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"I've actually really loved the whole independent reading thing. Before, I had never read a full book by myself. I despised reading. When I saw Matched by Ally Condie on the table and saw what it was about, it interested me. Reading the book was so fun. I love romance. It made me blush and squeal and giggle. It really connected to me. I even cried at the end of the book when Ky was arrested. Then I started reading Delirium by Lauren Oliver and that book was amazing. I loved it from beginning to end. I just never would have thought I would love reading so much. Now I have five new books on my bookshelf I made my mom order for me. I will definitely continue reading. I just love the whole thought of it."—Melanie, grade 11

"I really didn't like books or reading, but once I got in here, and saw all the books, I got really interested. There are all kinds of books for me to choose from. I really like that."—Moe'Nai,

grade 11

"Having a large classroom library has been very helpful to me. First off, there is such a variety of good books to choose from, so really almost every book you choose is good. Another thing is that these books are relatively new, and not older books."—Layth, grade 11

"Yes, I think I have grown as a reader. I read more and more every day. At first I would read only in class; now I read everywhere. I read faster than when I started the trimester. I have expanded my vocabulary and now I think I am more prepared for the ACT."—Malik, grade 11

After almost 20 years of teaching, I finally have the tools that most effectively engage students in reading and writing. The Book Love Foundation's grant has been an instrument of joy for me and the 140 students I see everyday, and its impact is reaching far beyond just my classroom doors. Just the other day a girl I had never met raced breathlessly into my classroom right before the bell and asked if she could borrow "that book my sister was reading a few weeks ago." Once she identified who her sister was, I knew exactly the book she was talking about – Sharon Flake's Who am I Without Him. It was notable because it was the first book that Mariah had read with characters who reminded her of herself and she just couldn't get over how amazing it was that a book could be like that.

I used to have a running joke with a colleague (as we watched our budgets slowly dwindle) that armed with only a phone book, a really skilled English teacher could still do her job. While there is a tiny bit of truth in

that, I have been just stunned at the work I can do with so many books, on so many subjects, in so many genres, and at so many levels. My job is now one of matchmaker, or perhaps more aptly, dealer. For some kids, I need to find the gateway book that will get them coming back for more. For others, I need to help them make the jump from Ellen Hopkins to Sylvia Plath or from Paul Volponi to John Feinstein. My rich classroom library makes this possible, and I can no longer imagine teaching without it.

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