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Readers' Workshop Conferences: Fostering Relationships and Reading Ability

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Readers' Workshop Conferences: Fostering Relationships and Reading Ability

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Research Question

How can I best support each student's reading development?

About Readers' Workshop

- **Readers' Workshop:** student-centered approach to teaching reading in the classroom. Contains four main components (1) mini-lesson, (2) independent reading, (3) student-teacher conferences, and (4) responding.
- **Student-Teacher Conferences:** the teacher listens to the student read, motivates students to set reading goals, makes suggestions of others books based on the student's interests, guides students to different genres, and gains ideas of possible mini-lessons based on students' needs.

Literature Review

- **Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students:** appear to benefit from this approach because it decreases the emphasis on the structure of language which is often difficult for these students to grasp
- **High-Risk Students:** These at-risk students benefit from this structure because it creates a sense of community in the classroom
- **Struggling Readers:** Struggling readers need for individualized instruction can be found in a Readers' Workshop approach to reading.
- **Critiques:** There is very little empirical research that demonstrates improved reading ability.

Methodology

- First grade classroom in an elementary school in a large city in central Illinois containing 22 students (11 males, 11 females)
- Documented progress of study through field notes and conference forms

Conference notes for _____ Date _____

Book Title _____

Goal 1: Reads with understanding and fluency.		Goal 2: Reads and understands literature that comes from different times and places.		Comprehension		Level	
Reads fluently and accurately	Uses reading strategies	Characters	Identifies story elements	Excellent	Book Level:	Too Easy	
Sounds out words		Setting		Good		Too Hard	
Context clues		Problem		Fair		Just Right	
Syntax clues		Solution		Poor			
Picture clues		Fiction					
Retells main events of a story		Non-fiction	Identifies various genres or literature				
Self monitors and makes corrections while reading		Poetry					
		Makes personal connections to literature.					

Notes:

Conference Form Example

Results

- **Individualizing Instruction:** By working one-on-one with each student, I became aware of each student's reading strengths and weaknesses. While conferencing with a student, I was able to immediately tailor instruction to meet their needs.
- **Fostering Relationships between Teacher and Student:** Since I was able to meet one-on-one with students weekly, a relationship between me and each student grew quickly.
- **Higher Order Thinking Skills:** Through conferencing with each student weekly, I was able to assess their understanding of the skill presented in a mini-lesson as well as delve deeper into the text instead of simply asking questions about comprehension.
- **Struggles:** Time constraints made it difficult to dedicate more than five minutes to each student, meet with every student weekly, and deviate from the Readers' Workshop schedule.

Conclusion

Student-teacher conferences permit individualized instruction, teacher-student relationships, and higher order thinking growth, however, the time constraints found in the structure of Readers' Workshop effect students' reading development.