

IDEAS are the heart of the message.

- Topic is one the writer knows about and has recent knowledge of or experience with.
- Ideas are focused (stays on topic).

EARLY WRITERS

- Picture matches the words and letters written.
- Picture includes accurate details. (May include multiple pictures related to the topic.)
- The writing contains a lot of details.
- The writing makes sense. (The writer orally explains it.)

OLDER WRITERS

- Writer addresses all aspects of the writing task/prompt.
- Topic is narrow and manageable.
- Subtopics are developed with specific details. (It's more than a list of undeveloped sentences).
- Details and support are relevant and interesting.

VOICE is the writer's attitude about the topic.

- Writer is interested in and cares about the topic.
- Writing *may* reflect the personality of the writer.
- Reader can interpret the writer's "attitude" toward the topic or situation.
- In informative writing, the writer sounds confident and authoritative on the matter (like an expert).

EARLY WRITERS

- Picture includes facial expressions to show feelings.
- Writer uses punctuation to communicate feeling— ALL CAPS, !!!!!, **bold**.
- Writer includes feeling words.
- Speech bubbles indicate dialogue.

OLDER WRITERS

- Writing may reveal a creative perspective or attitude.
- Writing communicates directly with the audience (e.g., questions, parentheses).

ORGANIZATION reveals the ideas and details in a logical order.

EARLY WRITERS

- The pictorial writing is balanced across the whole page.
- There is a simple title that may also serve as the introduction to the topic.
- Writer *attempts* to connect ideas with *and, so, then*.
- Writer *connects* ideas with transitions (e.g., first, then, next).

OLDER WRITERS

- Beginning or introduction reveals the topic or situation.
- Information or events are revealed in a logical order to match the purpose and genre.
- Ideas are connected to show relationship with transitions.
- Ending or conclusion brings the topic or situation to a close—it doesn't just stop.
- The title grabs the reader's attention.

WORD CHOICE is the use of specific, precise, "bullseye" vocabulary.

- The topic or situation is explained with precise and accurate vocabulary— words related to the topic.

EARLY WRITERS

- Writer explains his picture with specific word choice.
- Writer includes description using 5 senses and/or simple adjectives.
- Writer attempts "big words"— he's not afraid to take spelling risks.

OLDER WRITERS

- Words paint a clear picture.
- Concise language mirrors the subject matter.
- Minimal redundancy keeps the writing tight.
- Writer shows— rather than tells— feelings and reactions.
- Strong action verbs convey and propel the writing.

SENTENCE FLUENCY is how smooth the writing sounds.

- Writing contains complete thoughts.
- Writer varies sentence beginnings.

EARLY WRITERS

- Writer explains his pictorial writing fluently.
- Writer can read his own writing.
- Writing is readable without writer interpretation.

OLDER WRITERS

- Reader finds it easy to read aloud the first time through.
- Writer varies sentence lengths, types, and structures to add rhythm.

CONVENTIONS reveal the level of "correctness" the writing possesses.

EARLY WRITERS

- Writer expresses complete thoughts.
- Sentences begin with capitals and end with punctuations.
- Writer capitalizes /I/.
- Spaces appear between words.
- Words in the environment are spelled accurately.
- "Big words" are written phonetically.

OLDER WRITERS

- First-draft writing may include errors, but they don't impede the flow of the ideas.
- Grade-level skills (e.g., capitalization, punctuation, grammar, spelling, paragraph indents) are applied.
- Writer is able to self- and peer-edit for these skills.

PRESENTATION is based on neatness and overall visual appeal.

- Handwriting/Penmanship is legible.

EARLY WRITERS

- Letter formation is correct.
- Writing contains left-to-right/top-to-bottom directionality.

OLDER WRITERS

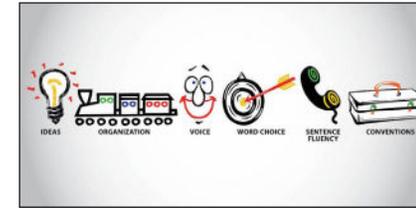
- Formality and quality of the writing matches the purpose (e.g., taking notes vs. final draft).
- Uses appropriate font types, sizes, and styles.
- Graphics and color are used effectively.

STRATEGY #1

Reveal a set of visual icons.

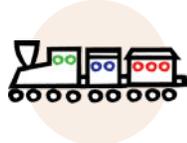


The light bulb is used for **ideas**. It represents the **topic** of the writing and the **details**. Some teachers have introduced this trait with a light bulb on a dimmer switch— if your writing has few details, the light is low; many details and the light is bright!



SECRET SITE RESOURCE

Introduce “good” writing by defining the 6 Traits.



For **organization**, the concrete image of a **3-car train** reminds students they can have multiple sentences/paragraphs within the body of their writing (**middle cars**), but they should always have an engine (**beginning**) and caboose (**ending**). Note also that the train cars are in order (**sequence**), and they are hooked together (**transitions**).



A writer’s **voice** can change, depending on the topic he is writing about. A **reader** should be able to “hear” a writer’s voice, tone, or **attitude about the topic**— *frustrated, hopeful, confident, serious*, etc. The use of **facial expressions** can help students convey how they feel about the topic within their pictorial writings.



Specific vocabulary or **word choice** comes down to the right word in the right spot. Think of this as exact language or **bullseye writing**. The outer ring of the target represents a general and vague word (e.g., *blue*). The middle ring represents a more specific word, (e.g., *light blue*), but still not exact word choice. The center ring identifies **specific word choice** or a **WOW word** that is vivid and precise (e.g., *periwinkle blue*).



Sentence fluency is an auditory trait. You don’t read fluency; you hear it. You hear the **variety of sentences** and the way they play off each other. You hear the music of **figurative language**. You hear the **ease and readability** of the piece. In the classroom, teachers often have students reread their writings into a whisper phone to check for sentence completeness and whether or not it “sounds good.” Hearing it back through a **phone** is how many check for fluency.



All writers utilize tools from their **conventions toolbox**. These include **capitalization, spelling, punctuation, grammar, paragraph indents, word spacing**, etc. These tools are designed to help the reader move through the writing more easily.



Presentation is the writing trait that focuses on how the **final piece looks** on the page—its **neatness, spacing, formatting**, and overall **legibility**. Just like a picture frame doesn’t change the quality of the photo it displays, regardless if the presentation is neat or messy, it **doesn’t change the substance** of the message.

Introduce the 6 Traits to students

STRATEGY #2

Teach a set of song lyrics.

MEET WRITER NEEDS



SECRET SITE RESOURCE

Upgrade the 6-Traits songs.



"Row, Row,
Row Your
Boat"

THE IDEAS SONG

Write, write, **write your thoughts**.

Make your **ideas clear**.

Tell the reader **what you know**
and what you hold **most dear**.

"Mary Had a
Little Lamb"

THE ORGANIZATION SONG

Writing has a good **beginning**,
strong **conclusion**,
and builds **bridges**.

Writing has a good beginning.
The **order just makes sense**.

"If You're
Happy and
You Know It"

THE VOICE SONG

If you're **happy** and you know it, that's your **voice**.

If you're **thoughtful** and you know it, that's your **voice**.

If you're **spunky**, and you know it,
then your **words will surely show it**.

If you're happy and you know it, that's your voice.

"Ring
Around
the Rosie"

THE WORD CHOICE SONG

Writing with your **best words**—

Finding lots of **new words**—
Sparkle! Dazzle!

The **words stand out**.

"Frere
Jacques"

THE SENTENCE FLUENCY SONG

Sentence fluency,

Sentence fluency,

The **writing flows**.

The writing flows.

Sentences are longer.

Sentences are shorter.

It **sounds smooth**; it sounds right.

"The
Hokey
Pokey"

THE CONVENTIONS SONG

You put your **periods** in.

You pull some **spelling** out.

You put your **capitals** in,
and you shake them all about.

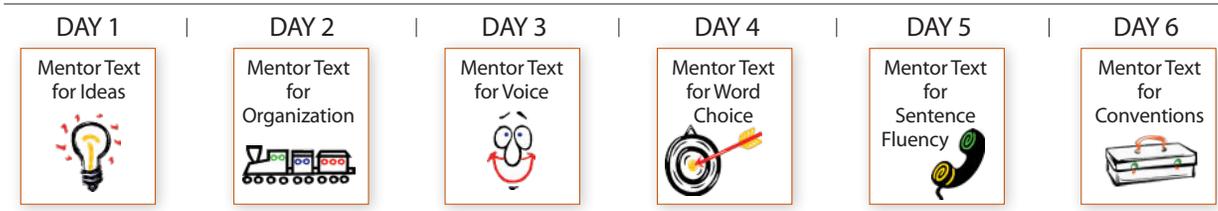
You make your paper better
when you **edit** it just right.

That's what it's all about.

STRATEGY #3

Read a mentor text that exemplifies each trait.

OPTION A: Read 6 texts over 6 days, 1 per trait, highlighting evidence of each trait per day.



OPTION B: Reread 1 text over 6 days to demonstrate that all traits should be within one product.



OPTION C: Create a two-day pattern of singing the song and reading a text.



Add a Day 7 to review all the traits with a seventh text.



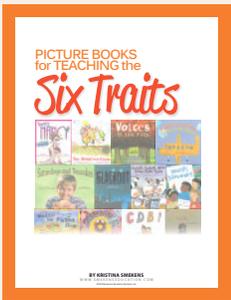


SECRET SITE RESOURCES



INTRODUCE THE **6 TRAITS** WITH A SINGLE TEXT

Choose a high-quality mentor text to introduce 6 Traits.



PICTURE BOOKS for TEACHING the **Six Traits**



RELEVANT RESOURCES



Trait Trackers

Trait Trackers identify writing skills evident per trait within 20 popular picture books.

Launch the Writer's Workshop—K-2 and 3-12 versions.