



Featured Teacher: Simona Elena Palaghianu

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Cast of Characters

Pre-K students in Washington, D.C.

Background and Setting

Palaghianu has been a teacher for eight years.

Memorable Learning

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Bringing Little Voices to Life

As a Pre-K teacher, Palaghianu has turned her classroom into a hub of creativity by leading her students through the process of publishing their very own classbooks. Since 2023, she and her class have created four classbooks on themes such as "What Is Kindness?," "Who We Are," "My Favorite Memory at School" and a special collection of stories reflecting on her class' growth throughout the year.

"It[']s an incredible way to build confidence, encourage early writing and create lasting memories for both my students and their families," said Palaghianu. "Watching their faces light up when they held their published books for the first time was truly one of the highlights of our school year!"

Pre-Writing Memories

Her Pre-K classroom is a lively blend of curiosity and creativity, where even the quietest voice finds a stage. Palaghianu shared a moment from creating this year's classbook, "What is Kindness?"

"One of my favorite moments was our brainstorming sessions," she said. "Every [student] eagerly shared their ideas and personal experiences. It was amazing to watch them collaborate, listen to one another and build confidence as they realized their thoughts and stories mattered."

From early sketches to excited chatter, each student played an important role in shaping their classbook.

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A Memorable Turning Point

For some students, creating a classbook was transformative. Palaghianu shared an experience with one student who was initially hesitant to participate, but grew in confidence as they watched their classmates share and illustrate their stories.

"By the end of the [class activity], they eagerly volunteered ideas during brainstorming and proudly read their page to their family," she said.

Another student who struggled to express complete thoughts began using descriptive language and writing in full sentences.

"Holding a professionally published book with their own writing and artwork helped them see themselves as real authors," said Palaghianu. "That sense of accomplishment motivated them to write more often during our classroom literacy centers and encouraged them to take risks with their reading and writing."



An Unforgettable Moment

While the writing process was exciting, the publishing day was pure magic. Watching her class fill with pride and pure joy created an unforgettable moment for Palaghianu.

"My students were beyond excited when they saw their published books! They couldn't wait to find their pages, share them with their classmates and take the books home to their families," she said. "Seeing their own writing and illustrations in a real book made them feel like true authors, and the pride and excitement on their faces was unforgettable."

Advice to Teachers

Palaghianu's message to other teachers is simple: "Go for it!"

"The process is simple, engaging and incredibly rewarding for both teachers and students," said Palaghianu. "Give your students plenty of opportunities to share their ideas and make the book their own."

She added with a smile, "Next time, I'd love to create even more classbooks, because my students enjoyed the experience so much!"



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