

6-Traits of Writing Assessment

- ✓ Imagine this scenario: A story is written by an ESL Learner or by a student with a learning disability. It is a well-constructed, moving story that paints a vivid picture with its choice of descriptive words. However, the grammar and spelling errors make it very difficult to read. When only a letter grade is given for the paper, and points are deducted for spelling and grammar errors, the student will end up with a failing grade for writing. The grade, then, is not assessing the student's talent as a writer, but rather his/her knowledge of English grammar and spelling rules.

- ✓ The 6-Traits of Writing Assessment, developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, is an analytic scoring guide (rubric) that provides separate scores (on a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 being the highest) for six different aspects (traits) of the writing:
 - **Content and Ideas**
 - **Organization**
 - **Voice**
 - **Word Choice**
 - **Sentence Fluency** (Variety of sentence types)
 - **Conventions** (grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

- ✓ The benefits of having separate scores are:
 - The student is able to get credit for his/her strengths
 - The separate scores provide more valid information about the students' strengths and weaknesses in writing (i.e. Strong in Content and Word Choice, needs to work on Organization...)
 - The rubrics (one for each of the 6 traits) are empowering for the students as they learn to assess their own writing using the rubrics – and thus learn how to have more control over their writing scores.
 - When reading literature, students begin to notice word choice, sentence fluency, voice, etc. (Picture Books become a way of teaching writing with a focus on one trait at a time.)

6 + 1 TRAIT WRITING ASSESSMENT

To evaluate the quality of one of the 6 traits in a piece of writing (perhaps your own story for purposes of revision), read the piece with only one trait in mind – don't think about any of the other traits. While reading, think about how well the writing fits the description in the box below for the trait you are considering.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">IDEAS and CONTENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Interesting ❖ Well focused ❖ Clear ❖ Detailed, complete, rich ❖ Precise Information | <p style="text-align: center;">WORD CHOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Precise language ❖ Strong verbs ❖ Specific, concrete nouns ❖ Natural ❖ Words used in new way ❖ Strong imagery |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ORGANIZATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Good Introduction ❖ Good placement of details ❖ Strong transitions ❖ Smooth, easy pace ❖ Reader doesn't have to think about organization ❖ Strong Conclusion ❖ Starts somewhere, goes somewhere (clear beginning, middle, and end) ❖ Builds in tension, creates interest | <p style="text-align: center;">SENTENCE FLUENCY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fluid ❖ Easy to read aloud ❖ Interesting word patterns ❖ Musical, poetic in sound ❖ Good phrasing ❖ Varied sentence structure ❖ Varied sentence beginning ❖ Fragments used well |
| <p style="text-align: center;">VOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Individual ❖ Honest ❖ Natural ❖ Expressive ❖ Unusual, unexpected ❖ Appealing ❖ Written to be read and enjoyed | <p style="text-align: center;">CONVENTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Correct spelling ❖ Punctuation works with sentence structure ❖ Some sophisticated punctuation attempted ❖ Correct grammar ❖ Paragraphing enhances organization |
| <p style="text-align: center;">PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Attention to details (i.e. dotted i's, crossed t's) ❖ Effective title ❖ Good margins ❖ Paragraphs indented ❖ Neatest handwriting or typed ❖ Easy to read | |