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Allen, Patrick A. (2009). *Conferring: The Keystone of Reader's Workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

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Reviewed by Sandra L. Duty
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The mere mention of conferring and reader's workshop conjures up pleasant memories for many practitioners. Many teachers sit in a rocking chair reading stories to children and engaging in conversation about what they read. At times, they sit with one child or a small group. Patrick Allen is a classroom teacher. In this book, he writes about reading conferences becoming a regular part of the reader's workshop. He emphasizes the importance of building classroom environments and honoring each student's strengths and uniqueness. As teachers confer with each individual, they genuinely begin to know the student.

The text is user friendly. Information is presented in student keystone points, ponderings, charts, and diagrams. In the appendix of the book, the author provides blank

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forms to use when conferring with students. The format of the book is easy to understand. The author uses student thinking and student writing. The book is organized into three sections beginning with beliefs about conferring, conferring goals, and building the environment. In the second section, the key components are bringing structure to conferring, developing rigor, nurturing inquiry and developing intimacy. Part three discusses what emerges from the reading conference.

In *Conferring: The Keystone of Reader's Workshop*, Patrick Allen has written about conferring in an understandable and helpful read so you may change the way you see yourself (and your students) as a teacher and a learner. Patrick Allen also knows that it is important to sit next to a child and have a conversation as a fellow reader. In the book, you gain insight into how important it is to build a classroom culture that honors communication with teacher and learner. Teachers learn how the structure of the conference helps with the process. The “Ponderings” are questions that help the reader think about their own thinking, but also adapt Patrick Allen’s experience and so the reader can develop their own program.

This concise book provides valuable instructional support to all teachers. Novice teachers will find the format and jargon free language user-friendly. Veteran teachers will find the structure easy to follow and delightful to read. The author includes many practical teaching examples in the book. It is the perfect book for use in developing reading conferences with individual students. Patrick Allen inspires me through his writing in this book. As a classroom teacher, he would be difficult to find in the classroom. That’s because he sits next to children, shoulder to shoulder, listening and learning. This book is real, and touches the hearts of teachers.

About the Reviewer

Reviewed by Sandra L. Duty, doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Portland State University. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and presently teaches 4th grade.

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