



Pat Zietlow Miller knew she wanted to be a writer ever since her seventh-grade English teacher read her paper about square-dancing skirts out loud in class and said: “This is the first time anything a student has written has given me chills.”

Pat started out as a newspaper reporter and wrote about everything from dartball and deer-hunting to diets and decoupage. Then, she joined an insurance company and edited its newsletter and magazine.

Now, she writes insurance information by day and children’s books by night. Pat has 11 picture books out in the world right now and nine more coming in the next few years.

BE KIND was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 10 weeks, while SOPHIE’S SQUASH won the Golden Kite Award, a Charlotte Zolotow honor and an Ezra Jack Keats

New Writer honor. WHEREVER YOU GO and THE QUICKEST KID IN CLARKSVILLE also won Crystal Kite awards.

Pat has one wonderful husband, two delightful daughters and two pampered cats. When she’s not working or writing, she enjoys reading, consuming copious amounts of chocolate and watching “Chopped.” When social distancing is not in force, she’s an avid visitor to bookstores and libraries.

Pat Zietlow Miller will be accepting applications for: fiction picture books.

1. If you could be in any movie or tv series, what would it be and what character would you play?

Well, when “Glee” was in its prime, I would have chosen that and been a cool librarian who helps the kids find just the right book for whatever crisis they were going through. In fact, I used to write blog posts recommending YA titles to the characters in the cast.

2. If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be and why?

The ability to teleport myself anywhere. I have a terrible sense of direction, and I don’t love driving in unfamiliar places, so my life would be a lot easier if I could just wish myself wherever I needed to be.

3. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?

Well, now you’re just being mean. How can I only choose five? But, all right, I’ll try. In alphabetical order:

- A HOUSE THAT ONCE WAS by Julie Fogliano and Lane Smith
- GRACE FOR PRESIDENT by Kelly DiPucchio and LeUyen Pham
- OWEN by Kevin Henkes
- STARS by Mary Lyn Ray and Marla Frazee
- THERE MIGHT BE LOBSTERS by Carolyn Crimi and Laurel Molk
- THIS IS NOT A VALENTINE by Carter Higgins and Lucy Ruth Cummins

What? You say that’s six books? I think you’re mistaken. Remember, if you asked me tomorrow, I might come up with a different list. For more of my thoughts on this matter, visit my website. It has [a list of other picture books that I think are practically perfect in every way](#).

4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?

Being able to consistently have books published and out in the world. I'm still astounded when I stop and think about how my books are in libraries and classrooms and bedrooms being read and re-read.

5. What about mentoring excites you most?

Helping someone who is as excited about picture books as I am make their manuscript the best it can possibly be.

6. What are your strengths as a mentor?

I think I'm encouraging. I ask good questions. And, I'm passionate about picture books.

7. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I do a lot of line editing and like to focus on the flow of the picture book. How does it sound when it's read aloud? Is that really the best word? Does that sentence add value? I am also a stickler for every word earning its way into a manuscript. So, I'll try to help you make your story tighter and leaner and more powerful and maybe encourage you to give up some elements you thought you needed. Of course, I'll also comment on plot and structure.

8. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?

Someone who's professional and pleasant and willing to revise and try different things. Someone who hugs picture books when no one's watching. Someone who wants to have an ongoing career as a writer versus just one story that's very important to them.

9. Who are you not the best mentor for?

Anything in metered rhyme. Even though I sometimes write in rhyme and I like reading it, I think others are better at explaining how to do it. Also, someone who wants to self-publish. I don't know much about the mechanics of that.

10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?

I'm hoping my mentee and I will choose a story or two to focus on during the mentorship. I see us going back and forth during the time we have, working on those stories, until we both think they are as good as they can be. I'm also happy to answer general publishing question or talk about book promotion and social media.

11. What is your style of communication like?

I'm hoping that my mentee and I can email back and forth for the duration of the mentorship as we work on stories. I'm also happy to have a phone call or two. I do work full time, so I cannot respond instantly. I'll usually be able to respond to questions within a day or two and will do so thoroughly. But, if you're looking for continual interactions during the workday, I'm not your mentor.

12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?

Strong writing, whether it's lively or lovely. A good sense of how picture books work and what makes them different than a short story or a chapter in a middle-grade novel. Stories with heart, humor or hope.

13. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?

Send me the story you love the most. After you've polished and proofread.

14. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?

There's this poem by Edgar Albert Guest that I've memorized called "It Couldn't Be Done." I recite it to myself sometimes as a motivator. Here's the ending:

*"There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it."*

I think writers sometimes let fear get in their way of taking risks. I know I do. So, if you're interested in a mentorship, put your hat in the ring. Even if you know your story isn't perfect. Even if you assume other applicants are more qualified. Failure isn't final. And, it will never happen if you don't try.