



Jessica Lange

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I grew up in a tiny, rural community in Northeastern Arkansas. We lived a 20 minute drive from the local library, and an hour drive from any book store. It took me years to appreciate how hard my mother worked to keep books in my hands!

Both my teaching practice and my own

reading life was forever changed when I discovered the works of Thomas Newkirk, Don Murray, Kelly Gallagher, Donalyn Miller, and Penny Kittle through my local chapter of the National Writing Project. Independent reading and conferencing became a cornerstone of my daily teaching practice, and I began to actively model my own reading habits. I wrote in front of children boldly- and showed them that we all struggle to put our thoughts on paper from time to time! No matter the grades I have taught- independent reading and conferencing- is the magic sauce to create meaningful relationships, joy, and purposeful academic



growth for all students, no matter their backgrounds.



I have served in a variety of roles in education over the last decade- and I have continued my mother's mission of getting books into kids hands! I choose to work in the same rural community that raised me because access to books is still a challenge- and possibly worse than it was when I was growing up. Unite for Literacy estimates that only 20-30% of households in my district have more than 100 books. Without meaningful access to books, students' academic growth and belief in themselves is stunted. I strongly believe that the Book Love Grant will help my classroom be a hub for literacy- that will have wide ranging

impacts across our community!