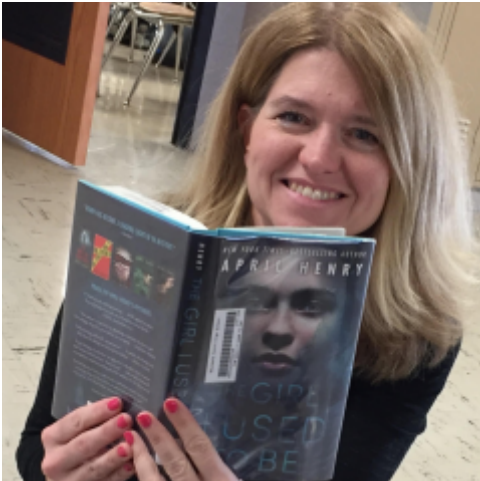


Gretchen Egner

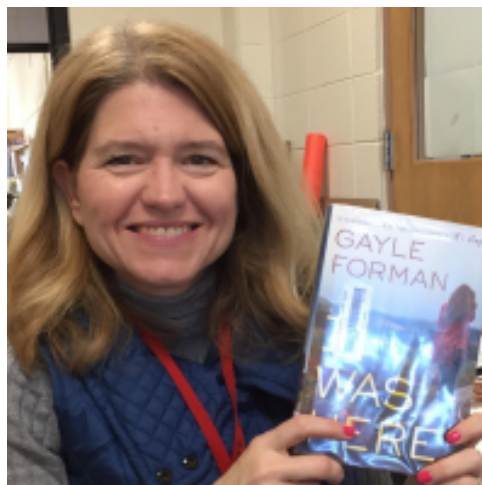
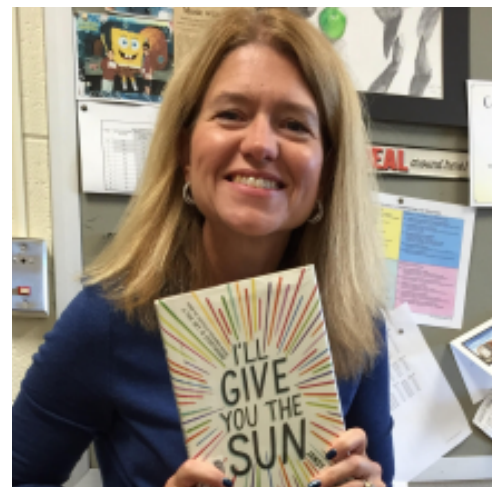
Waukesha South High School
Waukesha, WI



I've been hooked on reading since seventh grade, when after reading the last line of *The Outsiders*, I flipped back to the first page to start from the beginning again. And again. I can still recite from the opening line until the mustang pulls up beside Ponyboy.

Originally from Rockford, Illinois, I earned my grammar and writing chops from Babs Erickson in Accelerated English 10 at Jefferson High School. As the editorial page editor, I tested the limits of my snarky tone and the administration's patience with my freedom

of speech. From there, I went to Illinois State University for a BA in English Education to University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for an MS in Reading.



For twenty years I've taught in the Waukesha School District, the last ten at Waukesha South High School. The past two years have been by far my best as a teacher -- embracing Book Love has empowered students to read, critique, and discuss their books as readers, not solely as *students*. What's more, I'm walking the talk myself, modeling the analysis and discourse I want students to engage in as students of English. We posted pictures of our English teachers with books they were reading on our office doors to remind students (and ourselves) that high school English isn't just about assigned 'classic' books.

This shift in my teaching is invigorating, and while it hasn't stop the grays or erased the wrinkles, channeling the Book Love has renewed my classroom energy and passion for teaching.

I've adopted a quote from Stephen Covey (of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* fame) as my mantra: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Our purpose as teachers can easily become blurred by all the expectations, initiatives, missions, objectives, etc. Focusing on the *main thing* -- kids' (and our) reading lives has cut through the fog for me, and I credit that resolve with receiving a Book

Love Foundation grant.

When I'm not teaching, I try to run regularly. Motivated by a re-read of Penny Kittle's *Write Beside Them*, I've started a blog, [A Positive Stride](#), where I'm sharing my experiences as a mom, wife, daughter, athlete, and advocate for Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

