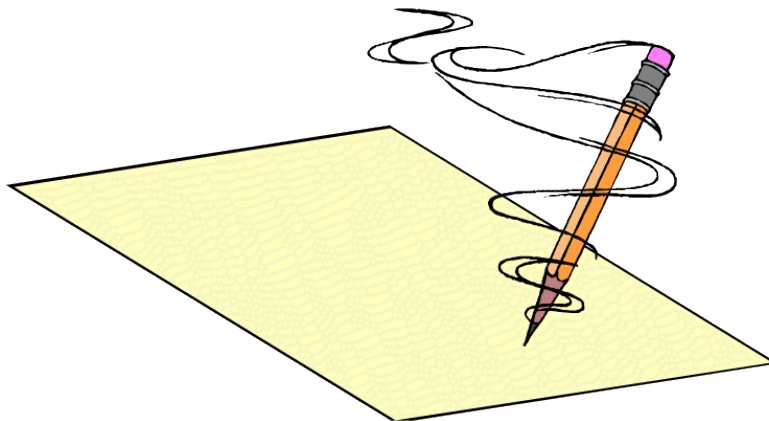


Organization
Sentence Fluency
Conventions
Ideas
Voice
WORD CHOICE

4th Grade
Language Arts -
6 Trait Writing Handbook
Mrs. Klumb





Dear Writing Coach,

This year we will be writing every day in 4th grade. Your 4th grader will need your encouragement and this booklet will give you support to help guide your writer at home.

Coach - don't write - for your child. Question, listen, and talk about writing together. They need you at the sidelines, while they continue to learn about the writing process.

Always let your child know you read what they brought home. Find something you think is done well, and then offer praise. Writing is a challenging task and they will need encouragement to be successful. Often times sharing writing with a family member or friend will be a required homework assignment.

When looking over your child's writing piece, focus on content and ideas first. Save editing until the ideas are clear, complete, and focused.

Your child will hear me say, "Read like a writer" this year. You can help with this by discussing good examples of writing from; newspapers, magazines, poetry, instructions for toys, and cookbooks.

Read, read, read! Better readers make better writers.

Happy writing,
Teresa Klumb



What is Six Trait Writing?

Throughout the year we will use the 6 Traits of writing.
The traits are simply a way of talking and thinking about writing.



Ideas - a clear point, message, theme, or story line, backed by important, carefully chosen details and supportive information.



Organization - How a piece of writing is structured and ordered and moves the reader smoothly through the ideas.



Voice - The fingerprints of the writer on the page - the writer's own personal style coming through in the words, combined with concern for the information needs and interests of the audience.



Word Choice - Language, phrasing, and the knack for choosing the “just right” word to get the message across.



Sentence Fluency - The rhythm and sound of the writing as it is read aloud.



Conventions – editorial correctness and attention to any detail a copy editor would review, including:

- spelling
- grammar and usage
- capitalization
- paragraph indentation
- punctuation



Presentation - focuses on the form and layout of the text and its readability. The piece should be easy to read and pleasing to the eye.

Classroom Assessment

At times I will use the traits to assess writing performance in the classroom. They may be assessed for *all* of the traits or *selected* traits that we are focusing on. The scoring criteria can easily be adapted to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities. For example, I may want to score a writing assignment for our science unit. For this assignment I may decide that the most important traits to assess are:



- **Ideas** - Does the student's writing show a clear understanding of the concept of complete metamorphosis? Does the student present the concept clearly and completely?
- **Word Choice** - does the student use accurate language to describe the four stages of development?
- **Conventions** - are specific terms spelled correctly? Do proper punctuation and grammar make the piece easy to read? Are proper nouns capitalized?

Students will always know what I am looking for in a particular writing assignment. At times they may help create the rubric for grading their own work. Other times we will use a rubric like the one for sentence fluency on the following page.

SENTENCE FLUENCY RUBRIC

Rating of 5 (Strong):

The paper has an easy flow and rhythm. It is easy to read aloud. The writing sounds natural--the way someone might talk. The sentences have different beginnings, lengths, and structures.

- ✔ The writing sounds natural, with one sentence flowing effortlessly into the next.
- ✔ Varied sentence beginnings guide the reader readily from one sentence to the next.
- ✔ Variation in sentence structure and length adds interest to the text.
- ✔ Fragments, if used at all, work well. Most sentences are complete.
- ✔ Dialogue, if used, sounds like people talking.

Rating of 3 (Developing):

The text moves along efficiently, but lacks rhythm and grace. It may sound technical or mechanical instead of pleasant and musical.

- ✔ Simple sentences are okay, but compound sentences and complex sentences are not.
- ✔ The sentences make sense, but do not seem skillfully written.
- ✔ There is some variety in sentence beginnings, length, and structure.
- ✔ Fragments sometimes work, but mostly do not work; they seem to be the result of error.
- ✔ The reader has to hunt for clues to see how one sentence should flow into the next.
- ✔ Some parts of the text sound good when read aloud, others are choppy and sound funny when read aloud.

Rating of 1 (Beginning):

The paper is difficult to follow or read aloud. Most sentences are incomplete or run together.

- ✔ The sentences do not sound natural. The text is not at all like a person would talk.
- ✔ The reader may have to pause or read the sentences again to understand what is meant.
- ✔ There is no variety in sentence beginnings, length, or structure.
- ✔ The reader cannot make sense of the connections between sentences.



Writing is a Process

Normally the writing process includes these steps:

➤ **Prewriting**

Listing, brainstorming, talking, interviewing, reading, word webbing- or doing whatever puts thinking in motion and makes it easier to begin writing

➤ **Drafting**

Getting first thoughts down on paper without worrying overmuch about organization, completeness, or correctness

➤ **Responding**

Sharing writing with a partner or in a writing group in order to get some audience response in preparation for revision

➤ **Revising**

Taking a closer look at main ideas, details and support, organizational structure, voice and tone, language and phrasing, and fluency- then reworking to make the piece clearer, more concise, more interesting, or more accurate

➤ **Editing**

Thinking like a copy editor; attending to details; proofreading and correcting the text for grammar and usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and paragraphing

➤ **Publishing**

Going public in some way-whether putting a piece up on the bulletin board, making a book in class

The following chart will show you the how the 6 Traits fit into the writing process.



How can I help in the classroom or at home with the writing process?

Parents have become very helpful in the classroom during writing times. (I couldn't do it without you!) Knowing the writing process helps you to understand how to assist. Many parents want to jump into the editing stage. This is an important part of writing; however this doesn't always apply to what we are working on.

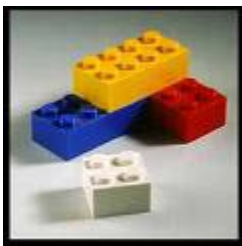
Once kids understand the Six Traits, they have a better understanding of where to begin during revision.

The traits provide teachers and students with a common vocabulary to describe qualities of writing. Six traits break writing down into manageable parts so they can effectively assess and revise their own writing pieces.

Six Trait writing provides a common language to explain WHAT to revise and teaches students HOW to revise.

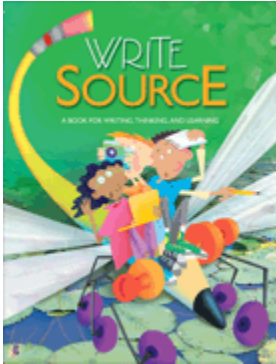
Here is a list of some ways students might think about revisions:

- try a new lead
- rework organization
- cut some extra detail
- expand ideas with new details
- check sentence beginning so they do not all start the same
- varied sentence lengths



I like to use the analogy of a Lego building.

Sometimes we have to move the blocks around, other times we take them out, and we often add blocks to the building to make it more interesting. Revising our writing is the same way.



The Germantown School District is using the Write Source Curriculum for language arts instruction.

The Six Traits are woven throughout the forms of writing.

4th graders are involved in a variety of writing experiences using the following forms/modes of writing:

- Creative Writing
Poetry is important for kids to practice word choice. It is important in poetry to learn specific nouns, strong verbs, vivid adjectives, etc.
- Descriptive Writing
We will work on creating images in the reader's mind and use precise details to paint "word pictures" for readers. Writing in paragraph form with a topic sentence and strong organization is emphasized in descriptive writing.
- Narrative Writing
This is the most common type of writing in 4th grade. The purpose is to describe an experience, event, or sequence of events in the form of a story.

- Expository
This writing explains, clarifies, and provides information. This will coincide most often with science and social studies. Here we will research and find out how to locate information from the library, internet and reference materials.
- Process Writing
After reading many "how to" articles we will write our own.
- Persuasive Writing
The primary purpose of persuasive writing is to give an opinion and try to influence the reader's way of thinking with supporting evidence.
- Historical Fiction
We will use information from our social studies units to write historical fiction in the form of a journal.
- Literary Response
Students will have the chance to respond to literature throughout the entire school year. It is important for learners to be able to compare and contrast fiction and nonfiction and we will do this with paired reading assignments.

With all of these modes of writing your child will be practicing public speaking. I have some mandatory public speaking assignments and other times kids can volunteer to share writing. I never have to worry about volunteers!

Authentic writing

If we want our 4th graders to be motivated to use their emerging writing skills, we have to make writing purposeful, challenging, and real - to - life.

This isn't always easy in the classroom, but we try to give authentic reasons to write.

We will publish some of our writing in books or on the website.



Reading - Writing Connection

Reading Study Driven by Katie Wood Ray, showed me how to encourage students to read closely to improve the effectiveness of their writing. I will do many studies with the children of published texts that support their learning, lead them to a better understanding of the traits of good writing, and motivate them to become more accomplished writers.

As we read like writers we start by Gathering texts to show the kind of writing we will be doing.

Next we Set the Stage, by setting our writing expectations.

(The kids know that they will try to write in this style.)

Immersion is when the teacher and student get to know the texts and list the crafts used.

Lastly we are ready to Write Under the Influence by using what we learned through examples of other authors.

After studying the genre "odes", one student used what she learned and came up with her own "ode" writing piece.

Student sample of this genre study:

Winter
By Bailey

Winter is snow flakes drifting down from the sky.

Winter is forts with snowman built in top of them.

Winter is snowball fights that never end.

Winter is snow angels that soar through happiness.

Winter is cold that tickles your cheeks and freezes your ears.

Winter is the clouds that are gloomy and gray.

Winter is warm hot chocolate, fires and hot air conditioning.

Winter is hot, warm hugs that fills you up with happiness, joy and all the winter wonders.

Classroom Atmosphere



Students are more motivated to write when they have the support of their classmates. Once children feel like they are in a safe environment and trust those they work with they can begin to develop writing skills in many ways. Students seem to enjoy brainstorming ideas for writing, reading bits to friends as they go along and having a genuine audience for their finished piece. Working together makes the assignment more engaging and realistic.

When you visit our classroom of writers, remember that the discussion going on is most often constructive. I usually bounce ideas off my colleagues and read other peoples work before trying a specific genre on my own. I give the students these same opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to understand our writing curriculum. Please let me know if you have any questions.