade Humanities teacher at Paul Cuffee Middle School in Providence, RI uses choice reading to teach and discuss important issues in today’s world. She chooses books wisely. She selected *Piecing Me*

Together by Renee Watson, for example, because “This book features a protagonist who has goals and works hard to achieve them - but who faces societal pressures and prejudices as a black girl in America. This book serves as a mirror for my high-achieving girls of color, and a window for other who may not yet understand the experience.”

Elizabeth Snevily is a 7th grade English teacher at Markham Place School in Little Silver, NJ. Her creatively-structured application - as a *Nerdy Book Club* blog post titled "When A Teacher Reads" - showed how her reading life and her classroom library have evolved, as well as how she connects with her students through books. She said when teachers read, classrooms change. "My passion for literature floods my classroom with book talks, read alouds, quick writes, writing, independent reading, book clubs, choice, and most importantly, individual conferences with students. Those minutes have become my absolute favorite part of my job." Elizabeth is passionate about fighting for reading choice with her students and rejects old teaching practices that are no longer creating students who can think for themselves.

Jordan Stamper is finishing her fourth year of teaching at Klein Forest High School in a suburb of Houston, TX. Jordan focuses on diversity in what her students read so that they can take ownership over the words they read and write in order to make the world a more diverse place to live in. Her library of 289 books is self-funded, as she does not have school financial support. Her list of books she wishes to purchase is thoughtful and inclusive. Although Jordan is in the early years of her teaching career, the concept of choice reading seems to come naturally to her. Supporting Jordan will send a message to her school and district that she is a leader and is getting national attention for her work.

Bailey Steinhardt teaches 6th grade English Language Arts at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Oceanside, CA. A veteran of the San Marcos Writing Project, Bailey knows that truly engaging learners means involving them in their own growth process as readers and writers. To this end, she conducts daily reading conferences, observes patterns in her students' reading habits, gives book talks, and shares her own reading experiences with her classes. Plus, she is fully committed to growing her classroom library through any means available. Bailey states, “Many of my students who have not yet made connection with a work of literature still need to find THE ONE that awakens their desire to be a lifelong reader.” We hope this grant will support that mission.

Lindsay Stotts teaches 10th grade chemistry at Centennial High School in Corona, CA. (Yes, she's a science teacher.) She said, “Investing in my classroom means that you would be showing teachers and schools that reading novels can extend beyond ELA classes, and you would be pioneering that mental shift in thinking about reading.” Lindsay attended the California Science Teachers Association Conference where she learned how literacy can be incorporated into a science classroom. She currently integrates reading into her science curriculum and, with this grant, will continue to expand her understanding of book clubs in content areas and the power of reading to sustain engaged thinkers across content areas.

Anne Straub has been teaching for 8 years and currently teaches grades 9-11 in suburban Rockledge, FL. Anne has put the thinking of professional authors she follows into practice by beginning her class with 10 minutes of independent reading every single day. She is very aware that many of her students wouldn't read at home unless they had those 10 minutes of class time to 'get hooked' on their books. Her 300-book classroom library is utilized by 90% of her students. A literacy coach at her school stated, "Mrs. Straub celebrates diversity in her classroom ... her students are able to select books that identify with their diverse backgrounds, allowing them to connect with the text in ways they never had before."

Susan Taylor teaches 6th grade English and social studies at Ripon Elementary in Ripon, CA. She said "I want my students to realize they are part of the entire world; they are global citizens. I want them to grapple with these questions: 1) What does the world need from me? 2) What are the responsibilities of well-educated global citizens? Through reading books set in places around the world that have been largely unknown to my students, they develop empathy and begin to see the world — for its beauty and challenges. We are learning the world's needs and realizing young people are and CAN make a difference NOW." Susan's sense of urgency in helping her students become global thinkers and informed citizens is necessary and inspiring.

Emily Waisanen teaches middle school language arts at Oakfield Middle School in Oakfield, WI. She describes her role as "playing matchmaker between a book and a reader to inspire a lifelong love of reading" and has shown commitment to developing a fabulous classroom library. Emily has created an amazing "reading identity assessment" her students can use to determine what type of readers they are and then set goals to grow their identities to the next level. She has also found the time to make connections with author-mentors for her class, develop a system to send books home for students to read over the summer, and to keep reading and attending conferences to expand her own thinking.

Valen Warner is a first year 8th grade teacher at Sherwood Middle School, an urban school in Memphis, TN. She has just 111 books in her classroom library, but her commitment to social justice makes her extraordinary. Instead of teaching the curriculum she was handed, her application showed us how she taught it through critical race theory. She has read Emdin, Delpit, and Freire and attended reading by Kiese Laymon, an author of the memoir *Heavy*. She attends lectures at the National Civil Rights Museum and is determined to provide her students with culturally relevant literature. She said, "My students deserve a relationship with a loving adult who will guide them in their intellectual growth, and they deserve relationships with many, many books."

Katie Washburn has 9 years of teaching experience and currently teaches 11th grade at The Franklin School of Innovation, a college-prep school with a focus on service-learning. In her comfortable, flexible-seating classroom, she works with students from urban and rural areas of Asheville, NC. Because they have no school library, Katie has worked hard to grow her classroom library to approximately 800 books. She uses daily independent reading time

to conference with her students, which her students take ownership of as the year progresses. Her professional readings are diverse and her knowledge of YA literature is current. Katie hopes that as she grows her classroom library to become more representative, more illuminating, and more inclusive she and her students will grow.

Tim Wheeler is heading into his second year of teaching and recently was hired at Riddle Elementary School in Mattoon, Illinois. He spent the summer before getting his first classroom scouring Goodwill stores to amass a large collection for his classroom library. Tim inspires his third graders to believe in themselves and to work and play hard. His teaching includes funny voices and sometimes, wigs. Tim describes himself as a teacher who relentlessly encourages students to develop a love for reading by connecting them with accessible books they love. His students discuss and recommend graphic novels and swap them like he did with the baseball cards of his youth. With this grant, we celebrate the promise of new teachers, alive to the joy of inspiring young readers.

Eryn Willow teaches English Language Arts, math, and sign language at Silverton Middle School, a rural public school in Silverton, OR. Eryn says, "A book in a hand is power and joy and a promise made" and she invests in her classroom to provide a robust and diverse library for students of all skill levels and interests. Her passion for reading and books began as a child, saying, "They gave me courage when I was afraid, patience when I was angry, and hope when I was lost." As a teacher, Eryn is committed to building reading lives that last because, as she says, "Reading is a skill that can empower a person for life." Bravo.

Diana Wolf teaches English Language Arts at Rotolo Middle School in Batavia, IL. She discovered the power of a robust classroom library when she was struggling from "teacher burnout" during a leave of absence to care for her children. She found inspiration in four professional development books that offered strategies on how to rediscover joy in the classroom and begin building a reading community at her school. She said, "The results from being a passionate reader and teacher have been positively overwhelming," and she is now focused on incorporating this love of reading within her district's curriculum. A passionate letter of recommendation from one of Diana's students was a compelling reason to believe in Diana's plans for her Book Love Foundation grant.

Corey Wozniak teaches English II and AP Literature at Equipo Academy in Las Vegas, NV, an area that he categorizes as a 'word desert' - where the closest reading material to his school are magazines and tabloids at the local 7-Eleven. Despite the surrounding environment, Corey has slowly built a culture of reading within his classroom through professional development training, implementing school-wide silent reading, and collecting data from his students with regular surveys on their reading attitudes and habits. The most compelling part of Corey's story was the school event he created known as the "Midnight Book Brunch". The annual event brings together more than 200 students and family members to read from 8pm to midnight instilling passion for reading to the entire community.

Christina Young is in her nineteenth year of teaching English at Sierra High School in Manteca, CA. Using ideas from professional development texts, she has begun introducing choice, conversations, book talks, questioning strategies, and a little prodding in her classrooms. Christina believes that books not only teach about life, but fundamentally open our eyes, open doors, and help us see the beauty, or lack of it, in humanity. “I don’t impact every kid,” she writes, “But each day I try to make eye contact, use each student’s name, help each student, compliment, laugh, and encourage. That’s my job. That’s why I love it.”

Jenny Zimmerman teaches English and Broadcast Journalism at North Buncombe High School in Weaverville, NC. From her trip to NCTE in Houston, to research on rural male readers, to her extensive reading list, Jenny’s dynamic, heartfelt love of reading and learning clearly benefit her students. She says, “I can’t control everything. I can’t control what kids read online. I can’t control the poverty and hardships my students deal with. But I can control what happens when that one kid comes into my classroom every day: First, I love them. Second, I try to help them love reading.” Jenny accomplishes this by seeing all her students as unique individuals and ensuring that she has a book for each of her students’ diverse reading needs and life experiences.



In a time when far too many schools no longer have a librarian and many no longer even have a school library, we need to support teachers committed to inspiring a love of reading at every age.

Help us support thousands of students and their teachers next year.

Donate today at booklovefoundation.org.

100% of your donation goes to classroom libraries of books that are inspiring, engaging, and inclusive. Teachers choose the books that will most likely help all students build reading lives that last.