



Featured Teacher: Nicole Collums

"Seeing their ideas come to life through writing and colorful illustrations was magical."

Cast of Characters

First-grade students in Houston, MS.

Background and Setting

Collums has been a teacher for seven years.

Memorable Learning

"Creating a Studenttreasures classbook was one of the most meaningful projects we've done all year."



"The sense of pride they felt holding their finished book in their hands was unforgettable."

Young Authors, Big Dreams

First-grade students in Houston, Mississippi School took part in a classbook that allowed them to imagine their futures. Under the guidance of their teacher the students created the classbook, *When I Grow Up*.

Each student wrote about their dreams for the future, reflecting on the goals they hope to achieve and what they aspire to be.

"It was inspiring to see their thoughtfulness and creativity shine through their writing and illustrations," said Collums. "My students are so proud to be published authors. It's an incredible accomplishment at such a young age, and it's sparked even more excitement about their futures."

Where Futures Begin

The publishing experience was a hit from start to finish in Collums' classroom.

"My students absolutely loved the entire process," she said.

One of the most memorable moments came during the early brainstorming sessions, as students eagerly shared their future aspirations.

"Watching their eyes light up as they shared their big dream with one another was truly heartwarming," said Collums.

During the planning phase, students reflected not just on what they wanted to be, but what it would take to get there.

"It sparked some great class discussions about determination and hard work," she added.

Building Confidence Through Creativity

The impact of a classbook extended beyond creativity; it played a significant role in strengthening students' confidence and core literacy skills.

"Creating our classbook had a powerful impact on my students' growth in writing and ELA," Collums said. "One student who typically hesitated to write more than a sentence ended up composing a full paragraph about becoming an NBA player—and even asked to revise his draft to add more detail."

Another student, known for being shy about sharing her work, found her voice through the activity.



"She proudly read her entire page about being a slime maker to the class and beamed when her classmates applauded," Collums recalled.

The structure of the publishing process helped build foundational skills and allowed for self-expression through writing.

"The process encouraged them to plan, draft, revise and edit their work, all while expressing their ideas in meaningful ways. It helped them see themselves as real authors," said Collums. "That confidence has carried over into our daily writing routines."

Student Success Stories

Publishing created powerful moments of transformation for Collums' students.

"One of my favorite success stories came from a student who had consistently struggled with creative writing and spelling," Collums shared. "At the beginning of the year, he was often unsure of what to write and reluctant to begin. But during the classbook, something clicked."

Inspired by the opportunity to become a published author, the student chose to write about his dream of becoming a police officer.

"He suddenly had a flood of ideas," said Collums. "With support, he organized his thoughts, stretched out words to spell them phonetically and even asked for help revising. His confidence grew with every step of the process, and when he saw his final page in the book, his smile said it all."

Another student, who typically rushed through writing assignments, showed remarkable dedication to the activity.

"She was so excited to be part of a 'real' book. She reread her work several times, added descriptive words and even helped a classmate edit their piece," Collums said. "It was amazing to see how a sense of purpose transformed both her effort and her engagement."

A Magical Moment

Receiving their classbook was a day that Collums and her first-graders won't forget.

"When my students saw the published book for the first time, their faces lit up with pure joy and amazement," Collums shared. "They were in awe that their writing and illustrations had been turned into a real book—it felt like magic to them."

Excitement filled the classroom as students flipped through the pages to find their work.

"There were lots of proud voices saying things like, 'That's my page!' and 'I'm an author now!'" she recalled. "Some even hugged their books and didn't want to put them down."

That sense of pride extended beyond the classroom. Students eagerly shared their books with family and friends, and the recognition of being published authors gave their self-esteem a meaningful boost.

"The experience gave them a strong sense of accomplishment," Collums said. "Now they see themselves as writers with a voice worth sharing."



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Recommendations to Teachers

For the first-grade students at Houston Lower Elementary School, their classbook stands out as a highlight of the school year.

"Creating a classbook was one of the most meaningful projects we've done," Collums said. "It sparked creativity, strengthened essential ELA skills and gave my students a lasting sense of pride."

Beyond academic growth, the experience had a significant emotional impact. Her students, many of whom were new to writing, gained confidence and enthusiasm as they took on the role of published authors. Collums encourages other educators to consider similar projects in their classrooms.

"It's a powerful way to celebrate student voices and make learning unforgettable," she said.



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