

Study Guide

to *know* and *nurture* a reader



Conferring
with
Confidence
and Joy

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Summary

Conferring with students about reading allows for clearer access to one-on-one, in-the-moment teaching and learning, yet it can sometimes feel intimidating or overwhelming. Kari Yates and Christina Nosek want to help. Here they have provided practical, reflective, student-centered teaching moves that you can use to develop an intentional, joy-filled conferring practice.

To Know and Nurture a Reader is a get-going guide to conferring. The book includes step-by-step guidance that is also considerate of time and other classroom challenges. It includes:

- lots of tools such as guiding questions, reproducible planning and note-taking documents
- classroom vignettes that pull you close to a reader and teacher in a conference setting
- video clips of classroom conferences to show what conferring looks like in action

The book breaks conferring into manageable chunks with specific goals for knowing and nurturing young readers, then puts all the pieces together with classroom scenarios and examples. The tools, examples, and ideas in this book make conferring something every teacher can begin immediately and continue to master with effort and practice.

Authors, Kari and Christina would love to pull up alongside you, and support you as you read this book. They want you to feel empowered to make this book study your own. In each chapter they offer possible moves you might make or directions you might decide to pursue. This guide provides suggestions to help groups of educators read, write, discuss, and extend the ideas from *To Know and Nurture a Reader*; into classrooms. These ideas will come to life as teachers are given opportunities to put them into practice with their own students. The format of this guide is set up so that it could be used with a group of teachers or as a reflective structure for those reading the book alone.

With that in mind, we have developed discussion questions, pulled provocative quotes, video clips, and professional development ideas from each chapter that will enable participants to reflect on the text as well as the writing lives of their students. We encourage readers to try on these practices in their own classrooms. The suggestions offered in the guide are designed to foster collaboration and spark new thinking.

Introduction

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What do you consider the greatest joys and benefits of conferring with students?
- What are your current challenges or struggles with conferring?
- What do you hope to achieve by exploring this book?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read or review *Making the Commitment to Nurture a Joyful Conferring Practice* (pages 3-4).
- Which of the three commitments do you think will be most challenging for you?
- Why? Who might you ask for support?

Toolbox – The Decision Making Map (15 Minutes)

- Read The Decision Making Map on the bottom of page 4 and top of 5. The Decision Making Map (shown inside the front cover) is a tool that shows the lay of the land within a conference, reminding you where you are so that you can decide which direction to proceed and which moves to make along the way. Take a few minutes to explore and reflect on the map. What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“At its simplest, conferring is the act of pulling up alongside a reader to engage in a one-to-one learning conversation. At its best, conferring is the daily choice we make to give our wholehearted and undivided attention to one reader at a time, intentionally noticing, celebrating, and moving their reading life forward.” –page 2

“There is not one right or wrong way to do this work. So loosen up, have some fun, and when in doubt trust your instincts to follow your students.” –page 6

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What's worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you've read?

Part 1 Interactive Moves: The How of Conferring

Each of the chapters in Part 1 takes an up-close look at one of the versatile teacher moves for conferring. The moves are the ways you interact with readers, leveraging language to build strong relationships and impact learning. The four interactive moves include: Wonder, Affirm, Extend, and Remind.

Chapter 1

Wonder: Bringing Curiosity and an Open Mind to Every Conference

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What actions might you take to maintain a sense of trust, respect, and partnership in the conference?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read or review *Asking Exploratory Questions* on pages 17-21. Be sure to take time to read through Figure 1.5, Four Square Conferring Questions.
- As you consider each of the four quadrants of the Four Square Conferring Questions tool, which feels most comfortable or familiar to you in your conferring? Which areas might be important to spend more time exploring with readers?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Exploring the Wonder Move in Action (20 Minutes)

- Watch the *Wonder* move in action in the classroom. View the video clip, *Wonder Move with Nora*.
- Use the Know and Nurture T-Chart (Appendix I) to hold your thinking.
 - The Know question: What's going on?
 - The Nurture question: How might I respond?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Wonder is a commitment to watch, to ask, to listen, and to notice. Wonder is the move that helps us answer the driving question at the very top of The Decision Making Map (Figure 5.1), the Know question: What’s going on?” –page 12

“Whether you’ve known a student for six minutes or six months, the goal of every conference is the same: you’re there to harness your curiosity in the service of better informed teaching decisions.” –page 16

“Deciding on an intentional focus encompasses both the heart and the art of conferring. What you choose to prioritize as your next moves is not an exact science.” –page 23

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What's worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you've read?

Chapter 2

Affirm: Celebrating Effort, Strategy, and Emerging Work

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read or review *Making It Happen* on 29-31. These pages break down the *Affirm* move of a conference into three parts.
- Be sure to take time to closely read Figure 2.4, Example Affirmation Language Across the Four Directions for Conferring.
- As you consider the three-step process what do you wonder or notice?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Exploring the Affirm Move in Action (20 Minutes)

- Watch the *Affirm* move in action in the classroom. View the video clip, *Affirm Move with Shahee*.
- Use the Know and Nurture T-Chart (Appendix I) to hold your thinking.
 - The Know question: What's going on?
 - The Nurture question: How might I respond?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

This fierce determination to notice what's right, right now, before we set about with other teaching, helps our students move from, "Oh, no, here comes the teacher" to "Oh, yes! It's my turn to learn more about myself as a reader". –page 28

"An affirmation is much more than simply telling a reader what it is we like about their reading. It is an intentional learning message—helping the reader understand what they are already doing well so they will leverage it time and time again."—page 28

"Affirmations are like fertilizer for readers."—page 31

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What's worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you've read?

Chapter 3

Extend: Nudging Readers Forward

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read or review *Making It Happen* on pages 40-42. These pages break down the Extend move of a conference into a four-part sequence.
- As you consider the Extend move and selecting a focus what do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Exploring the Extend Move in Action (20 Minutes)

- Watch the Extend move in action in the classroom. View the video clip, *Extend Move with Naama*.
- Use the Know and Nurture T-Chart (Appendix I) to hold your thinking.
 - The Know question: What's going on?
 - The Nurture question: How might I respond?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“You choose to make this move, not because you must teach something new in every conference, but because in this conference, you’ve identified something you believe could expand the reader’s success and open up more possibilities for the reader.”—page 40.

“You’ll make some mistakes. Sometimes, your teaching focus will be magically right on, and other times, it might be a bit of bungle. The important thing is that you keep working to refine this skill and learn as you go.”—page 43

Kids want to learn, and they appreciate being respected enough to be asked. So we ask. The offer is not some kind of trick to get buy-in. Instead, it is a way to set a collaborative and anticipatory tone for the teaching that is to come.”—page 43

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Chapter 4

Remind: Ensuring Transfer Beyond this Conference

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read or review *Making It Happen* on page 53. The beginning of this section provides ideas you might try during the Remind move.
- As you consider the ideas what do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Exploring the Remind Move in Action (20 Minutes)

- Watch the *Remind* move in action in the classroom through the video clip, *Putting It All Together with Luke*.
- Use the Know and Nurture T-Chart (Appendix I) to hold your thinking.
 - The Know question: What's going on?
 - The Nurture question: How might I respond?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“With the Remind move, our teaching lives on, actively helping a child become more engaged or independent as a reader. After all, we didn’t come to the conference to teach a book or a strategy. We came to nurture a reader by offering solutions that they can use again and again even when we aren’t beside them.”—page 51

“The first tool at our disposal for making learning stick is the language we choose to use, especially as we close the conference, summing up and reminding the reader of what we’ve taught.” —page 53

“When we publicly acknowledge and celebrate the good work of one student, the whole community of readers benefits.” –page 60

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Part 2 Intentional Directions: The What of Conferring

Part 2 is aimed at helping you develop a deeper understanding of each of the four intentional directions for conferring. You can think of the directions as the what of conferring, each of them representing a collection of strategies, skills, mind-sets, or motivations that readers need to thrive. The four directions for conferring include: book choice, healthy habits, strategic process, and authentic response.

Chapter 5

Confer to Support Book Choice

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

Essential Question: Is the reader consistently finding texts that lead to high levels of engagement?

- Read or review *Signs a Student Might Benefit from a Conference Focused on Book Choice* (pages 76-86).
- Review Figure 5.6, Book Choice Conferring Reference.
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Conferring to Support Book Choice (20 Minutes)

- View the video clip, *Affirm Move with Beck*. View through the lens of conferring to support book choice.
- You may want to use the Questions to Guide Conference Observations in Appendix K as you view the video.
 - What do you notice about the language the teacher uses?
 - How does the teacher establish and maintain a sense of respect, partnership, and/or student ownership?
 - What do you notice about how the teacher navigates the Decision Making Map?
 - What are you left *Wondering* about this reader?
 - What additional follow-up actions might be helpful?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“If we are serious about nurturing lifelong readers, we must take seriously the work of book choice.”
–page 74

“Every book choice tells a story, about both the reader and their book-finding skills.” –page 76

“By helping our students build their capacity for this messy work of book choice, we send them out into the world a little more courageous, a little more resilient, and a maybe a whole lot more equipped to make thoughtful decisions, not only about books but also about other matters because learning to navigate choice isn’t just a reading skill, it’s a life skill.” –page 92

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Chapter 6

Confer to Develop Healthy Habits

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

Essential Question: Is the reader making intentional decisions that result in lots of time spent reading both in and out of school?

- Read or review *Signs a Student Might Benefit from a Conference Focused on Healthy Reading Habits* (pages 99-107).
- Review Figure 6.5, A Healthy Habits Conferring Reference.
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Conferring to Support Healthy Habits (20 Minutes)

- View the video clip, *Putting It All Together with Ezia*. View through the lens of conferring to support healthy habits.
- You may want to use the Questions to Guide Conference Observations in Appendix K as you view the video.
 - What do you notice about the language the teacher uses?
 - How does the teacher establish and maintain a sense of respect, partnership, and/or student ownership?
 - What do you notice about how the teacher navigates the Decision Making Map?
 - What are you left *Wondering* about this reader?
 - What additional follow-up actions might be helpful?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“When we see healthy reading habits in action in the elementary classroom, we’ll see students who are aware of personal preferences and are intentional about nurturing their own reading lives.” –page 97

“When we help students get creative and concrete about where, when, and how they might make time and space for reading in the hours outside of school, we can become a lifeline of support rather just one more source of stress in their already full lives.” –page 103

“Being a great reading teacher would be impossible if you weren’t a reader yourself. So, go on, set some goals to strengthen your own reading habits. Find great books. Make more time for reading in your own life outside of school- all the while spy on yourself. Pay attention to what conditions make reading work for you and which work against you.” –page 112

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Chapter 7

Confer to Strengthen Strategic Process

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

Essential Question: What strategic actions is the reader taking to solve problems and make meaning of the text?

- Read or review *Signs a Student Might Benefit from a Conference Focused on process* (pages 119-136).
- Review Figure 7.12, Strategic Process Conferring Reference.
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Conferring to Support Strategic Process (20 Minutes)

- View the video clip, *Extend Move with Beck*. View through the lens of conferring to support strengthening the strategic process.
- You may want to use the Questions to Guide Conference Observations in Appendix K as you view the video.
 - What do you notice about the language the teacher uses?
 - How does the teacher establish and maintain a sense of respect, partnership, and/or student ownership?
 - What do you notice about how the teacher navigates the Decision Making Map?
 - What are you left *Wondering* about this reader?
 - What additional follow-up actions might be helpful?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Strategic process is not only learning to decode letters, turning them to sounds and words, but it is also about weaving together words, visual features, and thinking in an attempt to understand clearly what it is the author has put on the page.” –page 116

“No matter what the stage of development, the overarching goal with regard to strategic reading process is virtually the same with all readers—bolster self-initiated problem-solving and meaning-making strategies—but the differences in development require some specialization stage by stage.” –page 119

“Rather than jumping in immediately to bail them out with directive strategies (check the picture, sound it out, look for chunks, go back to the beginning), our inquisitive thinking leads us to wait. Sitting on the edge of our seats, we’re poised and eager to learn what the child will do.” –page 137

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Chapter 8

Confer to Support Authentic Response

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

Essential Question: How is the reader using reflection, connection, or action in authentic ways?

- Read *Signs a Reader Might Benefit from a Conference Focused on Authentic Response* (pages 149-159).
- Review Figure 8.6, Authentic Response Conferring Reference.
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/ Video Clip- Conferring to Authentic Response (20 Minutes)

- View the video clip, *Extend Move with Sophia*. View through the lens of conferring to support authentic response.
- You may want to use the Questions to Guide Conference Observations in Appendix K as you view the video.
 - What do you notice about the language the teacher uses?
 - How does the teacher establish and maintain a sense of respect, partnership, and/or student ownership?
 - What do you notice about how the teacher navigates the Decision Making Map?
 - What are you left *Wondering* about this reader?
 - What additional follow-up actions might be helpful?

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Authentic response goes far beyond basic comprehension to a focus on how the text has changed us as readers and as people.” –page 146

“The most meaningful responses are reader driven, not teacher assigned.” –page 148

“Response, after all, is the reason for reading. We don’t just read to make meaning of the text, we read to make meaning of ourselves and the world around us.” –page 149

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What’s worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you’ve read?

Part 3 Organizational Moves: Behind the Scenes

Part 3 includes a few short, practical chapters focused on behind-the-scenes moves. These are the moves for getting and staying organized with this fast-paced, on-the-go teaching. Behind-the-scenes moves include: gathering materials, making a plan, and taking note.

Chapter 9

Getting Ready for Teaching and Learning on the Go

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Look at the opening chart: *Gather Materials Move at a Glance* on page 169
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox – Materials for Conferring (15 Minutes)

- Make a list of the materials you typically use for conferring.
 - Do the tools allow you to efficiently and effectively take notes on the go?
 - Do the tools support meaningful interactions with students?
- What works well? What challenges do you face?
- Add any new ideas gathered from the chapter.

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Whatever it is you choose, you’re going to spend a lot of time with these tools, so take your time to play with a few different options and be prepared for your tools to evolve along with your skills.” –page 170

“Cumbersome systems can detract from rather than support your interactions with students. When in doubt, start with a clipboard, blank paper, and a favorite writing tool. You’ll discover what else you may need as you go.” –page 172

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- What's worth thinking, talking, writing, or learning more about?
- What actions will you take as a result of what you've read?

Chapter 10

Creating Time to Confer with All Students

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Look at the opening chart: *Make a Plan Move at a Glance* on page 170
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox – Creating Time to Confer with All Students (15 Minutes)

- How do you create and commit to time for student conferences?
- What works well? What challenges do you face?
- Reflect on Figure 10.6, Questions to Help You Prioritize Conferring Plans.
- Jot down any new ideas gathered from the chapter.

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“To build a vibrant conferring practice, you’ll want to confer every day, as much as you are able.”
–page 173

“The ultimate goal of conferring, of course, is not to see all students the same frequency or amount of time. Rather, it is to meet with students according to their unique needs.” –page 175

“Of course these plans are written in sand, not in stone. Planning is a tool to help you best leverage your time. Yet, some of your most meaningful conferring will take place, not because a child’s name is on the schedule for the day, but because you observe a need and respond to it in the moment.” –page 183

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- Conferring is a commitment. Here is a challenge to get you started. Commit to a two- or three-week period of conferring with four-to-six readers every day until you have conferred with everyone in your class at least twice. Just choose your tools and map out a plan.

Chapter 11

Holding onto Thinking to Help Pave the Path Ahead

Discussion/Sharing (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Look at the opening chart: *Take Note Move at a Glance* on page 185
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox – Take Note (15 Minutes)

- What note-taking system have you tried in the past? What worked and what didn't work for you?
 - What can you remember to help with reflective planning, follow-up, problem solving, and tracking progress?
- Reflect on Figure 11.2, Four Square Conferring Notes Template.
- Jot down any new ideas gathered from the chapter.

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Pushing yourself to take note of a few meaningful items during each conference can be the key to transforming your practice from a collection of isolated or disconnected check-ins to an ongoing series of interactions aimed at knowing and nurturing the reading lives of each of the children you serve.”
–page 187

“You can intensify your impact when you have notes to help connect one conference to the next, like links on a chain, past, present, and future.” –page 188

“Ultimately, what matters is not how messy or neat, elaborated or brief your notes are. Instead, it is how they support you after the conference in making informed decisions.” –page 190

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- Continue the conferring challenge with four to six readers every day until you have conferred with everyone in your class at least twice. Focus on note taking. Is your system working? What tweaks may you make? Be sure to try out one or more of the note taking tools offered in the appendix and the online resources.

Chapter 12

The Art of Decision Making

Discussion/Sharing- Putting It All Together (10 Minutes)

- What did this chapter make you *Wonder* about your own conferring practice?
- What did this chapter make you realize is important to *Affirm* about your own practice?
- What steps might you choose to *Extend* your practice as a conferring teacher?
- What will be important to *Remind* yourself to keep doing as you confer?

Reading Excerpt (15 Minutes)

- Read *Third grade conference –Strategic Process with Lily* on pages 209-211
- What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Toolbox/Video – Putting it All Together (15 Minutes)

- Now that we have made it through the process of conferring, view the video clip, *Putting It All Together with Naama*.
- Use the Questions to Guide Conference Observations in Appendix K as you view the video.
 - What do you notice about the language the teacher uses?
 - How does the teacher establish and maintain a sense of respect, partnership, and/or student ownership?
 - What do you notice about how the teacher navigates the Decision Making Map?
 - What are you left *Wondering* about this reader?
 - What additional follow-up actions might be helpful?
- Be sure to take time as a group and share thinking.

Quotes worth Discussing (10 Minutes)

“Only you can bring the moves and directions we’ve offered to life in ways that affect the real readers in your classroom.” –page 194

“The language we choose influences readers, building confidence and a sense of ownership over their own reading lives.” –page 203

“One thing that can quickly zap the joy from conferring is the pressure we put on ourselves that conferences must follow a precisely prescribed path and that to deviate from that path is to do it wrong.” –page 215

“No one else will confer precisely as you will. The conferring practice you build will be uniquely your own.” –page 215

Responding through Action: Choosing Next Steps (5 Minutes)

- Reflect on what you had hoped to get out of this book experience. Did you achieve your goals?
- What changes will you make to your conferring practice as the result of this experience?
- What support/resources do you still need to make the most of your conferring practice?
- Which of the three commitments for conferring will be most important for you keep in mind as you work to build a joyful conferring practice that really works?