

DON TYSON SCHOOL OF INNOVATION  
SPRINGDALE, AR  
AP LITERATURE & ENGLISH 10

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*Books give us life when the world tells us it's too late.*

Books became loyal friends during my teen years, and they have yet to leave my side. Words breathe life into the places that feel the most lost--allowing us to see each other and, hopefully, ourselves. The beauty of rekindling a love of reading in older students is that moment when a student feels seen, heard, appreciated, valued, loved. Giving students choices in their reading without fear of failure and shame is essential to fostering new hope. Many older students can experience feelings of vulnerability when deciding to fall in love with reading again because they feel that they have failed before they even pull the book off the shelf. Selecting texts that reflect the voices of my students has become a vital to building an authentic sense of community with each group of students. It is my hope for each student I have the privilege to teach that I might be the match that creates the spark leading them to burn brighter than they ever knew they could.

"THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE BUEAUTY OF THEIR DREAMS." -- ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

*Sometimes, they need us to believe in them first.*

*Teach for*  
**ALL OF THEM**

My instructional practices reflect student choice, student needs, student relevancy, student learning. Their needs and interests are the threads that pull us together like a well loved quilt.

While obtaining my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, my research often returned to these foundational beliefs: build a love for reading through student choice, provide student relevancy through inquiry learning, and foster student agency through clear, targeted assessment of skills.

Early in my career, I struggled to make these beliefs a reality in the classroom. I felt as though I was always sacrificing something; it just didn't feel possible to actually inspire a love of learning and provide targeted instruction. John Dewey's progressivism has always been the heartbeat in my classroom, and too often, my students and I would lose our passion to learn when the assessments began. I knew my students were learning. I just couldn't figure out how to keep them at the center of the decisions I was making while designing our curriculum.

Looking back, I have so much compassion for myself as an early teacher. I was bold in my efforts, and I am proud of my journey that has led me to be the educator that I am today.

Over the last three years at DTSOI, with the support of my administrators and collaboration with my colleagues, I have learned how to keep these core beliefs at the center of the work. I can proudly say that my students have become the center of our classroom, and I get to join them as we discover the beauty of reading and writing together.