



Rob Sanders [He/Him/His] is an award-winning author of funny and fierce fiction and nonfiction picture books. He is known as one of the pioneers of LGBTQIA+ nonfiction picture books. His books have been published with some of the best-known publishing houses in the US and he is a sought-after speaker, teacher, mentor, and critiquer. Rob is co-regional advisor for SCBWI Florida. He is represented by Rubin Pfeffer. Visit Rob's website at www.robsanderwrites.com.

Rob is accepting applications for: Picture book biographies and/or LGBTQIA+ themed picture books (fiction and nonfiction).

Rob is accepting applications from: unagented/unpublished creators only

1. What's one non-publishing-related career that you wish you could have?

An opera singer or Broadway performer. (Yes, I know, that's two!)

2. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?

- a. *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox and Julie Vivas
- b. *Mr. George Baker* by Amy Hest and Jon J. Muth
- c. *I Wish You More* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld
- d. *Before She Was Harriet* by Lesa Cline Ransome and James E. Ransome
- e. *Otis and Will Discover the Deep: The Record-Setting Dive of the Bathysphere* by Barb Rosenstock and Katherine Roy

3. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?

I love breaking barriers with my books—writing about something no one else has written about, exploring a subject that hasn't been explored in picture books, and helping children discover through my books heroes that might have otherwise been unknown to them. That's what I seek to do with my nonfiction picture books and that's what I'm most proud of in my body of work.

4. What about mentoring excites you most?

I am excited by discovering someone who is working on an untold or under-told story and by helping them get that story ready for publication.

5. What are your strengths as a mentor?

My mentoring strength is the approach I use that combines inspiration, teaching, questioning, and discovery.

6. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I provide detailed feedback that includes what is working for me, what is not working for me yet, and notes on plot/structure; character development; word choice, sentence structure, and language; voice; marketability; and more. I also provide extensive margin notes and next step suggestions.

7. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?

I look for mentees who read and know about picture books and who have been working on their writing craft. In addition, I like working with people who are inquisitive, flexible, and who want to grow a writing career.

8. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?

I provide detailed feedback, look at manuscripts at various stages, suggest mentor texts, and help writers make discoveries on their own. We will look at a manuscript more than once and we will look at a variety of manuscripts.

9. What is your style of communication like?

I believe in give and take. I communicate primarily via email. I am open to also having a phone chat or Zoom session if we both agree it would be beneficial at some point in the process.

10. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?

Honestly, I will begin with the manuscript, not the application. I look for manuscripts that move me, stories to which I feel a connection, and pieces that I think kids need to read. I am a no-frills kind of guy, so the basics in an application will mean more to me than a lot of verbiage.

11. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?

I'm hoping writers know the basics (and beyond) from the conferences they've attended, the books and blogs they've read, the other critiques they've received, and the previous writing they've done. This whole business is subjective, so each of us will have a different opinion of someone's writing. The ultimate and best advice is to put yourself on the page and submit your best work.

12. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?

Keep your chin up and your fingers on the keyboard!