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Too often when reading or hearing about Detroit, the stories are overcrowded with the tales of crime, poverty, political disarray, and dysfunction. The pictures are those of abandoned city blocks and school buildings. They paint a picture of a lost and desolate city.

However, if you were to visit my high school classroom any day in Southeast Detroit, you would see a different, more true reality. My 11th and 12th grade English students are bright, eager, and energetic, despite the challenges and hardships they face due to circumstances outside of their control. Many of my students rise before the sun so that they can take the unreliable city buses to be at school on time.

They value their education and the opportunities it can offer them. Each of my students has a vision and goal for themselves to attend college, to have a professional career, and to make this world a better place for themselves, for their families, for their communities.

Our classroom library is an opportunity for my students to have choice and agency in choosing what they read. They build their reading stamina and confidence. "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men," Frederick Douglas said. As teachers, we need to work with families and communities to build strong children who have the necessary skills to be a part of the generation that rebuilds a stronger Detroit.

For the 180 students I see each day, the Book Love Foundation gift has been a tremendous gift. It has enabled ALL students to be able to find a book that interests them and attracts them as readers. What has been some of the most moving and most rewarding results of the Book Love Foundation grant is seeing children for the first time finding a book that really connects with them or that opens their minds to different ideas and worlds. Due to a lack of resources and lack of a variety of books, this had not been possible before.

Because of the Book Love Foundation, students who had not seen themselves as readers before, or students who had never seen themselves finishing a book are now able to find books that speak to them. For students who have always loved reading, they are going through books like lightning. One student is finishing about a book a week!

While there still is much work to be done in our classroom to truly transform our reading and writing skills, the Book Love Foundation has provided us with the tools and resources to do so.