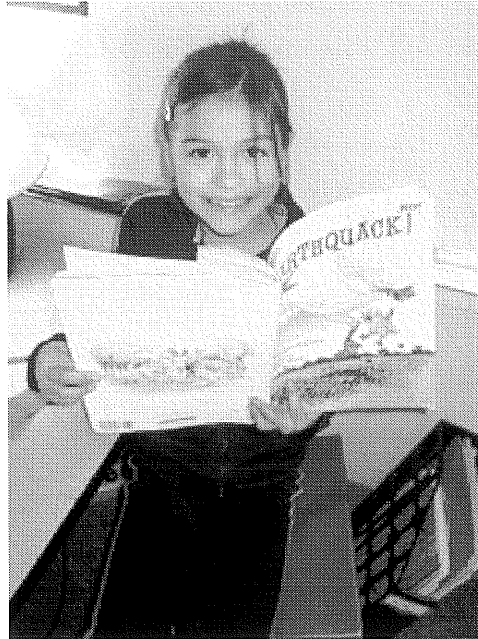


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But I Haven't Read That Yet (ARTICLE)

Lori Sabo

I used to think I needed to have read the book a student was reading in order to have a meaningful conference. Even though I am a voracious consumer of children's literature, it isn't always possible. I've come to realize that conferring conversations differ from book club conversations, so even though it would be nice to have read the book, it isn't really necessary.

What I am after when I meet with a child is how they are doing with comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. Those can all be determined whether I've read the book or not. I usually sit next to a student and say, "Tell me what's happening in your book." Their answer to this question lets me know how their comprehension is.

Thoughtful questions can prompt a student of any age to think more deeply. For example, I might ask one or two of the following:

- How is the character feeling and how does the author's writing let you know?
- Is this a good setting for the story? How would another setting have changed things?
- What has the author done that you would like to try in your own writing?
- Is this book fiction or nonfiction? How do you know?
- What do you think is going to happen? What makes you think that?
- What are you wondering about?

Then I say, "I'd love to hear a little of it. Please read to me for a little bit, starting right where

you are." I can listen for accuracy and fluency, and often have a chance to discuss vocabulary.

If I feel the need to know a little more about the book, I might read the blurb on the back or peek at the table of contents. If there happens to be a movie version of the book, we chat about the differences between the book and the movie.

Like anything else, conferring becomes more comfortable as we practice. Whereas my mind used to race as I wondered what I should say next, conferring sessions have now become comfortable conversations where sticking points are worked through and growth is celebrated whether I've read the book or not.

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