



Teacher Feature

Monica Benz seems like she's read every book in the school library, so it's surprising to hear Meadowbrook's librarian of 11 years say she "hated reading" as a kid. Mrs. Benz grew up on Chicago's South Side and attended Chicago Public Schools. Her elementary school did not have a library of its own until she was in 4th grade. At that time, the librarian gave her a book and just getting through it was the challenge. "I was so happy I finished it," she said.

Mrs. Benz' parents were immigrants and spoke German at home, so she entered school as an English language learner. She says she was "always in the slow group." By sixth grade, things changed, and she was getting top grades.

Now, Mrs. Benz says, "I'm a big library lover and a huge reader." However, she doesn't read books written for adults and says they are a waste of her time. She only reads children's books so she can relate to her students. She reads every picture book that comes into the library but says she can't possibly keep up with all of the chapter books the students are reading. She never reads a series all the way through to the end. She reads enough to determine if something is worthwhile for her students and then moves on to the next book. Her favorite genre is historical fiction, but she also enjoys fantasy and looks for complex characters who aren't all good or all bad.

Earlier in her career in education, Mrs. Benz was a classroom teacher but became frustrated because she felt like she couldn't possibly teach her students all of the content she wanted them to learn. However, as a librarian, she focuses on teaching them how to learn for themselves, how to find information, and how to vet that information to make sure it's reliable. "It's real thinking," she said.

Fun Facts about Monica Benz

Adopted her first pet ever from a shelter last year.

He's a boxer mutt named Woodrow.

Loves to cook and enjoys making big pots of soup and chilis.

Lives with her husband and two daughters

(high school senior & sophomore) in Arlington Heights.

Curious about a teacher or staff member at Meadowbrook? Send a request for someone you would like to see featured to julieweinberg@me.com.