



Pen to Paper with Alexander: The Writing Process for No Good, Very Bad Days

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by LaKendra Butler

Writing has always been one of the most expressive forms of communication for me, an avenue to convey my feelings, emotions, or ideas. In times where orally expressing myself has failed me, words down on paper has always been my saving grace as it is the most comfortable for me. Because writing is such an important life skill, it is crucial to teach children at an early age the basics to build a strong foundation that will be beneficial to them all of their lives.

It is my greatest hope that as an educator I can help my students develop a love for writing at an early age, so that one day they may grow up to be the screenwriters, editors, authors, or songwriters of their generation. I have the honor of serving the community and children at Elizabeth D. Redd Elementary in Richmond, Virginia. Redd is an inner-city, Title I school with grades K-5. We have approximately 500 students, and the majority of them come from low-income households. Our students are predominately African-American and Hispanic. Many are new to the country from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and speak English as a second language.

My unit, “Pen to Paper with Alexander: The Writing Process for No Good, Very Bad Days”, will bring one of my favorite picture books as a child, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, into the writing process for my students. The unit will be based upon the book by Judith Viorst, which tells the story of Alexander who from the time he wakes up with gum in his hair, has a day full of unfortunate events that makes him want to move away to Australia. I would love for my third graders to hear Alexander’s story and use it to gather their thoughts and write about a bad day of their own.

I selected the book *Alexander* because I remember how much I loved it as a kid. It is a funny story and I feel it will keep the students engaged as they will be able to relate to Alexander and his very emotional day. In addition to using *Alexander* as our main text for lessons on the writing process, we will have several mini-lessons using various mentor texts to introduce students to concepts such as synonyms, grammar, adjectives, author’s purpose, voice, and dialogue etc. We will also use 3rd grade nonfiction reading passages. These will all allow us to focus on and highlight key points in identifying the author’s craft. This will give students the confidence and background knowledge they need to create a personal narrative about a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 3; recommended for Language Arts, grades 2-3)

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