



**Pat Zietlow Miller [She/Her]** Pat Zietlow Miller has 11 picture books currently available and 11 more coming out over the next few years. Her picture book *BE KIND* was on the New York Times bestseller list for 10 weeks, and *SOPHIE'S SQUASH* won a Golden Kite Award, an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Honor and a Charlotte Zolotow Honor. She also blogs about children's books with other kidlit creators at Picture Book Builders ([www.picturebookbuilders.com](http://www.picturebookbuilders.com))

**Pat will be accepting applications for:** Fiction picture books.

**Pat will be accepting applications from:** unagented/unpublished creators only

**1. What's one non-publishing-related career that you wish you could have?**

I'm so happy having a career writing books for kids and the people who love them. It's really my all-time dream job. But ... I've always thought it would be fun to be one of the people who comes up with names for new nail polish colors. I love the puns and the themes and the inside jokes. Those people seem cool.

**2. If you could have dinner with one person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?**

I would like to have dinner with my aunt Faye Clow and her brother, my dad, Allen Zietlow. Faye was a librarian who died before I sold my first picture book. She knew I was trying to get published, but never saw me succeed. My dad got to see several of my books published, but he died before I made the New York Times bestseller list for *BE KIND*. I know they both would have been extremely proud of me.

**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. And, this is a different list from the one I provided last year because there are SO MANY great picture books. In no particular order, I present:

- A HOUSE THAT ONCE WAS by Julie Fogliano and Lane Smith
- HOW MANY SEEDS IN A PUMPKIN by Margaret McNamara and G. Brian Karas
- EVELYN DEL REY IS MOVING AWAY by Meg Medina and Sonia Sanchez
- TWO SPECKLED EGGS by Jennifer Mann
- THERE MIGHT BE LOBSTERS by Carolyn Crimi and Laurel Molk
- THIS IS NOT A VALENTINE by Carter Higgins and Lucy Ruth Cummins
- EACH KINDNESS by Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis

What? You say that's seven books? You must be mistaken. Remember, if you asked me tomorrow, I would 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 manuscripts the best they can possibly be.

#### **6. What are your strengths as a mentor?**

I think I'm encouraging. I ask good questions. I'm passionate about picture books. And, if you have extra or low-value words in your manuscript, I will find them.

#### **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? And, how does the story make the reader feel? 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. Someone who's curious and always wants to learn more.

**9. Who are you not the best mentor for?**

Someone with manuscripts in metered rhyme. Even though I sometimes write in rhyme and I like reading it, I think other mentors are much 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 Zoom or have a phone call or two to answer questions. I'll usually be able to respond to questions within a day or so and manuscripts within a week. And when I respond, I will do so thoroughly. But, if you're looking for instant responses or continual back-and-forth 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 or lyrical. 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. Last year, I chose my mentees because they wrote stories that grabbed me from the start and that I could not stop thinking about after I read them. The stories weren't perfect – no stories ever are – but they were engaging. And, I had instant ideas of how I could help make them even stronger.

**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 may be more qualified.

Contests like these are subjective. You never know what will connect with someone. And, if your story doesn't connect this time, well, failure isn't final. Most of all, you'll never know what could have happened if you don't try.

Best of luck!