



Secondary Literacy Instruction: Conferring

What is conferring?

Conferring involves teachers initiating conversations that provide powerful opportunities to help students become better readers and writers. Even though the conference is between the teacher and student(s), the teacher is also a reader talking to readers, and a writer talking to writers. The expectation is that what students learn will be used independently in their future reading and writing.

Why do conferring?

- Through conferring the student(s) and teacher can notice and name the learning as they expand their understandings of themselves as readers/writers.
- As teacher and student(s) confer, student(s) are able to reflect on their thinking and monitor their reading and writing growth.
- Conferring provides an opportunity to differentiate needed strategies and techniques that more experienced writers/readers use.
- Conferring provides an opportunity for teachers to re-teach and gather formative data to help guide instruction.

See also Recommendations for Effective Conferencing with ELL's

What does conferring look like?

A conference has a predictable pattern that includes researching, determining a teaching point, teaching and extending, recording the learning (both teacher and student), and reflecting.

Reading Conferences:

- The teacher confers with individual students or small groups of students while others are engaged in independent practice.
- A student comes to the conference with reader's notebook and mentor text for additional support around student's demonstrated needs (e.g., noticing text forms and features, distinguishing between fiction and nonfiction, identifying how different genres work, and how all these characteristics of text support meaning making).
- Reading conferences are primarily for the purpose of providing opportunities to re-teach the skills necessary to interact with mentor text.
- The teacher collects monitoring notes from these conferences to support and inform next instruction.
- The teacher sets expectations for students to apply their new learning during independent reading and response.

Writing Conferences:

In writing conferences, the teacher is teaching the *writer* not the writing.

- Teacher confers with individual students or small groups of students while others are engaged in independent practice. See Pattern of a Writing Conference from Carl Anderson's *how's it going?* (attached)
- Students come to the conference with their mentor text and writer's notebooks. These tools help support students' questions and thinking about their writing during the conference, as well as inform the direction of instruction. It is important to remember that the teaching point and feedback should advance the *writer*, not just the writing.
- The teacher collects monitoring notes from these conferences to support and inform next instruction.
- The teacher sets expectations for students to apply their new learning during choice or genre writing.

How do teachers support student thinking during conferring?

Reading:

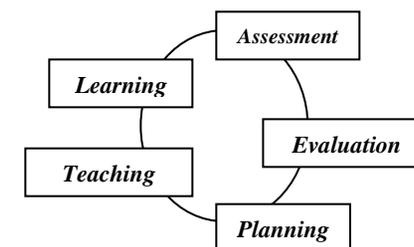
- What is the genre or type of this book? How do you know?
- Why did you choose this book?
- Tell me about what you just read.
- What have the challenges been in reading this book so far?
- What predictions are you making? Why?
- What was the author's purpose for writing this piece?
- Are there any words underlined, in bold, or in italics? Why do you think they are like that and how does it affect your reading? (nonfiction)

Writing:

- What have you read that looks like what you are trying to write?
- How does your mentor text help you understand this genre?
- What are you trying to do with your form (e.g., lead, structure, ending)?
- How do you want your voice to develop in this piece?
- What new things are you trying on? How is it working for you?
- What effect do you want your piece to have on your reader?
- What are you noticing about your craft (e.g., voice, tone, punctuation)?
- What problems did you come across today?

How do teachers determine an instructional focus?

- As teacher and student(s) confer, observe what they know to do as readers and writers.
- Based on what they know to do, determine what you can teach into.



Picking Up the PACE!