



Featured Teacher: Lisa Harrington

"Creating a classbook gave them a sense of importance and belonging as 'real authors,' making the experience a true win-win."

Cast of Characters

Kindergarten students in New Castle, PA

Background and Setting

Harrington has been a teacher for 20 years.

Memorable Learning

"Seeing that level of engagement and pride from students who don't always enjoy writing was incredibly rewarding."



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Monsters, Buddies and Big Ideas

Creating authentic learning experiences has always been important to Harrington. After 20 years in the classroom, she knows the magic happens when students feel proud of what they create. This year's classbook was anything but ordinary. Harrington decided to bring her kindergartners together with a fourth-grade class for a unique collaboration titled "Monster Friends: A How-To Guide."

Harrington shared how the two classes collaborated. "Each pair designed a friendly monster and worked together to write about how to care for it," she said. "Kindergartners shared their creative ideas and illustrations, while fourth graders helped shape those ideas into organized, 'how-to' writing. This collaboration allowed students to learn from one another while growing as writers, leaders and teammates."

By the end, the classroom buzzed with energy—not just from creative writing, but from teamwork.

"This [class activity] gave writing a powerful and authentic purpose, which made it exciting and meaningful for students," said Harrington.

"They were highly engaged from the very beginning, especially during the brainstorming phase when they got to imagine and describe their own unique monsters. Planning and creating the book with their fourth-grade buddies made the experience even more special and collaborative."

Building Confidence Through Collaboration

As pages came together, so did her students. Harrington saw growth in many areas beyond writing skills.

"Creating a classbook had a powerful impact on both student confidence and ELA skill development," she said. "I saw our fourth graders naturally step into leadership roles as they worked alongside my kindergarten students, which boosted their confidence as writers and communicators. They took great pride in guiding their younger buddies, helping them organize ideas and turn them into complete, readable pieces."

Her kindergartners also radiated with pride. "It gave them a sense of importance and



belonging as 'real authors,' making the experience a true win-win for both groups," Harrington said.

The publishing process even changed how the students thought about writing.

"This [class activity] also allowed students who may struggle with spelling or handwriting to focus more on the creative aspects of writing," said Harrington. "They began to understand that writing is a process—ideas come first, and editing and polishing can happen later. That shift in mindset was really meaningful."

Through shared laughter, brainstorming and writing side-by-side, the classroom became a space where everyone felt like an author.

Stories That Stay With You

Some moments stick for a lifetime. For Harrington, publishing classbooks creates those moments in abundance.

"One of the most memorable examples was a pair of energetic and typically reluctant writers we partnered together," she said. "Instead of struggling, they thrived. They fed off each other's enthusiasm and ended up creating one of the most imaginative and entertaining pages in the entire book. Seeing that level of engagement and pride from students who don't always enjoy writing was incredibly rewarding."

Harrington also shared a story from one of her kindergarteners who utilized his push-in support from Harrington's school's Special Education program and his fourth-grade partner to overcome writing barriers and spark creativity.

"He absolutely loved talking about monsters with his partner and was able to shine through his creative ideas. With the support and encouragement of his buddy, he became more engaged and confident, contributing ideas that helped shape their page in a meaningful way," said Harrington. "It was wonderful to see him so excited to participate and to feel successful as a writer."

A Celebration to Remember

When the classbook finally arrived, Harrington shared her class' pure reaction.

"When my students returned from specials, they were greeted by their published books displayed on a table. The moment they saw them, the room filled with excitement," she said. "They gasped, cheered and couldn't wait to get their hands on their books!"

"They immediately began flipping through the pages, eagerly reading their work and sharing it with anyone who would listen. It was so special to watch them revisit their writing with such pride and enthusiasm," said Harrington.

At the end of the day, she shared that many of her students walked out of school carefully holding their classbooks, ready to show everyone their hard work.

"The sense of joy and pride was truly unforgettable," said Harrington.

Lessons for the Future

For Harrington, the celebration doesn't stop at the Publishing Party. It lives on in the advice she gives to other teachers looking to give publishing a classbook a try.



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"My biggest advice is to truly enjoy the process and embrace the journey," said Harrington. "It goes quickly, and it's such a special experience for both you and your students. Also, don't be afraid to use replacement paper! Sometimes starting fresh is part of the process, and that's okay."

A few other tips she shared are using story maps to keep the book pages organized and in page order, and to let students take ownership of their work.

"A little 'imperfection' adds authenticity and charm, it's what makes the book theirs," said Harrington.



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