

Karina Perez

*Hackensack Middle School
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Karina Perez, a 22-year veteran educator, teaches 7th grade social studies at Hackensack Middle School in an urban, richly diverse community. As co-advisor of the D.I.C.E. Club (Diversity, Inclusion, Culture, Empowerment), she has long been a champion for student voice, representation, and equity both in and out of the classroom. With a deep love for books and their power to transport, affirm, and empower, Karina has built a reading culture rooted in student choice, diverse perspectives, and authentic connection. Her classroom is full of books that reflect the identities and experiences of her students, and her free classroom library has become a hub for curious readers—even students outside of her classes stop by to browse, recommend, and

request new titles.

With the Book Love Grant, Karina plans to implement several initiatives aimed specifically at reluctant and disengaged readers. One initiative is to purchase a full class set of Choose Your Own Adventure books—including *Mystery of the Maya*, *Secret of the Ninja*, and *Chinese Dragons*. These interactive narratives allow for reader autonomy, enabling students to actively shape their reading journey. They also align with Karina’s social studies curriculum, reinforcing historical thinking through a literary lens.

Karina believes books change lives not just by what’s on the page—but by how they’re introduced, shared, and celebrated. With the support of the Book Love Grant, she will continue to make reading a joyful, inclusive, and empowering experience for every student who walks through her door.