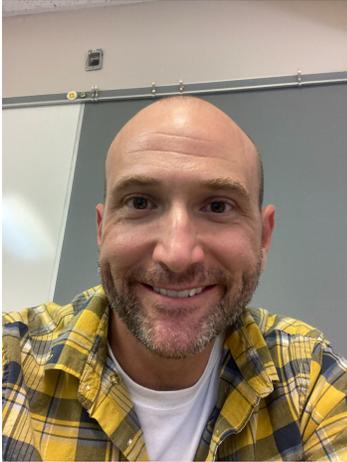


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I'm going on 13 years as an ELA teacher, and it will be my 4th year at Bishop Miege High School. It was a few years ago when I started building a classroom library. It was a combination of parent-donated books, novels from local book banks, and gems from my home library. I was beginning to become a believer in an independent reading program, and this idea of choice as a driving force is a great way to get books in the hands of reluctant and avid non-readers. I soon had a go-to list of novels that I would hand kids that hadn't picked up a book in years. I loved hearing kids cackle out loud as they read *We Were Here* by Matt de la Peña or watch a student tear through *A Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds. I loved the sounds of silence and looking at the clock with the realization that 30 minutes had gone by without any protest from students. It was energizing to be around, and although getting students to prioritize reading in a noisy world is a challenge, it started to become well-worth it. I am incredibly thankful for the Book Love Foundation and grateful for the opportunity to grow a classroom library that kids can use.

This classroom library means many, many choices for students, which I've seen to be pretty powerful, especially early on. Books like, *Readicide*, *Book Love* and *4 Essential Studies* are a constant source of energy and have been an important springboard for the classroom culture that I'm really striving for. Shelves brimming with high-interest reading books that kids can really see themselves in is just one of the many things that I'm looking forward to as we near another school year.

