

Getting Rid of Interruptions During Conferences

adapted from Growing Readers by Kathy Collins

Connection

Every day when you are all reading, you'll notice that I move around to talk to kids about their reading. I take notes on this clipboard I have with me. I am busy learning about you guys so I can help you get better as readers. That's why, when I'm working with a reader during a reading conference, it's important that we don't get interrupted. Today, I want to teach you about the jobs we have in conferences so that you can really understand why it's so important not to interrupt them and what to do if you have a problem.

Teach

Let me show you what I mean. *I ask a volunteer to sit at a table and pretend to read. I sit down next to the reader as the class watches. Watch closely what I'm doing and what Sophia is doing. I whisper this loudly to the rest of the class, and Sophia and I dramatize a reading conference. After a minute or so, I ask the students what they noticed. Turn and tell your neighbor what you noticed. I listen in as the students talk. They usually say things like, "She was sitting right near Sophia," or "She was writing stuff down," or "She was watching Sophia read," or "Sophia was reading and then she had to talk to the teacher."*

You guys are absolutely right. I sat near Sophia, watched her closely, wrote stuff down, and talked to Sophia about her reading. My job is to teach Sophia something that will help her become a stronger reader. Sophia also had a challenging job because she was doing reading work and then talking to me about it. This is called a reading conference, and it's important for teachers and kids to have this time together. But I need all of your help. When I'm conferring with someone, it's important that the rest of you don't interrupt. That means not coming up to me when I'm working with someone. It's a very important rule in class – no interrupting during reading conferences because we all have challenging jobs to do in conferences.

Active Engagement

Right now, I want you to turn to your neighbor and talk about some problems that might come up and why you would need to talk to me during a conference. Then try to figure out a solution to the problem. Right now, turn to your neighbor and list the things out on your fingers. I hope you get to four fingers, at least.

As they turn and talk, I listen in and then report back the things they said. I make a chart that has the problems that might come up with the student solutions. Post this in the class so students can refer to it during conferencing time.

Examples:

Problem: *I need to go to the bathroom*

Solution: *Decide on a class "sign language movement" that they can flash at you. Then you can nod yes.*

Problem *I'm stuck on a hard part.:*

Solution: *Work more on the hard part. Ask a friend quietly for help.*

Problem: Someone keeps bothering me.

Solution: Politely tell them to stop because it's reading time. If it continues, wait until the conference is finished and then tell me.

Link

Today during reading time, and every day, I am going to have a few conferences, and you guys are going to try really hard not to interrupt me and the student I am conferring with because you know how to solve your own problems by referring to the chart and also understand the important work we're doing in a conference.

Follow Up

I send the readers off to read, and of course, I am interrupted during conferences even after doing that lesson. I try to be very consistent in my responses to the interruptions. When my students interrupt me after this lesson, I know that in tomorrow's mini lesson, I'll talk about the interruptions, and we'll figure out other ways to help ourselves besides approaching the teacher during a reading conference. Don't forget to add them to your chart.

These mini lessons help students understand and meet the class expectations for noise, movement, and work habits. I call these types of lessons management lessons, and my goal is to have fewer and fewer of these as the days go by. The less time I need to spend in management lessons, the more time I can spend on teaching mini lessons.