

I'm Matt Gile, Librarian for WSD. Our library is prek-12th grade, so I get to see everyone! This is my 10th year at Winooski, so kids I was reading stories with in 2nd grade are graduating this year. It is a joy to support students curiosity through their whole academic journey, which gives me the kinda special opportunity to see some of the seeds planted in elementary school blossom, I get to support students interests as they grow into passions, and ultimately into decisions about how they want to explore and change the world after they leave our school. Students always get nostalgic in their senior year, come walk around the storytime area, which I made sure stayed the same through our construction, and ask if I remember storytime when they were in elem, which of course I do! But I've realized that I never can predict what they remember, what lesson or story or activity they've carried with them, making clothespin fairies and hiding them in the garden after reading Alice the Fairy, or when had a student read Gerald's lines in Today I will Fly and they could still recite some lines in their Gerald voice, or the time I mispronounced the diphotic and a student corrected me. or boy who spoke no english at the time told me remembered reading Stinky Cheese Man, he told me couldn't understand what I was saying at the time but the way said 'run run run fast you can can't catch me I'm the stinky cheese man" man was so stupid he couldn't help but laugh and thought OK maybe books can be fun. Learning to read is difficult and complex, requiring carefully designed curriculum and specialized support from educators, and real work and persistence from students. And in library can show students that wherever their text decoding skills are at the moment, they can engage with and participate in a story, they can analyse a story and characters, they can sit with a book and be engrossed flipping through pages, and in a book they can explore and learn about themselves and the world. When students are motivated by joy and curiosity to read, that can carry them through moments of learning to read that can difficult and frustrating for some students, and is a the passion they can carry with them for their lives.

We got the Children's Literacy Foundation's Year of the Book grant this year, and it has been beautiful, we had Caldecott winner Jason Chin visit and draw with our students, poet Rajnii Eddins read with students and talked with parents about importance of reading with your kids, we're going to have VT Institute of Nat Science going to come with some birds and a lizard and talk about animals in myths and legend, and soooooo many books for our students. At each event students get 2 books they can take and cherish, and the joy and enthusiasm for reading that flooding our community with books has really been truly wonderful. These are the types of events I used to be able to fund out of my library budget, which has decreased by 50 percent since 2018, almost 60 percent if adjust for inflation. I am doing all can do to maintain a collection that is relevant for preK-12th grade students, that reflects and represents them. We all know why school budgets are rising, and it's not because districts are indulging in unnecessary extravagance, it's rising costs and the fact that our students need more and more support so that they are ready to receive an education because of failures outside of the school building. We have 20 homeless students at Winooski, and if those kids are going to receive an education we have to do everything we can to make sure they're ready to learn in the morning, and that requires significant resources from the district. But the solution to students being unhoused is not for schools to arrange daily transportation from the shelters, and provide necessities and warm clothes, and support through rental applications, which are important and necessary things our district does, but the solution is outside the school building, the solution is to house everyone. If you hold budgets flat while letting the drivers go unaddressed you're slashing vital services for our students. The wealthiest received an enormous boon from Trump, we need to recapture that for our state and use it to invest in our communities.