



Conferring: The Keystone of Reader's Workshop

Patrick A. Allen

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In his workshops with teachers over the years, Patrick Allen has encountered a long list of “counterfeit beliefs” about the process of conferring with students, including such comments as: “I don’t have time. I don’t know what questions to ask. It’s too hard, I don’t know what to write in my notes, I don’t even take notes, I don’t know how to go deep. . . .” In *Conferring: The Keystone of Reader’s Workshop*, Allen argues that the benefits of conferring are well-worth the effort of learning to do it well. And then he sets out to show teachers how to overcome all of their perceived obstacles, and make the somewhat intangible aspect of conferring tangible.

Just as the keystone—a symmetrical, wedge-shaped stone at the center of an arch—forms the foundation of a structure, conferring lays the groundwork for effective reading instruction. Allen defines the word confer as a verb “meaning to consult together, compare opinions, or carry on a conversation.” Conferences with students are purposeful conversations that scaffold reading comprehension strategies that guide the reader’s progress, and ultimately, through the gradual release of responsibility, create independent readers.

Allen begins by explaining what conferring is and what it’s not, and then unpacks the essential components of the process: intimacy (the social context of conferring); rigor (the cognitive context); and inquiry (the analytical context). He explores the guiding principles of conferring—including goal setting, instruction points, listening, rapport, challenges, and teacher learning—and provides questions that lead teachers through the reader’s conference from start to finish.

Conferring: The Keystone of Reader's Workshop Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2009 by Stenhouse Publishers (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9781571107688

Author : Patrick A. Allen

Format : Paperback 232 pages

Genre : Teaching, Education, Nonfiction



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Dawn Little says

I've had this book on my TBR pile for a while. I had the opportunity to hear Patrick speak at the All Write Conference last week and thought I should have a little background. This book affirmed some of my thinking about reader's workshop and the importance of conferring, but also challenged me to think about how to make conferring work in my school with my students. A conversational read, Allen is pleasantly passionate about this keystone to reader's workshop.

Deborah says

Lots of good thoughts on how to use conferring in your classroom and how it should look. It is a key to students learning how to read. I like that Allen doesn't make it sound super easy. He tells us that it is a skill that takes time to learn and refine. Really enjoyed this book!

Cristina says

Love this book still was just re-reading before starting workshop conferences second semester.

Joanne says

A must read for any teacher of reading.

Andrea says

This book gave me a lot to think about when conferring with students during reading workshop. I got lots of good notes and ideas from it.

Tony Keefer says

Excellent and thought provoking book. Affirmed many of the things I believed about the power of conferring with readers, but also challenged me to look at conferring differently. Allen's writing is marvelous. Must read for any teacher who works with readers.

Sheryl Coats says

Wow! Awesome book! While I have been doing a reader's workshop for nearly 5 years along with conferring, this book really challenged me to take my conferring deeper. It's a easy read and it is full of wisdom, powerful quoters and real world application.

Mark Isero says

This book was only OK. My favorite chapter, "The RIP Model," gave me great ideas about the three most important parts of any reading conference. I also appreciated that the author suggests that each conference can last between three and five minutes. This is something that I can do. Unfortunately, most of the book seemed less focused in purpose.

Kristen says

So thoughtfully and passionately written. I love his RIP model for structuring a conference and his scripted conferences to get a feel for how to encourage kids to become more strategic in their reading without doing all the talking. I know I'm light-years away from conferencing like Mr. Allen but he has given some great building-blocks for getting to his level at some point.

James Craig says

Excellent little book about workshopping.

Lisa says

Lots of ideas and things that affirmed my beliefs about teaching reading. Found a few things to try. Used some words I've never seen before.... I suppose this shouldn't be a complaint in a professional book for teachers... but I've seen A LOT of words, so perhaps the author might have been able to find a word that didn't make me have to stop reading to figure out what it meant. Nevertheless, definitely recommended for teachers.

Laura says

After attending a conference where Patrick Allen was a speaker, I picked up a copy of *Conferring: The Keystone of Reader's Workshop*. His focus on conferring with students during reader's workshop served as a reminder of the power of really listening to student thinking and giving students the time and attention

necessary to truly think deeply. In an era of one minute fluency probs, documenting and encouraging deep thinking to guide instruction needs to be at the forefront of teaching reading.

Tanya Windham says

Excellent resource! Allen shares his experiences as he improves his ability to do one-on-one "conferences" (conferring) daily with his students. The first part of the book spends time developing the purpose or philosophy for conferring. Allen then begins giving examples and strategies. This is one of several books written by members of the Public Education and Business Coalition. These strategies help students to become better readers, writers, and thinkers. This book is not just for reading teachers. I can see these strategies being used across the curriculum!

Mindi says

This book gave me lots to think about as I plan my reading/writing workshop for next year. Definitely worth the money.

Donalyn says

A good exploration of conferring for teachers who are not sure how to begin. We read this as a department book study.
