

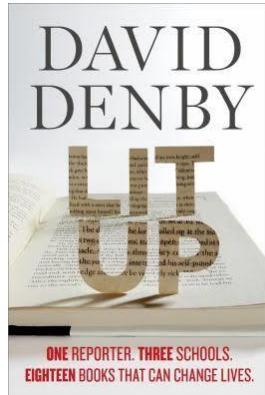


MAMARONECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

1000 W. Boston Post Road, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 • 914 220-3070

News Release

In a sea of bad news about education and the fate of the book, Denby reaffirms the power of great teachers and the importance and inspiration of great books.” - Amazon



MHS Featured Prominently in Bestselling Author David Denby's New Book, *Lit Up*, Exploring How to Get Teens to Love Books

MAMARONECK, NY, January 28, 2016 – Mamaroneck High School is one of three schools that bestselling author David Denby visited when working on his new book, *Lit Up*, due out next week. Denby, a distinguished staff writer and former film critic for the *New Yorker*, even dedicates his book – which explores the factors going into creating teenagers as serious readers – to MHS English Teachers Margaret Groninger and Mary Beth Jordan, whose 9th, 10th, and 11th grade classrooms he sat in on multiple times last year.

“Mr. Denby clearly conveys our philosophy, which is that students will develop a love of reading if they are presented with opportunities to choose the books they can read,” says MHS Principal Elizabeth Clain. “We feel honored that he chose our school to highlight as an example of a school that has great teachers who inspire a love for reading.”

When visiting Ms. Groninger’s classroom, Denby looked at Mamaroneck’s independent reading initiatives and how students move along the reading ‘ladders’. “David Denby’s book captures the most rewarding part of what we do: teachers in their classrooms working with students who are invested and have ownership of their learning. It clearly communicates that *great books* come in many forms and are the starting point of great thinking, writing, and meaningful connections,” Ms. Groninger said.

In Ms. Jordan’s class, Denby observed how independent reading is integrated with the core curriculum and the strategies she used to make classic works of literature, such as *Macbeth*, accessible and meaningful for students. Ms. Jordan said. “I think he really cares about kids and

wants what we all want and that is for our kids to be readers, problem solvers. He reaffirms the value of literature in adolescents' lives."

In addition to sitting in on classes in Mamaroneck, Denby sat in on a 10th grade English class in a demanding New York City public school (the Beacon School) for an entire academic year and made frequent visits to a troubled inner-city public school in New Haven. Denby writes, "At Mamaroneck, the administration and the English Department were trying to create a hunger for books – and then better books – as a value in itself...they also wanted to turn them [students] into vibrant men and women. Mamaroneck's goals were both practical and utopian at once."

"When Mr. Denby first approached the District to involve Mamaroneck High School as part of his book, he came to us with a set of ideas about reading, questioning how and if teenagers with today's technology become serious readers," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert I. Shaps explained. "We were grateful to have the opportunity to say yes, they can develop a love for literature, and here's what we do to instill a passion for life-long reading."

Dr. Shaps points to what he calls "an entire cultural shift" in the techniques the District uses at all levels – elementary, middle and high school -- to get students to love literature. He says the shift began several years ago when the District launched an independent reading initiative at the middle school. "The goal at Hommocks was to get every student to read 25+ books during the course of the school year -- to make sure students were reading frequently and continually increasing their stamina for reading," he said. "To do this, we needed to make sure they were choosing 'just right' books – appealing books at their level, books they could read comfortably without too much difficulty."

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Annie Ward has been instrumental in promulgating well-established research on the importance of high volume, high success reading. "All readers develop by turning page after page in books that they love. It's our job to put the most compelling books into kids' hands every day and to ensure they have access to books at home. Denby's book is a richly-deserved acknowledgement of MHS teachers' efforts to fuel students' reading lives."

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Media Contact:
Debbie Manetta
914.220.3070

