

Cindy Gerwin

*Winnebago Elementary
Bloomington, IL*



Cindy Gerwin is a bibliophile—passionate about literacy and building inclusive literacy communities full of curious joyful readers. For fifteen years, Cindy has worked to share this passion in her classroom by engaging students and their families with authentic literacy experiences. During the upcoming school year, she will be teaching fifth grade at Winnebago Elementary School (Marquardt District 15) in Bloomington, Illinois.

Cindy believes that the human brain is hardwired for story. From the beginning of time, humans have found unique ways to share their feelings and experiences through story. Falling into a good book—feeling the power of its story and sharing that experience with others—is the beating heart of my classroom regardless of the content we are learning. Stories build empathy. In a world that is becoming increasingly polarized, story is a necessity.

Cindy will use the funds provided by this grant to select inclusive, engaging, relevant, and thought-provoking books for her students to read and share, but that is not enough. Cindy also wants to build identity, confidence, and agency in her readers as they become authors of their own stories by responding to books with compassionate action—action has the power to effect meaningful change.