



## Featured Teacher: Carissa Daugherty

*"My advice to a teacher considering creating a classbook is DO IT! It is well worth it."*

### Cast of Characters

Fourth-grade students in Rio Rancho, NM.

### Background and Setting

Daugherty has been a teacher for over eight years, and she has published seven times!

### Memorable Learning

"The students were cheering nonstop with smiles from ear to ear. They were so excited to see their story in the classbook."



**"This is a writing activity that allows them to express themselves in any way that they want to..."**

## A Journey into Imagination and Creativity

For Daugherty, a classbook has become an annual tradition that her students eagerly anticipate.

"I've created seven books with my students over the past seven years," Daugherty shared. "Each year, they choose to write about various creatures—some fictional, some nonfiction—and they have complete freedom to create these creatures and their habitats in any way they can imagine."

## Unleashing Creativity and Self-Expression

The creature-themed classbook provides a perfect outlet for Daugherty's students to explore their creativity.

"It allows them to express themselves in any way they want," she explained. "They create creatures of their own, with unique traits and abilities, living in habitats that they dream up. It's a great way to let their imaginations run wild and also gives them the space to think critically about the world they create."

The process is open-ended, encouraging each student to explore their own interests, making every story as unique as the student who writes it.

Each year, her students dive into the writing process with enthusiasm as they begin to understand how the stages of writing build upon each other.

"It has really helped my students understand why writing steps are important, from brainstorming to rough drafts, editing, revising and finally publishing," Daugherty said. "A classbook gives them a reason to care about their writing and see the value of working through each step to improve their work."

## Gaining Confidence

One of the most rewarding aspects of a classbook is watching her students grow in confidence.

"One of my students struggled with writing two or three short, unintelligible sentences at the beginning of the project," Daugherty recalled. "But knowing that her work would be published in a book motivated her to push through and write a full three paragraphs."



With Daugherty's guidance, this student worked through her rough drafts, focusing on improving legibility and grammar. By the end, she was incredibly proud of her progress.

"She was thrilled with what she had accomplished, and it gave her a huge boost of confidence," Daugherty shared. "Since then, she's been more willing to write every day, and I've seen a remarkable improvement in her writing abilities."

A classbook also offers a sense of accomplishment that many students can't wait to experience.

"Every year, when the books come back from publication, the students are always beyond excited to see their stories in print," Daugherty explained. "But this year, the excitement was on another level. They were cheering non-stop and had smiles from ear to ear. They couldn't wait to read each other's stories aloud to the class. It was such a joyful and validating experience for them."

## Celebrating With a Publishing Party

Their classbook activity concludes with a publishing party, where Daugherty's students celebrate their big accomplishment.

"We host a red carpet event where each student gets to walk down the carpet, sign the classbook and show off their work to parents and classmates," Daugherty said.

The publishing party not only celebrates the students' creativity but also reinforces the significance of their work.

"The kids feel like real authors," she added. "And it boosts their confidence even more when they see their writing in a professional format."

## Advice for Other Teachers: Start Early and Trust the Process

Daugherty's advice to teachers considering creating a classbook is straightforward: "Do it! The outcome is well worth the effort, and it's such a rewarding experience for both students and teachers."

Having created seven classbooks over the years, Daugherty has refined her approach.

"Each year, I critique and edit based on my students' needs," she said. "But the key takeaway is to trust the process."

For teachers considering this activity, Daugherty offers one piece of encouragement: "Your students will gain more confidence and pride in their writing than you can imagine. And they'll have a tangible book to treasure for years to come."



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