



BOOK LOVE

F O U N D A T I O N

Choice Inspires Reading

The Book Love Foundation Grants \$87,500 to Teachers Across North America

North Conway, NH (October 3, 2022) -- The Book Love Foundation awarded 56 classroom library grants totaling \$87,500 to teachers in the United States and Canada in 2022. The books are shipping this fall, and students are delighted with the choices.



Ashely Anderson, 2022 grant winner, and Book Love Foundation board president, Penny Kittle, are seated in this photo on the shelves filled with titles Ashley bought with her grant to support book clubs in her 10th grade classroom in Dickinson, Texas.

If you have any doubt about engaging today's busy students in reading, these teachers will convince you it is not about time and not about technology; it is about putting relevant, engaging books into students' hands, and then carving out school time to read them. Our 2022 grant

winner is extraordinary teachers who work at local, state, and national levels to inspire both students and colleagues. Every one of the 2022 grant recipients is creating a future generation of readers.

Since 2012, the Book Love Foundation has raised more than \$1MM to provide nearly 400 teachers (from 41 states and six Canadian provinces) with grants to build classroom libraries.

The Book Love Foundation also provides annual professional learning opportunities to hundreds of teachers and leaders through a summer book club, which included educators from 15 countries in 2022. We continue to receive generous support from Heinemann and Bookelicious, as well as hundreds of individual donors. You can find out more about the Book Love Foundation at booklovefoundation.org or join our **Mighty Networks community** at <https://book-love-community.mn.co>.

Please help us celebrate our 2022 Book Love Foundation Grant Recipients:



Yulil Alonso-Garza is in her 21st year teaching 8th grade Language Arts in Imperial County at Enrique Camarena Jr. High in Calexico, California. Her understanding of the power of choice in reading began when she worked at an alternative high school and received a generous budget to buy books for students who had lost interest in reading. The plots and characters of the books they began reading related to her students' lives, and she witnessed immediate changes in students' self-esteem, reading interest, and voice. Yulil's own love of reading began with these students. Yulil is the founder and president of the nonprofit Mothers and Men Against Gangs Coalition, which has a MAG Teens Book Club

partnered with public libraries who present read alouds for all ages. She currently works with her administration, the academic support teacher, and a newly formed literacy committee to establish a schoolwide reading culture. This Book Love Foundation grant will increase the range of titles, authors, protagonists, and graphic novels to enhance the voices of her students and her own knowledge of their cultural backgrounds.



Ashley Anderson is a tenth-grade English teacher entering her seventh year of teaching at Dickinson High School in Dickinson, TX. Go gators! She truly, madly, deeply loves reading. You rarely see her without a book in her hand, and most of the time, she's handing that book to a student. Ashley is known among students for her "3 book guarantee" – any student that enters her classroom and says "I don't like reading", she guarantees that within 3 books she can find something they can connect to. With the Book Love Foundation grant, she can now add over a 100 more diverse titles to her classroom library – helping her

keep that "3 book guarantee". Since making the transition to education, Ashley has found inspiration from Maya Angelou's words of, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." As this guiding principle, Ashley continues to learn from pivotal educators like Kelly Gallagher, Rebekah O'Dell, Liz Prather, Linda Rief, and (of course) Penny Kittle. Because of their passion and shared knowledge, she continues to know better so she can do better for her students and fellow teachers. Her classroom has one focus every year - every student reads and writes every day. Ashley believes that the texts she and her students dig into each year pushes her students past their classroom walls, past their southern suburban town, and past all of their inherited beliefs. Her vision is for her students to know better, so they too, can do better for themselves and their community.



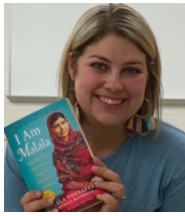
Heather Atterberry loves books. She finds joy in talking with students, discovering their interests and sharing titles to help them fall in love with books too. Returning to school after the pandemic, Heather found many of her students not invested in reading; she sought to remedy this by creating a small classroom library featuring diverse titles. The conversations Heather had with students about the books in her classroom library this year gave her a renewed purpose in teaching during a most challenging year. Students would talk about how the books they were reading helped them broaden and define their world views. Heather

has been teaching at Kamiakin High School in Kennewick, Washington for over 15 years teaching English to students from diverse backgrounds.



Michael Billotti is a middle school ELA teacher at Merton Williams Middle School in Hilton NY. He is excited to receive a 2022 Book Love Foundation grant and plans to use it to help build his middle grade and young adult graphic novel collection, which are among the most popular in his classroom library! In his classroom, Mr. Billotti works tirelessly to instill a love of reading in each of his students. Through daily independent reading, shared discussions, book talks, and virtual author visits and videos, Mr. Billotti has built a culture of literacy in his classroom. He is also the founder of the Merton Williams Project LIT

chapter, which connects students to a nationwide, grassroots literacy-focused network of students and educators. He is active on Instagram (@mrbillotti), engaging with middle grade and young adult authors through his freelance graphic design work.



Erin Boiles has been a teacher for ten years. She currently teaches 9th grade Practical Writing and 10th grade pre-AP English II for Burleson Collegiate High School, a school dedicated to helping those underrepresented at the college level obtain an associate's degree while enrolled in high school. She is an advocate for student choice and independent reading. One of her proudest moments in the classroom last year was having a student who, at the beginning of the year, was a self-proclaimed "nonreader" ask if he could finish his book when he had free time in class. That is Erin's goal for all students who walk into her room. Not for them to fall in love with the books she selects or the stories the curriculum chooses for the district, but for students to fall in love with reading. Whether that be manga, free verse, or an online platform for unknown authors to share their stories, Erin wants her students to want to read and to love the experience. Erin has spent the past few years building up her classroom library, collecting books that promoted diversity and a wide range of topics. Now, her new goal is to develop book club options for her students. The Book Love grant is providing her the opportunity to expose her students to options such as graphic novels and books of verse. Erin loves how the Book Love grant is giving her the opportunity to provide students with the magical and transformative power that books can provide to those who open them. Erin believes by providing these new options to her students more critical thinking and in-depth, relationship-building moments will take place.

Patriaia (Paddy) Boyt has been an EL (English Language) teacher for over 30 years and is currently teaching 4th and 5th grade EL students at Eastern Heights Elementary in St. Paul, MN. She holds an MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (Monterey, CA), a K-12 MN EL license, and has experience teaching overseas (2 years in Peace Corps, Poland and 5 years in Istanbul, Turkey) and in the Saint Paul Public Schools (23 years). These experiences instilled in her a strong desire to create and maintain a library with inclusive, engaging and culturally relevant texts for her multi-lingual, multi-cultural students, regardless of their reading level. She believes it is crucial to impart a life-long love of reading through a variety of genres (memoir, graphic novels, realistic fiction, fantasy, historical fiction) which her Somali, Hmong, Karen, and Spanish-speaking students can easily access and share with their friends and family. While this library is designed primarily for independent reading, we will use these texts for read-alouds, book clubs, and poetry and author studies throughout the academic year. Paddy believes fervently in the power of public education and is honored to work alongside colleagues who share her vision that all students deserve to see themselves in the books they read.



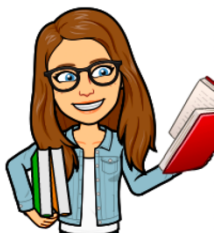
Anna Brady will be teaching for her first year ever and she couldn't be more enthusiastic. She will be at Sunset View Elementary School in Provo, Utah teaching 1st grade. She cannot wait to teach children to read; she also hopes to help her students view books as mirrors so that they can see themselves in the text as well as open their eyes to people who are different from them, and thus view a book as a window. With the help of the Book Love Foundation, Anna's classroom library is fully stocked with diverse genres that will inspire, educate, lift, and encourage students to be lifelong readers! This grant will be focused on teacher favorites found online. She cannot wait to see her readers get their hands on these books!



Kelly Chacon is entering her 22nd year of teaching English at Diamond Bar High School in Diamond Bar, California. She currently teaches 11th grade Honors/IB English and AP Literature and Composition. She has worked to build a classroom library for her students over the years and has tried many different approaches to get more books into the hands of students. Her goal with the grant money is to continue to build a classroom library that inspires and encourages students to read more and to read about what interests them. Her inspiration for applying for the grant was her students' reactions to reading in her class this past year. After a full year of online school, many students were enthusiastic about the time they were given to read and for the autonomy they were given in choosing books. Her students rely on her library as the main source of getting books to read, and she knew she needed to find ways to increase the options available to them. It is her hope that with the new additions to her library provided by the grant, that she will help more students to discover the joy and value of reading. Thank you to the Book Love Foundation for supporting teachers and students!



Emma Charles: is a first-year teacher at Wasatch Elementary School in Provo Utah. She is teaching 2nd grade. Her goal with the grant money is to encourage a love of literacy in her young students. She believes that all students are readers and if she can put the right book in the hands of the right student it can unlock so much reading potential. It is her hope that with the new additions to her classroom library provided by the grant she will be able to expand her classroom library to include diverse books and give better representation to the students in her classroom so that they can see themselves in the classroom literature and have powerful stories that inspire them at a young age. She also hopes to include high-interest books and series that will get kids "hooked" on reading and discover the joy that comes from a good book. Thank you to the Book Love Foundation for your incredible generosity in supporting teachers and students!



Meg Clements is entering her 9th year of teaching with the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, currently teaching in the junior division of Dr. George Hall Public School. She is an avid picture book collector and wholeheartedly believes that the most important life lessons can be taught, felt and communicated through a good picture book. Her commitment to engaging staff and students to a love for reading is unmatched and her unwavering passion for using literacy as a catalyst to empower her students to see themselves as difference makers and agents of change within their

community and the greater world, is apparent in each lesson she teaches. Her desire is to successfully curate a bookshelf that reflects the diverse community within her classroom, to increase the depth of understanding for cultures and communities beyond the walls of the small town she teaches in, and to build empathy. She wholeheartedly believes that all students can love reading as long as the right books are in front of them, and is relentless in her pursuit of finding books that will spark joy for her students. Meg knows that time spent reading is *always* time well spent.



Rebecca Cohen is entering her 11th year of teaching and her 10th at Pflugerville High School. She has been fortunate to work with many incredible educators who have influenced her to approach reading as a path to empowerment, passion, empathy, and social justice. Central to her class culture are the relationships she builds with her students and those they build with each other, and she strengthens those relationships through reading. She is a fierce advocate of student choice. Her students engage in independent reading as well as book clubs, and they quickly learn she will never give up on finding them a book they will enjoy. Her goal with her classroom library is to not only reflect the identities

and experiences of her students, but to expose them to a diverse range of inclusive literature. She is humbled and grateful to receive the support of the BookLove Foundation and is excited for the many opportunities the diverse literature this grant will provide for her students.



Carriann Cook is a book lover and high school English teacher. She teaches grades 9-12 at Fargo-Gage High School in Northwest Oklahoma. Carriann has taught at all levels but has found her true love in teaching high school English. She feels that she has mastered the art of matching kids with books they'll like. Carriann has an extensive classroom library, but still can't seem to say no to used bookstores and library sales. Her favorite thing in teaching is when students ask if they can read just a little longer. She began using book clubs in her class this year and found that her students loved

getting to choose what book they read. Through this grant, she plans to implement graphic novels, novels in verse, mental health/trauma, and immigration book club choices. She is also adding to her existing book clubs. Carriann believes that reading is an opportunity to travel when you have nowhere else to go and wants to share the world with her students, one book club at a time.



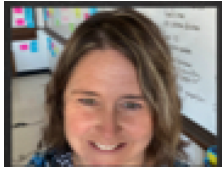
Kaitlynn Cooper is entering her tenth year of teaching in Reno, Nevada. Kaitlynn is dedicated to helping her students develop a lifelong passion for reading, empathy for others, and a practice of giving back to the community. She commits each day to building a classroom culture that supports those ideals. Reading is a cornerstone of her professional practice, and includes books both on professional practice as well as diverse books representing her students' interests and lives. Building and nurturing a

solid classroom library has been the one constant through the past nine years of teaching as subjects, schools, student populations, and the world itself have changed. She enjoys the challenge of empowering students to realize there are books that they can connect to and dive into as readers. Kaitlynn loves seeing students' eyes light up when they open a graphic novel with a character they relate to, hearing a student recommend a book they are finishing up to a classmate, and witnessing the confidence of a student grow after they finish a book and start to identify themselves as a reader. Kaitlynn is thankful and excited to have this grant, which will impact her students as they are able to connect to others through their reading and learn about themselves in the process.



Rebecca Decker has just completed her 18th year teaching at Brick Memorial High School in Brick, NJ, where she was once a student. She is also the co-advisor of the Project Lit book club and co-advisor of the Class of 2025. She was awarded the incredible honor of being named the 2020-2021 Brick Memorial High School teacher of the year. Choice reading in the classroom is her passion. Her priority as an ELA teacher of grades 11 and 12 is to never trade the engagement of her students for works of literature that she loves; instead, she uses choice in both reading and writing to provide her students with

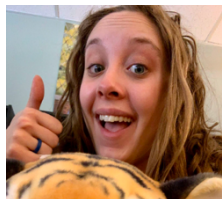
ownership in the classroom. She feels the greatest part of the process is getting the right book into the hands of each student. In her classroom, this happens through conferencing, book talks, book tastings, first chapter Fridays, and the creation of her teacher TikTok @mrsdeckersbookinit, where she gives weekly book reviews. It is not uncommon for a student to finish a book for the first time while sitting in her classroom. She says, "Above everything else, I want my students to experience that twist they did not see coming, that gut punch of emotion only an amazing book can deliver, and that feeling of happy sadness you get when you finish a book you love, but you realize you will never experience reading it for the first time ever again. This grant will give my students those moments, and be a part of creating lifelong readers, and that is invaluable."



Deb Eaton began her career in alternative education inspiring readers and has spent the last six years teaching 10-12 graders at Springfield High School in Springfield, IL. Student choice fuels her passion for authentic reading and writing. Book clubs have become the heart of her classroom because of the concrete results she has seen- less cheating/fake reading, deeper discussions and world connections, and improved relationships. Choice shows students that their opinions and time are valued, while supporting individual ownership of learning. Students understand from day one class is about what they need and how she can support their work, not about her. If the student does not have any interest or control, he or she will be even less likely to engage in authentic reading and writing, so having readily available texts is crucial to the goal of supporting self-sustained lifelong readers. Through book clubs, students use the space to discuss without the pressure of “being right.” Book Love Foundation funds will serve as mentor texts, while providing a window into other’s experiences- some familiar some not.



Gretchen Egner has built a solid secondary classroom library over the last decade and will use this grant to enrich her collection with recent, engaging titles that will help students develop and sustain their reading identity. “There’s some magic in finding ‘that one right’ book for students, but really the sweet sauce is hooking them on what they’ll continue with—that *next book*—the one that makes them see themselves as a ‘reader,’” says Egner. She plans to purchase current titles by authors whose prior works have captivated her students, as well as books highly rated and reviewed that are sure to connect with her kids. She also likes to field suggestions from her students, frequently asking, “What was the last book you read that you liked?” Egner says that in addition to helping her find a next book for a stuck student, she often learns of new titles and authors to connect with more students. The 2022-2023 school year will be Egner’s sixteenth year teaching at Waukesha South and her 24th year teaching in the Waukesha School District. This grant is her second Book Love Foundation award; her first was in 2017.



Rachel Foley is entering her eighth year of teaching. She has spent the past six years teaching 9th and 11th grade English and coaching Varsity Girls Volleyball at Lakewood High School in Colorado. She has always loved to read, but was inspired to get back into books during her first year of teaching when some of her middle school students asked if they could have a book club during their lunch and recess. Since then, she has been inspired by so many amazing teachers along the way- Penny Kittle, Kelly Gallagher, Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, Ben Bleckley, Robin Bateman, Paige Gilbert- the list could go on; every day, she tries to take an active step toward growing as an educator. Foley, as her students call her, tells her kids at the beginning of the year that it’s okay to say that they don’t like reading, but it just means they haven’t found the right book yet. Her mission every year then becomes to get that book into each student’s hands. Foley can often be found wandering in the halls of the school with groups of students talking about what they’re reading, with excited voices, wild hand gestures, and a significant amount of arm waving. Everyone in the school- teachers and students alike- knows where to go if they’re looking for a good book to borrow. Foley (and her students) are so honored and thrilled to receive this grant and get new books in their classroom library. Her students from last year promised to stop in at the beginning of the year to check for new books so they could check them out first! Ultimately, Foley’s goal is to bring joy into the classroom and empower her students to view themselves as readers and writers- to show them that reading and writing have meaning because what they have to say matters. All students deserve to find themselves in the pages of a book, and it is merely Foley’s job to light their way on that journey.



Dan Fournier teaches 10th grade English at Bishop Miege High School, located in Kansas City. He will be starting his 13th year of teaching this coming school year. As a proud member of the Greater Kansas City Writing Project, he strives to continue finding ways for students to gain additional confidence in their reading and writing voices, and believes strongly in the importance of being a lifelong reader, writer, and learner. Dan is a huge supporter of choice when it comes to the reading and writing that happens in an ELA classroom and has been working for several years to support a reading program founded on literature that students can really connect with. He is immensely thankful for the opportunity to fill his classroom with high-interest books and can't wait to see what this does for the classroom culture. One of Dan's favorite things to do during a free read is to look around the room in the midst of the silence and see every student with a good old-fashioned book in their hands.



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 Bloomingdale, 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.



Eunice Gonzalez-Sierra is entering her 4th year as an 8th grade English Teacher at Fesler Jr. High School in Santa Maria, California. Having once attended the school where she now teaches, Eunice is passionate about giving her students a culturally relevant and engaging educational experience. Because of this, she ensures that her classroom library is full stocked with diverse titles from diverse authors and makes independent reading a core component of her teaching. As a teacher from a low-income, immigrant background, she ensures all students are seen and validated and hopes that the books in her classroom reflect the stories and lived experiences of her students. Eunice is also an avid reader herself and enjoys reading alongside her students and encourages them to keep her accountable to reading and learning alongside them. She enjoys buying new books for her classroom library and is grateful to have the support of the Book Love Foundation in continuing to encourage students to foster a love of reading and to become lifelong readers.



Emily Hall is an 8th grade Writing and ELA teacher at the Wright Science & Technology Academy in Chelsea, MA. In the wake of the pandemic, her literacy coach advised her to read *Book Love* in preparation for a year of virtual teaching, telling her that if they were going to center students more than ever in the coming year, then this was the book to guide them. She was right, and it completely changed Mrs. Hall's view of what middle grade education should look like. Now, her teaching practice is driven by students' emotional and intellectual needs – meaning it is driven by students' LOVE of reading. Whether her

students enter the year already claiming to be avid readers or they come in claiming to “hate reading,” Mrs. Hall loves the challenge of helping students find new ways to explore and discover love of reading. With Chelsea Public School’s guiding vision of books that are “doors, mirrors, and windows (Bishop)” Mrs. Hall eagerly seeks out how to engage students with texts that both reflect their identities and experiences and open their eyes to other places and people. With the Book Love Grant, Mrs. Hall will be able to build a classroom library alongside her students and with the collaboration of the Book Love team that continues to support ALL students who enter her classroom.



Alex Harrison is currently a fourth grade ELA teacher at the same school she attended as a kid, Walnut Bend Elementary School in Houston, Texas. She is also entering into the final year of the doctorate in Educational Leadership program at the University of Houston-Clear Lake where she is specializing in reading. Alex shares her love for reading with her students by first gaining their trust, building relationships, then pairing them with books that align with their interests. Starting each school year, independent reading time is not typically a crowd favorite amongst the new bunch of students. However, by implementing autonomy and allowing students the opportunity to read books that pique their interest and not limiting them to books that are “on level,” students begin to slowly trust themselves as they begin to build or build onto their reading identities. Alex’s favorite part of the school day is when she gets to sit on the comfortable furniture in her classroom, surrounded by her students with their books, as she dives into her own book choice from the classroom library. Her favorite part of the school year is when the students begin having longer independent reading stamina and beg for more minutes to spend with their books. Daily picture book read alouds also help to formulate a community of literacy lovers while also building empathy, an understanding of the world around us, and thought-provoking conversations. The Book Love Grant will allow Alex to purchase books that are reflective of the students she educates.



Rachel Hernandez is a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing. She is in her 21st year of teaching. Mrs. Hernandez has taught all age levels but is currently serving High school students for San Joaquin County Office of Education-Special Education Programs in Central California. Mrs. Hernandez teaches English to all her students and has a passion for literature. However, reading can tend to be more of a chore for her students than a pleasure. Mrs. Hernandez is excited to create a new library with a deaf focus for her students and campus with the funds from Book Love. The library will only contain books that have deaf characters. The goal of the library is to have students be able to identify with the literature they read by seeing themselves within the stories as well as for the general education students on campus the ability to see deafness as a common situation and have exposure to culture and language. The library will not only serve her high school campus but also be available to the other deaf and hard of hearing classes. The books will span from preschool through adult in order to fit the needs and be accessible to all in the deaf and hard of hearing program. Mrs. Hernandez is excited to find this connection for her students on campus as well as open the world of books to them at a more personal level.



Lauren Inman is entering her third year teaching 7th and 8th grade English at Notre Dame Academy, an all-girls middle/high school, in Worcester, Massachusetts. She is a voracious reader with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Masters in Education. Her graduate coursework led her to implementing a reading intervention program in her middle school classes and conducting research on increasing student engagement and attitudes toward reading. She scoured second-hand stores, libraries, and friends for opportunities to grow her classroom library. Reading and books were able to become a talking point to build relationships between students and between herself and students. She is beyond grateful to the Book Love Foundation for the opportunity to grow her classroom library and her connection to her

students. Lauren's school, and personal, motto is "teach them what they need to know for life." Through these books, she feels she can do just that. Her goal is to help foster girls who are compassionate, who understand the world outside the gates of the school, and who have a drive to ask questions. Lauren will use the grant to help build her classroom library adding more inclusive texts to show the plethora of stories and experiences to help students navigate life.



Kevin Jaworski is secondary English teacher entering his twelfth year at Springfield Collegiate found in Oakbank, Manitoba, Canada. Ever since he adopted the "Book Speed Dating" activity six years ago where students are immersed in a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts to browse and choose freely, he instinctively knew the impact and power of fostering a classroom that is anchored in choice book selection. With the support of his administration, he continues to add to his classroom library annually, making a conscious effort to include titles that his students can see themselves in. By having timely and

relevant titles easily accessible to his students, he has found a dramatic increase in student engagement with reading, as well as building stronger working relationships with them. Kevin finds joy in conferencing with students to find books that will be a good fit for them where they can read daily in class, and hopefully outside the classroom. Also, the inclusion of book clubs where students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a book that is important to them, but also to be part of a community allows them to realize that reading does not need to be an isolated event has been integral to Kevin's classroom culture. Being a recipient of the Book Love Foundation Grant will allow Kevin to continue to grow his classroom library as well as craft book sets to persist with the pursuit of enriching the love of reading both inside and outside of the classroom.



Jamie Kerr is a 7th grade ELA teacher at California Middle School in Sacramento, California. Her background is in elementary education and is beginning her 8th year of teaching. She is also active in leadership roles of the Area 3 Writing Project. Through her work with A3WP and a dedication to building a love of reading in her students, she has transformed her teaching to center on choice and expression through reading and writing. She has carefully built a classroom library to invite her students to become readers. Last year, by starting every class with 10 minutes of choice reading, coupled with reading

conferences, goal-setting, book talks, and book clubs, she built a culture of reading in her classroom. Last year, students reported that they read more (and enjoyed it more) than they ever had before. Her focus for this upcoming year is to strengthen the book club experience in her classroom to include novels in verse, which will be funded by the Book Love Foundation Teri Lesesne Book Club Grant. She found that this type of book hooks reluctant readers and is most accessible to the wide variety of readers in the room and is thrilled to begin curriculum development on this new endeavor.

Debbie Kim teaches reading intervention and literature classes at a charter high school in Los Angeles. For years, she searched for ways to reach students who struggled or hated to read. Recently, she has been focusing her energies on building an independent reading culture, first by expanding her own reading horizons, then by making space in each class for students to find and read what interested them, and finally, by scaffolding discussions for students to talk about their reading. Integral to this process is easy accessibility to an ever-widening range of texts that students want to read. It has been a slow process but a rewarding one, and this grant offers a huge step forward in the journey toward nurturing lifelong readers.



Amanda Knopp is currently a 6th and 7th grade gifted English Language Arts teacher at East Coweta Middle School in Senoia, Georgia. She just completed her 21st year of teaching and serves as the English Language Arts department chair. She enjoyed reading *180 Days* by David Gallagher and Penny Kittle. This is what inspired her to incorporate the 10 minutes of reading and 10 minutes of writing everyday in all of the ELA classes in her school. She has worked hard with the principal to grow the teachers classroom libraries. This gives the students more choice of what they are going to read during their 10 minutes of reading each day. She also took over the book fair and has two a year. These proceeds also go to the teachers classroom libraries. She currently has over 750 books in her classroom library! Her next goal was to incorporate book clubs and when she saw this was being added to the Book Love foundation grant she knew she had to apply. She was so excited to find out she won and is looking forward to a wonderful year with her new book sets for book clubs!



Natasha Kostyniuk has taught at W.P. Sandin High School, Saskatchewan, Canada for the last five years teaching high school History and English Language Arts, and now will be teaching at Martensville High School. She loves bringing in books to her classroom where they become a value of the lesson each and every day. She values choice, discussions about literature within choice read and book clubs, and using pieces of writing as mentor texts. Natasha values and becomes excited about conferencing with students, as she believes when they discuss literature with each other they all build a love for reading. She often brings in inclusive literature into her classroom library and will be using the grant to bring in more diverse literature, which will build more empathy. Putting books in the hands of students always brings smiles and she feels so privileged to teach the subjects she teaches.



Jessica Lange teaches 7th grade at Greene County Tech Middle School and is going into her eleventh year of teaching. She holds an M.Ed. Leadership from the University of Arkansas, and is currently pursuing a certificate in teaching English as a second Language. She is committed to social justice, and equitable and inclusive practices in and out of the classroom. Last year, she led her classes through a Civic Journalism Grant funded by the MacArthur Foundation and the National Writing Project. Ms. Lange loves helping her students to rediscover their love for reading by promoting choice reading time, book talks, and regular conferences. Over the last two years, she has focused her attention on improving the quality and quantity of books readily available for students, ensuring that all voices are heard and represented. She is an avid reader and thrives on sharing recent reads with her students to encourage them to pick up books that may be outside of their comfort zone.



Ted Leach is an 11th and 12th grade ELA teacher at Kingston High School in Kingston, NY. Entering his 25th year of teaching, he is a passionate, avid reader who shares his love of literature with his students and colleagues. He is thrilled to be receiving this grant, which will allow him to expand his classroom library with high-quality contemporary books that engage and challenge his diverse learners. In addition to his classroom teaching, he has worked with the Bard College MAT program for the past 12 years, serving as a mentor teacher, workshop leader, and consultant. In all this work, he shares his commitment to increasing student choice in reading.



Brett Legault is currently teaching a split grade six/seven class at Starbuck Hockey Academy in Starbuck Manitoba Canada. He strongly believes in voice and choice in his classroom and supports this by bringing in as many books as he can get his hands on into his classroom library. He works closely with the literacy consultant in his school division to ensure that there is a wide selection of high interest books, books that students can see themselves in and books of all types including picture books, graphic novels, and audio books. He loves to see the gradual change in student's that come into his classroom in September and loudly announce with pride, "I hate reading" or "books suck," to students that are reading on the bus or that are discussing books in the hallways. He spends a lot of time in the classroom discussing books, promoting books, and sharing his favorite books to help encourage hesitant readers. He also reads a lot of YA books so students know they can ask questions, or ask for suggestions. Brett loves promoting reading and can't wait to continue nurturing struggling readers, strong readers and everything in between.



Brooke Libby is an English Language Arts teacher at Messalonskee Middle School in central Maine and entering her ninth year of teaching. Having taught high school for the first six years of her career, she realized quickly it is important for students to develop a love of reading early on in education. Now, as she teaches 6th grade ELA, she works hard to provide students with opportunities to enjoy books that foster a love of reading strong enough to keep them reading through middle school, high school, and beyond. This begins with student choice and access to books that engage and inspire students. To get students reading, Brooke gives weekly booktalks and introduces monthly Spotlight Authors. She provides students with books that they can relate to, but also she also provides books that offer students new perspectives. Students engage in book clubs, independent reads, and whole class reads. She believes that, in addition to fostering conversation and relationships, books teach life lessons and validate student experiences as they grow into who they are meant to be. Brooke is incredibly thankful she received the Book Love Foundation grant as she works to help her students become lifelong readers and learners. The grant will help Brooke purchase a diverse variety of books for students, thus helping them make a positive impact on the world.



Meghan Look just finished her twelfth year of teaching. This past year she taught in a 4th grade classroom at the Helen S. Dunn School in Greenbush, Maine. Her career has consisted of teaching elementary and middle school students in different subject areas. All of her teaching experience have emphasized one major point: books can be a great equalizer. For children who live in rural and impoverished communities, books are an essential way for students to experience the world around them that they may not have

access to otherwise. Thought-provoking stories, relatable of the characters, and conversations born of an engrossing read are imperative to learning about the world beyond their limited reaches. It also helps children understand that they, too, can make positive influence on the world someday. Her goal is to have current, relevant and high-interest books in the hands of every one of her students, and to help every student see himself or herself as a reader.



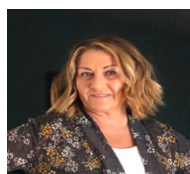
Shelly Lutes is entering her twenty-fifth year of teaching English and social studies in New Brunswick, Canada. She has been teaching at Saint Mary's Academy in Edmundston, New Brunswick since 2003. She is an avid reader and works hard at instilling the love of reading in her students. She is very proud of her classroom library as it offers a variety of genres and multitudes of authors. Shelly's classes emphasize independent reading and allowing students to choose what they want to read. It is important to her that the students can see themselves reflected in the books in her classroom and that there are also options for them to lose themselves in worlds/places they could never visit any other way. One of her favourite things to

witness as a teacher is when a student is so wrapped up in a book that the reactions are evident for all to see, at least if they are looking. Diversity is also important to Shelly and the Book Love Foundation grant will allow her to provide her students with more relevant choices, graphic novels and books from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ authors.



Heather Martin is approaching her 10th year as an English teacher at Aurora Central High School in Aurora, CO. Heather is an avid YA lit reader who advocates for choice reading in the classroom at all ages. Her love for reading and stories began at a young age when her dad used to read The Lord of the Rings trilogy to her and her siblings every night before bed. As a kid, she took great pride in reading any and all books she could get ahold of, though her favorites were stories that had characters she could either look up to or see herself in. As a teacher, she is an enthusiastic book talk giver who loves the challenge of finding the perfect book for each student's unique interests. She truly believes in the power of stories and how they can provide hope, characters to look up to, varying perspectives, and even an escape when needed. As a survivor of the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, Heather has found that owning her story, and her struggles, has made all the difference in her recovery from trauma.

Melissa Martinez has been teaching for 24 years and is currently at Sam Rayburn High School in Pasadena, Texas. She serves on her campus' site-based decision-making team and on the school's Emergent Bilingual Student Task Force. For years Melissa has taught on level high school English, but it was COVID that catapulted her into the world of high school ESL. A teacher shortage required some class changes be made, and she was asked three weeks into the school year to teach English to students who were newcomers to the country. Knowing her emergent bilingual students have so much to learn, speaking, reading, and writing in English, Mrs. Martinez knows that choice reading plays a huge part in that. Unfortunately, her classroom library lacks the Spanish, bilingual, and high interest/low level books that her students need. She has slowly been adding to her bookshelves from titles she finds at thrift stores, garage sales, and some that she has purchased, but it isn't enough. She is excited to fill her classroom with books that her students will connect with and that will celebrate their identities.



Kristin Mathieu is going into her 20th year of teaching high school English. She currently teaches 9th and 12th grade at Como Park Senior High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Ms. Mathieu is passionate about culturally responsive and social justice teaching. She believes that when students can see themselves in the books that they read, they can then see themselves as a part of the world that they must change! As a

National Writing Project teacher-consultant, she knows and understands that daily reading cannot improve without daily writing. Ms. Mathieu is excited to continue to be able to add new titles to her culturally responsive, student choice driven classroom library and is grateful to the Book Love Foundation Grant for this opportunity.



Stefanie McCleish is a high school English and Multimedia teacher in Buffalo Grove, Illinois entering her fifteenth year. Her commitment to literacy and education has also led her to a position on her local school board serving as the vice president. She works tirelessly to foster lifelong learners, readers, and good humans. She wants her students to be curious, not judgmental, empathetic, not cruel, and to embrace all of the existing possibilities that are out there for them to grow as readers and people. Increasing empathy, understanding LGBTQIA+, promoting social justice, and recognizing mental health issues are vital to her pedagogical practices. Although she has considered herself an ally to marginalized groups for sometime, it is

only in the past several years that she has worked to become a true “co-conspirator” as Bettina Love says, by truly “putting her hand on the pole” and living the mission. With an increase in attacks on books and public education, Stefanie believes it is more important than ever to passionately advocate for all stories, to continuously fight for equitable practices and opportunities, and let kids read what they want to read. More than anything, she believes that JOY should be the center of all classrooms. Through bringing in Mystery Readers, book talks, having students create two-page spreads, and more, Stefanie provides the time and place to foster a love of reading. An emphasis on dual credit and AP course loads has resulted in students becoming hyper-focused on being extremely involved both academically and in extracurricular activities to the point that they are mentally and physically drained. However, Stefanie believes when you provide the space, time, and encouragement, students begin to remember and fall back in love with reading.



Mason Nichols is an elementary reading interventionist. Growing up his father was often absent due to military duties and deployment. As a result, he developed a strong commitment to working with military kids. Mason loves incorporating diverse books in his classroom to support all students while using social-emotional learning strategies. He enjoys sharing best practices and tips on social media platforms to empower and spark inquiry in young minds.



Deb Bass O'Brien Deb Bass O'Brien is in her 8th year at The Crest Academy, a project-based middle school (5-8th grade) in Salida, Colorado, which is on Ute Land and her 14th year in her school district. She taught High English before moving to middle grades. She teaches at a small school with only 60 students and houses both the school and the classroom library in her classroom. Her classes focus on reading and writing workshop models while she builds 4-year relationships with her students. Students constantly ask her for book suggestions and use her library to select their independent books. With the classroom library grant, she will add more diverse books that students can access ideas they do not get to experience in their rural, somewhat-sheltered town. She also loves the idea of supporting LGBTQ+ and BIPOC authors and introducing her students to new authors and content that they would otherwise not know about. She aims to create readers and writers who care about the world around them.



Lindsey Olsen has a passion for teaching students to read. This coming school year marks her 18th year of teaching elementary students and she currently teaches 4th grade in Allendale, Michigan. She has two literary degrees from Grand Valley State University and teaching reading has captured her heart. Fostering the love of reading is a foundational part of her daily routine in the classroom and Lindsey loves spreading the joy of reading to others around her. Whether it's seeing students find a character they can relate to, fall in love with a series, or getting lost in a book, it brings her joy. Creating a safe and encouraging environment for reading will always be in the forefront to how students learn in her classroom.

Salimatou Cristal Ouedraogo is an ESOL teacher for Prince George's County Public Schools in MD. She has almost 10 years of experience as an educator which includes time working as a mentor for first generation students in public schools and teaching as a Peace Corps volunteer. She is also a writer and appreciator of the arts, especially art that celebrates and elevates culture. She believes in the power of storytelling to educate, transform and heal. Her love for books transcends borders. She has helped fundraise for and create a library in the village where she served as a Peace Corps volunteer. In addition to teaching and writing, facilitates an extracurricular club (The Global Citizens Club) that she founded to help

students cultivate cultural intelligence and empathy. She hopes to use the books she will gain to support cultural respect in and out of the classroom.



Wendy Peabody has been teaching in North Carolina schools for over 20 years, working with students in preschool up to fifth grade. Three years ago, she left one of North Carolina's largest school districts to teach 5th grade ELA at Envision Science Academy, a K-8 project-based charter school. There she was able to design a curriculum that utilized engaging texts to both teach the standards and meet the unique needs of her students. She also carved out time for daily independent reading time, and she continues to advocate for making this time with text a priority for her students. An avid reader herself, she is always looking for new texts and authors her students might enjoy. The Book Love Foundation grant comes at the perfect time as she plans on teaching 5th grade science next year and will be building this library from scratch. She plans on incorporating Jillian Heise's #classroombookaday challenge with a science twist. Her hope is to show students connections between literacy and science and cultivate a love of reading and science exploration in her students.

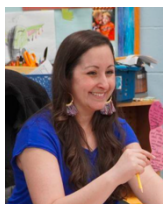


Matthew Persico is entering his 12th year of teaching at Hoboken Charter School in Hoboken, NJ. He teaches 7th and 8th grade English Language Arts and Social Studies as well as a variety of humanities-based elective offerings. At Hoboken Charter School, Matthew is also the director of the 3rd-8th grade Drama Club program as well as the faculty advisor for the Middle School Student Government Association. Next year, he plans to develop two additional student organizations; a Literary Magazine Club and a School Newspaper Organization. One of the core tenets of the Hoboken Charter School mission is a commitment to Social Justice Education, thus Matthew looks forward to utilizing the Book Love Foundation Grant to further expand his classroom library so that it is more reflective of the critical issues facing our world today. He hopes that through powerful reading experiences with these new text selections, students will establish deeper levels of empathy as well as a penchant for becoming change-makers in our communities and our world.

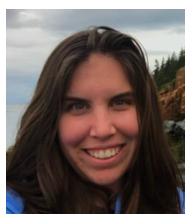
Twenty-some-odd years ago, a student handed **Amanda Potts** a book one Friday afternoon and begged her to finish it by Monday. He explained that he was in the middle of reading it and, "I can already tell that I'm going to need to talk to you about it when I'm done. So you need to finish first." Of course she read it. Today, she teaches students at Gloucester High School in Ottawa, Ontario, where all of her English classes start with independent choice reading and writing practice. To help make this successful, she reads regularly and gathers books any which way she can; her classroom library is full of texts that invite people to both recognize themselves and learn about others. She figures her plan to grow readers must be working because at the end of each semester students ask if they can return for more books. Sometimes, students bring their friends, assuring them that these books are really good. Occasionally, a former student shows up just to read for a few minutes or a student Amanda has never seen asks to borrow a book a friend has mentioned. Amanda looks forward to many more years of helping students discover their reading identity because, as Thomas King says, "The truth about stories is, that's all we are." And yes, students are still handing her books to read, often on a Friday afternoon.



McKenzie Randall is a 5th year English teacher in Utah. She currently teaches 11th grade English, and her favorite part of her job is her amazing students. She is a huge advocate for choice reading, and is always on the lookout for new YA books to add to her classroom library. When she's not teaching, you can probably find her reading a coming-of-age book, running outside, or spending time with her husband and dog.



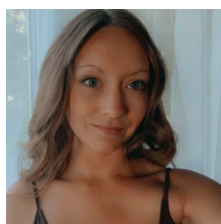
Laura Reece recently completed her 10th year teaching in a fourth grade classroom at Winnebago Elementary School in Bloomingdale, Illinois. As a voracious reader, she works hard to model a joy of reading and builds a love of reading within her classroom community. This year, her class began their own podcast about books called, “We Talk About Books Here!” They used this platform to discuss the books they love, to interview staff members about books, and to discuss banned books. Her recent shift towards building positive reading identities has impacted her teaching in such a beneficial way. She works hard to have a classroom library that reflects the diversity, values, and interests that exist within her classroom and the world. She is incredibly grateful to have received this grant.



Veronica Schwenn teaches freshman and sophomore English at Curie High School in Chicago, Illinois. She uses choice reading in her curriculum to help students find books, graphic novels, and audiobooks that excite them and help them discover the joy of reading. She lives for the moments when students ask for book recommendations, and is thrilled to work with Book Love Foundation to grow her classroom library and offer even better recommendations for students. Veronica is committed to diversifying her classroom library and bringing in books that celebrate LGBTQ+, Latinx, BIPOC, and neurodivergent stories, especially during this time when many of these authors and stories are most under attack in our schools. She is looking forward to another year of sharing her own enthusiasm for reading with her students and seeing them grow as readers and storytellers in their own right.



Anthony Segura is entering his ninth year as an English teacher. Immediately after finishing his bachelor’s degree and teaching credential program, he and his wife flew out to South Korea to begin their lives and careers. After two years of life and teaching experience in such a wonderful country, Anthony and his wife moved back home to Fresno, California. He began the teaching profession in the US teaching 7th grade for three years until finally arriving at his present site, Sunnyside High School. The summer prior to beginning at this new school proved to be a pivotal period of time that has completely changed his practices and pedagogy as an English teacher. It brings him great joy to be able to have students engage in “speed dating with books” at the very beginning of each school year as it allows students choice to pick the book that they will be spending time with each class. It is in this time that teacher and student conference about their books, where rich and meaningful conversations about their text and connections take place, and ultimately, where lifelong readers continue to be shaped. Allowing students choice in what they read on their independent time has been instrumental in turning a student like Anthony from reluctant reader to book lover. As any teacher knows, starting their own classroom library is not only important for such endeavors but also very expensive. The generous support of The Book Love Foundation will help Anthony actualize for his students the belief, as Kittle puts it, that “rich and rewarding lives are within reach for all of our students.” As it was for Anthony, students just need to come in contact with that one book that will forever change their readings lives.



Kirsten Strand-Gnam is a passionate literacy advocate and English teacher in Innisfail, Alberta. She has just completed her first year teaching 7th grade English, previously having taught High School English for seven years. Early in her career, Kirsten noticed a large and growing population of non-readers, stemming from weak literacy skills, over dependence on technology, and a disengagement from reading. Since then, she has focused on building relevant classroom libraries and working actively with students to develop their reading identities and a love for reading. Inspired by the work of Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle, her classroom instruction has shifted to more of a workshop model

where students use mentor texts to overcome the mystery and fear of reading and writing. Through book talks, posters, engaging displays and conferences, students quickly learn that “reading is what we do here”. In a divided, conflicted world, Kirsten sees books as a bridge to create empathy and connect people. In her classroom, she uses books and diverse characters as a tool to create conversations about human differences and perspectives. As part of her ongoing mission to create a thriving, relevant classroom library full of diverse and engaging voices, this Book Love Foundation grant presents a unique opportunity to continue to add to the collection and spark inspiration in the minds of future students.

Kori Joelle Taylor is heading into her second year of middle years in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, located on Treaty Six Territory here in the land now known as Canada. Her school is full of beautiful youth who deserve the absolute best, so she had this in mind when she applied for the grant. She is fortunate to have had access to countless novels for a classroom library thanks to educators who came before her and mentored her, but it is essential that the classroom libraries are up-to-date, built with student input and reflective of all our learners. This grant is going to allow Kori to ensure her students are reflected in the books they are offered daily. In Ms. Taylor’s classroom she emphasizes and celebrates reading, and she has started seeing her students do the same. Seeing them share a smile over something on a page, discuss their favorite moments in a narrative and even bicker over who the better hero in their stories is has been her greatest reward of entering education so far. She is so excited to tell her students we won this, because it will truly showcase how worth it they are, not only to a young teacher, but to the world, too.



Rachel Thune Real learns alongside her students in Junior English and AP English Language and Composition at Mountain View High School in Mesa, Arizona. At the heart of Rachel’s reading pedagogy is agency: students not only choose their books, but the peers with whom they enjoy those texts and the questions that guide their book club discussions. Thanks to the generosity of the Book Love Foundation, Rachel’s classroom library will feature a wide range of books that reflect and affirm students’ backgrounds and identities (in particular, those of LGBTQ+ students and students of color) and inspire all students to transform empathy into action. This fall, Rachel will be entering her eighth year of teaching and first year of doctoral studies at Arizona State University.

Lindsay Walker is going into her 9th year teaching, and currently teaches grade 7 and 8 English Language Arts at Crowther Memorial Junior High School in Strathmore, Alberta, Canada. Lindsay is excited to use this grant in the fall to grow her classroom library in her rural town, particularly by adding more diverse voices to the collection. She would like every one of her students to see themselves represented in a book. As well, Lindsay thinks it is so important for students to build empathy and understanding through stories. One of her main goals is to build her graphic novel and non-fiction section of her classroom library. ‘I find these are often first steps to hooking reluctant readers. Additionally, I find it easier to get students to read about social justice or characters different from themselves through a graphic novel rather than a novel.’ We all have stories and we are all connected through stories. Lindsay loves reading young adult fiction and sharing what she is reading with her students, and helping them to find a good book. She believes everyone is a reader; they just need to find the right book. Lindsay is grateful to the Book Love Foundation so she can build her classroom library, and so every student can find the right book.



Sara Wheeler is entering her eighth year of teaching elementary school in South Carolina. She is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early and Middle Childhood Literacy and an M.Ed in Literacy, Language and Culture. The upcoming school year will be her first year as a second grade teacher at Irmo Elementary School. Although she has taught a variety of grades, her dedication to helping all of her students develop a lifelong love of reading has always been at the center of her philosophy. Reading is the core of every content area and essential to the development of critical thinking skills. Sara

believes strongly that creating a classroom community in which students feel safe, heard, and included is the key to unlocking every student's full potential. Books are an integral part of developing these strong connections with students whether through shared read alouds, individual conferences, book talks, recommendations, or group reading challenges. Reading is such a positive and celebrated part of Sara's classroom that her students almost always choose some form of reading for class rewards. Read-a-thons, extra read aloud time, and readers theater are some of her most recent favorites. She is extremely grateful for the opportunity to expand her classroom library with a variety of relevant and high-interest titles across all genres. She hopes to meet all students where they are and ensure that all learners are represented not only through well-developed characters, but also through diverse authors and illustrators.

Jessica Willever is currently a 9th and 10th grade English teacher at Hamilton West High School in Hamilton, New Jersey. She is going into her third year teaching. Jessica has always had a passion for reading Young Adult literature and uses it frequently in her classroom to engage her students in relevant and relatable stories. She is most proud of her growing classroom library, which consists of over 250 books that she has collected and saved since her own time in high school, when her love of reading began. Through the use of First Chapter Fridays, independent reading units, and important discussions, she has seen the positive impact that modern and diverse literature has made on her students firsthand. Her greatest joy is seeing reluctant readers fall in love with a book. Jessica looks forward to continuing her journey to facilitate a love of reading for all of her students.