



## Featured Teacher: Norma Buenafe

*"When the books arrive, it's all worth it!"*

### What's My Story?

Buenafe has 25 years of teaching experience, from overseas to California, from kindergarten through eighth grade, at both private and public schools. She has been at her current school for six years and currently teaches fourth grade. She has published four books with her students.

### The Power of Prose

For Buenafe, allowing students to choose a book topic, research, and capture their thoughts or dreams becomes a very powerful way for students to share messages peer to peer and with others outside the classroom.

One of her favorite examples is a book one class published, "Why Do I Eat My Vegetables?" Buenafe was able to incorporate numerous lessons related to this topic, and it turned into one of the most fun books she's had a class create.



# A book publishing project teaches students to persevere and persuade.

## Lesson Without Limits

For "Why Do I Eat My Vegetables?" the students researched and wrote about 32 different vegetables, including ones most had never heard of or tasted – from artichokes and jicama to nopales cactus, okra, turnips and more!

This topic provided plenty of valuable lessons she could incorporate: One parent provided samples. Buenafe included a lesson on nutrition, cooking, and vitamins.

She took the lesson even further, teaching the students their ability to persuade through writing and, in this case, getting others to eat more veggies.

"This book especially allowed me to teach a variety of lessons throughout the process," Buenafe said.

To further their cause, the students dedicated their book to their moms "for encouraging kids to eat vegetables!"

## Lessons in Fact, Opinion, and Persuasion

Through the book planning process, Buenafe's students learned they had the power to reach others with their writing and to share facts as well as opinions. They learned that a book provided an opportunity to educate more people.

"When I saw the parents of these students, many told me 'Since your project, my son is eating more vegetables!'"

They also learned that the completed book became proof or "fact" itself of something for which they could be proud, shared Buenafe. For example, she said, "If I say, 'I'm a published author,' I now have proof!"

## Inspired Teaching and Creative Learning

Buenafe believes that a book publishing project is a wonderful way teachers can approach a lesson in a challenging and, at the same time, fun way. Because kids are very visual, the entire process, including lessons along the way, becomes extremely memorable.

“Doing a book publishing project is hands-on and can incorporate different aspects of learning. It also teaches my students to go through a persistent process and enjoy an end product that they can keep for life.”

Depending on the topic, Buenafe also knows that students can be positively influenced through the book writing process.

“The more we introduce them to new things through the research or planning process, the more open they become to new things,” she reflected.

## The Best Ending Ever

“Being published is a big accomplishment for my fourth-grade students, which gives them more confidence in their writing. They are encouraged to do more writing activities, which includes learning how to focus on a theme,” she said.

In addition, “The authors don’t get tired of looking at their books over and over; and because it’s hardbound, they will last, with hopes to someday show their own children.”

## Tips for Success

Buenafe believes that letting the students choose the topic helps to engage them and see them through the process.

She also incorporates an art contest to decide who will design the cover and includes the winning student or students’ names, which is recognition the kids enjoy.

To help get parents excited, she shows samples of past books during parent/teacher conferences, tries to include pictures of the students as part of the books, and involves parents if possible – like the parent who shared vegetable samples!

“The kids also are excited to publish when they have seen the books from years before and because it looks professional, like a real book.”

## Leading by Example

In 2011, Buenafe wrote her own book about eating healthy foods, “You Don’t Have to Like It!”

