

Kaley Kowarick

*Ridgefield Alternative High School, Ridgefield High School
Ridgefield, CT*



Kaley Kowarick is entering her eleventh year of teaching. She has had the pleasure of working in Ridgefield Public Schools for her entire career. She currently teaches reading electives and special education courses at both Ridgefield Alternative High School and Ridgefield High School. During the 2025-2025 school year, she will take on an added role as part of a reading intervention team.

Kaley sees reading as one of the greatest tools for hope and community-building. She wholeheartedly believes in the words of author Libba Bray, that “there is no greater power on this earth than story”. While studying to be a special education teacher, she chose to complete a concentration in English because of her love of reading. In 2015, as a first-year teacher, Kaley had the opportunity to co-teach American Literature, which reignited her passion for reading and for sharing it with others.

One of the greatest adventures in her reading journey began when she had the opportunity to join Ridgefield High School’s Reading Department. Created and developed by two incredible teachers (both of whom have been named Ridgefield’s Teacher of the Year), the Reading Department seeks to “cultivate a love of reading and to provide students with a welcoming, highly engaging, and personalized learning experience. [The courses] emphasize community learning as the norm and promote close-reading through a collaborative process, which results in more reflective readers, critical thinkers, and empathetic citizens. Most importantly, students will enjoy the gift of reading”. The founding teachers have mentored Kaley, and she has been so proud to join their work and carry it forward. Kaley is also proud to teach at the Ridgefield Alternative High School. She currently teaches special education resource classes, co-teaches English III/IV, and has introduced a variety of reading electives to RAHS students (Reading Center, Hero’s Journey and the Human Experience, Individual Identity and Social Justice, and Teen Voices in a Changing Society).

RAHS is a special place with a wonderful community of learners and educators. While the district is

fortunate to have well-funded and resourced programs, the school's location (across town from the "main" high school) means that RAHS students have less direct access to the books in the RHS library and Reading Department classroom spaces. This grant will be used to upgrade the books in the RAHS classroom library so that all students have access to engaging modern texts.

Kaley strives to highlight Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's idea of books being mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. She wants each student at RAHS to be able to find a book that reflects their identity. She also wants them to experience new perspectives and step into unfamiliar worlds. She is deeply grateful that the Book Love Foundation is providing this opportunity for her students.