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## **BOOK LOVE FOUNDATION GRANTS \$86,000 FOR CLASSROOM LIBRARIES ACROSS NORTH AMERICA**

North Conway, NH (July 1, 2020) -- The Book Love Foundation awarded **68** classroom library grants totaling \$86,000 to teachers in the United States and Canada this year. Since 2013, the Book Love Foundation has given away \$590,000 in grants to more than 270 teachers from 41 states and six provinces. Each grant winner is a classroom teacher who works to create a lasting love of reading in all students. Our [summer book club](#) for teachers includes 1000+ educators and is our biggest fundraiser. We continue to receive generous support from the [Booksource](#) and [Heinemann](#), as well as hundreds of individual donors to support this work.

Our 2020 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.

You can find out more about the Book Love Foundation at [booklovefoundation.org](http://booklovefoundation.org) or follow [The Book Love Foundation Podcast](#) with Julia Torres (@juliaerin80).

**Please help us celebrate our 2020 Book Love Foundation Grant Recipients:**

**Angela Almond** is a 16-year veteran 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. She has earned National Board Certification in Literacy and an MEd in Reading/Literacy Education. Angela is a teacher leader in her school, presenting to other middle school teachers and leading a weekly planning session with first year ELA teachers. She works at the Albemarie Middle School, NC in rural Stanly County, where all the county's public housing is in the district, and 100% of the students receiving free and reduced lunch. Her reading instruction starts and ends with her classroom library. Angela says, "I always watch my students as they finish reading a book. I

love the look on their faces at their moment. It's an amazing moment, and these moments make every dollar I spend on books worth it."

**Sandra Alvarado** teaches 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELAR in one of the most diverse schools in the nation. Barrington Place Elementary serves English Learners from over 90 countries. The heart of Ms. Alvarado's classroom is the classroom library. Students in Ms. Alvarado's classroom live, breathe and love reading. Even if her administrator walks in her classroom to execute an evaluation, Ms. Alvarado states, "I will not disrupt my student's reading schedule for anyone". Ms. Alvarado's commitment to building her student's literacy skills has developed students who are voracious and accomplished readers. Ms. Alvarado states, "I have personally witnessed with my eyes and heart, 5th graders grow in their love of reading, year after year."

**Chelsey Ambrosio** teaches at S. Bruce Smith School in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and has been a middle school teacher for 11 years. She is a teacher who seeks to support both her own students in their reading lives and colleagues in their support of even more students. Chelsey promotes reading identity with an inclusive library of current books. She has plans to purchase a list of books that is impressive, relevant, and timely. Chelsey prioritizes time and engagement helping kids become more savvy readers. She encourages reading through modeling and conferring with kids. Chelsey believes that there are no kids that are non-readers, only kids that haven't found the right book yet. There's energy and spark here, and we know this grant will continue her growth.

**Kristen Anderson** is a 7<sup>th</sup> year teacher at Village Elementary in Hartland, Michigan who will be looping up with her 26 students from second grade to third grade next year. Passionate about the ways books can bring the beauty of our diverse world to her semi-rural community of learners, she knows firsthand the power of a strong classroom library bursting with books that engage readers, challenge perspectives and affirm identities. Kristen works to stay current on best instructional practices by attending conferences and by exploring social media, research articles, professional books and educational podcasts - all in the service of her commitment to help each of her students grow into a lifelong reader.

**Lindsey Baird** has been teaching high school English for five years in an urban school in Lethbridge, Alberta. Lindsey is active in her own professional development as well as showing leadership in our profession. She is a member of the Rocky Mountain Book Award committee in order to read and promote the work of Canadian authors. She ended her application by saying, "Nothing can replace moments like flipping to the map of the Philippines in *Patron Saints of Nothing* and having a student point out where his family lives. I treasure the tear-stained pages (I'm looking at you, *What If It's Us*). Reading is one of my greatest joys in life, but nothing compares to sharing that joy with others."

**Leanna Baker** is a high school teacher who recently completed her thirteenth year of teaching at Clover High School in Clover, SC. She is an avid supporter of choice and challenge in self-selected independent reading. Leanna listens to YA podcasts and works to find books that create conversations about social justice issues, race, and the difficult thinking that helps build our understanding of identity. Even though her classroom library is, at this point, somewhat small, she works to curate it in a way that is responsive to the needs of students and helps them learn more about themselves and their world. Leanna has committed to

supporting and nurturing the reading lives of the students in her classes, and she understands the foundational importance of reading as it contributes to fully formed literacy learners.

**Jessica Barrington** teaches multiple middle and high school English classes as well as 10<sup>th</sup> grade history at Blaine Lake Composite School in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. She is a learning facilitator in a district where the challenges students face can be overwhelming. She has homeless students who battle with food insecurity. One of Jessica's top priorities is to support students who are in "survival mode, not learner mode." She shows real persistence to finding the right book to connect with for the kid who "hates reading" and shares in the excitement of their breakthroughs as readers. Jessica's compassion is equaled by her passion for the power of reading.

**A'Lana Bates** has taught eighth grade for eleven years in Garden City, Kansas. She works with a growing population of refugees from Haiti, Burma, Somalia, Thailand, and Myanmar. She says the unwritten parts of the job description include playing the role of counselor, parent, probation officer, librarian, cheerleader, and motivational speaker. A'Lana combs books stores for titles that inspire. She says, "I know that my students will read. I seek to help my students find the stories that will open doors of literature or deepen an already existing love of reading. Investing in me means investing in hundreds of students and helping me, their teacher, continue to grow as an advocate of literature for all, regardless of race, creed, sexuality, or reading level." We are happy to do so.

**Stephanie Boegh** teaches eighth grade Communication Arts and is in her fifth year of teaching. She uses literature to challenge the thinking of her students at Waunakee Community Middle School in Wisconsin, and believes strongly that books need to be "sliding doors" (from the scholarship of Rudine Sims-Bishop) to the world for students, and not simply mirrors of their current experiences. Stephanie connects with many on line professional groups, soliciting suggestions and guidance as she seeks out books to share with her students. She is known as an agent of change within her district, gaining knowledge from workshops and professional readings and sharing with others whenever possible. More than anything, Stephanie wants to foster a love of reading from her students, doing what she can to find books that appeal and connect to her students as she attempts to show them the world outside of their classroom.

**Erik Borne** a 21-year veteran educator, is working on his EdD in literacy while teaching sophomore and junior English at Dwight Township High School in Dwight, IL. Erik's work is exemplary, administrator-supported, and reflects classroom practices that fully embrace voluntary, engaged reading. We are excited for Erik's leadership in the field. Erik's vision and his intellectual drive will lead to new research in our field. His recent dissertation research, focused on how student choice impacts reading volume and reader identity, led to so many students positively evolving as readers--with many who admitted to fake reading and not reading a book at all for years learning what they like to read and reading more in a semester than they read in 4-5 years combined. Fighting against a literacy, Erik serves on the executive board of the Secondary Reading League and frequently presents at the IL Reading Council Conference and others.

**Katie Bragg** is in her 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Flower Mound, Texas. Katie has been on a journey to face her own bias, and has participated in a vast array of professional development such as NCTE, TCTELA, and TCEA. Through these conferences, she has been able to make big strides in her own understanding with fighting bias and is now ready to lead in her school. With the grant, she plans to invest in books that give her students windows into the world of others to create empathy and respect for various cultures and backgrounds. She is committed to conferring with students and helping them break the cycle of simply “performing” for school, but actually yearning for knowledge and learning. Katie's student recommendation was persuasive and inspiring.

**Ryan Buck** has been teaching juniors and seniors for 16 years in Mundelien, Illinois. He describes his learning process as, "learning by doing...and failing...and learning from failure." We love his honesty and his persistence. He has moved students from fake reading 3-4 books a year (as he once did as a high school student himself) to students engaged in reading 5, 10, 15, or 20 books in one semester! Part of that success was in allowing students to read at their own pace. One dyslexic student was empowered by this approach and went on to read twenty books in 18 weeks. Ryan's success has led the entire English department to shift to 80% student choices in reading during each course. Ryan says, "When you walk down our hallways and you'll see students reading books waiting for school start." These students sit under gorgeous murals of book covers at the doorway to each classroom. What an inspiring school! We are thrilled to support Ryan.

**Changela Burns** is currently teaching 9th grade English at Summer Creek High School in Houston, Texas. She has 8 years teaching experience and is eager to expand her library to better suit her students' needs. A Project Lit Club advocate and chapter leader, she is working to put the "right" book in each student's hands. Changela has multiple copies of many books making it possible for kids to read in groups and alongside friends. Most notable is Changela's personal story as she came to reading late herself. She was not a reader until 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She shares that story with students, reminding them always that it's never too late and that reading truly is for everyone.

**Pamela Bussey** teaches English to 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the Chateaugay Valley Regional High School in Ormstown, Quebec. Pamela is a leader, extending herself beyond her classroom to serve others. She is on the Board of The Association of Teachers of English of Quebec and the Advisory Board of English Education. Ms. Bussey believes in educational democracy, social responsibility, and bringing her own passions to the classroom. She works hard to learn from her students as much as she teaches them, and she shares these lessons she's learned via video. Pamela is the colleague we all want: engaged, curious, thoughtful, and wise.

**Sarah Cocks** describes herself as a “caretaker of literature”. She tries to inspire her 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA students in Fishers, Indiana to become life-long readers through the use of choice reading, read alouds, book talks, short stories, poetry, and book clubs. Sarah's students have access to her classroom library daily. Her goal is to build a more inclusive library where students can not only see themselves, but also learn from the stories of others. An avid reader herself, Sarah has completed professional book studies on her own as well as with colleagues. She served on her school division's Curriculum Review Committee, and has

attended several professional conferences in order to hone her craft. As Sarah stated, “The magic of books connects us, heals us, challenges us, and inspires us.”

**Tiffany Coleman** will start her 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at Hendrix Elementary –IB World School in Boiling Springs, South Carolina. Tiffany teaches second grade students who represent nine different countries. Her teaching is informed by her personal relationship to literacy, a passion for books, and her desire to help her students develop their own identities as readers. She never lets a day go by without reading to her class, talking about books, and finding ways to match books to the interests of her children. Her classroom library is already large and accessible to her children every day, but her hope is to use this grant to add books that reflect her students’ lives, match their interests, expand their vision of the world, and help them to better understand themselves and others.

**Shannon Conners-Casillo** is an experienced teacher with a drive to know her readers. She teaches in Fort Worth, Texas, at Boswell High School. She is a “loud and proud” advocate for students to have choice in her classroom. Through her studies and blogs, she has worked to bring mindfulness into both her personal life and her classroom life. Shannon also took it upon herself to learn about Islam in order to connect with her Muslim students. This endeavor serves as a microcosm for her advocacy work towards her classroom readers. As a teacher of diverse readers, she seeks to fill the gaps in her library for students. Her dedication to her students is noted in a student support letter. Shannon not only made an effort to learn about Islam but also joined the student in fasting during Ramadan. The student noted that the year Shannon made a connection with her was the year the student “gained confidence in who (she) was and where (she) came from.” This student developed confidence in thanks to books that Shannon connected her with. Students who enter her classroom, enter a place where they can find themselves in books they read.

**Dan Coomber** is a dynamic 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Davison Elementary School in Melville, SK. Dan was not a reader growing up and that gives him perspective when students say “I don’t read” or “I’ve never liked a book.” He currently reads at least one YA book a week, so that he always has something to recommend. He is committed to building a library of current, diverse books. Dan says, “I have witnessed books opening the minds and perspectives of young readers..... I don’t say this lightly: I see and value books as being instruments of change for my students and for my community.”

**Colleen Court** is a high school English Language Arts teacher finishing her fourteenth year of teaching in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. She is a department head who has used her funding to get libraries for all of her colleagues. Her school library is underfunded, with the librarian applying for grants to get books, especially to support a new English Learner population in the school. One of the coolest features of her application was how she wrote her responses to the questions using popular Young Adult Literature as her mentor texts, showing her deep commitment to and understanding writing beside students (and authors). We like to imagine all that is possible with this creative teacher.

**Haley Denton** has just finished her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching, most recently at Rock Island High School in Rock Island, IL. She currently teaches sophomores. Haley tells the story of a student asking her *Why would I read any of your books? You do not have books about people like me.* She heard similar comments from other students, helping her recognize this unmet need in

her school. Her practices around student reading is primarily assessed through individual conferring and student journals, include sharing reviews of books that helps students keep and update their to-read book lists. We support the emerging understanding of new teachers like Haley, who challenge existing curriculum by noticing the needs of individual students.

**Nicole Falkner** teaches English to students in 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in North Collins, New York. In addition, she provides Academic Intervention Services to students in 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. Her students discuss texts in literature circles and create multimodal projects centered around social justice and human rights. After attending workshops centering student safety and inclusiveness, Mrs. Falkner reached out to students so they could identify gaps in her library and make book requests. Nicole believes that students can be taught any literary concept within their own personally selected texts if they are offered texts they really love and are invested in. She reads passionately, devotedly, and voraciously to live her best life with her heart and eyes open, and she hopes to engender this same life-long love in her students.

**Brent Gilson** teaches 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Magrath, Alberta, Canada. Brent has a passion for learning from others and is interrogating his own privilege by reading the essays and blogs of educators of color. This has led him to leadership in our field, from co-moderating the #G2Great twitter chat, to his invitation to present at the 2020 National Council of Teachers of English, to regular writing for his own blog. He turns his new understandings into actionable steps in his classroom. He is continuing to build his classroom library to be more inclusive of both different races but also different lived experiences. He is adding books with characters dealing with poverty and books with LGBTQ characters. He finances his own learning by attending conferences and learning opportunities that challenge his understanding. Brent is an emerging leader who will have a large impact on teaching and learning.

**Jessica Grider** is a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher with 10 years of teaching experience at Park Hill High School in Kansas City, Mo. When her predominantly white school saw an influx of students of color, Jessica began building her classroom library to represent all of her students. Over time, she has consistently pushed for more diverse books to reach every student and says her greatest reward has been being there when students see themselves in a book for the first time. All schools benefit from the commitment of teachers like Jessica.

**Kimberly Gwizdala** is a high school English teacher with ten years of experience, and she currently teaches at Glenbard West High School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Kimberly belongs to several state and national professional organizations, including NCTE, and has published a chapter in a book on literacy. She has a strong awareness of current diverse titles and a passion for sharing those titles with her students in a quest to make them lifelong readers. In recent years, Kimberly has reimagined her teaching practices to include daily independent reading. She said that this decision to give time in class for the sole purpose of reading for pleasure was the start of a reading journey that has fundamentally changed her as a teacher. An influx of books will help Kimberly continue to lead students on their individual reading journeys.

**Courtney Hall** is in her 7<sup>th</sup> year of teaching English at Warman High School in Saskatchewan. A letter from a colleague in another school depicts this classroom as the one



to visit in order to feel inspired about the future of education. The joy of kids and reading fills Courtney. She is passionate about books as agents of social justice and change. Her classroom library is carefully curated, so that her students know they will be choosing a great read. Courtney has recently become an instructional leader in her school and district, but like far too many schools, the school library is not staffed and the collection is outdated. Courtney is devoted to improving the lives of her students by getting the right books into their hands. We are certain that this grant will influence teachers far beyond her classroom.

**Sean Halverson** is a Special Education teacher at Clear Lake High School in Iowa. He believes the best teaching is done through teaching the love of reading because it will produce a passion for life. Sean's impact with readers is apparent. He plans to build his library in the spirit of Liz Murray's *Breaking Night* to help students connect with difficult life choices. According to his colleague, he has created a class of readers from those others would have labeled as non-readers. Sean will continue to inspire both students and colleagues with his commitment to literacy and growth.

**Jolene Heinemann** is a 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher with eight years of teaching experience. She teaches at Oak Park and River Forest High School in Oak Park, Ill., and she differentiates her literacy practice by interest and ability intentionally aimed at equity. Jolene sets a goal with her students to develop lifelong reading habits, and she has a robust system for assessment and measuring progress for readers of all skill levels. She delivers weekly book talks and also invites other teachers, coaches and faculty members to do short book talks to provide students with insight into other adults' reading lives. She has co-authored a pedagogy book, called *Choice and Voice*, about this collaborative reader workshop system. Jolene's thoughtfulness impressed all who read her application. The future of reading is in good hands in Jolene's classroom.

**Amy Helsby** writes, "I pride myself on dedicating time and energy toward professional development on an ongoing basis. I strongly believe that my ability to inspire and motivate my students is directly linked to my willingness to learn new things, grow as a learner, and be open to new ideas and approaches." This is a teacher to believe in. Amy is a department head of communications and a 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Napanee District Secondary School in south eastern Ontario. Providing students with direct access to high interest literature is a fundamental part of creating an equitable classroom for Amy. In Napanee, there are no bookstores, the internet is sparse, and the closest store to buy a book is 30 minutes away. Amy states, "My classroom library has a direct and profound impact on the engagement and buy-in of my students. Reading should not be a chore, it should be enjoyable." Book joy will flourish in this classroom.

**Andrea Jones** is a candidate for a Master's in Reading and Literacy Coaching. Andrea has 18 years teaching experience, and also teaches English to 8<sup>th</sup> graders at James Blair Middle School in Norfolk, Virginia. In the past six years she has pursued professional development to help students write with passion and develop joyful lifelong reading habits. She has embraced sketch notes as an instructional strategy, helped students develop visual vocabulary, and was inspired to embrace choice book reading. Because of the writing of Rudine Sims-Bishop, she believes that "with access to mirror texts, students are able to see that their narrative matters, and with access to window texts, students learn to understand and appreciate the narratives of others." Through teaching and hosting such special events

as family dinner and literacy nights, Andrea aspires to “ignite the passion for reading in all students so they will continue to crave good books.”

**Lalla Jones** has been a teacher for 17 years, serving students in 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. She currently is a Master Teacher at Bates Academy in the Detroit Public Schools Community District, helping other teachers to improve their pedagogy. Dedicated to building a love of reading in her classroom, and recognizing the need to showcase books in an engaging manner, Lalla utilizes strategies she has found on social media such as First Chapter Fridays and March Madness to showcase the books she thinks her students will find interesting. She is passionate about matching students to the right books and has spent much of her own money on trying to build an inclusive and diverse classroom library, stating, “I want to find that right book, that book that excites each of my students.” Lalla’s commitment can be seen in being reflective, responsive and open to her students’ thinking, ideas, and values. She wants her library to be a true representation of her students.

**Lori Jordan**’s application opened with a photo of her students, who had just returned from the library, begging for time to read. Lori has been teaching 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders for 27 years in Arizona, most recently in the Mesa Unified School District. She teaches in a large, diverse area near Phoenix. She works with her vivacious school librarian to stock her room with books that will engage and delight her students. Lori works closely with the Gay Straight Alliance at her school, and she is looking for books to help her continue that work. One of Lori’s recommendations came from a biology teacher in her high school, who is now teaching reading within her courses because Lori reached out to her. Lori loves her school, her students, and the teaching of reading.

**Amber Kallen** teaches grades 6-12 English Language Arts students and is the librarian at the Taber Mennonite School in Alberta, Canada. The population of the school is exclusively English Language Learners whose first language is Plattdeutsch, or Low German. Amber works hard to create a culture of literacy in her school through a variety of activities, including a lunch hour book club. Outside of the classroom, Amber pursues professional development through the Alberta Teachers Association and the English Language Arts Council. She serves on the Rocky Mountain Book Award committee which celebrates Canadian authors. Teaching across six grades, Amber needs a wide variety of books for her classroom library. This grant will mean that her students, who typically do not have books at home, will finally have access to a large number of books.

**Ryan Katzenmoyer** has been a second-grade teacher for sixteen years at the Mifflin Park Elementary School in Shillington, PA. Ryan accesses online resources, attends Teachers College Reading and Writing Institutes, and studies the work of social justice organizations such as Teaching Tolerance. He describes himself as a “relationship builder, kid supporting, community creator, literacy lover who inspires learners to write from their hearts every day.” Ryan knows choice is essential to instill the habits of lifelong reading. Ryan involves his students in organizing and revising his classroom library. He is an instructional leader in his building, always trying out new ideas and sharing them with his colleagues. He looks forward to using this grant to impact his entire school community.

**Patricia Killian** is in her fourth year of teaching 11<sup>th</sup> grade British Literature and AP Language and Composition at Piscataway High School in Piscataway, New Jersey. After



leaving a job in law, Patricia has worked to learn about fostering social justice and activism in the classroom. For over half of the year, her students spend half of every period reading books of their choice. She begins every school week with discussions of books and other literacies that students enjoyed over the weekend to reinforce the universal desire for storytelling and human connection. Patricia is a teacher to believe in.

**Landon Krandall** is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teacher at Lewiston High School in Maine where he has taught for two years. Landon works hard to empower students through the inclusion of texts which reflect who they are and what they've experienced. Books were powerful for Landon as a queer transgender man and he hopes to bring their power into the classroom and to his students. His primary goal is to make reading enjoyable and relevant to all students and provide students with books which reflect who they are. He continues to grow his practice by attending annual conferences like the UNH Literacy Institutes, the Boston Teen Author Festival, and the Maine Council for ELA Spring Conference. Additionally, he is a member of the Trans Educator's Network (TEN), the NEA, the MEA, and NCTE. In order to continue expanding his classroom library, he subscribes to blogs and journals like We Need Diverse Books and the NCTE's *English Journal*.

**Kelly Landen** is in her 28<sup>th</sup> year of teaching high school English at Colorado's Overland High School, where reading is a central focus in her work. Kelly has engaged in a variety of professional development opportunities as she explores a problem all teachers of adolescents recognize: engaging readers. She plans to use this grant to expand and deepen the representation of all students in her library, especially for LGBTQ+ and Latino males. Kelly will grow her graphic novels collection as well. Based on her students' testimonies, it is clear that Kelly has already made a great impact on students' growth in reading and in their lives.

**Haley Lewis** is finishing her 4<sup>th</sup> year at Creekside Middle School in Fairfield, OH. She is working on her MA through the Ohio Writing Project at Miami University. Even as an early career teacher, Haley runs a Project Lit book club, does a Friday First Read book talk with her students each week, and is a leader in her district's literacy professional development program. She has developed a classroom library of about 350 books, with about  $\frac{2}{3}$  being regularly read by students. This grant will provide much-needed support for her work with students. We see the leader Haley will become as she completes her advanced study in literacy and continues to share her thinking and her successful practices with other teachers.

**Madison MacKeracher** became a full-time teacher last year after substituting for two years in Battleford, Saskatchewan. She is a Cree woman, who found that the myths and legends she read about First Nations people in her own education did not discuss the contemporary issues she was facing. Madison is determined to create a classroom library that represents all of her students. Her wish list is smart and shows her deep understanding of literature that can reach young people. As a young teacher, she is already organizing book clubs and doing daily book talks. A special education teacher who works in her classroom said, "Her passion is contagious. In her book talks it is evident she reads all of the books." Madison's passion is contagious. We know she will have a big impact on education in the years to come.

**Jamila Mallard** is a kindergarten teacher at Jackie Robinson Academy in Long Beach, CA. She will begin her eighteenth year in the classroom in the fall. Jamila is a reflective

professional who continuously improves her teaching through pursuit of National Board Certification, attending conferences, and engaging in professional reading. It is through this reading that she has become aware of the importance of curating an inclusive classroom library. Jamila's thinking has shifted dramatically over her tenure as a professional educator leading her to join the Disrupt Texts movement. She believes in the power of story to build students' positive identities and "America's diverse democracy." In Jamila's classroom, tiny citizens who "press forward in reaching their goals while being responsible, caring, and collaborative" are built one text at a time.

**Elizabeth McCann** is a grade 7 English, History, Geography, Health, and Arts teacher in Ontario, Canada. Using holistic, wellness-focused instruction, her students are empowered as readers and learners through choice reading, collaborative learning, and individual reading conferences. Elizabeth seeks to educate herself on the 21<sup>st</sup> century issues faced by her students. By doing so, she promotes inclusivity through her library and teaching methods that reflect a variety of ethnicities, sexualities, gender identities, and socio-economic backgrounds. Elizabeth says, "I believe that by building strong and supportive relationships with my students, teaching empathy explicitly as well as issues surrounding social justice, welcoming and valuing student voice and choice, as well as simply sharing my love of reading by incorporating a wide range of diverse texts in my lessons, my goal of fostering a passion for reading and learning is accomplished."

**Heather McCarthy** has 18 years of teaching experience in 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts at Oak Lawn Hometown Middle School in Oak Lawn, Illinois. Heather actively seeks to understand equitable teaching and social justice practices. Heather's deep passion for children, teaching, literature and service learning is reflected in her classroom where her students demonstrate their love for reading and connection with diverse text that expands their world. Her ceiling is covered with paintings of book covers showcasing her students' favorite titles such as *Born a Crime* and Jason Reynolds' *Ghost*. She engages her students in discussions about refugees, civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQ, kindness and empathy. Heather's trips to Rwanda and Malawi to work on clean water project for children directly correlates to service learning she promotes in her classroom. After reading *A Long Walk to Water*, she and her students hosted a 6K to raise awareness of water shortages throughout the world, and they served 40,000 meals to local families after reading about those suffering from food insecurity. Heather challenges students to change the world through literature.

**Emily McKeenan** has just completed her 6<sup>th</sup> year of teaching 9<sup>th</sup> grade English at Eastern High School in Louisville, KY. She is an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) teacher for both reading and writing. Emily spoke of her desire to impart a genuine love of reading to each of her students, and says teaching is her dream job because "students bring me life every day." She is serious about education, having just completed a two-year process to attain National Board Certification. Emily's creative approach in her classroom includes a coffee-shop themed literature circle program she calls Starbooks - this was the highlight of the 2019-20 school year as it engaged previously reluctant readers. Emily also introduced certified therapy dogs to her classroom by implementing the Ruff Reader program to support students' confidence; this was the first time the program was implemented in a high school setting. She needs quality, varied, high-interest texts, and this grant is a first step toward creating a new generation of book lovers.

**Shanna Mellot** is a high school English teacher with 29 years of classroom experience currently serving Cache High School in Cache, OK. As her freshmen, sophomore, and senior students begin to focus on their futures beyond high school, Shanna believes that her classroom library should be a reflection of her students' career choices, interests, and talents. In addition, Shanna has created the Books 'n Action Club at her school. The club allows students to not only read, but to use what they have learned in order to share with others. This year the students created podcasts after reading science fiction titles. Students have created poetry, movies, and books in response to what they have read. As Shanna pointed out, "I want reading to be that spark that will inspire students to make a difference in the world."

**Ines Mendoza** is a first-grade teacher at Compton Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles, CA. After just two years in a classroom, Ines has learned to invest in two critical goals: cultivating her students' love of reading; and nurturing them to be co-conspirators who bend the world toward justice. She leads through active membership in the California Teachers Association, United Teachers Los Angeles, and Teachers 4 Social Justice. Ines frequently attends professional development focused on racial justice and abolitionist teaching and studies the work of thought leaders, like Dr. Bettina Love, and organizations such as Rethinking Schools. She is committed to the curation of an inclusive classroom library that helps her students become "critical thinkers, analytical readers, and informed citizens" in "a space full of love, peace, acceptance, and stability."

**Kemba Metropolis** practiced law for 11 years before entering the teaching profession. She found more joy coaching a Mock Trial team than working as a trial lawyer, so she joined the English staff at Parkway Central High School in Chesterfield, Missouri. As is true in many schools, Kemba said, "We have lots of classic texts, but we do not have enough contemporary and diverse texts written by diverse authors." She has seen the power of disrupting the canon through a focus on independent reading. She is determined to engage all of her students in regular acts of reading, and because her father purchases books for her classroom and a former colleague left her library, Kemba has begun to move pretend readers to true engagement. She interrogated the gaps in her library and seeks to close them. We know how hard changing a system is, and we applaud the will and the courage Kemba has demonstrated. She is not giving up, and it is an honor to support her work.

**Rachel Obenchain** teaches high school English in Spokane Valley, Washington to students in grades 9-12. She is in her 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. Rachel is National Board Certified, serves on the Professional Education Advisory Board at Eastern Washington University, and believes in continual professional learning. Rachel has established routines to provide time for choice reading, including a cozy corner to make even the most reluctant reader feel welcome. She is driven—and by this, we mean *unstoppable*—in meeting the challenge of finding the right book for each student. As she continues to build her library by any means necessary, Rachel is determined to fill gaps: specifically, books about people of color written by people of color. She knows a rich and varied classroom library of #ownvoices is necessary to match all students to books.

**Chakadasovavan Or** is a first year, second grade teacher at the Mitchell Math and Science Elementary School in Charleston, SC. Chak is keenly aware of the need for quality, culturally

relevant books that students can relate to. It is key to transforming his classroom library. He is dedicated to providing students with the tools they need to become empathic and culturally competent citizens. Chak seeks books that spark curiosity and is craving books that will help transform students into activists. As a bi-lingual, first generation Cambodian graduate of the College of Charleston, he is uniquely poised to use this grant to make a difference in the lives of his students. He works to ensure that every student has access to a variety of high quality books that will enhance their knowledge and lead them to growth because through knowledge, there is power.

**Karla Palafox** has been teaching for 23 years and is a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Chandler, AZ. She is working toward National Board Certification. Karla finds joy in reading and instill this passion in the students she teaches. She reads to students every day. She encourages students to take books from her library that she has accumulated through the years by rummaging through yard sales, from the kind donations of close friends, and from teachers who have left the profession. She works with the librarian to get each student a library card and to learn about all the resources the library has to offer. Karla has a unique interest in high quality nonfiction books for her students – graphic novels, biographies, and other books that her students can relate to and learn from. Her goal is for students to broaden knowledge, increase vocabulary, and live those adventures through the joy of reading. Karla is a bilingual teacher committed to ensuring that her students are proud of their native tongue and culture, but also that they will become fluent, engaged, regular readers.

**Erin Palazzo** just finished her 15<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. She teaches 10<sup>th</sup> grade English and AP English Language at Shrewsbury High School in Shrewsbury, MA. She employs the reading and writing workshop model in her classes, values choice and student empowerment in her pedagogy, and is actively pursuing “the work [she needs] to do to break down personal and systemic biases.” She is a passionate reader who writes in her application about the power of books in the lives of herself, her students, and her community – a power that connects people, generates empathy, and increases moral and emotional capacity. To that end, Erin is grateful for her expanding teacher community on Twitter and its various chats, which help to broaden her reading life and challenge her growth as a teacher and human being. Erin has written small grants to fund the books she adds to her library, and her success was evident in a powerful recommendation letter from a colleague, who noted that Erin’s impact on reluctant readers has spread by word-of-mouth among the students themselves. We know Erin’s work will snowball, as this grant will provide the momentum that leads to dynamic leadership in our profession.

**Victoria Parent** teaches 10<sup>th</sup> grade English at Monacan High School in Richmond, VA. Victoria conducted an action research study that explores the use of graphic novels in literacy development. Victoria is an educator who is “committed to life-long learning, allyship and advocacy...” Victoria is determined to connect students with the books they need to learn about themselves, about others, and to survive in our world. Victoria practices and is a continuous learner of culturally relevant pedagogy. She also learns with her students by reading and writing with them and beside them. Ms. Parent’s students grow and develop lifelong literacy skills through independent reading, discussion, journal writing, and conferring. She stated, “We’re growing leaders and world changers— we ought to give them their tools.” Victoria Parent is the English teacher all students deserve.

**Renetta Peddle** has taught high school English for 7 years in two places in Alberta, Fort McMurray and now in Fort Saskatchewan, where budget cuts will increase her class sizes to nearly 40. She is the only full-time English teacher in her school. Renetta is undeterred. She knows that connecting each student to a relevant and fascinating book is central to engaging each as a reader. She reads constantly, and this allows her to find those books. She has paired her grade 10 students with a local 4<sup>th</sup> grade to create reading buddies. This program not only connects students to their community, and to other students, but most importantly, it instills confidence in her 10<sup>th</sup> graders. We love to imagine how this small grant will expand what is possible for Renetta and her students. Renetta is also Chair of the For Saskatchewan Public Library Board. This role helps her connect local schools to work more closely with the people and resources to increase student success in literacy.

**Michelle Roy** is a middle school teacher at Northeast College Prep Charter School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She uses her small but growing library to connect with each individual student's unique personality and background as she helps them constantly grow as readers and writers. As an educator with a diverse population in her classroom, Michelle understands the importance of plugging herself into multiple learning communities that help her close the achievement gap within her own classroom. By using a fluid approach to her reading and writing instruction, Michelle is able to leverage independent reading to teach and assess each student. Her core desire is to put a book that empowers student voice, identity, and agency into the hands of each student in her classroom.

**Rachael Ryan** has the everyday, beautiful task of discussing, debating, and dissecting books, writings, and media with five sections of eighth-graders in Oakdale, Minnesota. After reading *White Fragility*, *Waking Up White*, and *White Rage*, Rachael began work to decenter her voice by reading and studying the articles and blogs of Tricia Ebarvia, Cornelius Minor, Dr. Kim Parker, and Val Brown and participated in the Clear the Air, DisruptTexts, and Liberate and Chill movements. She is passionate about getting high-interest texts to her students so they may live their best literate, book-loving, empathetic lives. Rachael recommends a book every day to her classes and confers regularly to track the movement in students' literacy growth. A student proudly shared that Ms. Ryan read and fell in love with a new series that she, the student, had recommended. Ms. Ryan is now working to find the entire series so the rest of her students can enjoy it as well.

**Court Shuller** is a sixth-grade English Language Arts teacher finishing their fourth year of teaching in Hayward, CA at a tuition-free public charter school. What struck readers most about this application is their commitment to anti-racist education and creating a community of readers. When asked why the Book Love Foundation should invest in them, they said, "The investment is really for my students, and therefore, you should know why you need to invest in them. You should invest in me and my classroom because not only am I an avid book advocate, I empower my students to be their own advocates." Students start the year by reaching out to their community to advocate for their needs as readers. It was through one student's research and encouragement that Ms. Shuller learned about applying for this grant. This classroom of readers is destined for good things.

**Alanna Schaffer** is a high school English teacher. Her understanding that creating a love of reading means increased access to a wide variety of texts has led her to create a culture of

literacy both inside her classroom and throughout her school. Alanna reads hundreds of young adolescent books so she can recommend the best titles to each of her students. For a relatively new teacher, she has established many sophisticated ways that students can be instructional resources to each other. Flipgrid, “Starbooks” book tastings, and bulletin boards full of student recommendations are part of business as usual in Alanna’s classroom. Alanna wants to provide diverse texts to all of her students; particularly those for whom English is not a first language, and for those who struggle because they have not had the reading instruction that they deserve. Alanna believes in the power of reading to change her students’ futures.

**Kimberly Scouller** has ten years of teaching experience. She is currently teaching fourth grade at Barrington Academic Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. Kimberly is committed to social justice, equity and empathy in all aspects of her curriculum. She believes children need to understand the world is bigger than their school or community. She thinks deeply about how she teaches and shows her students that they can impact the world through their actions. Kimberly believes reading is an avenue for students to educate themselves about the world around them and to appreciate multiple perspectives. She is committed to curating and maintaining a robust classroom library so her students can develop a personal reading identity. Kimberly strives to provide each student with a reading experience that challenges them to think and to question the world around them. Her goal is to include more of the current, relevant titles her students seek in her classroom library, so that all students will continue to engage and grow as readers. Kimberly is described as “a true educator whose love of teaching and learning is contagious, as well as inspiring.”

**Rachel Smith** is a sixth-grade English Language Arts teacher entering her fifth year of teaching. Her creative GoodReads-themed application caught our eye, not just because it was clever, but because it shows the cohesion of her reading philosophy. For Rachel, a robust library is her classroom's spine. She artfully uses a variety of texts to engage her students in meaningful reading, writing, research, and more. Rachel wants to beef up her nonfiction collection and continue to add diverse books for her students TBR lists. She strives to create a classroom where independent reading is non-negotiable.

**Kelsey Stoyanova** is in her 6<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at Reeds Brook Middle School in Hampden, Maine. Kelsey regularly implements conferring, read alouds, and independent reading time in her daily schedule. Even with her current small class library, her students have read over 1,000 books in the past year. She is passionate about bringing in titles that represent all religions, cultures, races, and sexual identities, so that her students can see into the worlds of others. She has shaped her professional reading and graduate coursework around this passion. With the investment of this Book Love Foundation grant, she will diversify her library. Kelsey impressed application readers with her determination to fight bias by having a classroom library that is representative of the world. She is keeping track of the great gains her readers are making in order to persuade other teachers to share in her journey.

**Amanda Suttle** teaches English 10, 11, Sports Literature, and Media Literacy at Licking Valley High School in rural Newark, Ohio. Amanda’s path to teaching began with a ten-year career in public health education with a criminal justice background. A dedicated learner, Amanda is an active member of OCTELA and NCTE and reads widely in both professional texts and young adult literature she then shares with students. She has made a commitment



to becoming a stronger antiracist and GLBT ally and lists several texts that have informed her growth. She co-sponsors the Gay-Straight Alliance chapter at her rural school. Her relationships with her students reflect admiration, respect, and compassion, as shown through the several anecdotes and short video she shared about her students. Winning the Book Club Foundation grant will impact all four grade levels of students and assist Amanda's ongoing efforts to support young readers.

**Tara Swords** teaches English, Writer's Craft, Media Studies and Social Studies to pregnant and parenting young adults at McHugh Education Centre in Ottawa, Canada. Tara views a quality classroom library as key to developing the reading and writing lives of her students, as well as complementing the trauma-informed approach of her school and classroom. Tara is passionate about helping her students, all of whom face numerous responsibilities and competing demands on their time, find pleasure and a place of solace in books. She is committed to building a classroom library that will not only support her students' education and instill values of life-long reading, but also to encounter stories of powerful women and mothers that will inspire and empower them. Tara views the foundation's investment as helping her students and their children find joy in books; she knows that she is not just impacting the current generation but also generations to follow. We love to imagine each student's joy of reading being passed along to their own young children.

**Juliann Tacconi** has just finished her second year of teaching sixth grade in Bound Brook, NJ. Her school does not have a library, but she has built one in her classroom. She defines her work as, "Using literature to enter different worlds, facilitate necessary life conversations, and pass the microphone to voices that have been systemically muted. Trying to redefine and ignite students' relationship with books, one story at a time. Listener. Advocate. Student of my Students." This is a teacher to believe in. She has purchased over 100 high interest new & classic books at thrift stores. She has a sophisticated understanding of her library's strengths and gaps. In her school she advocates for choice reading. She confers with students daily to learn how to help them be engaged, and stay engaged as readers. On Flashlight Fridays students are given small flashlights and everyone finds a cozy nook to read a book by flashlight. We want to read in this room!

**Kira Temple** has taught high school for 16 years in Reno, Nevada. She says, "The last couple of years has been an explosion of learning, a sea-change in pedagogy and a relief as I enter the second half of my career. For once, the professional development I have sought out, and the results that have followed, have actually improved student learning." That sea change began with independent reading. Outside of her classroom she serves as the play selection chair for the Restless Artists' Theatre. They read 20-30 plays a year and seek out dark comedies, political farce, and scripts that push thinking on gender, social justice, the environment, and science. She brings this passion for reading drama to her classroom. She has also learned from Solace Tree how to manage the grieving in her school district, which has suffered over a dozen suicides since the start of the school year. She knows literature can heal and help. She says, "I don't have to cajole or threaten or bribe kids into reading. It's not for a grade." Kira's leadership extends beyond her classroom where she hosts 20-30 colleagues in her room each week for a new teacher seminar.

**Kat Terhune** has 9 years of teaching experience in English, Speech and Debate, English for Newcomers, and History in a suburban middle school in Buena Park, CA. She has

implemented reader's writer's workshop in her classroom for the last two years, and it has transformed her teaching. She says choice is the magic solution to disengagement with reading. One of her goals is to begin book clubs with the additional books she will select with this grant. She says, "I am a passionate lifelong learner looking for engaging opportunities to help form my students into the same, encouraging them to take ownership in their learning and empowering them to become global citizens who fight for a better world for us all.

**Amy Tompkins** is a third-grade teacher at Townsview School in Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada. With ten years of experience to build upon, Amy is the literacy and social studies leader for her third-grade team. Being part of a district professional development team on English Language Learners, she has been able to reach many students with more joy, passion, time and creativity than ever. Amy has moved her practice from teaching skills to transforming lives through literacy. This has led her to create an environment where students see themselves in their book selections and learn about the world around them. Yet with students from seven different countries, she needs more books that promote conversations around issues of injustice, inequality and inspire courageous acts. As a teacher in a diverse, yet rural, small town, Amy urged the foundation to invest in her, so that she can shift a narrative that may lead to small-minded thinking in the areas of injustice and inequality and to broaden her students' perspectives and possibilities. She states, "I need your investment to help rewrite the equation to: Small town + many books = big thinking + big dreams."

**Lee Tucker** is a high school teacher from Villa Rica, Georgia. He sees reading as a lifestyle decision that contributes to more than success on a standardized test. He is an advocate at both the school district and state level for choices in reading. He finds success in both the conversations he has with readers, and by building engaging interactions through available technology. Embracing student choice has been transformational for Lee as he seeks to continuously improve his teaching pedagogy and his ability to help kids find their place in the world. As he learns more about student choice in reading, he learns more about literacy instruction and, ultimately, his students reap the rewards.

**Amy Watkins** is a 20-year veteran teacher of English at Belleville High School, Michigan. She describes her dream teacher role as "getting books in kids' hands so they can see themselves and others reflected in the pages, thus realizing the value and power of everyone's story." She describes her experience at the Tyrolia Literacy Institute as "the most amazing professional experience she ever had." She has outlined a curriculum focused on genre and has begun to expand her library. Amy starts all of her classes with independent reading and book clubs are essential in her teaching. Amy said, "with a Book Love Foundation grant, I can continue to launch more book clubs in my room, establish practices that work with all of our kids, gush about the impact, and then help inspire school-wide change." We are confident in Amy's continued growth as a leader.

**Randy Williams** is a high school English teacher and Department Lead for grades 10-12 in Jenks, Oklahoma. Randy continues to push himself by attending conferences and reading professional books that inform his teaching, leading, and project-planning throughout the school. After seven years of teaching, he has created a diverse library because he believes that the quality of a student's reading life sets them up for a lifetime of success. He is passionate about reading because reading had a life-changing impact on him--leading him to

become the first in his family to attend college. He hopes that the additions to his library can serve as “windows and mirrors” for students, as well as challenge students to think critically about their community and the world beyond. We are proud to support Randy’s work.

**Victoria Zdeb** teaches 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English at El Camino High School in Oceanside, CA. Victoria’s application exudes spunk, passion, and an undying commitment to each of her students. Working with organizations such as Teaching Tolerance and Facing History and Ourselves have helped shape Victoria into an inspirational educator who not only possesses the skills of being able to connect to each of her students as individual readers, but one who maintains an overarching focus on culturally proficient and responsive pedagogy. To this end, Victoria notes the importance of “constantly learning to see the structures that privilege some over others, and to do my part in dismantling those structures.” She adds that reading “brings out the best in us and allows us to unite behind a common goal.” In these uncertain times, where unity can seem hard to come by, we could do well to follow Victoria Zdeb’s lead.