

AT A GLANCE

Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

AGENDA

Engage, Reflect, Assess

Discuss Professional Reading: “Teach Students How to Select ‘Just-Right’ Books” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 93–95), “Choosing Just-Right Books” (*Conversations* excerpt, pp. 50–52), and “What Do We Mean by an Independent Reading Program?” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 85–90), all downloadable from www.regieroutman.com



View Video (25 min.)

Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

- Naming and Practicing What Good Readers Do: Kristy (Grade 4)
- Evolving Views of a Classroom Teacher: Ginny Vale (Grade 4)
- Handing over Responsibility to Students: A Follow-Up Conference with Juan (Grade 5)

Achieve a Deeper Understanding

Try It/Apply It in the Classroom

Professional Reading for Next Session:
“Conduct Informal Reading Conferences”
(*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 101–108)



PLANNING

Before the Session

- Become familiar with the procedures for an informal reading conference. Review the resources in this session. Have ready whatever forms or record keeping you may be using or recommending for assessment. Participants may want to adapt the form.
- Review the *Try It/Apply It* activity from the last session. Connect what participants learned about choosing just-right books in Session 5 to conducting an effective reading conference.
- Read the Notes on the Deeper Understanding charts, preview the video, and take notes on the session Notecatcher.
- Be ready to discuss the professional readings for this session: “Teach Students How to Select ‘Just-Right’ Books” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 93–95), “Choosing Just-Right Books” (*Conversations* excerpt, pp. 50–52), and “What Do We Mean by an Independent Reading Program?” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 85–90).

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RESOURCES

In this Session

- Optimal Learning Model in a Daily Literacy Block (see Session 2)
- An Informal Reading Conference: A Tool for Comprehensive Assessment (not available on website) 7; PDN 6–5

Continues on next page

PDN numbers refer to pages in the *Professional Development Notebook*.

PLANNING

continued from page 1

After the Session

- Collect and review participants' session evaluations.
- Review, reflect on, and revise your plans for the next session based on these evaluations.
- Send a reminder about the professional reading, the *Try It/ Apply It* activity, and the date, time, and place of the next meeting.
- Read "Conduct Informal Reading Conferences" (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 101–108). Think about a question based on this excerpt that would jumpstart participants' exchange of ideas about it.
- Perhaps encourage participants to observe each other's conferring and give feedback.

RESOURCES**In this Session, cont.**

- A Framework for an Informal Reading Conference 9; PDN 6–8
- Informal Reading Conference form(s)
 - Blank form 10; PDN 6–8
 - Kristy 11; PDN 6–9
 - Juan 12; PDN 6–10
- Identifying Readers' Strengths: A Checklist of Possibilities 13; PDN 6–11
- Child-Friendly Reading Goals 15; PDN 6–12
- Questions to Probe for Student Understanding 16; PDN 6–14

**On the Website**

- Additional Blank Conference Forms: Informal Reading Conferences
- Attitude/Interest Surveys: Blank Forms
- Keeping Track of Conferences: Ginny Vale's Plan
- Management Practices During Independent Reading

SESSION 6

AGENDA

The time segments listed in the agenda are geared for a 90–120-minute session.

1. Engage, Reflect, Assess (10–15 min.)

- Have participants share with one another how the *Try It/Apply It* activity went.
 - *What went well? What did they notice? What changes/modifications will they make as a result of their new learning?*

2. Discuss Professional Reading (10–15 min.)

- Invite participants to discuss “Teach Students How to Select ‘Just-Right’ Books” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 93–95), “Choosing Just-Right Books” (*Conversations* excerpt, pp. 50–52), and “What Do We Mean by an Independent Reading Program?” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 85–90).

3. Set Goals (3 min.)

Share what participants may expect from the session:

- Learn how to regularly monitor each student’s independent reading through informal reading conferences.
- Demonstrate how to conduct an informal reading conference with a student.
- Understand how reading conferences can be used to focus on students’ strengths, teach what’s necessary, and set new goals with and for students.
- Learn to use informal reading conferences to place more responsibility on students to self-monitor their reading and set important goals.
- Consider the ways informal reading conferences help them shift their stance so that they stay current with each child’s reading likes and dislikes, strengths, and needs for instruction.

4. Introduce the Video (2 min.)

- Say something like the following in your introduction:
This session’s video will impress upon us how beneficial it is to confer briefly with one or two students each day. Notice the way the conferences develop a rapport between teacher and student. The student basks in the special attention and feels valued as a reader. Notice the way these informal reading conferences allow us to carefully monitor every student’s self-selected reading—so that any fake readers we have will be discovered and get the support they need. Also pay attention to the procedures, the tone of the conference, who’s in charge, and what is learned by the teacher and student.

5. View Video and Take Notes (30 min.)

- Watch the 15-minute conference with Kristy. Do a brief turn-and-talk by asking participants to share with a partner all they noticed about the conference. Then, if you wish, chart their ideas, which generates a list of insights and information quickly. Now view the interview with teacher Ginny Vale (4-minute segment). Afterward, ask: "What did you notice?" Repeat the turn-and-talk activity. Do the same process with the third segment, the conference with Juan.

6. Respond to the Video (10–15 min.)

- If you prefer, have participants watch all three segments straight through and then use the following Discussion Questions to prompt a group discussion:
 - What did you notice about the interaction between the teacher and student? What was the role of the teacher? What was the role of the student?
 - How did Regie Routman use the reading conference to focus on a student's strengths? How did she use the conference to pinpoint an area of need and teach it on the spot? How did she set new goals with and for the student?

7. Achieve a Deeper Understanding (15–20 min.)

- Give participants a few minutes to read and review the Deeper Understanding charts. This will help them recall particulars of how Regie Routman conferred with students; namely, the questions and follow-up questions she asked to gain insight. It might be useful to have small groups select either the Kristy or Juan conference, review the completed form from the conference, and describe it as a sequence of teaching moves. Groups can then share with the whole group their understanding of the basic structure of these conferences. What you are after here is to swiftly pool understandings of all the possibilities for these informal reading conferences so that teachers approach the *Try It/Apply It* activity with maximum information and confidence.

8. Try It/Apply It in the Classroom (10–15 min.)

- Invite participants to try an informal reading conference first with a high-achieving student, and then with a typically performing student. (Starting with a high-achieving student will build confidence.) Let participants know that in this session they learn and try out the procedures for an informal reading conference. In Session 7, they learn how to confer with readers who struggle and get additional practice in conducting an informal reading conference.
- Direct participants to the resources in this session and on the website for procedures and information on conducting informal reading conferences. Advise participants that they may want to have some of these resources by their side until they become familiar with the procedures, language, questioning, and goal setting in an informal reading conference.

Note to Facilitators:
In this session, Discussion Questions are included here instead of on their own page.



- The following are some conference guidelines to share with participants now for their informal reading conferences:
 - Begin by affirming the student. Ask questions that have the child articulate what he/she has done well.
 - Name what they see as strengths and record these.
 - Note their teaching focus.
 - Select one or two reading goals with the student.
 - Have the student state reading strengths and goals.
 - Set a time and date for the next reading conference.
 - It is very important to remember this while conferring: after they ask a question, *give the student time to collect his thoughts*—it's tempting for the teacher to fill in the silence with an additional comment or the answer but it undermines the process. It's through talk that students discover what they think and what they know about reading.
- Remind participants to be ready to share their findings with their small group during the next session.

9. Wrap-Up (5–10 min.)

- Celebrate and highlight learning.
- Ask participants for feedback on the session.
- Post the date, time, and place of the next session.
- Ask participants to read for the next session: “Conduct Informal Reading Conferences” (*Reading Essentials* excerpt, pp. 101–108).
- Encourage vertical, grade-level, and/or partner teams to meet weekly before the next whole-group sessions to revisit the video on the website, the Deeper Understanding charts, and/or plan together and try out new learning. They can use the Response Notes page to record ideas and questions to bring back to the next session.
- Remind participants to bring any forms, lessons, writing, or student work samples from the *Try It/Apply It* activity to the next session.



AN INFORMAL READING CONFERENCE

A Tool for Comprehensive Assessment

An informal reading conference, sitting side-by-side with a student, reveals the most effective, complete, and accurate assessment of a child's reading. It comprises, in effect, assessment *of* reading, assessment *for* reading, and assessment *as* reading. Here, we are not just assessing for reading the words but reading for deep understanding.

To gain information of the child as a reader, as part of the informal reading conference, you can efficiently include and modify several effective reading assessments, such as:



- Reading interview and attitude/interest survey (see website for forms)
- Running records of oral reading (Marie Clay, Heinemann) or modified running record. (Photocopy one page from the book. Have the student read the page aloud. Mark and analyze the miscues.)
- Anecdotal records
- Observations of reading behaviors
- Reading record/log
- Personal response
- Think aloud (Have the child say everything he's thinking.)

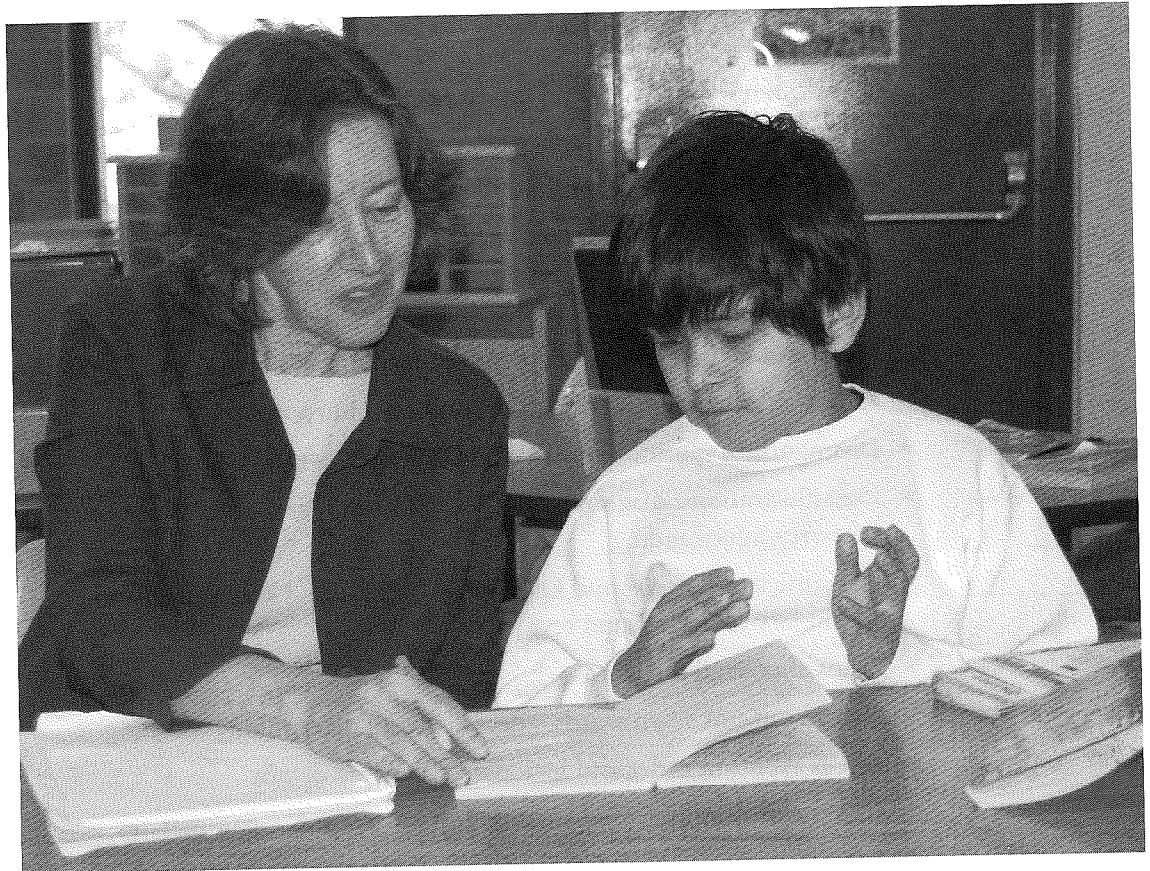
In 15–20 minutes, in an informal reading conference, you can find out if the student:

- Chooses books at his just-right reading level
- Keeps a reading record/log that indicates preferences of texts and authors, balance of genres, variety and depth of reading, and quantity of reading
- Reads for enjoyment, information, and own purposes
- Distinguishes specific features of and between genres
- Uses illustrations, diagrams, labels, text features, and other resources to support understanding
- Has sufficient letter/sound knowledge, background knowledge, and vocabulary to understand text
- Reads almost all the words
- Figures out unknown words—decoding and determining meaning
- Retells events in order and includes supporting details
- Tells the most important happenings in own words—summarizes
- Infers meaning from text

- Interprets and analyzes text and author's point of view
- Connects personal experiences to the text
- Notices author's craft and literary language
- Reads fluently and reads at the appropriate speed for the type of text
- Understands character motivation and behavior
- Predicts while reading and confirms, or not, those predictions
- States facts learned
- Self-monitors and self-corrects, as needed, for meaning
- Interactively applies reading strategies to make sense of text
- Sets reasonable and important "next-steps" goals
- Works to achieve agreed upon goals

Important Note:

Assessing on a text the student is familiar with (the student has completed the book or is in the process of reading it) optimizes comprehension as the student, most likely, has some background and understanding of the text.





A FRAMEWORK FOR AN INFORMAL READING CONFERENCE

- **Bring me a book that you can read pretty well.** (Is the child able to select books she can read and understand?)
- **Why did you choose this book?** (Does the child take recommendations from peers? Is this a favorite author or series? Is she overrelying on designated book levels?)
- **What is the reading level of this book for you?** (Does the child know that understanding requires reading easy and just-right books? Is she overrelying on being able to read all the words?)
- **Tell me what the book is about so far.** (Can the child give an adequate retelling that shows she understands the gist and main ideas of the text? If not, check oral reading to be sure she can read the text. If oral reading is a problem, help her select an easier text. If not, probe to find out why she cannot say what the book is about.)
- **Read this part of the book for me.** (Have a younger student and developing reader read orally. However, once the child is a “reader,” have her read silently, since most of the reading we do in the world is silent. Ask her to read two or three pages while you read along silently. Note the time she starts and finishes in order to approximate her reading rate per page. Jot down difficult vocabulary words so you can check to be sure she is figuring them out. Observe her as she reads silently. Does she subvocalize, reread, use illustrations and visuals, get the humor, or seem to skip over hard vocabulary?)
- **Tell me what you remember about what you just read.** (If the child is reading fiction, does she understand character motivation and behavior? If she is reading nonfiction, is she also using charts, photos, and graphs to get information? Check whether difficult vocabulary is understood. Is the student going beyond literal events in her retelling?)
- **Let's discuss your strengths and what you need to work on.** (Always note first what the child has done successfully so she will continue to do it and be affirmed for her efforts.)
 - **STRENGTHS:** (Focus on what the child does well—selecting a just-right book, retelling appropriately, figuring out vocabulary, inferring meaning, rereading when necessary.)
 - **GOALS:** (State, and have student restate, one or two goals that have resulted from the conference. See Child-Friendly Reading Goals, pp. 14–15, for some important goals to set.)
- **How long do you think it will take you to complete this book?** (Has the student thought about it and set a realistic goal? For example, if there are eighty pages left to read and she allots one hour a day for reading, thirty minutes at home and thirty minutes in school, at a rate of about one page a minute, she should easily be done with the book in two days or less.)



INFORMAL READING CONFERENCE

NAME _____ DATE _____

- *Bring me a book that you can read pretty well.*

TITLE OF BOOK _____ GENRE _____

- *Why did you choose this book?*
- *What is the reading level of this book for you? _____ hard _____ easy _____ just right*
- *Tell me what the book is about so far.*

- *Read this part of the book for me. (Take notes as the child reads silently or orally.)*

- *Tell me what you remember about what you just read.*

- *Let's discuss your strengths and what you need to work on.*

Strengths:

Goals:

- *How long do you think it will take to complete this book?*



Informal Reading Conference: Kristy

NAME Kristy M. DATE 10-21

Bring me a book that you can read pretty well.

grade 4

TITLE OF BOOK Secrets of Brom GENRE fantasy
by Tony Abbott

Why did you choose this book? read other books in series

What is the reading level of this book for you? hard easy just right ✓

Tell me what the book is about so far. Know most of words, just a few words I don't know

up to p. 16 . needed some Ter frump to know mostly what story is about
to main idea of what's going on
silently

Read this part of the book for me. (Take notes as the child reads silently or orally.)

11:10 who is Khen? what did inched princess do?

2 1/2 min. p. 16 scrambled
Cuddling

2 pp p. 17 sheathed

Tell me what you remember about what you just read.

told main summary of what had happened. Know
main characters & their principal actions.

Let's discuss your strengths and what you need to work on.

* Strengths: understand what you read
choosing J.R. book - choosing book you like
choosing series

Goals:

1. if you don't know a word, try to figure it
out by what you already know

2. do more reading

How long do you think it will take to complete this book?

2 days - (exactly right, 100 pages left,
reading 1 page per minute)

eat

huddled



Informal Reading Conference: Juan

NAME: Juan C.

DATE: 11-14
11-15 follow up grade 5

Bring me a book that you can read pretty well.

TITLE OF BOOK: Carnival at Candlelight GENRE: fiction
realistic fiction, fantasy

Why did you choose this book?

have read about 5 in series, Ricardo told me about it.

needed T prompting to identify "title" (first said magic tree house)

What is the reading level of this book for you? ___ Easy ___ Just Right Hard

p.18 "good words, not too hard words, chapters are not too long, lot of magic in it, I like magic."
with T prompting, had overall meaning of how series works & story so far; able to define "gondola" from story

Read this part of the book for me. (Take notes as the child reads aloud or silently.)

1:56
4 min Carnival - needed to reread to define
got overall meaning, needed T prompting to state the most important events in story
Tell me what you remember about what you just read.

Let's discuss your strengths and what you need to work on.

- STRENGTHS: 1. choosing a book that you like & understand & that is "just right"
2. figuring out what words mean ("gondola", "century")

- GOALS: 1. learning more words - through rereading, "book tells you"
* 2. checking to be sure you understand what's going on in the story - "concentrate more on the book"
* 3. do more reading

How long do you think it will take you to complete this book? 80 min.

2 days (with T help) - originally said "next week"

11-15-05 "I studied the book"



IDENTIFYING READERS' STRENGTHS: A CHECKLIST OF POSSIBILITIES

- ___ Chooses a book he/she likes to read.
- ___ Selects a just-right book (*you can read it; you understand it; you can figure out most of the words you don't know; you can tell everything about the story; and you're enjoying it*).
- ___ Keeps a reading record.
- ___ Reads a series (*you know how the series works*).
- ___ Reads at a good pace and adjusts pace when necessary.
- ___ Self-corrects and monitors for meaning.
- ___ Rereads for meaning.
- ___ Retells the story in order.
- ___ Recalls important details.
- ___ Uses surrounding text to figure out unknown vocabulary.
- ___ Determines and states most important happenings (summarizes).
- ___ Connects the text with own life experiences and knowledge.
- ___ Thinks about what's going on in the text: predicts, infers, and so on.
- ___ Applies strategies that have been previously demonstrated and practiced in order to make sense of text.

Note: Use this list as a starting point to help you identify and name a student's strengths when you are conducting an informal reading conference.



CHILD-FRIENDLY READING GOALS

- **Reread when meaning is unclear, when something doesn't make sense.** (Good readers monitor their reading to make sure they understand the text.)
- **Think about what you are reading and what's happening.** (Good readers use helpful strategies to understand text; they predict, check—and sometimes change—their predictions, question themselves, question the author, and summarize as they are reading.)
- **Make sure you can decode and understand the words in the books you select.** (Good readers know that if they can't easily decode almost all the words, they won't understand what they are reading. Good readers recognize most words automatically, which allows them to focus on meaning.)
- **Think about why characters act and behave the way they do.** (Good readers understand that fiction, historical fiction, and biographies are largely about people—what motivates them, how they relate and change, how they attempt to solve problems.)
- **Make connections to your life and what you already know to help you understand the story.** (Good readers rely on prior knowledge and experiences to help interpret text. Good readers know they need sufficient background knowledge before reading nonfiction and some fiction.)
- **Read in your mind. Don't move your lips.** (Good readers read a lot and read quickly; they don't have time to subvocalize.)
- **Make a picture in your mind to help you understand.** (Good readers form mental and visual images in order to understand more as they read and remember more afterward.)
- **Try reading in another genre.** (Good readers balance their reading diets and know and understand how biography, poetry, nonfiction, and other genres work. This in turn increases their general knowledge and vocabulary.)
- **Read more, at least thirty minutes a day at home, plus thirty minutes in school.** (Good readers read a lot, and in doing so increase their vocabulary, fluency, and prior knowledge.)
- **When you don't know what a word means, use surrounding words—or read the next sentence or two—to help you figure it out.** (Good readers have strong vocabularies and know how to determine concepts and word meanings from context.)



QUESTIONS TO PROBE FOR STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

With Fiction

- *What's the problem in the story so far?*
- *What's the main character like? How does this character change?*
- *Tell me about the setting, where the story is taking place.*
- *What's your favorite part so far?*
- *What's happening in the story right now?*
- *What do you think will happen next?*

With Nonfiction

- *What's the most interesting thing you've learned so far?*
- *What's your favorite part?*
- *What else are you hoping to learn?*
- *How is this book organized?*
- *What are some important facts you have learned?*
- *What questions do you still have?*

If a student seems not to be understanding, have him read a short passage aloud to see whether this will help to figure out the problem:

- *Is the book too difficult—words, concepts, vocabulary?*
- *Does he lack sufficient letter/sound knowledge?*
- *Does he lack sufficient background knowledge?*
- *Does he lack fluency?*
- *Does he fail to reread when something doesn't make sense?*
- *Is he aware that the text is not making sense to him?*
- *Does he know how to select a just-right book?*
- *Is he reading so slowly that he is not attending to meaning?*
- *Does he know how to use special features of text—illustrations, author notes, captions, timelines, glossary, headings, and so on?*

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

The teaching and assessing points reflect the total lesson but not all of these points are on the edited videos you are watching. However, the major points are represented on the edited videos.



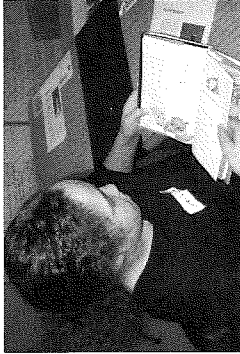
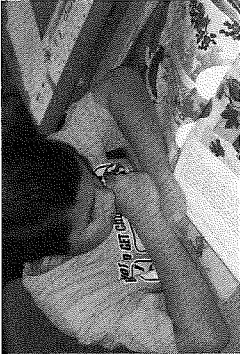
The globe icon indicates that the example is also available when you visit www.regieroutman.com.

Video SCENES

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points	Ongoing Assessment	Questions/Reflections	Learning Outcomes
<p>The What, Why, and How of Teaching</p> <p>CLASSROOM SETTING The first two scenes take place in Ginny Vale's fourth-grade classroom of 22 students in Bellevue, WA, where 10 of the students are on free and reduced-priced lunch and 9 are English language learners. Ginny has been teaching for 3 years. She and I worked together in a residency the previous year, and she began to shift her beliefs and practices, especially in handing over more responsibility to students and in more closely monitoring students' reading comprehension.</p> <p>Ginny follows the district's balanced literacy program, which consists of a three-block model: reading, writing, and word study. Reading is taught and practiced using real books in a variety of genres.</p> <p>The last scene takes place in mid-November in a fifth-sixth-grade classroom of 25 students. The classroom teacher, SeAnn Sivly, has been teaching for 7 years, with most of those years in a fifth-sixth-grade classroom. These students typify the make-up of this large urban K-6 school where 87 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and 80 percent of the students speak a language other than English at home. (There are 29 different languages spoken.)</p> <p>Reading is being taught using trade books, most of which are leveled, for reading aloud, shared reading, and guided reading. Accelerated Reader is a computer-based, reading incentive program "being used primarily for motivation." (See website for the effects of Accelerated Reader on comprehension.) Many students are moving through levels but</p>	<p>Informing Our Instruction</p> <p>Informal Reading Conferences are a powerful ongoing assessment tool that monitor and support all students' independent reading. By conducting one or two reading conferences per day, we have an updated conference on every child about every two weeks. There are several reading behaviors that we assess during a reading conference: student engagement, self-assessment and goal setting, metacognitive awareness, reading fluency, and comprehension through oral retelling/summary on self-selected texts. I use what I learn about students during reading conferences to determine individual and whole-class needs for teaching, and to create flexible groups for guided reading based on student needs. Reading conferences are an indispensable assessment that monitor and document student growth over time. When you carefully assess students' understanding of texts, you can do a better job teaching them.</p>	<p>For Professional Conversations</p>  <p>Regie and SeAnn Sivly celebrating a student's strengths in an informal reading conference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and where do independent reading and reading conferences fit within a literacy block? • Why is daily, independent reading crucial for students' reading achievement? Where does it fit in the Optimal Learning Model? 	<p>What Students Know and Are Able to Do</p> <p>NOTE: These are typical standards for most states. Feel free to add the learning outcomes that apply to your district and state.</p>



DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points The What, Why, and How of Teaching	Ongoing Assessment Informing Our Instruction	Questions/Reflections For Professional Conversations	Learning Outcomes What Students Know and Are Able to Do
<p>are not demonstrating comprehension beyond the literal level. According to Greta Salmi, principal, even when students were reading on their own "there was no structure in place to hold kids accountable. Implementing reading conferences pushed us to a whole new level."</p> <p>The purpose of the weeklong residency in both classrooms is for students to become better readers, that is, they read and self-monitor for meaning when they read on their own. To that end, our goals for the week are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure students know how to self-select just-right books (see Sessions 4 and 5) • provide sustained time and an inviting environment for daily, independent reading practice • enjoy reading and see the importance for it • demonstrate and guide students (through shared read-aloud and small-group guided practice) to interactively apply strategies to comprehend the main idea and vocabulary as they read (see Session 9) • use informal reading conferences to assess students' understanding of texts they are reading • note students' reading strengths • set realistic and important reading goals <p>Our ultimate goal for these students, and for all students, is for them to comprehend more deeply when they read on their own, that is, they understand character motivation, themes, and genres; they can self-monitor and problem solve; and apply appropriate strategies when meaning breaks down. (See website for Glossary for definition of strategies and skills.)</p>	<p>For maximizing students' success when students read on their own, self-assess for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have a library in place or a source where children can self-select interesting texts? • Have you established expectations and procedures for independent reading? • Do students follow those procedures and self-manage their behaviors? (Can you confer with students, uninterrupted?) • Do students know how to select just-right books? • Have you been demonstrating, through read-aloud, shared reading, shared read-aloud, and/or guided reading, how effective readers apply strategies, problem solve, and self-monitor reading behaviors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your classroom environment set up so that independent reading practice time is peaceful, easily managed, and self-directed by students? If not, what procedures do you need to demonstrate, and what do you need to change?   <p>While you are conducting informal reading conferences, students are reading independently.</p>	


DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

Video SCENES




Naming and Practicing What Good Readers Do: Kristy (Grade 4)

(15:15 min.)

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points The What, Why, and How of Teaching	Ongoing Assessment Informing Our Instruction	Questions/Reflections For Professional Conversations	Learning Outcomes What Students Know and Are Able to Do
<p>NOTES</p> <p>In this scene, we observe Kristy, a fourth grader whose teacher notes her enormous progress as a third grader and says that Kristy is "really close to being on grade level" (according to results of fall testing). At the beginning of third grade, her teacher noted she "was not much of a reader. She really didn't understand what she was reading. She wasn't even sure how stories worked." This conference confirms Kristy's great progress and her solid understanding of what she reads.</p>	<p>Kristy is the only girl of four children in a hard-working family that values education. Spanish is spoken in the home, and Kristy did not learn to speak English or have access to books until she came to school. While she learned to decode words, her lack of literary and academic vocabulary impeded her comprehension. Kristy was most successful understanding texts that were based on popular culture, that is, familiar television shows and video games. She didn't understand how stories work and hadn't heard a lot of them. Much of the focus to help her become a better reader was on vocabulary. Her teachers would write unknown words on sticky notes and discuss them with her, put vocabulary words she learned on a binder clip, draw a picture of some words, and use images from the Internet to show, for example, what a prairie was. By the end of sixth grade, based on test scores and teacher reporting, Kristy was reading and working at grade level.</p>	<p>Check that students understand and explain genre (as well as what makes a book a just-right book):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What's the genre of this (book)? (no response) You know what we mean by genre?" Kristy: "Yes." • "What makes it a just-right book for you?" Kristy: "I know most of the words and there's just a few words I don't know." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to literature written in a variety of genres.
<p>TEACHING POINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm why reading books in a series is a positive reading behavior. "That is really smart because...you get to know how the series works, like what the setting is, who the main characters are—that generally stays the same and that helps your understanding." • Confirm what the student knows. (about a just-right book) "So you know most of the words...and mostly what the story is about...and there's only a few hard words." • Use on the spot silent reading of a self-selected text in process to check for understanding. (Teacher notes time to determine reading rate and looks on and reads same pages.) "Read these two pages. And then after you're done I'm going to ask you to tell me about what you just read." • Give student honest feedback (in a positive manner). "Excellent understanding." • Guide student to figure out unknown words. "What do you think this word means here? Can you read that word? What do you know about the EA sound? Like if I gave you this word (writes eat), "What would that be?" Kristy: "Eat." "So this would be?" Kristy: "Sheath." 	<p>Ask questions that can cue an appropriate response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Is this a fiction book? Fantasy? Nonfiction?" Kristy: "It's like a fantasy." <p>Probe that the student can explain her responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What makes you say that?" • "What do you mean by that?" • "And when you say... what are you talking about?" <p>Assess that the student can state the main idea, setting, and main characters (of what she's already read and what she silently reads during the conference).</p>	 <p>• What do you notice about Kristy as a reader? Her strengths? Weaknesses? Reading attitudes? Confidence?</p> <p>• How can you use what you observe from this conference (and Juan's) to more effectively assess and teach your own students?</p>	






DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points The What, Why, and How of Teaching	Ongoing Assessment Informing Our Instruction	Questions/Reflections For Professional Conversations	Learning Outcomes What Students Know and Are Able to Do
<p>What do you think that means? What you want to do is not skip over the words but really think about them as you're reading."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain/confirm meaning of vocabulary word (to cement meaning). "Could be happy inside (responds to Kristy's response to meaning of huddled), huddled inside. They were kind of like all close together inside." • Name everything the student has done well as a reader. "Let's talk about all the good things you've done as a reader... some wonderful things. You understand what you read. That is everything. You're using a lot of strategies when you're reading. You're thinking about what's going on in the story.... You're choosing a just-right book and you are choosing books that you like. You're choosing a series... going to help you with figuring out words because you understand pretty easily what's going on in the story so you can put your energy into figuring out some words." • Use student's reading rate from the reading done in the conference to help figure out how long it should take to complete a book. (Kristy read 2 pages in 2 minutes.) "You are reading about a page a minute and you've got 100 pages left. What do you think?" (Student correctly estimates two days.) • Establish next steps/goals for and with the student. "If you don't know a word, try to figure it out by what makes sense... look at the text around it." • Confirm and affirm student's goal setting. "Exactly" (shakes her hand at Kristy's accurate assessment) "You need to do more reading... that's going to pick up your speed, what we call fluency." • State what's necessary to meet goal(s). "And that's going to mean possibly spending more than a half-hour a night reading. It will be worth it because at the end of the year you'll be exactly where you need to be as a reader..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Okay, there's a lot happening on these two pages, so in your own words, what's the main thing that's happening here?" • "What's the problem?" <p>Assess that the student knows the meaning of and/or can figure out essential vocabulary (checking meaning of scrambled, huddled, cuddling):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What does that mean?" • "If you put in another word, what word could you put in there?" • "What do you think that means? What would make sense?" <p>Check that the student can establish a realistic time frame for completing the book:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How long do you think it's going to take you to finish this book?" (If the student can't tell you, help to set that goal.) <p>See if the student can set appropriate reading goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What is something you think you need to work on as a reader, just based on our conversation?" <p>Kristy: "We worked on some words— see if I know what it means."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Read a little bit more books." 	 <p>Regie's conference with Kristy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important to note the student's approximate silent reading rate? How can you use that information to help move a student forward as a reader? • Why is it essential to help many of our students set goals to increase the amount of reading they do? • Think about how you end your contact time or conference time with a child. Do you end on a positive note so the student is motivated to continue learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vocabulary (word meaning) strategies to comprehend text. • Use prior knowledge, the text, context clues, and graphic features of text to predict, clarify, and/or expand word meaning and concepts. • Read aloud grade-level informational/expository text and literary/narrative text accurately using appropriate pacing, phrasing, and expression. • Adjust reading rate to match the difficulty, type of text, and purpose for reading.

Video SCENES

Naming and Practicing What Good Readers Do: Kristy (Grade 4) continued

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points	Ongoing Assessment	Questions/Reflections	Learning Outcomes
The What, Why, and How of Teaching	Informing Our Instruction	For Professional Conversations	What Students Know and Are Able to Do
<p>Video SCENES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirm major strengths in understanding (so student maintains this focus). <i>"These two pages were not easy... We (the teacher and I) had to go back and reread. (Kristy read the pages just once.) I'm impressed. Good for you."</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply comprehension monitoring strategies during and after reading: Summarize grade-level informational/expository text and literary/narrative text.
<p> Evolving Views of a Classroom Teacher: Ginny Vale (Grade 4) (3:56 min.)</p>	<p>NOTES Fourth-grade teacher Ginny Vale and I worked together in a precious residency. (See Session 4.) Here she discusses how she has shifted her beliefs and practices and is now effectively using reading conferences to check more carefully for understanding (and not assume students understand what they read, even when they look engaged).</p> <p>TEACHING POINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to effectively confer with students one-on-one and recognize that it takes time and practice. • Keep track of reading conferences (see Ginny's binder and forms). • Use your assessment to drive instruction. 	<p>See Ginny's management plan on the website.</p>  <p>Self-assess how and what each of your students is reading. How do you know they understand what they read?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you do to ensure students are focusing on meaning when they read on their own? • How are you using and adapting your reading program to ensure students have sufficient, daily independent reading practice? 	<p>Regie and Ginny Vale.</p>  <p>Set reading goals and create a plan to meet those goals.</p>
<p> Handing over Responsibility to Students: A Follow-Up Conference with Juan (Grade 5) (5:58 min.)</p>	<p>NOTES This scene takes place during daily independent reading practice time. As students are reading self-selected texts, the teacher is monitoring reading comprehension through one-on-one, informal reading conferences on a book the student is reading or has just completed. (Assessing on a text the student is familiar with optimizes comprehension as the student, most likely, has some background and understanding of the text.)</p> <p>Here I am following up on a previous conference with Juan, specifically to check if he has followed through on the goals we agreed on. (See his Informal Reading Conference Form, p. 12 and his student profile. Note that this is the form, exactly as I wrote it during the actual conference.)</p>	<p>Self-assess your management set-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students know how to select books they can read and understand? • Do they follow agreed upon procedures so you are free to conduct a reading conference? • Are they clear on the expectations? • Do they know how to seek help (without your assistance)? • Do they use this time productively? How do you know? 	<p>Juan is a fifth grader who reads at least two years below grade level. His teacher SeAnn Sivilly says, "He's an enjoyable kid, but he's not motivated when it comes to school. He wants to play all the time." He has low expectations for himself as a reader as demonstrated by how little reading on his own he seems satisfied to do. Until this reading conference, he has not been held accountable for his reading. His classroom teacher reports that after the informal reading conference he showed much greater interest in reading and that in sixth grade he finally "latched on to reading."</p> 


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<p>TEACHING POINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review readers' strengths. "...choosing a just-right book." • Restate agreed upon goals student has not yet mentioned. "...checking to be sure you understand what's going on ... doing more reading." • Affirm student's accomplishments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading more: "At first you said it would take you a week to finish this book and we agreed you could finish it in two days and you did." • Increase in confidence: "Your voice is much stronger... you even look different... You seem more confident in yourself." • Have student say how he was able to be successful (fosters self-awareness and encourages self-reflection). "What did you do differently when you were reading this?... What made it easier for you to concentrate this time? Was it because ...?" Juan: "I want to be a better reader." • Connect reading enjoyment with comprehending text. "Kids are always amazed that if they understand what they're reading, they actually like what they're reading." • Restate most important goal. "You have to do a lot more reading." • Ensure student commits to a greater quantity of reading. "You could actually read three books like this in a week and... that needs to be your goal." • State reading expectation of "having a book ready to go" (when you're near the end of a book during independent reading). "We noticed that when I was having a conference with somebody... a whole twenty minutes went by and you didn't do any reading." Juan: "I didn't have another book." 	<p>Check that the student knows the purpose of follow-up conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What were some of the goals you said you were going to work on?" Juan: "Learn more words." <p>Push the student to explain thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How do you figure out what words mean?" Juan: "...don't go around it. Look for words and you can find out the meaning." <p>Check for understanding on multiple levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So what happens?... What is the problem?... How did they solve it?" <p>Ask questions that probe beyond the literal level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "And do they do that? How do they do it? Why...? What do they have to do when...? How does the story end? What do you mean when you say...?" <p>Assess if student can determine how long it should take to complete a book (in the series):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So if you're reading an hour a day, how many days would it take you to finish a book (in this series)?" Juan: "Ten hours." Then (with probing), "Two days." "Good for you." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you begin to use daily reading conferences to ensure that all your students are reading for meaning and not just reading the words and/or moving through levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress toward implementing the plan, making adjustments and corrections. • Discuss common reading selections and experiences with others.

Video SCENES

Handing over Responsibility to Students: A Follow-Up Conference with Juan (Grade 5) *continued*

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: Checking Students' Understandings Through Informal Reading Conferences

Setting, Notes, and Explicit Teaching Points The What, Why, and How of Teaching	Ongoing Assessment Informing Our Instruction	Questions/Reflections For Professional Conversations	Learning Outcomes What Students Know and Are Able to Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect being a better reader with extensive reading. "You can't waste twenty minutes... you've got to be prepared with another book." • Raise expectations for and with the student (in this case, completing more books). 	<p>Check that the student can transfer how long it will take to complete one book to completing many books:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So how many of these should you finish a week?" Juan: "Two." • "Wait a minute. Six days, so two days, one book; four days, two books; six days, how many books?" Juan: "Three." <p>Assess wide range of reading by asking students to keep track of their own reading. In a notebook/reading log or binder ask students to write down the title of the book, author, genre, date finished or dropped, and to rate the book they have read. See samples of several reading records that you might want to use to assess your students' wide range of reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it essential to focus on the quantity of reading students do? How can we put that responsibility on our students and have them assume that responsibility? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate reading process and apply strategies for setting grade-level appropriate reading goals.
	<p>Reggie talks to Juan about his reading.</p>		

Video SCENES

Handing over Responsibility to Students: A Follow-Up Conference with Juan (Grade 5)
continued