

Gretchen Egner, Waukesha, WI

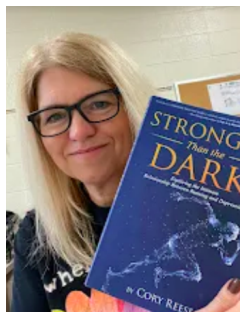
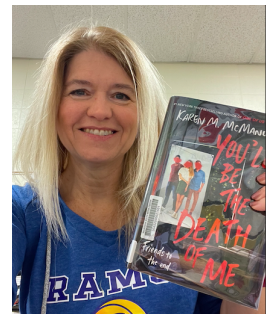
“Until we solve the volume problem, the standards don’t matter.” Kelly Gallagher



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 and to University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for an MS in Reading.

For twenty-four years I’ve taught in the Waukesha School District, the last fifteen at Waukesha South High School. Since COVID upheaved education and schooling in the Spring of 2020, I’ve seen a steep decline in student engagement and stamina in independent reading. It’s of paramount importance to me that all kids view themselves as *readers*, with favorite genres, go-to authors, and excitement as they talk about books. Beyond the ACT, beyond grammar (and I do love me some grammar!), beyond grades—what I want most for kids is an active reading life through and beyond high school.



Kelly Gallagher has said that “until we solve the volume problem, the standards don’t matter.” His words resonate with me as I continue to carve out daily time for independent reading and conferring with kids. Every day. This Book Love Grant will continue to allow me to put engaging, relevant texts in their hands that will foster that will give reading a competitive edge in the fight for students’ time.