CONDUCTING IDR CONFERENCES

As mentioned in the previous section, you should confer with individual students early in the year to ensure that they are reading appropriately leveled books and to get to know them as readers. As the year progresses, your conferences will focus more on assessing the students’ comprehension, supporting struggling readers, and encouraging self-monitoring strategies. With IDR conferences, the expectation is not that you will have read all the books the students are reading. The conference structure suggested below is designed to be effective with any book, fiction or nonfiction, whether you are familiar with it or not.

A Structure for IDR Conferences
We recommend that you hold IDR conferences at a desk or table set apart from the rest of the class. Call individual students to the table so your conferences do not distract other students from their reading. Plan to spend 10–15 minutes per conference, and plan to confer with each student multiple times over the year. (See BLMI, “IDR Conference Class Record Sheet,” at the end of this book, for a way to keep track of when you have conferred with each student.) The following is a possible structure for an IDR conference:

1. Initiate
   Briefly scan the back cover blurb of the book the student is reading (for your own information), then begin the conference by asking the student to tell you about the book. Ask her to tell you what is happening in the part she is currently reading.

2. Listen to the Read-aloud and Assess
   Have the student read aloud from where she is currently in the book. Listen for fluency and make note of any miscues. Ask yourself:
   • Does the student attend to meaning?
   • Does she pause or reread if she’s having difficulty?
   • Does she read most words accurately?
   • Does she try to make sense of unfamiliar language?
   • Does she read fluently?
   • Is this book at the right level for this student? If not, is it too easy or too hard?
After the reading, ask and discuss:

Q  What is happening in the part you just read?

If it seems that the student is not in the right-level book, skip Step 3 and proceed to Step 4.

Discuss the Book

Notice where the student is in the book and target your discussion based on that and the book's genre.

For a fiction book, if the student is:

• At the beginning of the book → Ask questions about character.
• In the middle of the book → Ask questions about character and setting.
• In the middle to end of the book → Ask questions about plot.

For example, if the student is near the beginning or middle of a fiction book, ask questions such as:

Q  Who is the main character of your story? What are you finding out about [him/her]? Read me a section that tells you what this character is like. What does this section tell you about [him/her]?

If the student is near the middle of a fiction book, ask questions such as:

Q  What is the setting of your story (or where and when does this story take place)? Read me a section that tells you what this setting is like. What do you imagine when you read that?

If the student is in the middle to end of a fiction book, ask questions such as:

Q  What problem is the main character having in this story? What has happened so far with this character and this problem? How does the problem get solved?

In some cases, you may be able to extend this discussion to include questions about significant events at the end of the book.
For a **nonfiction** book, if the student is:

- At the beginning of the book → Ask questions about what she is curious about and what she thinks she will learn.
- Between the middle and end of the book → Ask questions about what she is learning and how she is learning it.

For example, if the student is **near the beginning or middle** of a nonfiction book, ask questions such as:

**Q**  *What have you learned so far about this topic? What are you curious about? Let’s look at the table of contents. What do you think you will learn about in this book?*

If the student is **between the middle and end** of a nonfiction book, ask questions such as:

**Q**  *What have you learned about this topic so far? Let’s read a little from this [sidebar/caption/glossary/index/other text feature]. How does this information help you better understand the main text?*

### 4 Discuss Book Level

Have the student assess the level of the book for herself by asking:

**Q**  *Does this book feel like it is at the right level? If so, how do you know? If not, why not?*

If the book is at the right level, point out the code indicating the level (for example, the colored dot) and encourage the student to continue to read books at this level. If the book is not at the right level, help the student find a more appropriate book (perhaps by pulling 2–3 titles at the correct level from which she may choose) and plan to confer with the student again in the next day or two after she has begun reading the new book.

You can document your observations using the “Record Sheet for IDR Conferences” tear-off pad. (A blackline master is also provided in this book.) Over time, these notes can become an important source of information about each student’s development as a reader.

The sample IDR conference booklets we have included in this kit give more specific examples of how you might use this structure with a fiction and a nonfiction book from the IDR Library for your grade. Adaptations of the conference for grades K and 1 are given in the sample conference booklets at those grades.