

# Lori Lebel

Schenectady CSD  
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Despite growing up in a house filled with books, family reading time each night, and frequent trips to the library, I didn't grow up as a reader! I actually hated to read right up until 11th grade when my English teacher slyly slid me the right book – *The Scarlet Letter*. She found a book that would “speak” to me and engage me in a way no other had previously. Since then, I have been a voracious reader and I endeavor to help all of my students find that right book that will “speak” to them. I want to facilitate students turning to books to provide them solace, escape, and exhilaration – exactly why books should be read! My classroom library is continuously growing to reflect the interests and recommendations of my students. I read every book I place on the shelves, which helps me to recommend books accurately and fittingly for students and staff alike. Additionally, our reading challenges seek

to inspire students to read more, talk about what they are reading, provide reading recommendations to others, and reflect upon their own reading practices. Reading shouldn't be a chore, and my classroom library tries to entice, rather than rebuke, students into reading.



I earned a dual Bachelor's Degree from Syracuse University in English Education and English Textual Studies with a minor in Psychology, and a Master's Degree from the University at Albany in Secondary Education in English.

I have been teaching English Language Arts within the Schenectady City School District for twenty-one years. For the past eleven years I have had the opportunity to be the English Language Arts teacher and Team Leader





for the Schenectady Smart Scholars Early College High School (ECHS) Program at Schenectady High School in the Schenectady City School District. Early College High School is a program whose focus is preparing students from traditionally underrepresented groups to enter college with the knowledge and skills to succeed and finish their degree. I also teach the English Methods course at Siena College to senior students wanting to become English teachers. Overall, my approach to educating my ELA students is focused on instilling a love of books through fun, a penchant for reading, and growth in literacy skills.

*From my perspective as a teacher, the interest our students had in reading increased significantly under the reading program Lori Lebel started. They also improved in their other classes. We started with reading hour and significantly expanded following Lori Lebel's lead. Her classroom library is known to all of my freshmen. For those that did not have her as an English teacher, those that did took them down so they could see the library. Reading hour during school progressed to reading more at home. My students came in before school giving me updates on what they were reading and what they wanted to read next. They kept books in their bookbags "just in case," and any time students finished with their assignments, tests, worksheets they would automatically pull out their book to read, some would even come into class and read while having lunch. With the reading challenges, our students looked forward to the final tally on most books read.*



*When students didn't have a book, the students that did advised them to "just go see Miss Lebel."*

*One of my freshmen a few years ago let me know when I gave one of their first reading assignments that she did not like to read. Over the course of her freshman year she developed a love of reading. In the challenge, she was my most read freshman. She has also improved academically. She became involved in reading and took off on the challenges. Lori Lebel was her freshman English teacher. The benefit to our students: active minds, expanded vocabulary. They developed an appreciation for reading. Instead of shying away, they started sharing what they were reading.*

*One of Ben Carson's quotes: "you can go anywhere in a book."  
-Chief Jayne Thompson*

**Some other notable information:** I was the sole recipient of the 2015 New York State English Council Dr. Ruth E. Everett Award for promoting teaching as a profession and the 2018 Schenectady Gazette Best of the Best Teacher recipient. Additionally, I was a 2018 Empire State Excellence in Teaching Award recipient and in 2019 received the New York State English Council Program of Excellence Award for my Smart Scholars ECHS Independent Reading Program. I can be reached via my personal email at: [elalebel@gmail.com](mailto:elalebel@gmail.com)