What does this make you think about?

Instead of thinking about the right or wrong questions to ask learners, perhaps we should think about conferring as a conversation. Lucy Calkins tells about working with a group of teachers one day. She read aloud a story written by a child: My grandfather was sick. He went to the hospital. He died. He went to God. Then, she asked the participants how they would confer with that student. Some of the questions they suggested asking were: What would you add to your story? What did the hospital look like? Finally one teacher raised a hand from the back of the room and said, I am probably wrong, but I think I would just hug the child and say I am sorry about your grandfather.

-Isabel Sawyer, Center for the Collaborative Classroom Blog
**What is my purpose?**

- Build respectful relationships
- Support transference of new skills and strategies
- Helps students be accountable for deep reading
- Sharing and encouraging thinking
- Getting to know students as readers and thinkers
- Support learning new concepts and strategies
- Encourage oral expression and communication
- Encourage evaluation of reasoning
- Extend and deepen thinking (thoughtful literacy)
- Support differentiation according to student need
- Assess students’ understanding of new learning
- Provide coaching at a critical point of need
- Provide guidance for next steps to help students grow as readers
- Model productive conversation

**How do I begin?**

- Create a Schedule
  - Post the schedule if you need accountability.
  - Confer with as many kids as you can, as often as you can, within your given schedule.
  - 3-2-1 method

[Image of a schedule]

[Image of a photo credit]
Prepare Students

- Model or show a video of a conference to teach students what to expect.

Questions to guide the observation:
- What did the student say/do?
- What did the teacher say/do?
- What did the student learn?

Choose a System for Documentation

- Handwritten options
  - Grid notes
  - Individual student chart

- Digital options
  - Google docs/sheets/forms
  - Evernote

Prepare Students

- Create an anchor chart with students.

What happens in a reading conference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discusses your book strategy/thoughts</td>
<td>Asks about your book strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads aloud</td>
<td>Teaches you something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices a new strategy</td>
<td>Listens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is prepared with sticky notes/reading journal</td>
<td>Takes notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks questions</td>
<td>Suggests books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grid Notes
Individual Student Chart

Google Sheets

[Table]

Begin!

- Grab a timer and have a conference!
Conferences

- Start the conversation by asking an open-ended question.
- Choose an area of focus
  - Book selection
  - Engagement: motivation
  - Why did you choose this book?
  - Reading identity
  - What kinds of books do you like to read?
  - Comprehension
  - What strategies are you using to help you as you read?
  - Fluency
  - Can you read this part to me?

Conferring Video

Conferences

- Listen to student to determine next steps.
- Possible next steps:
  - Offer explicit praise*
  - Model or demonstrate
  - Provide specific feedback
  - Coach

- Give students the opportunity to practice in front of you.
  - Leave them with a plan

Your Turn
Conferring: Three Easy Steps!

1. Get started: Ask an open-ended question

2. Teach: Start with a compliment then determine one teaching point that will move the student forward in reading

3. Plan: Talk with the student about how he/she can continue to practice

Now What?

Keep Going

- Give yourself a pat on the back - you did something that helped you learn about your students as readers, and it meant a lot to them!
- Reflect on your notes (data) - look for strengths and instructional needs. Think about how to address needs.
- Stick with it - use your notes to prepare for your next conferences. (Conferences build on each other, like a conversation.)

What if?

- I don't know what to say/teach.
  - Review conference records
  - Review learning targets/standards/unit goals
  - Focus on reading habits
  - Understand text levels and complexity
What if?

My conferences are taking too long.

- Stick to one teaching point
- Limit teacher talk
- Use a timer

What if?

I want to learn more about conferring.

twowritingteachers.org
cdailycafe.com
Kari Yates’ Blog
Coaching Conference Video
Research-Decide-Teach Conference Video
CAFE Recording sheet

Tips for Success

- Teach the reader, not the book.
- Listen.
- Don’t give up!

Get the conversation started!

Questions/Contact Us

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