



## Featured Teacher: Jess Porter

*"My students love every step of the process."*

### Cast of Characters

Third-grade students in Pittsburgh, PA.

### Background and Setting

Porter has taught third grade for seven years.

### Memorable Learning

"With thoughtful planning and support, creating a classbook becomes a memorable and impactful project that builds students' confidence as published authors while nurturing their love for storytelling and self-expression."



**"Creating a classbook not only showcased their individual growth but also fostered a deeper appreciation for writing as a whole."**

## A Glimpse Into the Future

For Porter, a third-grade teacher, creating a classbook has become a cherished tradition.

"Four years ago, I created my first classbook, and it has since become a tradition that my incoming students anticipate each year," she said.

The activity encourages her students to write personal narrative stories, imagining their lives 20 years into the future, exploring careers, hobbies and aspirations in detail.

"It's a wonderful exercise that encourages creativity and long-term goal setting," Porter said.

## Empowering Students Through Creativity

Porter's class eagerly dives into every step of the process, from brainstorming and planning to illustrating and publishing their stories.

"Seeing their work published in a professional format boosts their confidence and pride," Porter said.

The activity transforms reluctant writers into enthusiastic authors, fostering a love for storytelling and self-expression. To celebrate the accomplishment, Porter hosts a publishing party. Students walk the red carpet, autograph the classbook and soak up the joy of being published authors.

## Building Confidence and ELA Skills

A classbook has proven invaluable for boosting students' writing confidence and improving their ELA skills.

"Creating a classbook definitely helps build students' confidence in their writing," Porter said.

For example, one student who struggled with writing had a newfound enthusiasm for storytelling while writing their future narrative. The drafting and revising process helped develop stronger storytelling skills, while others, typically shy about sharing ideas, gained confidence when they saw their work in print.



## Overcoming Challenges

Porter shared the inspiring story of a student who had struggled with spelling and lacked confidence in her writing.

"She often felt overwhelmed by writing tasks and would shy away from sharing her ideas in class," said Porter.

However, during the classbook activity, she found her passion for writing. She chose to write about her dream of becoming a veterinarian, detailing her love for animals and vision of owning a clinic. Despite initial challenges with spelling and grammar, the student persisted, learning to use resources and peer feedback effectively.

"Her breakthrough moment came during the illustration phase, where she discovered a talent for visual storytelling," Porter said.

The final published book was a source of great pride for the student and sparked a shift in her attitude toward writing and learning.

## A Memorable and Impactful Celebration

When Porter's students first saw their published classbook, excitement filled the room.

"They eagerly flipped through the professionally bound pages, admiring their narratives and illustrations," Porter recalled.

This moment of validation was a confidence booster for her students, and the publishing party provided a memorable way to celebrate their hard work.

"Students dress up, walk a red carpet and even autograph our class copy of the book," Porter said.

## Tips for Success: Plan, Collaborate and Celebrate

Porter offers helpful advice for teachers looking to start a classbook: "Start by planning early and setting clear timelines for brainstorming, drafting, revising and illustrating."

She encourages fostering a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and receiving feedback.

"Celebrate milestones throughout the project to keep students motivated," Porter said.

## Engaging Families and the Community

Porter also notes that involving families in the activity can further enhance student engagement.

"Consider inviting parents to contribute ideas or attend the publishing party to celebrate their child's achievements," she said.

This collaborative effort not only strengthens the bond between home and school but also empowers students to see themselves as capable authors.



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