

Tell Me More

CONFERRING WITH ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND STORYTELLERS

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A classroom full of children, full of possibilities. There are approximately 185 days of opportunities afforded to us to learn who these children are, what they bring, and what makes their heart full. Getting to know the students in our learning communities is not a beginning of the year activity. It is an ongoing, ever-growing, always-changing ways of engaging with children. **Every conversation has potential** for us to grow as educators, not only in our listening skills but also in the ways we position ourselves as learners alongside children.

In my book, *Tell Me More: Conferring with Artists, Writers, and Storytellers*, I position **conferring as an-in between space of possibilities**. I offer a conferring design that starts from the teacher's listening and noticing what children already do, and build from there. I refer to this design as **a Cycle of Dialogic Encounters** because it is an ongoing process of co-creating learning with children, honoring their questions, and documenting their journey for the purposes of collective growth. In the book, I offer additional details, children's examples, and conferring possibilities, and I expand on each pedagogical thread that informs this framework.

- ♡ How do we stay grounded so we stay focused on what truly matters, the children in front of us?
- ♡ How do we continue to center dialogue with children as a way to build from strength and not from deficit?
- ♡ How do we slow down to listen, notice, and invite children to be part of this learning journey?

To me, the answer to these questions has always been: **conferring**.



Conferring is about listening to children and seeking to understand the different ways we can show up for them in their writerly lives. **During conferring, children's voices act as the compass.** They guide us as we guide the community. Every child brings their own ways of composing and their understanding of the world. Conferring allow us educators to meet them where they are, differentiate their learning to honor their skills, and offer them entry points to elevate their crafts.

Conferring is not a linear process. It is a dance that requires flexibility, and yet there is always one starting point: it starts with us (teachers) listening and noticing what the artists, writers, and storytellers are already doing in the classroom. From this bi-directional, strength-based stance, the learning begins for both: educators and children. May we continue to strengthen our learning community one dialogue at a time.