



Featured Teacher: Cabrina LaFonte

"I was there as their guide, but I was not the driver of their success, my students were!"

Cast of Characters

Fourth and fifth-grade students in Sterling, VA.

Background and Setting

LaFonte has taught special education for six years.

Memorable Learning

"Creating a classbook not only built their writing skills but also allowed them to take ownership of their writing and creativity."



"Everything we did was a collaborative effort that held students accountable."

Turkey Time

LaFonte found Studenttreasures just in time for a fun Thanksgiving activity with her class.

"The only thing my students knew was that we were going to be brainstorming topics to write about that revolved around Thanksgiving time," LaFonte said. "After we laid out our topics, I had each student write one on a sticky note and turn it in. That is how we chose to write about a turkey (we named Timmy) and how he survived Thanksgiving!"

The Power of Brainstorming and Collaboration

What set this activity apart was the collaborative process from the very beginning. Rather than giving the topic, LaFonte had her class brainstorm and decide.

"Most teachers tell students the topic they are going to write about, we changed the narrative in this scenario," LaFonte said.

LaFonte emphasized the importance of giving students control over their creative process.

"If there is one thing I've learned about encouraging your students to write, it's giving them the power to dictate their version of what happens in the story!"

Her approach not only boosted engagement but also enhanced the students' confidence and excitement about writing.

"I had a student want to stay in during recess to finish writing," LaFonte said.

The class collaborated throughout the publishing process as they brainstormed, wrote and illustrated their story, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

"My students got to collaborate starting with the brainstorming process, to peer editing and to reading our story at the finish line," LaFonte said.

A Tool for All Learners

As a special education teacher, LaFonte is familiar with the different accommodations her students need to succeed. She found that publishing offered different ways to make the writing process accessible to all students.



"Whether I dictated to scribe for a student to get their thoughts and ideas out in a relaxed manner or had students type their rough drafts, this activity allowed for any and all accommodations you see fit to have your students succeed," LaFonte said.

Looking Ahead

When reflecting on the experience, LaFonte shared that many of her students listed writing *Timmy the Turkey* as their favorite activity.

"Not many elementary students list off that a writing assignment was their favorite activity," Lafonte explained. "Not only is it a memory that students can cherish forever, but every story is unique to YOUR class."



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