Writing Workshop:  
Integrating the 6+1 Traits of Writing

An Honors Thesis

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Abstract

This paper explores the interconnectedness of the writing workshop and the 6+1 Traits of Writing within the framework of the writing process. After explaining the three writing models, a series of lesson plans demonstrates how to improve the seven writing traits within the time frame of a minilesson. A variety of rubrics illustrate how trait writing can improve the students’ works as part of the writing process and provide possibilities for teacher-student conferences.

The paper explores how writing has shifted from an importance on the product to the process of writing. The writing process divides writing into smaller segments to make it more manageable for students. Students engage in prewriting, writing, revising, and editing before publishing their pieces, and this organizational structure takes a writer-centered approach as the students shift between the writer and reader of their pieces.

The writing workshop uses the writing process as its foundation, creating a timeframe that includes a short minilesson, writing time in which teachers conference with students about their works, and sharing time. This paper demonstrates how the goal of this program is to allow students to engage in the writing process with topics they choose. This creates an authentic purpose for the chosen audience and encourages the students to expand their craft of writing.

Because of the difficulty of evaluating writing due to its subjective nature, this paper demonstrates how the 6+1 Traits of Writing can be integrated into the writing workshop to assess students’ abilities in seven areas of writing. The traits look at the ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation of a piece through a series of rubrics that offer specific requirements and vocabulary of quality writing.
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Writing Process

When asked to recall how they wrote in elementary school, many teachers recall diagramming sentences, handwriting instruction, and prompts of little interest to them like “Why I Want to be a Teacher” or “The Most Influential Person in History.” They remember quiet classrooms where they would steal glances to see how much their neighbor had written and be scolded to do their own work. A paragraph consisted of a topic sentence and three supporting details, and an essay had an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. When papers were returned, spelling was corrected in red and had comments like “disorganized” and “see me” across the top. Writing in school had to follow a specific formula that the teacher dictated (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).

However, many of those students never enjoyed writing, and this dislike resulted in a shift of the writing curriculum from the product to the process of creating a piece; the scope of writing has expanded into how the students write, not just what they write. The idea that “if you want to learn to write, you must write” is the driving force behind the development of writing at a process (Portalupi, 2000, p. 28). Mem Fox summarized the new philosophy of writing as “writers don’t improve their craft unless they have a real purpose, a real audience, and a real investment in their writing” (Fox, 1990, p. 468).

No longer are unmotivating prompts given to the students. They engage in authentic writing activities that allows the students to explore the printed language through various strategies of their choice. This investment of interest, effort, and time results in writing that investigates the strategies and skills the students possess while developing a topic of their choice. Writing instruction has become a collaborative event in which the classroom is a community where teachers and students share their writings together. The shift has made writing a process
that is writer-centered, rather than teacher-centered, as students choose their own topics. This authentic approach to writing requires teachers to remind their students that they have something important to say and that their ideas matter (Ziegler, 1984).

Process writing recognizes that the goal of writing, regardless of age or experience, is to put thoughts on paper to share with a larger audience (Graves, 1983). Students are better able to organize their thoughts and create a meaningful piece that shows an awareness of an audience if student have the freedom to choose their own topics. Though the writing forms may differ between a child and adult, the main goal of conveying ideas and details is parallel between the two groups.

The writing process divides writing into the manageable pieces of prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. In the prewriting stage, students develop their ideas and consider who the audience of the piece will be and what form would best meet their purpose (Calkins, 1994). Students get their ideas on paper during the writing phase, paying little attention to the mechanics of the piece. Revising is the stage in which students examine the content of the piece; they make additions, deletions, or substitutions. Students look at the mechanics of their piece for the first time while editing and correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The final stage of the writing process is publishing in which students create their final draft to present to a wider audience (Morrow, 2003).

The process requires students to shift between the role of the writer to that of the reader and back again throughout the drafting of their pieces (Portalupi, 2000). This dynamic approach to writing differs from writing from a teacher prompt, because students often feels the need to expand their ideas or add details when working from a prompt. However, the shift between writer and reader, especially in the drafting and revising stages, results in more cohesive pieces
McCarthy, 2002). The students identify themselves as both the reader and the writer, making additions and deletions to their pieces as they work to make both of those roles easier.

The role of the teacher changes in process writing to a guide, facilitator, and model who offers information within the context of the students' learning to meet their individual needs (Kaufman, 2001). The classroom environment is established as a learning community at the beginning of the year where the setting is supportive for shared learning. This setting encourages the active exchange of students' ideas, and the students feel as though their contributions to class are valued (Calkins, 1994). Collaboration allows students to share ideas and integrate multiple perspectives into their pieces, broadening the students' abilities to articulate their rationale for the expansion of an idea, inclusion of a detail, or development of a character. The combination of groupings within writing, including individual, partners, small group, and whole class, creates a safe environment in which children have the opportunity to develop their voices. In seeing writing as a series of trials and errors within the writing process, students explore the meaning of the words on the page and how those words convey a broader message.

Calkins (1994) states that good teaching demonstrates the power and purpose writing has in our lives to create authentic writing experiences. Teachers must assist students in seeing their lives as valuable, taking a memory and declaring it as important by gathering information and reflecting on the world around them. By seeing, hearing, noticing, and wondering, students can take their daily observations and integrate them into their pieces if they have opportunities to rehearse that attentiveness within the classroom. Teaching writing should inform the students how little things can ignite the idea for a piece (Harwayne, 1992).

Evaluation of writing takes a constructive approach that includes brief informal oral responses from both teachers and students. These discussions occur often and only focus on a
few errors at a time (NWREL, 1999). Assessing writing pieces of students should be limited, thoroughly grading a few student-selected pieces that have gone through the whole writing process. Allowing students to select the pieces ensures that the teacher is viewing what the students see as their best works, making connections between a writer-centered curriculum and student-centered evaluations.

The writing process is a constructive look at writing that allows teachers to build alternatives for students of differing grade levels, needs, and abilities (Dahl & Farnan, 1998). All learners need scaffolding in the development of their writing, though the assistance received throughout the writing process differs for each child. Students deserve the opportunity to appropriate assistance while writing and need meaningful chances to engage in and learn about the craft (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003). Parallel to Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development, teachers act as an expert of the students’ writings and the process of writing, developing individual instruction based on those needs. Both share a joint focus for the writing interactions and a shared responsibility as the teacher expands on concepts outside the students’ zones of proximal development (Atwell, 1998). As the students become more familiar with the strategies, they integrate those skills into their pieces. Calkins (1994, p. 132) summarizes this analysis of mediated learning in writing as “what a child can do with cooperation today, he can do independently tomorrow.”

The U.S. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) examined evidence in the area of writing to determine if students benefited from process writing (Dahl & Farnan, 1998). The analysis found the students who are habitually encouraged by their teachers to use the elements of the writing process, for example determining the audience and purpose, tend to be better writers than students whose teachers reportedly never use such skills. Additionally, the
average writing ability is higher amongst those students whose teachers support them in implementing strategies associated with process writing. Those teachers who promote prewriting strategies such as lists, outlines, or diagrams have students who score higher than those who do not encourage the use of a planning phase.

The phases of the writing process include prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. The table below summarizes these phases and the following section will expand on them further.

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Prewriting

Prewriting is the first stage of the writing process which occurs prior to the students beginning to compose their drafts. At this phase, students develop their ideas, listing possible topics and details. They decide on their purpose and the audience of the piece by taking into account what the audience would enjoy reading (All Write, 2000). Prewriting allows students to sift and sort through their potential material to put themselves in the mood to write. They also engage in peer collaboration to discuss their ideas and develop a plan of attack (Ziegler, 1994).

Often students struggle with where to collect ideas, because they are initially uncertain about what their audience would enjoy and the value of their personal experiences. Teachers should emphasize the importance of the students' lives, highlighting that each of them have something to say because their lives matter (Newkirk, 2000). A.E. Lipkewich (2001) also suggests using magazines, newspapers, periodicals, children's literature, and research as sources of inspiration; this supply of print materials provides quality examples of authentic writing. Other sources of information could include interviews, music, visual art, dreams, role playing, personal interest inventories, and films.

Students should engage in prewriting activities to organize their thoughts. These could include free writing, journaling, image streaming, lists, brainstorming, webbing, and graphic organizers (Lipkewich, 2001). Image streaming requires students to transplant themselves into another place or time and describe it from a first person point of view. Journaling allows students to explore their personal feelings and develop their thoughts, relating those thoughts to their ideas for more public writing (Young, 1999). Free-writes provide another way to get a variety of ideas on paper as students write without stopping for five or ten minutes; this allows them to discover possible writing ideas that linger in the back of their minds and could be used as
potential starting points. Regardless of the written activity students use in the prewriting phase, they should continually observe, imagine, and reflect on their daily experiences so they see their lives as sources of information (Young, 1999).

This is also the phase in which students consider the beginning, middle, and ending of the piece, developing a vague idea of the organizational structure. Prewriting allows students to plan and predict so they can begin creating the story (Atwell, 1998), which is further developed throughout the writing process. By taking the time to prepare in advance, students are better able to formulate their pieces because they have taken into consideration some details that will build upon the idea with a focus on the intended audience.
Writing

The writing phase of the process pushes students to discover meaning (Atwell, 1998). Students strive to get their ideas on paper quickly, giving little attention to grammar or punctuation (Ziegler, 1994). They instead let their ideas flow freely, realizing that substitutions and corrections will occur in the revising and editing phases. Students should be encouraged to write for the entire allotted time, crossing out mistakes if they notice an error immediately, but not taking the time to erase.

The writing phase builds on the planning done during pre-writing by developing the topic fully with a specified purpose and audience. However, not every idea from the previous stage needs to be included in the piece. Only those details that are significant to the topic and purpose of the piece should be incorporated to keep the writing focused. Students should experiment with several beginnings to determine which start keeps the piece focused (All Write, 2000).

Regardless of what form of writing, whether personal, creative, subject, or persuasive, students should keep the audience and purpose of the piece as the central concern, making decisions about content and form to best meet those needs.

While creating a rough draft, Lipkewich (2001) recommends that students put their names and page numbers at the top of every page so if the draft gets out of order, little time is lost shuffling through papers. The piece should be double spaced, running from margin to margin; this makes revising the piece more convenient because there is room to add information. The writing should only be on one side of the paper so if the piece needs to be reorganized, students can cut apart the sections and arrange them differently without interfering with other sentences.
**Revising**

Revising is the phase in which students examine and polish the content or message of the piece; this process expands the students' vision of their writing as they “reseec and reseek” the meaning (Atwell, 1998, p. 155). While rereading the piece aloud, content changes are made to ensure the material is fully developed, making certain that the writing addresses the focus and audience. This phase allows students to move from their past drafts with a focus on the shape the final copy will take while anticipating the responses and the listeners (Calkins, 1994). This phase should not only include the teacher, but also focus on peer collaboration to provide a support system of ideas that will make the piece clearer and more memorable.

Students often confuse the distinctions between revising and editing, struggling with the differentiation of changing the content and correcting the mechanics. Often they have troubles with this concept because many feel their story is complete and perfect when they finish writing the last sentence (King, 1999). When they write those final words, they are proud of their work and often do not feel the need to add, delete, or move around sentences. The editing phase, on the other hand, is easier to accept, because changing spellings, punctuations, and capitalizations do not alter the substance of the story and therefore maintain the concept of the story being completed. To help cease the misconception that “good” writers do it correctly the first time while “poor” writers tinker with their work, teachers should introduce the concept of revision early in the year and reiterate the process often (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Teachers must help their students comprehend that no piece of writing is ever complete and all pieces, regardless of the phase in the writing process, are in progress and will move between the phases before a final copy is created.
Four main goals exist in the revising phase to make the message more focused for the audience: adding more words, ideas, and sentences; deleting unnecessary parts, substituting or changing parts; and rearranging parts (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Often this requires students to expand their draft with more details that create a clearer picture in the minds of the readers and to carefully analyze the present details to ensure they relate to the main idea of the paragraph in which they are. In evaluating how the draft fits together, Calkins (1998) notes that writers should be open to taking the piece in an alternative direction, composing several leads and conclusions as options to capture the audience’s attention faster and hold it throughout the story. Students should also consider naming and describing their characters to help the readers relate to them more, giving the character more personality through vivid descriptions. Students should consider incorporating dialogue between the characters in their pieces, using dialects and colloquialisms to make the conversations sound authentic (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). As each change is completed, writers should ask themselves if the plot fits together and if another alteration is necessary (Morrow, 2003).

While in the revising phase, students should consider the following questions about their papers and those pieces they peer edit (Atwell, 1998; Lipkewich, 2001; Ziegler, 1994).

- Is this what I expected?
- What new thoughts do I think because of the words on the page?
- What makes sense? What needs to be changed so it makes more sense?
- Is a vivid mental picture created in the reader’s mind?
- Is there a catchy introduction? Does the conclusion leave the reader thinking?
- Is the series of events logical? Do they relate?
- Do the supporting details support only the topic sentence of that paragraph?
- Can I read it aloud without stumbling?
- Do I use transition words?
- Are all the sentences complete or did I use sentence fragments?
- Does every word and action count?
- Are my words descriptive and vivid?
- Do I use a variety of verbs throughout the piece?
- Do I use the same words over and over again?
After revising, students begin the editing process to look for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure mistakes in their writings. This phase of reading and rereading for errors ensures that mistakes in mechanics do not distract the reader from the message of the piece. The positive outlook on this difficult phase is that "students' good ideas deserve to be presented correctly and neatly so others can appreciate them" (Gillet & Beverly, 2001, p. 128). Students often feel vulnerable to criticism after the revision process so correcting additional errors in a piece they had see as complete implies that they are again unsuccessful. However, by reinforcing their efforts and content changes of the previous step, teachers reiterate that the author deserves the opportunity to share that message with few to no errors when presenting to a wider audience.

The editing process varies at each grade level, taking into account the sequence of the curriculum for Standard English usage. At the primary grades, students should be responsible for checking for capital letters, punctuation, and correct spellings of high frequency words (King, 1998). Gillet and Beverly (2001) note that at second grade, writers should be able to write a piece with at least two separate paragraphs, indenting the first sentence of each paragraph and ensuring that all sentences relate to the same topic. While writing mostly complete sentences, students should use plural and verb tense endings appropriately the majority of the time. End punctuation, including periods, question marks, and exclamation marks, should be use properly. Students should also be able to capitalize the first word of every sentence, proper nouns, and I. The number of words spelled correctly should increase throughout the year as the students learn more high frequency words and make developmentally appropriate attempts for unfamiliar words, circling those words that might be misspelled.
The goal in the editing process is to foster the self-reliance of the students. While discussing with students, teachers should first articulate what the writer has done well, celebrating the risks the student took with her piece (Calkins, 1994). As the conversation progresses, teachers should limit the types of errors they mention so the students realize that though the teacher will tell them where to look, it is their responsibility to find other types of mistakes. To continue promoting independent editors, teachers can make a list of proofreading responsibilities individual writers can do and develop a list at the end of the piece of errors on which the student should focus (Atwell, 1998).

Besides teacher editing, peer collaboration should be encouraged after the writer edits his piece independently. This provides the opportunity for both positive and constructive feedback from peers, siblings, and parents in a written and oral form (Young, 1999). Peer editors should indicate errors without embarrassing the writer, instead helping the writer to find the way to correct the mistake. They should suggest changes to make the writing more correct without marking up the paper. The errors that are discovered during peer editing should stay within the editing conference and not be shared with other members of the class. Peer collaboration is a helpful collaborative process, and editors must remember that the writer has the final say about what changes will be made (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).
Publishing

The final stage of the writing process is publishing in which students share their pieces with a wider audience. This celebration of completion gives the students a sense of authorship and the pride to continue developing their skills (Calkins, 1994). With the awareness as authors, the students benefit from an increase in their self-esteem and pride in their works as they recognize how their abilities to advance plan, implement strategies, and problem solve grow during the writing process (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Publishing a piece also has the advantage of expanding the students’ awareness of the connections between reading and writing as they become familiar with language used in books and story structures.

Publishing should be a student-directed process in which the students choose what pieces to publish. This requires them to look at their works and reflect on their efforts with attentiveness of their potential audience (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). The writers then choose the form in which the published work will take, whether as a book, performance, flyer, or display; often writers keep their final product in mind as they write, having an idea the shape of each piece should have. The students then need to decide for themselves when the piece is ready for publication after the revising and editing phases have been completed.
Writing Workshop

One program that fits into the writing process framework is the Writing Workshop, which encourages a collaborative environment between the writers, teacher, and peers. This writer-centered approach to process writing allows students to write for authentic reasons during a scheduled time daily (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Parallel to the structure of the writing process, students in the writing workshop learning to write by writing, practicing their craft by presenting their ideas for a set purpose and a larger audience. The writing workshop serves the purposes of the students as they assist in creating an environment of individualized learning (Harwayne, 1992).

Direct instruction occurs in the form of a minilesson, a short and focused lesson that highlights one skill with which the class is struggling. Additional strategies are presented during student conferences to assist writers with the help they need at that moment. Conferences also serve as a discussion of the students' writings, exploring the purpose, intended audience, format, and direction of the pieces. While conferences take place with individual students, the class works on pieces and is often in differing places in the writing process. The writing block of the workshop makes up approximately two-thirds of the time spent in daily writing (Atwell, 1998), so students have the opportunities to fully explore their ideas without feeling rushed. The workshop should not be shortened so it lasts as long as the students' attention spans (Calkins, 1994); rather, teachers should encourage their students to add more details to their pieces to help them grow accustomed to utilizing the whole writing time. The writing workshop concludes with a sharing session in which writers share their pieces with the class to celebrate the work they have done on their finished piece or work in progress (All Write, 2000).
All Write (2000) recommends dividing the time spent in the three stages of the writing workshop comparable to the graphic organizer.

The writing workshop is built on the premise that students need a predictable time to write. When students know they have a time every day to write on their own project, they think about writing even they were not writing (Graves, 1983). Students begin to think about their stories outside the writers' workshop (Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003) and look at daily experiences to discover ideas for stories. Writers also need extended periods of time to write so they have the chance to think, write, confer, read, and change their minds without being interrupted (Gillet & Beverly, 2003). Having a predictable routine for the workshop block allows students to focus on their writing and own actions instead of the block's format or when the next opportunity to write will arise.

Teachers should strive to create a community of writers who feel comfortable conferring with the other members of the class. Students need the chance to communicate with other writers, share ideas, and receive feedback while they are writing (Gillet & Beverly, 2003). This response from both peers and the teacher provides necessary assistance and support for the
each other’s writings, they enhance both their writing and critical thinking skills as they explain their ideas more fully. The students have the opportunity during writing time to think through each decision they make, carefully assessing if the words, events, reactions, and characters meet their purpose (Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003). However, when this personal analysis is done individually, the writer is not required to verbalize why he made particular decisions. By encouraging collaboration with classmates, teachers require students to analyze their decisions and expand on their rationales and ideas to other members of the class who can assist in making the content clearer to the audience.

Within the first few days of introducing the writing workshop, teachers should begin establishing the rules and procedures for the block. The room should be organized so the flow of traffic does not interfere with students who are working independently and routines should be established so time is not wasted while students gather materials and organize their drafts (Kaufman, 2001). Students will learn these procedures by what is taught and how the teacher models (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). They keep all their writing materials in their writing folder, including word lists, daily record sheets for conferences, drafts, and notes. Nothing should be thrown away, though the folder should be periodically cleaned out and organized (Kaufman, 2001). Teachers should encourage student collaboration, especially when the teacher is conferencing and cannot be interrupted. When giving help, students should make suggestions in a constructive manner, realizing that the writer has the decision of what suggestions to include. When students are assisting each other, they should never take another person’s paper and write on it (Morrow, 2003). Papers belong to the person who wrote them so suggestions should be made orally or notes recorded on another sheet of paper. This maintains the author’s ownership and authority over the piece.
A writer's notebook provides the students an introduction to seeing the world as a writer does by looking, listening, noticing, wondering, and questioning as they explore potential topics. The notebook should be a collection of lists, interesting details, pictures, and drawing (Calkins, 1994). When students struggle to find an idea for writing, they can look back through the collected entries, underlining possible phrases or details to use in a rough draft. The writer should reread her entries to find a spark of a story and identify an entry with potential. The teacher’s role is to respond to the entry with interest and to encourage the student to expand on her topic verbally during a conference.

When introducing the concept of recording observations in a writer's notebook, teachers should use literature to inspire writing. Harwayne (1992) lists a variety of books in which the main character keeps a writing notebook, including *I’m in Charge of Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor, *Sister* by Eloise Greenfield, *Summer Rules* by Robert Lipsyte, and *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh. Additionally, Harwayne (1992) includes books where the main character demonstrates strong writing potential. In *Miss Maggie* by Cynthia Rylant, the main character pays attention to other people’s lives, while in *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers the writer pays close attention to sounds. Children's literature provides an authentic example of how both authors and main characters utilize writer’s notebooks to organize their ideas, make observations, and record important details.

The writing workshop strives to encourage children to develop a love of writing by taking risks with their work. What students do as writers largely depends on what teachers expect of them and what the students have done in the past (Calkins, 1994). Students who feel comfortable taking risks in their writing develop new skills independently, internalizing the process of writing, and seeing it as a dynamic process in which creative attempts set their pieces apart from
The skills the students discover through their risk-taking can be refined and further encouraged through class minilessons and individual conferences. The goal of the writing workshop is to deepen the reading and writing connection (All Write, 2000) so students see themselves as writers by comparing their pieces and drawing ideas from children's literature.

The pivotal point of the writing workshop is allowing students to choose their own topics for writing to develop their voices and share their lives. Teachers should encourage students to write about topics that are significant to them, such as an area of expertise, memories, or past experiences (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). They develop their topics when they identify themselves as writers through their daily writing. A teacher's first role in the workshop is to help the students develop real reasons to write; with an authentic purpose and intended audience, the students view writing as a communicative process created to express a message to others (Gillett & Beverly, 2001). Often students struggle in finding a topic, because they feel as though their lives are uninteresting and unworthy of being included in a story. Teachers must "convince children that they have unique, worthwhile, and important ideas that deserve to be recorded" (Harwayne, 1992, p. 127). Teachers should provide strategies for them to discover ideas on their own, including free writes, journal entries, and lists.

The teacher takes on a dynamic role in the writing workshop, acting as a facilitator, expert, sounding board, and fellow writer throughout the minilesson, writing, conferencing, and sharing times. The teacher's first responsibility is to ensure the time, materials, and structure for students to write and talking about their writing (Gillett & Beverly, 2001). Teachers should provide models of quality writing by showing examples of their own work, students' pieces, and children's literature so students are aware of the characteristics of writing that takes risks. Focusing the students' attention on the qualities of good writing, including writing for a
particular audience, imagery, figurative language, and personal experience, provides tools for
them to observe the world around them.

The writing workshop creates a collaborative environment of writers who create pieces to
communicate for authentic reasons. These writers are empowered to choose their own topics for
writing, using resources such as personal experiences, writer's notebooks, and children's
literature to find ideas. Additionally, through minilessons and students conferences, teachers can
address areas of difficulties with the students so they can move through the writing process at a
pace that suits their abilities.

Minilessons

A minilesson is a short, focused writing lesson that allows teachers to provide needs-
based instruction to students. These lessons last between five and fifteen minutes at either the
beginning or end of the allotted writing time (All Write, 2000). No scope or sequence exists for
minilessons, because they are developed centered on where the students are in the writing
process or skills with which they are struggling. By constantly monitoring what the students are
doing, teachers can create minilessons based on what the class needs to know at that moment
(Gillet & Beverly, 2001). The skills taught should be ones that every writer will eventually need
even if individual students are not at that point yet (Calkins, 1994).

Minilessons cover one strategy or procedure while raising an issue, demonstrating a
method, focusing on an author's technique, or reinforcing a strategy (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).
The focus of a minilesson can draw from the areas of management, process writing, quality
writing, and conventions (All Write, 2000). At the beginning of the year, the lessons should
focus on management skills, including rules, materials, and voice levels, to ensure the workshop
runs smoothly. Once these routines are established and running, teachers need only to readdress
or add new management lessons as required to maintain the flow of the workshop. After management techniques are in place, process lessons develop the components of the writing process, including planning, sequencing, adding details, and eliminating unnecessary information. While introducing aspects of quality writing, students should explore exciting leads, vivid descriptions, and stretching a moment by using children's literature as examples (Harwayne, 1992). Minilessons that look at conventions empower students during the editing phase by addressing such skills as punctuation, quotations, and paragraphing. Minilessons addressing the process of writing, quality writing, and conventions should be integrated throughout the year. Not all students will incorporate the skill taught that day, but conferences offer the opportunity to address those skills at a later time (King, 1999).

Teachers can acquire ideas for minilessons from experts, students' works, children's literature, and personal experiences as a reader and writer (Calkins, 1994). Using children's literature as read alouds for a minilesson develops the students' awareness of how language and rhythm enhance stories. Furthermore, failures in pieces, stories that have been abandoned for example, provide valuable learning experiences as students analyze what made them leave or rework the "failed" pieces (Atwell, 1998). Regardless of the category into which the minilesson falls, it should only focus on one idea. The concept should be explained concisely and demonstrated briefly by the teacher; the strategy should be quick and the example well-selected (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). Students do not volunteer or respond to questions, because the goal of the lesson is to spark an idea or reinforce a strategy and to move the students into their writing. Additional expansion of a concept can be done during individual conferences or later minilessons.
Harwayne provides a list for occasions to use minilessons as instruction for writing that encourages students to relate the strategies to literature (1992). At the beginning of the year, minilessons serve to build community, develop students’ oral memory banks, understand students’ literacy histories, and build the image of good writing through read alouds and storytelling. When students choose writing projects, minilessons assist in search for special topics, find the significance of those topics, and linger on an issue. Throughout the year, minilessons allow students to study the characteristics of good writing, learn the steps of the writing process, and develop the abilities to collaborate with their peers; these lessons also demonstrate the reading-writing connection and promote self-evaluations throughout the writing process.

**Writing Time**

The majority of the writing workshop should be spent in uninterrupted writing time in where the students work on their current pieces. During this thirty to forty-five minute block, students engage in drafting, conferences with the teacher or peers, reading for ideas, or any of the phases in the writing process (All Write, 2000). Unless students are in conferences, they are writing so that when they finish one piece, they begin the writing process again. Teachers support students’ improvements in writing by providing opportunities for dialogue about their writings, whether during conferences or sharing sessions (McCarthy, 2002). These conversations allow students to realize what characteristics of their writing appeal to the audience and what revisions need to be made to fulfill the purpose of the piece. Teachers should model listening and responding to student writing with helpful questions so all members of the class know how an effective conference runs, whether with a teacher or classmate (Atwell, 1998). Some teachers choose to have a time reserved at the beginning of this block of the workshop for silent writing, in which the students work independently; at this time, teachers should model writing also
(Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). When the teacher begins conferencing, the students know they can begin peer conferences and collaboration.

Peer conferences provide the author with a source of feedback from readers their age during the writing process. These informal conversations between teacher-made pairs and small groups allow the students to work cooperatively to develop writing strategies (King, 1999). These conferences begin with the students sitting close together to minimize the noise in the classroom. The author reads the story aloud and the peer listens, providing several ideas on how to improve the content. The peer should give specific praise and ask questions about certain parts of the piece, for example “I didn’t understand the part when,” “you should tell about,” or “I was confused when” (Morrow, 2003).

While students are writing and engaging in peer conferences, teachers should conference with individual students or small groups. Between conferences they should have informal conversations with several members of the class to see what direction their writing is taking; these brief updates may result in impromptu conferences to address difficulties they are encountering then. Throughout the writing period, teachers should record the students with whom they confer, individual strategies, and the types of writing the students are using (All Write, 2000). These records allow teachers to assess with what skills the students are struggling and how they are integrating information from the minilessons. (Rothermel, 1996).

The goal of an effective writing conference is to provide students with what is most important to that student as a writer at that given moment. This individualized, needs-based instruction assists students in using clear, concise, and organized language to fulfill the purpose of the piece, helping teachers meet their goals for instruction and moving the development of each writer (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003). Quality conferences allow teachers to teach
to the needs of all students. As teachers engage in content-interested conversations about a piece, they should ask “what might help this writer?” (Calkins, 1994, p. 126). “While teachers are encouraged to co-discover and coach all learner writers, variations in conferencing can and should occur if teachers are to meet the needs of writers with widely differing experiences and skill bases” (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003, p. 292).

A writing conference begins with the teacher asking how she can help the student. From the students’ comments, the teacher begins to generate a focus for the conference as the students reads a part of her piece aloud. During the reading, teachers should watch the writer and make eye contact when possible (Atwell, 1998). This allows the teacher to focus on the content of the piece and the students’ facial expressions to resist making judgments about the writing. Teachers should then ask a question about the piece, such as “are there places you need more details?” and “what is the most important thing you are saying in this piece?,” because it further establishes the students as the authority on the topic and details (Gillet & Beverly, 2003, p. 107). The teacher then provides a single strategy or suggestion for the student to consider based on a difficulty the student has or building on what the writer knows and has already done. This whole process should last less than three minutes.

These brief conversations should focus on one aspect of assisting the writers to limit the exchanges and prevent students from feeling discouraged or overwhelmed. Conferences should be a natural conversation about the writing that looks at its design, the process of writing, or evaluating the work (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). A design conference explores the sequence and organization of a piece through its format and genre; while process conferences look at how the students put the piece together. In this type of conversation, teachers should ask the students how they wrote the pieces, what problems or successes they have encountered and , where the
piece will go next (Calkins, 1994). As the students evaluate during the conference, teachers explore for whom the piece is, how the work is changing, what strategies are working best, and what patterns are emerging (Atwell, 1998). Regardless of the conference form, attention is directed on the content, ideas, and meaning of the piece rather than its correctness in grammar and mechanics (Preece & Cowden, 1993).

One strategy Rowe, Fitch, and Bass (2003) recommend is the use of conference sheets to record comments, questions, and goals. This provides structure to the conference and can provide a possible direction for student talk. By organizing what was said, teachers can record the topics covered to assist in other conferences and minilessons.

Effective conferences ensure quality, focused time void of interruptions (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003). The students should take on an increasing amount of responsibility in leading the discussions the year progresses. Students should be accountable for determining on what aspects they need to focus and on what to work (Preece & Cowden, 1993). Teachers should give specific and personalized feedback that emphasizes the strengths and articulates the weaknesses in a constructive manner. Often teachers tend to spend too long in conferences, which causes them to lose effectiveness. To shorten a conference, teachers should remember not to try to solve all the problems in the piece, focusing instead on “sharing one strategy, giving one tip, or learning one things about the writer” (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987, p. 60).

Rothermel (1996) provides a variety of suggestions for teachers to provide for students during conferences. For example, he recommends have them narrow the focus on the piece, stick to a single piece, or provide more information to the story so the readers can create a vivid metal image of the scene. Additionally, students should be encouraged to use direct quotations for characters to bring the speaker to life and to punctuate those quotes correctly. Students should
also self-edit for spelling by circling words they were not sure how to spell correct to establish a focus for the editing process.

**Sharing Time**

Between ten and fifteen minutes should be allotted for students to share both their published pieces and their works in progress with the rest of the class. This whole class gathering offers a purpose for the students’ writings and supports them as a public, teacher-supported conference (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). The goal of this block of the writing workshop is to allow students to speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences in differing contexts. Additionally, it encourages children to listen attentively to receive and respond to the information being present by the sharing author (Morrow, 2003).

Share sessions can be done in small groups or as a whole class. Small response groups provide the opportunity for the students to hear the work of other members of the class and confer with each other (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987), acting as a forum for reading and talking about the works of others. When sharing with the whole class, students who share sit in the Author’s chair to read either published pieces or works in progress to the rest of the class (Rothermel, 1996). The class then gives the writer feedback on what positive attributes the piece possesses and asks questions to prompt the writer to clarify confusing parts.

Both Morrow (2003) and Rothermel (1996) emphasize the importance that the listeners provide constructive and non-critical feedback during sharing sessions. Such comments could include:

"I love the way you describe..."
"I wonder why the character...
"I like the use of the word/phrase..."
"The way you began your story was...
"I think your story would be easier to understand if...
"Could you add more description to...?"
"I like the dialogue. It makes me feel..."
"I was surprised when..."

Such comments give the author valuable determinations of how well the audience understands the message of the piece while maintaining the author as the authority on the topic.
**Evaluation**

Difficulties in scoring students' writing arise due to the subjectivity of the area and the conflict between constructivist teaching methods and traditional assessment methods. Traditional methods reduce students' abilities to letter grades that provide little reference as to how the students are actually performing on their writings based on their strengths and weaknesses. With the shift to authentic assessment, primarily in the form of portfolios in the writing workshop, teachers can effectively combine state or federal requirements with constructivism. Calkins states that "assessment allows us to be truly student-centered in our teaching" (Calkins, 1994, p. 314). Evaluating student writing based on their strengths and weaknesses promotes teaching the students what they need.

Writing evaluation focuses on what Rothermel (1996) calls "success oriented grading" so that the classroom is one that promotes the success of students based on their performance. Teachers should determine what the students should be able to do within the writing workshop and create a rubric with specific expectations.

Evaluating writing should strive to answer what types of records are being kept of the students' growth (Calkins, 1994). One goal in evaluating writing is to move away from the subjectivity of assigning letter grades, because this does little to tell the students what they do well and what needs improvement. Using set criteria to assess writing provides the students with authentic feedback on their relative strengths and weaknesses. Rubrics move away from the misconception that there are "A" students or that standards are reflected in giving students an "F" (Rothermel, 1996, p. 70-71). Rather, scores are seen as assessments of relative strengths and weaknesses so students have the knowledge of what steps are needed to improve their writing. A
writing program should have a shared system of assessment so students know what is expected of their work (Calkins, 1994).

Culham (2003) uses those assessment characteristics to create a writing model for teachers to implement a shar system of assessment suggested by Calkins (1994). The 6+1 Traits of Writing divides compositions into seven major categories, providing rubrics as the primary assessment tool which can be implemented from kindergarten through high school. The model does not replace an existing writing program. Rather, it works in conjunction within other programs by altering teaching methods to focus writing to the seven traits. The model allows students to see examples of other writing in a range of scores on the rubrics as they assess the strengths and weaknesses of a piece (NWREL, 1998). This teaching philosophy invites both teacher and student reflection while providing clear standards and strategies to work within the writing process. When implementing the 6+1 Traits into a writing program, teachers empower students with the criteria of quality writing; when students know the expectations of their writing, they have a better chance of succeeding (NWREL, 2000). The traits provide a foundation for revising, because that is often the most difficult phase of the writing process for students.

The 6+1 Traits evaluates student work based on ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. Each trait has a separate rubric with a scale from one to five, which demonstrates writing from early beginnings to advanced skill in a trait (Culham, 2003). This analytic scoring provides a broad perspective of student writing, offering a model with which to respond to that writing. This analytical approach to scoring students' papers provides vocabulary for discussing writing with the students (NWREL, 2003), structuring a framework to begin revision and editing. The students practice assessing other writing based on
the traits so they can see strengths and weaknesses in other writings and how that works into the rubrics. Empowering students as evaluators offers "additional practice and broadens their idea of the characteristics of successful writing" (Ziegler, 1984, p. 25).

In breaking down the pieces, teachers can make connections between assessment and instruction by addressing individual or class problems in the form of student conferences or class minilessons. This allows the students and teacher to focus specific attention on noted areas of weakness in conferences and minilessons. Though the traits are broken in the seven rubrics the components remain interrelated. Rather, dividing the writing process into smaller pieces allows students to focus on manageable pieces while putting together a presentation; each trait provides another building block to creating a published piece.

When evaluating students' writings, teachers should only score those traits that have already been taught, building on the traits over time. The 6+1 Traits of Writing model recommends teaching Ideas, Organization, and Voice first in order to develop the content in a structured fashion with the personality of the author coming through the text. Once a trait is taught, the students should continue implementing that characteristic in their writings, even as additional traits are added (NWREL, 2000, p. 87). Once all the traits are taught, teachers must decide if they want to score each trait on the students' papers. Though analytical scoring takes time, it compares to the time necessary to write comments on every student's paper. Traits should be scored on their helpfulness on giving the students feedback based on the chosen topic, genre, or assignment.

The scores from the rubrics should be assigned based on the numbers, not on letter grades. The numbers have specific meanings and provide a reference for the students on their strengths and areas for improvement. However, equating scores with the letter grades
inaccurately presents the students' abilities. Though a "5" on the rubrics is an example of quality work, a "1" is not failing, but a reflection that the student has not yet begun to incorporate that trait. Likewise, a score of a "3" does not mean average but reflects a balance of strengths and weaknesses based on the set criteria (NWREL, 2000, p. 91). The numerical scores allow students to distinguish between their strengths and weaknesses within the process of them developing their writing skills and directly coincide to the criteria for quality writing.

To make the numerical scores meaningful to the students, teachers should use the actual phrasing on the scoring guide to focus their comments on student performance (NWREL, 2003). This language offers significant feedback which authorizes the students to make decisions about their writing. The numbers of the rubrics have no reference unless the students familiarize themselves with the criteria's language associated with that number. Honesty in the scoring of papers articulates the students' perceived strengths and weaknesses, making the scores accurate and helpful for directing students' later writing. False scores given because a student works hard or just completed his best work fail to give an accurate representation of what the student has done well. Writing performance cannot be used to assess attitude, so teachers much make those considerations as they are giving summative grades (NWREL, 2000).

The following graphic organizer demonstrates how the 6+1 Traits of Writing works with the characteristics of the writing process. A description of each of the traits is presented, followed by several lesson plans that target specific areas with which students struggle in the given trait. Also included are a variety of rubrics for the use of both teachers and students.
Writing Instruction

Writing Process

Pre-writing ↔ Writing ↔ Revising ↔ Editing ↔ Publishing

Ideas Organization Voice Conventions Presentation

6 + 1 Traits of Writing

Word Choice

Sentence Fluency

Ideas

Within the prewriting stage of the writing process, the Ideas trait of 6+1 Traits promotes students to gather information and observe life through pictures, oral explanations, and written expressions. Ideas are “the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with all the details that enrich and develop that theme” (NWREL, 1999, p. 3). The goal of the Ideas trait is to surprise the reader with new information which lies embedded in the details, providing piece of information another observer would overlook.

The focus of this trait is the exploration of the students’ topics as they brainstorm possible subjects within their purpose for writing. It provides a framework to help the students make decisions about their purpose, form, audience, and tone (NWREL, 1999). Students keep lists in their writers’ notebooks and choose a variety of resource, including movies, literature, and articles on which to draw information. They begin to develop ideas by observing the world around them and recording memorable experiences. Ideas concentrate on recording all possible topics about which the students are motivated and developing them into a manageable size with a conscious focus of who they are writing for and what their role as the speaker of the piece is.

While developing their topic, Morrow (2003) states that students should consider a series of questions to direct their thinking while planning a piece. They need to ascertain if they have enough information on the topic, and if not, where they can get the necessary facts. Students also must be aware of the scope of their topic, exploring how to broaden or narrow it to a manageable size.

Students should consider the following questions posed by NWREL (2000) while self-evaluating their use of Ideas:

- Do I know enough about the topic to share new or little-known information to my readers?
- Do I show what happened?
- Do I incorporate interesting details?
- Is my topic large or small enough to handle?
- Can I answer the question “What is the point of this piece?”?
Ideas Lesson Plans

Ideas Notebook

Materials: stories where the main character keeps a notebook, writing notebook, pencils

Procedure:
1. Read a story about main characters who keep writing notebooks. For example, Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh, Miss Maggie by Cynthia Rylant, or The Listening Walk by Paul Showers.
2. Explain that writing notebooks are for recording their thoughts, ideas, questions, and conversations. Students should write in their notebooks on a regular basis.
3. They can choose an idea from their notebook when they need an idea to write about.


Top Ten Lists

Materials: paper, pencils, chart paper, marker

Procedure:
1. Have the students brainstorm what Top Ten lists might be and what kind of Top Ten lists they’ve heard before (songs, movies, books, etc).
2. Offer an example of your own Top Ten list, either best or worse. For example, we might do our “Top Ten Favorite Books,” starting with number one and working down or the reverse.
3. Ask the students how this could be helpful in writing, leading them in the direction that it can give them ideas.
4. Discuss what type of Top Ten best or worse lists would be most helpful for writing. Ask them to think about stories they’ve written and where they’ve gotten stuck before. Walk them through the process of writing step by step. For example, have them think about when they start a story and what they need to know (character descriptions and names, setting, time period, etc). Continue through the middle and end of the story, when topics like problems and solutions will arise. Record these suggestions on chart paper for the students to refer back to later.
5. Brainstorm a few of these lists together. For example, “Top Ten Worst Problems for a Character,” Top Ten Scary Places,” or “Top Ten Names for a Character.”

Fishbowl of Ideas

Materials: fishbowl, paper scraps

Procedure:
1. Hand out slips of paper to each student and have them write their ideas down.
2. Each idea will be put in the fishbowl, which will be available for the students to use whenever they can’t think of an idea during writing time. They can choose as many ideas as they need until they find one they like.
3. The students can continue adding ideas to the fishbowl when they think of one they wish to share.

This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.

A. The topic is narrow and manageable.
B. Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.
C. Reasonably accurate details are present to support the main ideas.
D. The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original.
E. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.
F. Insight—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.

The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.

A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is headed.
B. Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line.
C. Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate, or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.
D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.
E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
F. The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme. The writer has not yet focused the topic past the obvious.

As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

A. The writer is still in search of a topic, brainstorming, or has not yet decided what the main idea of the piece will be.
B. Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development.
C. The idea is a simple restatement of the topic or an answer to the question with little or no attention to detail.
D. The writer has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.
E. Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what is important.
F. The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts with no discernable point.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). *An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing*. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
# IDEAS
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The Message---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfying</th>
<th>Intriguing</th>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>Insightful</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Shows more than tells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>Sumptuous detail</td>
<td>Surprises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting tidbits</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Vivid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivating</td>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The voice of experience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Intriguing possibilities**  Gaining momentum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solid first draft, but superficial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning to dig and question</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Developing**  4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic too big</th>
<th>Tells, but doesn’t show</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skimpy support</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming into focus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Just a taste</td>
<td>Leans toward the obvious—predictable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emerging**  3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murky</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Perplexing</th>
<th>Writer struggling</th>
<th>Cliché</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic not clear</td>
<td>Random thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bare beginning</td>
<td>Purpose-free</td>
<td>Searching for ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic not yet identified</td>
<td>Doesn’t show or tell</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Hard to paraphrase</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Not-yet**  2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic not clear</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Random thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bare beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic not yet identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A main idea is the hot dog in the bun. This juicy dog is easy to identify because it stands out in detail, length (regular or extra long), and plumpness. Right away it becomes the center of attention. It might look plain, but inside the meat is spiced and flavored just right and made of all the ingredients that cause your mouth to water after that very first bite. You find yourself taking bite after bite because the hot dog is so good—just the way you like it. This hot dog is special because it responds to your need for nourishment and when you are finished, you feel satisfied.

IDEA Tips for Writers:
1. Name the main idea (hot dog).
2. Make sure you can always see it (hot dog).
3. Find good details that tell about the main idea (hot dog).
4. Get answers to your questions about the topic (hot dog).
5. Once you start enjoying your piece, you won’t want to stop (hot dog).

Level 5 - I’ve Got it!
- You can tell I know a LOT about this topic.
- My writing is bursting with flavorful tidbits.
- I’ve picked a topic small enough to handle.
- I know quite a bit about this idea.

Level 3 - On My Way
- I know enough to get a good start.
- Some of my details are too general.
- My topic might be a little too big to handle.
- Now and then it really works well.

Level 1 - Just Beginning
- I just don’t know what I want to say yet.
- Lots of ideas, just no details.
- It’s hard to picture anything.
- I’m still thinking on paper—looking for an idea.

Student Rubric for Ideas

Made it!

___ I have a main idea.
___ I stick with my main idea. I do not try to tell about everything.
___ I know a lot about my topic.
___ I share interesting details.
___ It is easy to tell what my paper is about.

Getting there . . .

___ I have a main idea.
___ I stick with my main idea most of the time.
___ I know some things about my topic.
___ I share one or two details.
___ You can guess what my paper is about.

It's a start.

___ I do not have a main message yet.
___ I just wrote the first thing I thought of.
___ I need more information on my topic.
___ I can't think of any details.
___ It is hard to tell what my paper is about.

Organization

In the context of the drafting phase of the writing process, Organization describes the internal structure of a piece. This framework holds the piece together, giving it shape and direction in order to "move the reader through the ideas in a purposeful way" (NWREL, 2000, p. 20). With strong organization, the reader feels a sense of anticipation with the building details as he creates connections within the writing and his own life.

Prior to writing, students should take notes as they plan their piece. Bereiter and Scardamalie recommend a think-write-think-write pattern (Dahl & Farnan, 1998), in which students brainstorm possible difficulties they may encounter while writing and recording possible solutions and answers to those questions. For the second "think-write" phase, writers explore what they know about their chosen topic, set goals for the piece, and reflect on desired audience reactions. They then move into formulating the paragraphs and the organizational form that would best fulfill the previously set goals.

While considering how to organize the piece, students should have the option of using graphic organizers to discover how to best distribute the information to the readers. For example, a student writing a fictional story should develop the characters' personalities and the setting before beginning the piece; he should also make a list of what events will occur in the story and how to resolve the problem. For a student writing a nonfiction account, graphic organizers should be available to create a flow to the piece as she explores specific events, causes and effects, or similarities and differences.

Writers choose the organizational patterns for the piece based on their purposes, such as chronological, development of a central theme, compare/contrast, and cause/effect. Chronological refers to the passage of time, using signal words such as first, next, last, and finally (Fisher & Frey, 2004). The development of a central theme has each of the main ideas and details focused around the larger theme of the piece. The compare/contrast structure relies on descriptive text to explain how two concepts are alike and different. Often words such as yet, while, however, and like/unlike are used to demonstrate this relationship. Cause/effect shows another relationship between concepts as one incident makes another occur.

After deciding the piece's organizational structure, writers should consider their leads and conclusions, brainstorming possibilities. The piece should begin meaningfully and entice the audience to continue reading, while the ending should draw the piece to a close and give the
reader something to consider (Culham, 2003). Students should practice using leads that make a statement, use a humorous anecdote, state a startling fact, or pose a question (NWREL, 2000). Strong leads should immerse the reader in the setting and action of the story while creating a sense of urgency. They should cause the readers to wonder and often "ask questions that make the reader want to read on" (Gillet & Beverly, 2001, p. 117). By referring back to the goal of the piece, students can develop their lead based on their purpose. The conclusion of the piece should tie the details together and leave the reader considering aspects of the story. As with leads, students should experiment with endings to fulfill the goals of the piece. Possible endings include posing a challenging question, suggesting another story, summarizing, stating an observation, highlighting a detail the reader may have overlooked, or resolving questions (NWREL, 2003).

Within the body of the story, the details should build to the most important event or point the piece is trying to make. Details should provide bridges from the beginning of the piece to the ending, fitting together to connect back to the main idea. Supporting details should link ideas together for the reader, while building up to the story's climax. Trivial details should be avoided, because these meaningless details detract from the flow of the story and distract the reader from the purpose of the piece.

While evaluation their writings for Organization, NWREL (2000) suggests that students ask the following questions:

*Does my beginning get the reader's attention and give clues about the rest of the story?*
*Do all the details give a little more information about the main idea or story?*
*Are all my details in the right place?*
*Do I end in the right spot?*
Organization Lesson Plans

Cut-and-Paste

Materials: overhead projector, sample text on transparency, blank transparency, marker, scissors, tape

Procedure:
1. Show the sample text on the overhead projector, and read it aloud or have a student read it.
2. Invite the students to suggest places where more information is needed.
3. Mark the suggested revisions on the transparency with the marker, using carets for small additions and other revision symbols as needed.
4. Have the students identify a place in the text where a major addition should occur.
5. Mark the place with the marker. Cut the transparency apart above and below the added sections.
6. Use the marker to write the addition on the blank transparency, using space as needed.
7. Tape the cut-apart sections to the blank transparency above and below the added section.
8. Review the steps you followed to add a new section to the draft.
9. Have the students reread one of their pieces of writing and decide if they need to add more details. Provide them with scissors, tape, and extra paper to make their additions.


Beginnings

Materials: several favorite storybooks, chart paper, markers

Procedure:
1. To make a beginnings chart, read the beginnings of your pre-selected stories. Afterwards ask the students to tell you their beginning sentences. If desired, have the students look at other storybooks in the classroom for additional beginnings.
2. Ask the students to brainstorm answers to the question of how stories can start. Explain that the beginning words of some stories tell what kind of stories they will be. For example, “Once upon a time” indicates it would be a fairy tale.
3. Make a list of the children’s ideas of how a story can begin on the chart paper.
4. Display the completed list for the students’ reference.
5. Have the students look at their current piece and determine what kind of beginning they have.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
Writing a Paragraph

Materials: chart paper, markers, pencils, previously completed art project (1 per student), writing paper

Procedure:
1. Show the children your art project. Have several students offer one sentence that tells about the project and record them on the chart paper.
2. Take the recorded information and use it as the basis for a paragraph. Model for the students the writing of a paragraph, providing them with the following information:
   A paragraph is a group of sentences with one topic idea.
   A paragraph begins with an indentation on a new line.
   A paragraph consists of a topic sentence and two or more supporting sentences.
3. Write your paragraph with the students help. Begin by indenting the first line and writing a topic sentence that tell what you created. Add sentences from the chart paper to expand on your topic.
4. When the paragraph is complete, have a student read it aloud.
5. Divide the class into partners. Have them share their art projects with their partners, telling the partners all about their own projects as well as what they see in their partners’ projects.
6. After the sharing, have the students write a paragraph about their art project.


Writing a Narrative Story

Materials: Narrative Writing web, chart paper, markers

Procedure:
1. To be a narrative writer, the students will tell a story or describe a series of events in chronological order. In a personal narrative, the author tells about a personal experience, describing the event and her reactions or feelings towards what happened.
   Primary Features of Personal Narratives
   • First-person point of view
   • Chronological organization
   • Significance of the events is revealed
   • Reader shares the writer’s thoughts and feelings
   Primary Features of Narratives
   • Setting is clear
   • Characters are developed
   • Problem, conflict, or disagreement motivates the characters
   • Story progresses through a series of events
   • Problem is solved
2. After a common experience (field trip, interesting movie, memorable project), have the students brainstorm the various aspects of the experience. Teach the children how to use the Narrative Writing web by recording their responses on the enlarged web.

3. Using the completed web for ideas, have the students compose the story, telling about their common experience. Write their story on chart paper and read it aloud. Go through each element of narrative writing to be sure that it has been completed.

ORGANIZATION

5

The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.

A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
B. Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.
C. Details seem to fit where they're placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
D. Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
E. The title, if desired, is original and captures the central theme of the piece.
F. Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience.

3

The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.

A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie-up all loose ends.
B. Transitions often work well; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy.
C. Sequencing shows some logic, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the ideas. In fact, sometimes it is so predictable and rehearsed that the structure takes attention away from the content.
D. Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
E. A title (if desired) is present, although it may be uninspired or an obvious restatement of the prompt or topic.
F. The organization sometimes supports the main point or story line; at other times, the reader feels an urge to slip in a transition or move things around.

1

The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

A. There is no real lead to set-up what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up.
B. Connections between ideas are confusing or not even present.
C. Sequencing needs lots and lots of work.
D. Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa.
E. No title is present (if requested) or, if present, does not match well with the content.
F. Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
ORGANIZATION
—The Internal Structure—

Journey of discovery  Holds together  Every part adds to the whole
Purpose and direction  Beautiful architecture  Logical, but with flair
Creative  High point(s)  Movement and pacing
The ending lingers in your mind  Sense of resolution  A real lead
Hooks you—and keeps you hooked  Clear connections

Competent
Still taking aim
Make your own connections

Easy to follow—usually

Emerging
Developing
Maturing
Strong

Formula writing (five-paragraph theme)
Continuity comes and goes  Pacing irregular
Some bumpy spots
Recognizable introduction and ending
You'd like to rearrange a few things

Muddled  Confounding  Run that by me again...
Jumbled  Drags its feet, then races ahead
San-Andreas-Fault-sized gaps of information  Huh?
Tangled in trivia  No sense of beginning

Organization is the bun that holds the hot dog, mustard, ketchup and all the other condiments together. Without it, they would stand alone and not work together smoothly as a unit. As your teeth sink into a soft top bun, you find a brilliant beginning so good your mouth waters for more. If you continue on you will find a mighty middle crease strong enough to carry the best dog around and connect the bottom bun—an extraordinary ending. "Ahhh! That was good," you say. The hot dog bun creates a tasty eating order for a really super dog. Without this bun you have a big mess, a jumble of ingredients that don't come even close to the perfect hot dog of your dreams.

**ORGANIZATION Tips for Writers:**
1. Look for a brilliant beginning (top bun), exciting.
2. Find a mighty middle (strong crease), powerful.
3. Read an extraordinary ending (bottom bun), remembered.
4. You can follow it easily.
5. Everything ties together.

**Level 5 - I've Got It!**
- BB is exciting, MM is strong, EE will be remembered.
- Every detail is in the right place.
- It builds to the good parts.
- Logical order makes the ideas clear.

**Level 3 - On My Way**
- BB, MM, EE—some parts are working better than others.
- Most of the details fit, but some are hanging out there.
- Taking aim at a clear direction, but doesn't always hit the mark.
- Reads like a formula.

**Level 1 - Just Beginning**
- BB? MM? EE? Nopel
- Details are jumbled and confusing.
- Jumps around and hard to follow
- Just "stuff" on paper with no sense of order.

**Student Rubric for Organization**

**Made it!**

___ Everything is in order.
___ I stick to my main idea.
___ My paper gets off to a great start!
___ My paper has a strong ending. It feels finished.

**Getting there . . .**

___ Parts of my paper are in order.
___ Sometimes, I wander!
___ I have a beginning. It is one I have used before.
___ I have an ending. It is one I have used before.

**It’s a start.**

___ My paper is out of order.
___ I wander a lot. I try to tell about too many things.
___ My paper does not have a beginning. I just started to write.
___ My paper is not finished. I just stopped.
Or, I wrote the end.

---

**Voice**

Voice is the individuality behind the words as the author comes through in his writing; it provides the piece with character and style that sets the writer apart from others. When a writer engages with the topic personally and writes with an awareness of his audience, he writes with a sense that a real person is conveying the message (NWREL, 1998). To create an authentic voice, writers must be honest in portraying their own perspectives and not writing what others want to hear. Voice provides a means for the author to explore his own feelings and put those sentiments on paper (Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003). This requires a classroom environment in which each student feels safe and acceptable sharing his writings.

To create an authentic voice, students must write for a real audience, writing as though the audience is present and talking to them. Students should be aware that different purpose and organizational patterns affect the voice of the piece because of the desired response of the audience (Morrow, 2003). Dahl and Farnan (1998) note that students must possess an audience awareness in order to create a vision of the readers and make decisions to shape the piece. The audience affects what details to include or leave out and how to add details effectively. The role of the author is to communicate meanings and give information to the readers, which can be accomplished through recognizing how to meet the needs of the audience through an authentic voice. Through collaboration, students develop a sense of what characteristics will appeal to their audiences, asking first if the audience will like it and then considering if they as the author like it (Gillet & Beverly, 2001).

While evaluating their writing for Voice, students should consider (NWREL, 2000):

- Did I put my personal stamp on my writing?
- Can my readers tell I'm talking to them?
- Do I write with confidence?
- Did I put my feelings in my paper so my readers feel what I do?
- Can you tell I wrote this?
Voice Lesson Plans

Voice Game

Materials: large area

Procedure:
1. Have the students sit in a circle on the floor in random order.
2. Ask the students to close their eyes as you roam through the group.
3. Periodically, touch a student gently on the head. That’s their signal to say, “Hello out there” (or a phrase of your choice).
4. The rest of the students try to guess who is speaking.
5. After the game, talk about how you recognized different voices. How does this affect writing? How do different voices change what the piece is saying?


Voice Paragraphs

Materials: paper, pencils

Procedure:
1. Review letter writing with the students so you agree what denotes an effective letter.
2. Have the students write about one of the following events: describing the most exciting experience, convince the readers why they/you should attend a slumber party; explain why your most recent grade was less than acceptable.
3. Ask your students to write a paragraph to three of the following audiences. It’s important that they experience how they would change their voices depending on different types of readers.
   - Someone you just met
   - Your best friend
   - A newspaper reporter
   - A parent
   - A classmate
   - The principal
   - Your teacher
   - Your pen pal
4. Discuss the differences between voices and how they became clear in this exercise.

Writing Like a Scientist

Materials: nonfiction book, writing paper

Procedure:
1. Read the nonfiction book to the students. The book should be on a topic that the students can observed later (leaves changing colors, a class pet, storms, etc).
2. Discuss the nonfiction genre and how it differs from fiction. Have the students brainstorm what they noticed about nonfiction from the book.
3. As a class, make and record observations about the topic. Have the students include as many details as they notice.
4. After the observations, have the students write “as scientists” to document what they have seen. Remind them that when they take the scientist’s voice, they should use the correct vocabulary and only write what they observed.

VOICE

5  The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.

A. The tone of the writing adds interest to the message and is appropriate for the purpose and audience.
B. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, sensing the person behind the words.
C. The writer takes a risk by revealing who he or she is consistently throughout the piece.
D. Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by showing why the reader needs to know this and why he or she should care.
E. Narrative writing is honest, personal, and engaging and makes you think about, and react to, the author's ideas and point of view.

3  The writer seems sincere but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.

A. The writer seems aware of an audience but discards personal insights in favor of obvious generalities.
B. The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing, yet safe manner.
C. Only one or two moments here or there intrigue, delight, or move the reader. These places may emerge strongly for a line or two, but quickly fade away.
D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic to build credibility.
E. Narrative writing is reasonably sincere, but doesn't reflect unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1  The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the paper reflects more than one of the following problems:

A. The writer is not concerned with the audience. The writer's style is a complete mismatch for the intended reader or the writing is so short that little is accomplished beyond introducing the topic.
B. The writer speaks in a kind of monotone that flattens all potential highs or lows of the message.
C. The writing is humdrum and "risk-free."
D. The writing is lifeless or mechanical; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic.
E. The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is present—zip, zero, zilch, nada.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
## VOICE

**The Person Behind the Words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can't get it out of your head</th>
<th>Strong conviction</th>
<th>Engaging</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You need to know this...</td>
<td>You've gotta hear this...</td>
<td>Style!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A thoughtful person wrote this</td>
<td>Laughter and tears</td>
<td>Lively</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Fingerprint of the author</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Written to be read</td>
<td>Risky</td>
<td>Topic springs to life</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to read the sequel</td>
<td>Passionate</td>
<td>The voice of authority</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Watchful, wary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right on the edge</td>
<td>Expected</td>
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<td>Earnest, caring, trying</td>
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<td>Emerging</td>
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<td>Strong</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>It's there, but then it's gone</td>
<td>Personable</td>
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<td>Hides behind a facade</td>
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<td>Moments that grab you</td>
<td>Safe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guarded</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Let's just get this over with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No hints of the writer</td>
<td>Audience? What audience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay way over there, reader</td>
<td>Bland</td>
<td>Boring</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>Mechanical technical</td>
<td>Keep out! Ho-hum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rote response</td>
<td>Author hides</td>
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<td>Not yet</td>
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Voice:
Ketchup, Mustard, Pickle Relish, Onions, Cheese

Voice is your choice of all the goodies you want to add to the basic ingredients of the hot dog. After all, it's YOUR hot dog, so it's time to make it reflect what you like best. Do you like spicy mustard? Squirt it on! Or do you prefer ketchup, relish, onions or cheese (and don't forget the sauerkraut)? The condiments you choose creates a hot dog that is uniquely yours, piled high with all of your favorite ingredients. This hot dog stands out because it doesn't look like everyone else's and doesn't go unnoticed any way you squeeze it. Condiments add zip to your bite!

VOICE Tips for Writers:
1. Find the places (mustard, ketchup, relish, etc.) that are just exactly the way you want them.
2. Show that you are really committed to this hot dog by your personal choices.
3. Find parts that enhance the hot dog (ideas) and helps you connect with other hot dog lovers.
4. It takes courage to dress your hot dog in your own unique way.

Level 5 - I've Got It!
- The piece shines with personality and confidence.
- Readers feel a kinship with the writer.
- Writer clearly shows the main idea is important.
- The piece is so alive you want read it aloud.

Level 3 - On My Way
- There are moments where real feelings shine through.
- Pleasant, sincere—but cautious.
- The main idea is talked about with some care, just not a lot of energy.
- Leans toward the obvious and predictable.

Level 1 - Just Beginning
- Writer is indifferent; just a list of facts or statements.
- Who cares?
- It is hard to tell who wrote this.
- Audience? What audience?

Student Rubric for Voice

Made it!

___ I love how my paper sounds.
___ This sounds like me.
___ My paper is lively. I say what I really think and feel.
___ My paper shows feelings.

Getting there . . .

___ I like my paper. It sounds ok.
___ Parts of it sound like me.
___ Some parts are lively. I share my real feelings at least once.
___ At least one sentence shows feelings.

It's a start.

___ I am not sure I like it.
___ I do not think it sounds like me.
___ My paper is not lively. I did not share my real feelings.
___ My paper does not show feelings—yet!

Word Choice

Within the context of revision, word choice focuses on the use of rich and precise language that articulates the exact phrasing the author desires. This colorful vocabulary involves using a combination of unusual and everyday language in a fresh manner. Word choice requires writers to make their language precise, not just correct, through experimenting with dialects, formal phrasings, and informal usage.

The trait of Word Choice varies with the purpose and genre of the writing. Regardless of the type of piece, concise language is still the primary focus, but the readers’ reactions to those precise words differ. Strong word choice in descriptive writing creates a detailed image in the reader’s mind, while in persuasive writing, clear language further elaborates the writer’s point of view, sometimes convincing the reader to agree. Word choice in informational writing clarifies, explains, or expands key ideas and details (NWREL, 1999).

The words chosen for a piece should address the purpose of the writing while creating a vivid picture for the audience. Students should be aware of overused and non-descriptive words commonly used in writing, replacing them with a varied vocabulary that uses colorful adjectives, nouns, and verbs. To add the most strength to their pieces, students should focus on verbs that convey action. William Zinsser states, “Verbs are the most important of all your tools. They push sentences forward and give it momentum” (Zinsser, 1994, p. 65). While all parts of speech contribute to strong word choice, students should focus their attention on verbs that convey action, power, and energy.

A struggle that writers encounter within this trait is the overreliance on the thesaurus. Students should learn to use this resource skillfully and sparingly in an effort to maintain natural language in a piece. Writers must learn not to defer to the thesaurus when searching for a word to prevent them from attempting to impress their audience. Rather, literature should be introduced as a resource for natural language (Harwayne, 1992), so the writer can incorporate precise words appropriate to the piece’s purpose, characters, and speaker.

NWREL (2000) recommends that students consider the following questions while evaluating their use of Word Choice:

Do all my words fit in the paper? Do they all seem just right?
Are my words colorful, snappy, and fresh?
Do I use overdone, vague, or flowery language?
Do I have energetic verbs?
**Word Choice Lesson Plans**

**Describe It**

**Materials:** food items (grapes, popcorn, apple slices, marshmallows, crackers, gumdrops), chart paper, markers, crayons

**Procedure:**
1. Let the students know that adjectives are words that describe or tell about nouns and pronouns. They add details about the nouns and pronouns, telling what kind, how much, or how they compare.
2. Pass out the food item, one per child, instructing the students not to touch it. Ask the students to brainstorm words that describe how the item looks. Record these answers on chart paper.
3. Instruct the students to touch the item and brainstorm words that describe how the item feels. Record these answers.
4. Have the students eat the item and brainstorm words that describe how it tastes. Record these answers.
5. When all the describing words have been recorded, read the list aloud. Have the students write three to five descriptive sentences about the food item, using some of the words on the chart. When the sentences are complete, have the students use a crayon or marker to underline the adjectives they used.


**Opposites**

**Materials:** *Inside, Outside, Upside Down* by Stan and Janice Berenstain, chart paper, markers, pencils, Opposites Brainstorming sheet, leaf patterns

**Procedure:**
1. Read aloud *Inside, Outside, Upside Down*.
2. Use the word “antonyms” and discuss the definition with the class.
3. Partner the children and give each team a brainstorming sheet. Instruct each team to brainstorm a list of words with opposite meanings.
4. Allow the students to brainstorm for 5 minutes. Use the chart paper to record the compiled list of antonyms they have found.
5. Copy and cut out the five leaves per child. Cut the leaves in half, forming two puzzle pieces each. Write one word from a pair of opposites the students generated on each piece of the leaf puzzle.
6. Instruct the students to read the words on the leaf pieces and to put the leaf together by matching the antonyms.

Synonym Sundaes

Materials: bowl pattern, ice cream scoop patterns, box, index cards, thesaurus, markers, tape

Procedure:
1. Have the students list words they use repeatedly in their writing. Write these words on index cards to add to the box of possible choices to make “sundaes” out of.
2. Make a list of commonly used adjectives on index cards and place them in a box. Each group will draw a card from the box, and the word they draw will be written on the bowl.
3. They will use a thesaurus and their own knowledge to find as many synonyms for their word as they can. Each synonym will be written on an ice cream scoop.
4. The scoops will be stacked on top of each other to create a sundae.
5. Display the thesaurus sundaes in the room for future reference. If students have extra time, they can choose another word and create additional sundaes to add to the wall.


Tired Words

Materials: chart paper, markers, banned words list, adjectives list, verbs list

Procedure:
1. Create a list of “tired words” or words that are commonly used in writing that don’t have much description. Post the list in the room so the students have an idea of what words they should replace in their writing.
2. When we write, it’s important to use the best words possible in our sentences. These are the words that describe the situation, person, or object the best by creating a picture in the reader’s mind. We should ask: Did I pick just the right word for just the right places?
3. Using creative adjectives that we don’t hear very often and verbs that show lots of energy can do this. The students will create a list of adjectives to use that are creative and fresh.
4. They will repeat making a list using energetic verbs.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
WORD CHOICE

Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.

A. Words are specific and accurate. It is easy to understand just what the writer means.
B. Striking words and phrases often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.
C. Language and phrasing is natural, effective, and appropriate for the audience.
D. Lively verbs add energy while specific nouns and modifiers add depth.
E. Choices in language enhance the meaning and clarify understanding.
F. Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.

The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. It is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.

A. Words are adequate and correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.
B. Familiar words and phrases communicate but rarely capture the reader's imagination.
C. Attempts at colorful language show a willingness to stretch and grow but sometimes reach beyond the audience (thesaurus overload!).
D. Despite a few successes, the writing is marked by passive verbs, everyday nouns, and mundane modifiers.
E. The words and phrases are functional with only one or two fine moments.
F. The words may be refined in a couple of places, but the language looks more like the first thing that popped into the writer's mind.

The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.

A. Words are so nonspecific and distracting that only a very limited meaning comes through.
B. Problems with language leave the reader wondering. Many of the words just don't work in this piece.
C. Audience has not been considered. Language is used incorrectly making the message secondary to the misfires with the words.
D. Limited vocabulary and/or misused parts of speech seriously impair understanding.
E. Words and phrases are so unimaginative and lifeless that they detract from the meaning.
F. Jargon or clichés distract or mislead. Redundancy may distract the reader.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
**WORDS**

_The Language That Brings It to Life_

I can see it  Deliberate  Striking, yet natural  Dynamic
Wordsmithery  Every day words with a twist

Powerful verbs  Oh, that was good!  Energetic  Sensory details
Precise  Specific  JUST right!  Appealing  Original
I wish I'd said that  Vivid

Word list of the week
Tries too hard to impress
Reaching...just not there yet

Thesaurus alert

"Good" and "nice" vs. zowie and scrumptious
"Poetic" language overdone
Routine language

Some precision, many generalities

I can't bill on clichès  A good verb or two

Hard to wring much meaning from these words  Inadequate  Just plain wrong

Redundant  Imprecise  Vague and stuff...
Passive  Monotonous

Colorless  Groping—threadbare  Where are the verbs?

All your favorite words are sitting right here in an ice-cold can of your favorite soda fizzing away, waiting to be savored. So...hurry and look really close because you're not drinking from just any old generic can. This one is loaded with action verbs, delightful phrases, and beautiful imagery that sparks your imagination and creates picture after picture in your mind as you gulp it down. Each little carbonated bubble delights and surprises as it pops and fizzes its way down your throat. Now that you've made it this far, take another nice, big gulp of your favorite soda. Ahh, the perfect satisfaction of words to quench your writer's thirst.

WORD CHOICE Tips for Writers:
1. Find descriptive words that paint a picture in your mind.
2. Hunt for striking yet natural words that fit the piece perfectly.
3. Change passive verbs for action verbs whenever possible.
4. Choose specific words rather than the first thing that pops into mind.

Level 5 - I’ve Got It!
- Every word seems exactly right!
- Colorful, fresh & snappy—yet nothing's overdone.
- Accurate and precise.
- The words help the reader SEE what you’re talking about.

Level 3 - On My Way
- Words are correct but not very interesting.
- Some words spark emotion—others are flat.
- A cliché here and there, but some originality, too.
- Thesaurus alert... a good tool overused!

Level 1 - Just Beginning
- Confusing and misleading.
- Redundant phrases are redundant.
- Vague, fuzzy and often just flat-out wrong.
- No picture for the reader to work with from these words.

Student Rubric for Word Choice

Made it!

____ It is easy to picture what I am saying. I use words correctly.
____ I do not repeat important words.
____ I use strong verbs to show action.
____ I stretch for new words.
____ I use words that help readers see, hear, feel, taste, or smell things.

Getting there . . .

____ Maybe you can picture what I am saying. I think I use most words correctly.
____ I repeat a few words.
____ I use one or two strong verbs to show action.
____ I use one or two new words.
____ I use at least one word to help the reader see, hear, feel, taste, or smell things.

It's a start.

____ It is hard to picture what I am saying. I do not know if I use all the words correctly.
____ I repeat a lot of words.
____ I can’t find any strong verbs.
____ I did not try any new words—yet!
____ I did not worry about sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or feelings!

Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency works within the revision framework of the writing process, focusing on the question “how does that sound when read aloud?” (NWREL, 1999, p. 7). This trait extends writing beyond the visual aspect into the auditory by hearing how the sentence and word patterns work together. By reading pieces aloud, writers become aware of the rhythm and flow of language. They discover that fluent writing has cadence and movement that parallels the mood and purpose of the piece. Sentences should be concise so every word or phrase works to make the sentence impactful.

Students should notice how they begin their sentences to avoid repetition in their openings. Sentences should have varied starts that link to previous thoughts. Transition words such as “then,” “but,” “meanwhile,” and “when that happened” demonstrate logic in the writing and helps to prevent redundancy.

The length of sentences should vary throughout the piece. Students should be aware of what considerations to make the use of both long and short sentences effective. They should practice both combining short, choppy sentences into longer, more flowing ones and slicing long, awkward ones into two shorter sentences. The length of the sentence coincides with the purpose of the details; long and flowing sentences should be used for description, while short and snappy ones emphasize a point (NWREL, 2000).

The key to writing fluent sentences that are free of awkwardness that slows down the reader is playing with sentence structure. Students should practice beginning sentences in different ways, revising problem sentences as they arise. Though a parallel structure should exist while looking at the piece as a whole, sentences should display variety in length and style. Not every sentence should begin “Sally did this...,” “And then we...,” or with introductory phrases; there should be a combination of these beginnings to make the writing flow together as a cohesive whole. For example, the beginning of the following piece uses a repetitive beginning that fails to engage the reader in the story: “We went to the beach. We had fun. We saw seagulls. We went home” (NWREL, 2000, p. 26). This introduction could be consolidated into “Despite being overrun with seagulls, we had fun at the beach” and then expanded to give more details on the day at the beach before concluding “We had a great day at the beach before heading home.”
While evaluating their writings for Sentence Fluency, students should ask the following questions (NWREL, 2000):

- Are some of my sentences long and flowing? Are some short and snappy?
- Do I like the sound of my piece being read aloud?
- Do my sentence beginnings vary?
- Do they show how the ideas are related?
- Have I cut out the unnecessary words?
Sentence Fluency Lesson Plans

Sentence Fluency

Materials: overhead transparency, 2 column chart, writing paper

Procedure:

1. Provide the students with a writing sample low in sentence fluency on the overhead.
   
   *I have two cats. I have a brother and two sisters, too. We live in a big house. I am in 2nd grade. I go to school at Eaton Elementary. We used to live in Michigan where my dad worked at a college that had a name I don't remember and we lived in a house that have three bedrooms so I had to share a room with my sister and she was really messy and left her cloths all over the floor. I was glad when we moved here and I got my own room.*

2. Using a table with two columns, have the students copy down the first two or three words from each sentence.

3. In the second column, have the students tally and record the number of words in each sentence.

4. Problems with repetitive sentences openings will be apparent in the first column. Review strategies for improving this quality: pronouns, sentence combining, etc.

5. If sentence lengths are similar, encourage students to consider combining sentences or dropping in short, quick statements.

6. Encourage students to look for extremely long sentences and check for run-ons.

7. Once the students have revised for fluency, allow them to share the improved versions and encourage them to comment on one another’s work.


Rhythmic Language

Materials: poetry samples

Procedure:

1. Share poetry with students so they hear rhymes that are creative and language that is natural. Practice reading it aloud before you share it with the students so it will feel natural.

2. Hearing good language read aloud builds fluency, even in young writers who are not ready to write their own sentences.

3. Ask the students how the fluency and rhythm add to the piece.

The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.

A. Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the meaning.
B. Sentences vary in length as well as structure. Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.
C. Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings add variety and energy.
D. The use of creative and appropriate connectives between sentences and thoughts shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.
E. The writing has cadence; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. The first time you read it aloud is a breeze.

The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.

A. Although sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, they get the job done in a routine fashion.
B. Sentences are usually constructed correctly; they hang together; they are sound.
C. Sentence beginnings are not all alike; some variety is attempted.
D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (e.g., connecting words and phrases like however, therefore, naturally, after a while, on the other hand, to be specific, for example, next, first of all, later, but as it turned out, although, etc.) that show how sentences interrelate.
E. Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.

The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of the following problems:

A. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling or awkward; they need work. Phrasing does not sound natural. The patterns may create a sing-song rhythm, or a chop-chop cadence that lulls the reader to sleep.
B. There is little to no "sentence sense" present. Even if this piece was flawlessly edited, the sentences would not hang together.
C. Many sentences begin the same way—and may follow the same patterns (e.g., subject-verb-object) in a monotonous pattern.
D. Endless connectives (and, so, but then, because, and then, etc.) or a complete lack of connectives create a massive jumble of language.
E. The text does not invite expressive oral reading.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
FLUENCY
—Rhythm and Flow—

Sentence “sense”  Varied and purposeful beginnings
                   Powerful  Graceful
Fragments used well  Smooth connections
From long and stretchy to short and snappy  Delightful to read aloud
Crafted, not merely assembled  Parallel structure
                   Natural dialogue
Wonderful cadence

Simple sentences well-constructed
                   Flows—then skips a beat  Functional
Variable control
                   Repetitive patterns
Rough connections
                   Steady but not graceful  Lacks energy
Formula
                   Trudges—doesn’t dance
Sometimes mechanical
                   Assembled by number—not crafted

Irregular  Awkward phrasing
One sentence that lasts and lasts... or, a lot of little, choppy Dick-and-Jane-style sentences
Disjointed  Rambling  Tough to read aloud
Have to rehearse to read it  Jerks and jolts  Have to track back to get the meaning

Sentence fluency is made of crispy, crunchy chips that beat out a rhythm to your nibble or gulp. Every single chip is an original with no two quite exactly alike. Some are big and smooth while others are small and bumpy. Some are whole and some are pieces, but they all fit together to make a satisfying whole. Any way you munch it, each chip adds to the whole hot dog experience... different texture gets added to the mix. Chomp them loudly and with gusto!

**SENTENCE FLUENCY Tips for Writers:**
1. Listen for rhythm in sentences (chips).
2. Look for different size and structure of sentences (chips).
3. Find sentences that build on each other and make reading them aloud fun.
4. Notice how the chips (sentences) add to the overall enjoyment of the hot dog.

---

**Level 5 - I've Got it!**
- Sentences flow with a beat—they have rhythm and grace.
- Lots of variety in sentences from beginning to end.
- Each sentence builds on the next.
- Smooth as a ski run in December.

**Level 3 - On My Way**
- Some sentences are smooth, but there are bumps along the way.
- Playing around with different lengths and beginnings.
- A few sentences could merge; some need to be cut in two.
- Steady but not graceful.

**Level 1 - Just Beginning**
- Hard to tell where a sentence begins and ends
- You might have to stop or re-read to make sense out of this.
- Repetitive beginnings make the piece "sing-songy."
- Bumpity, bump, bump, bump.

Student Rubric for Sentence Fluency

Made it!

___ This is easy to read out loud.
___ A lot of my sentences begin in different ways.
___ I used some short sentences and some long sentences.
___ My paper has four or more sentences.
___ My sentences are complete.

Getting there...

___ It is not too hard to read out loud.
___ I used one or two different sentence beginnings.
___ Some sentences are longer than others.
___ My paper is about three or four sentences long.
___ Most of my sentences are complete.

It's a start.

___ It might be hard to read out loud.
___ My sentences all begin with the same words.
___ My sentences are all about the same length.
___ I only wrote one or two sentences—so far!
___ I am not sure if my sentences are complete.

Conventions

Conventions moves into the editing phase of the writing process with a focus on fixing spelling, punctuation, grammar/usage, paragraphing, and capitalization. The goal of this trait is mechanical correctness (NWREL, 1998) so the reader does not focus on mental editing or become confused by conventions mistakes that interrupt the meaning of the message. With correct conventions, the reader can focus on the previous traits mentioned: creative ideas, logical organization, unique voice, vivid word choice, and rhythmic fluency.

Students should practice editing, first by reading and rereading their own pieces and then by peer editing. They should read their pieces aloud to slow down the pace and focus on potential conventions mistakes. As students use proofreading marks to edit pieces, they should ask themselves how much work would a copy editor or teacher have to do to prepare the piece for publication (NWREL, 2000).

Conventions is the only trait for which 6+1 makes grade level accommodations, taking into account the scope of language arts programs. At each grade level, students are expected to demonstrate more proficiency in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and grammar/usage (Gillet & Beverly, 2001). As the students get older, they are expected to add skills in the areas of conventions, making this trait one that expands in upper grade levels.

### Second Grade Expectations for Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Capitalization</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Grammar/Usage</th>
<th>Paragraphing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spells grade level words correctly</td>
<td>Capitalizes words, first word of each sentence, and the pronoun I</td>
<td>Uses the correct end punctuation: periods, question marks, exclamation marks</td>
<td>Uses complete sentences</td>
<td>Writes in organized paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiments with expanded vocabulary words</td>
<td>Notices the difference between upper and lower case letters</td>
<td>Begins to use commas in dates and letter writing</td>
<td>Identifies parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs</td>
<td>Indents the first sentence of each paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds and marks words that may be misspelled and check their spellings</td>
<td>Begins to use quotation marks</td>
<td>Uses plural and verb tense endings correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While self-assessing their use of Conventions, NWREL (2000) recommends that students should consider the following questions:

- Do I use capitals correctly?
- Are my periods, commas, and quotation marks in the right places?
- Is my spelling correct?
- Did I indent my paragraphs?
- Is my grammar/usage consistent?
Conventions Lesson Plans

Conventions Editing

Materials: overhead transparency, editing list, marker

Procedure:
1. Give the students a paragraph that has problem in conventions. The length of the piece and difficulty of the conventions can be altered based on grade levels.
2. Have the students edit the text for conventions using a step by step list:
   a. Spelling
   b. Punctuation
   c. Capitalization
   d. Grammar and usage
   e. Paragraphing (when appropriate)
3. Discuss the advantages of breaking a complicated task like editing into smaller chunks.


Periods

Materials: series of related sentence written in paragraph form but lacking any periods or capital letters, small sticky notes with punctuation marks on them, felt pen

Procedure:
1. Read the writing sample aloud in a natural way. If the students have not commented that there are no periods, ask them what is missing.
2. Tell the students that they are going to decide where to place the periods by reading the piece out loud and listening for the places where their voices seem to drop or pause.
3. Ask a volunteer to begin reading aloud, stopping where he thinks the first sentence ends. Hand the reader a sticky note with a period on it and have him place it where the period should go.
4. Ask the other members of the group to determine whether they agree, by reading the preceding words aloud and listening for the place where their voices drop. If they do not agree, have someone move the period until it is in the correct position.
5. Continue having volunteers read aloud, dropping their voices at appropriate spots and placing the periods in the text as required. Have students check for accuracy by reading aloud and listening for the “voice drops.”

Capitalization

Materials: text (either entirely lacking in capital letters or with some capital letters used incorrectly) written onto chart paper, sticky notes, markers

Procedure:
1. Remind the students that one of the steps in editing is looking for the correct use of capital letters. Review what the students already know about where capital letters should be.
2. Invite volunteers to locate places in the text where capitals should be used, and have each correct one of the errors in the text by coveting up the lowercase letter and substituting the correct capital with the sticky notes. Ask each one to explain why he or she made that particular change.
3. If capitals have been inappropriately included in the text, ask volunteers to locate places where capitals don’t belong, and correct them with the sticky notes.
4. Summarize where capitals are required.


Paragraphing with Sentence Strips

Materials: pocket chart, sentence strips, markers

Procedure:
1. Create or find a paragraph made of four or five sentences. You may write one yourself, use a literature model, or use a student-written paragraph.
2. Copy each sentence onto a sentence strip. Include one or two sentences that are unrelated to the others. Display the sentences in the pocket chart.
3. Read each sentence aloud or have volunteers read them. Invite volunteers to identify and remove the sentence strips unrelated to the others. Explain that these sentences may be used in other paragraphs or may be deleted from the writing, but that in either case they do not belong in this paragraph.
4. Invite volunteers to physically arrange the sentence strips in a logical sequence to create a meaningful paragraph. Have someone move the first sentence over so that it appears to be indented, and explain that the space before the indented sentence is a sign that a new paragraph has begun.
5. Invite students to rearrange the sentence so that the paragraph makes sense. If they can be arranged in more than one way, point this out to the students.

Look Who's Talking!

Materials: magazine pictures featuring two or more people or animals, large pieces of construction paper, writing paper, pencils, glue

Procedure:
1. Let each child select a picture and a piece of construction paper.
2. Using writing paper, each child should write a statement or question for each person or animal in the picture.
3. After writing each statement, the child should draw a conversation bubble around it and cut it out.
4. When all the bubbles have been cut, instruct the children to glue their pictures to the construction paper and then to glue the bubbles near the appropriate speakers.
5. When complete, allow the students to share their work, creating voices for the characters, if they wish.
6. Encourage the students to use dialogue between their characters to give their narratives more variety.


Dialogue

Materials: tally sheet, story

Procedure:
1. Review how quotation marks are used. Key ideas such as quotation marks, “said,” and conversations tell who is speaking and what they are saying.
2. Have the students skim through a passage in a story and tally the number of times a character speaks. Taking several of the comments the students tallied, have the class read exactly what the character said.
3. Model writing our own sentences using quotation marks. Note that the punctuation goes inside the quotation marks and the first letter of what the person is saying is capitalized.
4. Have the students practice writing their own sentences using quotation marks, checking that they follow those rules.

Homophone Dominoes

Materials: ruler, pen, small rectangular cards

Procedure:
1. Draw a line in the middle of each small card to form a domino.
2. Write one word from a set of homophones on each side of the domino. Matching homophone pairs should not be on any one domino.
3. Place all dominoes in a stack upside down. Divide the students into partners. Each player draws five dominoes, concealing them from her partner. One domino from the remaining upside down pile is turned up to start play.
4. Player 1 tries to match of the words on the domino with its homophone from his pile. If Player 1 has a match, he places it perpendicularly to the first domino. If the player does not have a homophone match, the player draws from the upside down pile until one is found.
5. Play continues until one of the players is out of dominoes or until there are no more from which to draw.

CONVENTIONS

The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.

A. Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
B. The punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader through the text.
C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills are present.
D. Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.
F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being ready to publish.

GRADES 7 AND UP ONLY: The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions. For writers at younger ages, the writing shows control over those conventions that are grade/age appropriate.

The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.

A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words, but more difficult words are problematic.
B. End punctuation is usually correct: internal punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons, dashes, colons, parentheses) is sometimes missing/wrong.
C. Most words are capitalized correctly; control over more sophisticated capitalization skills may be spotty.
D. Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time.
E. Paragraphing is attempted but may run together or begin in the wrong places.
F. Moderate editing (a little of this, a little of that) would be required to polish the text for publication.

Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:
A. Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
B. Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.
C. Capitalization is random and only the easiest rules show awareness of correct use.
D. Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable, frequent, and affect meaning.
E. Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
F. The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning. Extensive editing (virtually every line) would be required to polish the text for publication.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). *An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing*. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
CONVENTIONS
—The Mechanical Correctness—

Readable to broad audience  Punctuation smoothly guides reader
Grammar contributes to clarity and style  In control  “Clean copy”
Paraphrasing complements organization
Evidence of editing/proofing
Spelling mostly correct—even on harder words
Only light editing needed

Problems don’t obscure meaning
Writer occasionally “stumbles”
Errors consistent  Minor problems in grammar/usage
Hastily edited  Terminal punctuation basically correct

Tough to decide  Numerous errors  Couldn’t publish yet
Little or no control over conventions
Paraphrasing random or not present  Struggling
Readability impaired
Errors extremely distracting  Cries out for editing

The last step of creating your hot dog meal is making sure you have everything where it belongs. Put that hot dog right smack dab in the middle of the bun, dabble those condiments over the hot dog and along the side of the bun so they are spread out evenly. Be careful, not too much mustard, just a smidge of relish along the side, and sprinkle those onions right over the top. There you go... everything in its place. Open up your chips, but watch out—don't let them spill all over. Yikes—don't shake your pop before you open it or here comes Niagara Falls! These are the conventions of the hot dog meal. They come at the end, when you have all the pieces and parts and are ready to put them together correctly! Now wrap up your perfectly-formed hot dog so nothing is out of place and enjoy!

CONVENTIONS Tips for Writers:
1. Look for punctuation marks that are correct and add style.
2. Make sure capital letters start proper names, places, things, title and sentences.
3. Paragraph indenting helps the reader follow the ideas.
4. Check the spelling to make it as "dictionary proof" as possible.
5. Grammar and usage are standard unless you break the rule on purpose!

Level 5 - I've Got It!
- Capitals are in just the right places.
- Paragraphing complements the organization.
- The spelling is magnificent and shows control.
- Punctuation makes sense and enhances the readability.
- Grammar contributes to clarity and style.
- Obvious evidence of proofreading.

Level 3 - On My Way
- Spelling is correct on the simpler words.
- Obvious capitals are in place, but not there in trickier spots.
- Indenting is random.
- Grammar is OK, but nothing to write home about.
- Punctuation not consistent.
- Looks like a quick once-over is all this got for editing.

Level 1 - Just Beginning
- So many mistakes make it hard to understand
- Little to no control over capitals, punctuation, and the grammar is iffy.
- Many spelling errors so many, in fact you have to read it once to decode and once again to understand the idea.
- No attention has been given to proofreading.
- Before this is ready for a reader, it needs lots of editing.

Student Rubric for Conventions

Made it!
___ I read my paper over well.
___ I put spaces between my words.
___ My spelling is easy to read.
___ I used periods to end sentences.
___ I used question marks to end questions.
___ I used capital letters to start sentences.

Getting there . . .
___ I looked at my paper for a minute!
___ I put spaces between most words.
___ Most of my spelling is easy to read.
___ I remembered to use periods some of the time.
___ I remembered question marks some of the time.
___ I used capital letters to start some sentences.

It's a start.
___ I did not read my paper over—yet!
___ I forgot spaces between my words.
___ My spelling is hard to read.
___ I forgot some periods.
___ I forgot to use question marks.
___ I forgot a lot of capital letters.

Presentation Lesson Plans

Friendly Letter

Materials: overhead project, transparency, markers, chart paper, The Jolly Postman by Janet and Allen Ahlberg, writing paper, pencils, envelope, sticker

Procedure:
1. Introduce the book The Jolly Postman and read one or two of the letters. Have the students brainstorm ideas they could include in a letter to a staff member (principal, secretary, custodian, etc.). Record their responses on the chart paper.
2. As a class, draft a letter. Use the overhead to demonstrate a letter that includes the heading, greeting, body, and closing. Emphasize each part as you write it, its purpose and its location in the letter. The body of the letter should include a question that can be responded to by the recipient.
3. After the class letter is complete, give each student a copy of writing paper and have them compose their own letters, using the information on the chart paper. Letters should include several sentences in the body and all parts of a friendly letter. Each letter should be addressed correctly, even though they will be hand-delivered. A stamp-sized sticker can be placed in the proper place on the envelope.
4. When the students receive their responses, allow them to share with the class.
5. Encourage the students to consider friendly letters as a possible presentation for their writings.


Sentence Strip Book

Materials: sentence strips, chart paper, pocket chart, markers, colored sentence strips, stapler

Procedure:
1. Bind five plain sentence strips with a colored strip for the cover. Additional pages can be added if needed.
2. Allow students to write their story in the book, one sentence or fact per page.

Concrete Poems

Materials: pencils, crayons, paper, collection of poetry including some concrete poems, pictures or cutouts of various shapes

Procedure:
1. Introduce the students to the idea of a "concrete poem," which is a poem that takes the shape of its subject matter.
2. Read and show the class examples of concrete poems, and explain how to create such a poem. The students should choose their topic and a shape their poem will take. They think of all the describing words they can about the topic and write a poem that relates to their topic.
3. Create a concrete poem with the class.
4. Have the students go back to their seats and brainstorm a list of subjects for their poem.
5. After they choose their subject, have their write their poem and share it with the class.

References


Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). An Introduction to the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.


