

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE

Assessing Writers, Assessing Writing

*Learning About Writing and Writers
Through Rubrics and Reflection*

by
Steve Peha


teaching that makes sense
www.ttms.org



© 1995-2010 by Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc. Some rights reserved.

Please Use This Stuff

Just follow the rules. Thanks!

1. YOU MAY use this Work or any portion thereof for non-commercial purposes only. No individual or entity shall profit from this Work but for the intellectual benefit that may accrue by its conscientious application. No fee may be charged in connection with the use or dissemination of this Work; nor may any fee be charged to any participant in any event where this Work is used or disseminated, whether such event is conducted in person or via electronic means; nor may any fee be charged, including tuition, to any person where this Work is used or disseminated by any institution, representative, or affiliate thereof. To request a commercial use license, click here to contact us at info@ttms.org.

2. YOU MAY copy and distribute this Work, or any portion thereof, by any non-electronic means, as long as this Work is not altered in any way other than coloring, reduction, enlargement, or binding.

3. YOU MAY incorporate this entire Work or its contents into any other work. Any work containing this Work or its contents shall be bound by the same rights as this Work, shall be considered a derivative work based on this Work, shall include the text of this agreement in paragraphs 1-5 and the URL of this Work, and shall bear the following notice: © Copyright 1995-2010 by Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc. Used by permission. For more information, contact us at info@ttms.org.

4. YOU MAY NOT distribute this Work electronically or post it for electronic distribution or download. You may, however, send or post a link to this Work using its URL in the *Teaching That Makes Sense Free Learning Project Library* below:

<https://ttms.box.net/shared/static/44mag5nh4m.pdf>

5. The rights enumerated above extend only to material to which *Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc.* holds applicable permissions.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

What is TTMS?

A Brief Explanation of Teaching That Makes Sense

Teaching That Makes Sense® works with people who are passionate about learning. We provide the following services:

- Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training Workshops
- Summer Professional Development Institutes
- In-Classroom Model Teaching, Co-Teaching, Observation, and Planning
- Curriculum Design and Program Evaluation
- Instructional and Administrative Coaching
- Educational Leadership Training and School Improvement Strategy

We work at all grade levels, K-12, and across the curriculum, in all kinds of schools. We specialize in the implementation of research-based practices that can be scaled easily from a single classroom to an entire district.

Since 1995, we have worked with over 20,000 people in over 500 schools and other learning organizations throughout the United States and Canada.

We provide support to teachers and learners using the most sensible methods and materials available. Our goal is to increase academic achievement by making teaching easier for teachers and learning more meaningful for kids.

You can learn more about *Teaching That Makes Sense* by visiting our website at www.ttms.org.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE

Featured Downloads

The Best of Teaching That Makes Sense

To view our entire library of free teaching materials click [here](#).



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Featured Workshops

The Best of Teaching That Makes Sense



Writing Strategies For Every Classroom.

In this highly interactive workshop, you'll be introduced to an innovative set of writing strategies that will help your students make dramatic improvements almost instantly.



Helping Writers Master Mechanics.

Got problems with punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure? Kids don't like to edit? Get proven tools based on what writing conventions really are and how real writers really learn them.



Read Non-Fiction Now!

Non-fiction texts make up most of the reading we pursue in our daily lives but fiction dominates in school. Give your students the skills they need to succeed across the curriculum and out in the world.



Comprehensive Comprehension.

Explore techniques that dramatically improve reading comprehension without traditional tests, tedious questions, dreary worksheets, and other inauthentic unmotivating methods.



Mastering Basic Math Facts.

How is it that so many kids sneak into 5th or 6th grade without mastering their basic math facts? With a set of innovative activities, kids can master basic facts quicker than you ever thought possible.



Math Problem-Solving Power.

Serious math involves serious math problem-solving. And that means students need serious problem-solving strategies. Teach math the way mathematicians teach it and give kids an edge.



Grading That Works For Everyone.

Stop spending hours grading papers. Use a research-based approach to grading that's fair, fast, accurate, highly motivating for kids, and—this is the best part—much easier for you.



Assessment That Makes Sense.

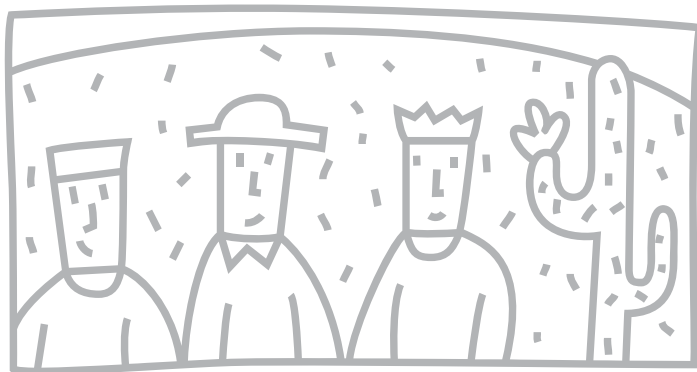
Learn how to use the key principles of effective assessment to gather information that guides instruction in less time and with fewer interruptions in your everyday teaching.

To schedule a workshop for your school or district click [here](#).

“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Assessing Writers

**“FULL”
VERSION**



Assessing Writing

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
VISIT TTMS.ORG**

by Steve Peha



The best way to teach
is the way that makes sense
to you, your kids,
and your community.

www.ttms.org

"Every study of young writers I've done for the last twenty years has underestimated what they can do. In fact, we know very little about the human potential for writing."

—Donald Graves, *A Fresh Look at Writing* (p.99)

Writing Instruction That Makes Sense

Quality

- Criteria
- Student models
- Teacher model
- Models from Reading
- Etc...

Management

- Scheduling
- Writer's Workshop
- Folder System
- Sharing
- Conferencing
- Room Setup
- Etc...

Process

- Pre-Writing
- Drafting
- Sharing
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing
- Reflecting
- Etc...

Philosophy

- The Real World
- Teacher as Writer
- Purpose
- Community
- Choice
- Expectations
- Best Practice
- Professionalism
- Zone of Proximal Development
- Authenticity
- Research
- The Brain
- Independence
- Inquiry
- Individuality
- Ownership
- Learner-centered
- Constructivism
- What is writing?

Forms

- Personal narrative
- Book reviews
- Journalism
- Research
- Notes
- Persuasive
- Etc...

Strategies

- What-Why-How
- CPA
- Idea-Details
- Leads
- Endings
- Action-Feelings-Setting
- 5 Big Questions
- 5 Facts of Fiction
- Etc...

Reading-Writing Connection

- Strategies "reversed"
- Read like a writer
- Conventions inquiry
- Concepts about language
- Sound-symbol relationships
- Etc...

Assessment

Assessment

Assessment

Assessment

Assessment

Assessment

What is Best Practice Writing Instruction?

Writing is very important in education today so everyone wants to know the best way to teach it. But that can be a challenge because there are so many different ideas out there. Fortunately, in the last decade, a national consensus has emerged regarding the essential elements of successful instruction. In the book *Best Practice: New Standards For Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*, written by Harvey Daniels, Steve Zemelman, and Arthur Hyde (2nd edition, 1999, published by Heinemann), the path to effective writing instruction is defined as follows:

Increase student ownership and responsibility by: helping students choose their own topics and goals for improvement; using brief teacher-student conferences; teaching students to review their own progress.	Decrease teacher control of decision making by: teacher deciding on all writing topics; suggestions for improvement dictated by teacher; learning objectives determined by teacher alone; instruction given as whole-class activity.
Increase class time spent on writing whole, original pieces through: establishing real purposes for writing and student involvement in the task; instruction in and support for all stages of the writing process.	Decrease time spent on isolated drills on "subskills" of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, paragraphing, penmanship, etc.
Increase teacher modeling writing as a fellow author and as a demonstration of processes.	Decrease teacher talks about writing but never writes or shares own work.
Increase learning of grammar and mechanics in context, at the editing stage, and as items are needed.	Decrease isolated grammar lessons, given in order determined by textbook, before writing is begun.
Increase writing for real audiences, publishing for the class and for wider communities.	Decrease assignments read only by the teacher.
Increase making the classroom a supportive setting for shared learning, using: active exchange and valuing of students ideas; collaborative small-group work; conferences and peer critiquing that give responsibility for improvement to authors.	Decrease devaluation of students ideas through: students viewed as lacking knowledge and language abilities; sense of class as competing individuals; work with fellow students viewed as cheating or disruptive.
Increase writing across the curriculum as a tool for learning.	Decrease writing taught only during "language arts" period—i.e., infrequently.
Increase constructive and efficient evaluation that involves: brief informal oral responses as students work; thorough grading of just a few student-selected, polished pieces; focus on a few errors at a time; cumulative view of growth and self-evaluation; encouragement of risk taking and honest expression.	Decrease evaluation as negative burden for teacher and student by: marking all papers heavily for errors, making teacher a bottleneck; teacher editing paper, and only after completed, rather than student making improvements; grading seen as punitive, focused on errors, not growth.

The message of best practice is clear: the more we apply proven principles of successful teaching, the more engaged our students will be in successful learning. This is a gradual process that unfolds over time. Teachers proceed on a continuum of development just like their students. With ongoing exposure to effective teaching methods through high quality in-service training and consistent administrative leadership that supports and validates contemporary instruction, teachers gradually replace less successful approaches with proven techniques that maximize student achievement.

Since the early 1990s when the best practice movement in American education began to take shape, thousands of teachers and administrators have begun the process of making research-based instruction an integral part of their schools. There is already a large best practice community in our country and many resources to help teachers make the transition. In the face of increasing pressure to improve student learning, everyone is looking for solutions. Best practice defines those solutions and provides for us the most logical and responsible path we can take.

How Do Teachers Achieve Best Practice?

Learning about best practice is vital but it's only the beginning. Knowing what best practice is helps us define where we want our teaching to end up. But it doesn't necessarily tell us how to get there. In our work, we have found that teachers achieve best practice when they concentrate their efforts on the following six instructional areas:

Writer's Workshop

A system for classroom management and the development of an effective writing community.

Focused mini-lessons taught in the context of authentic writing; status of the class; the majority of class time reserved for writing; conferencing; sharing; students choosing their own topics and forms; emphasis on authentic audiences and purposeful communication; writer's notebooks; frequent teacher modeling; five days a week, 45-60 minutes per day at elementary, three days a week at secondary; etc.

Writing Process

Teaching students how to write the way real writers write.

Pre-writing to develop ideas; drafting to increase fluency and expression; sharing to get feedback; revision to apply feedback; editing to produce conventional writing; publishing to make work available with others (twice a month on average); assessing to understand strengths and weaknesses and determine goals for improvement.

Writing Strategies

Reliable, re-usable techniques that help writers solve common problems.

Topic T-Chart; What-Why-How; Idea-Details; Tell-Show; Transition-Action-Details; Draw-Label-Caption; Action-Feelings-Setting; Content-Purpose-Audience; The Five Big Questions; The Five Facts of Fiction; lead strategies; ending strategies; pacing strategies, transition strategies, sentence strategies, conventions strategies; etc.

Six Traits

A language of quality that defines good writing.

Ideas: main idea, details, showing, purpose, originality; Organization: leads, endings, transitions, pacing, sequencing; Voice: personality, style, respect for audience; honesty; control; Word Choice: strong verbs, specific nouns and modifiers, appropriate vocabulary, memorable phrases, grammar and usage; Sentence Fluency: length, beginnings, sound, expression, construction; Conventions: capitalization, ending punctuation, internal punctuation, paragraphing, spelling.

Authentic Forms

Helping students explore and master the kinds of writing done by real people in the real world.

The creation of whole pieces that match as closely as possible the same types of writing done by adults; Primary emphasis on the personal essay (narrative, expository, persuasive) as the foundation of all writing; informational writing, reviews; letters; newspaper and magazine journalism; secondary emphasis on career-related forms such as technical writing, business writing, proposals, etc.; Occasional work on fiction, poetry, drama; etc.

Reading-Writing Connection

Helping students internalize reading and writing as complimentary aspects of literate communication.

Writing strategies used in "reverse" as comprehension strategies; analyzing reading texts for writing techniques; Explicit training in expressive reading to improve understanding of conventions; Conventions reading; Studying the same forms in reading that we want students to write; Reading and evaluating the writing of other students; etc.

In addition to dramatic improvements in test scores, teachers who have based the development of their own writing programs on the model presented here note the following advantages over the traditional approaches they used in the past: (1) Students enjoy writing; (2) Students write significantly more; (3) Low students often make as much progress as high students; (4) Students work independently with significantly greater on-task performance; (5) The burden of correcting and grading is reduced significantly; (6) Parents are thrilled; (7) Overall literacy improves across a broad range of reading, writing, and thinking skills; (8) Students gain confidence; (9) Students demonstrate more accountability and demonstrate greater effort; (10) Success in writing carries over into other subjects; (11) Student behavior improves making the classroom easier to manage; (12) Students enjoy school more.

What Do I Look For in Writing?

1. Quality

What is good writing? What does it look like? How can we describe it in words? What criteria do we use to say that some pieces are better than others? How do we justify our judgments and support our analyses?

The goal of this area of the writing curriculum is to provide students with an effective vocabulary that matches real world standards for appreciating the quality of a piece of writing and identifying opportunities for improvement.

1.1 General

- ☐ Uses a shared language of quality to express judgments in ways that others understand.
- ☐ Knows that different quality standards apply in different situations.
- ☐ Knows that some traits are more important than others.
- ☐ Knows that some traits are more important in some forms.
- ☐ Understands how the traits interact, knows that strengths and weaknesses in one trait may be linked with other traits.
- ☐ Knows that Voice is the most important trait.
- ☐ Knows that, in general, the communication of ideas is more important than correctness, but also understands community values with regard to conventions and strives to meet this standard.
- ☐ Knows that success in all traits is required in order to produce successful writing.

1.2 Ideas

- ☐ Defines and develops an important main idea.
- ☐ Supports ideas with interesting and relevant details.
- ☐ Uses "showing" or "descriptive" detail effectively.
- ☐ Produces writing that demonstrates a clear and consistent sense of purpose.
- ☐ Occasionally includes something unusual or unexpected that is appropriate and effective.
- ☐ Produces writing that displays insight, knowledge, experience, and depth of thought.
- ☐ Produces writing that makes sense.
- ☐ Values the meaning of ideas over organizational structure.

1.3 Organization

- ☐ Chooses organizational structure based on structure of own ideas.
- ☐ Uses authentic organizational structures, avoids inauthentic "recipe" and "fill-in" approaches.
- ☐ Creates effective beginnings that catch the audience's attention and make them want to read more.
- ☐ Creates effective endings that feel finished and give the audience something to think about.
- ☐ Determines sequencing based on the logical progression of ideas and the needs of the audience.
- ☐ Paces writing effectively, spends the right amount of time on each part.
- ☐ Produces writing that is easy to follow from section to section.

1.4 Voice

- ☐ Chooses own topics.
- ☐ Cares about own writing.
- ☐ Takes ownership of own writing.
- ☐ Writes in ways that make readers care.
- ☐ Respects the needs of the audience.
- ☐ Writes with honest statements and strong feelings.
- ☐ Shows own personality in appropriate ways.
- ☐ Writes with energy under thoughtful control.
- ☐ Uses humor appropriately.
- ☐ Takes risks with writing that lead to new learning.
- ☐ Demonstrates an understanding of the connection between Voice and choice.
- ☐ Consistently asserts personal preferences in ways that make own writing more effective.
- ☐ Produces writing that shows evidence of originality and uniqueness.
- ☐ Attempts to develop and assert a personal writing style.
- ☐ Asserts individuality in ways that are valued by the community.
- ☐ Constructively resists conformity when it is inconsistent with personal values.

1.5 Word Choice

- ___ Uses language that is appropriate to content, purpose, audience, and form.
- ___ Uses strong verbs effectively.
- ___ Writes with specific and precise adverbs and adjectives.
- ___ Produces writing that includes memorable words and phrases.
- ___ Demonstrates effective usage.
- ___ Uses appropriate grammar.
- ___ Demonstrates an understanding of the difference in vocabulary between formal and informal writing.
- ___ Knows the meanings of words used including connotative meanings.
- ___ Uses colloquial language effectively and appropriately.
- ___ Engages in word play.
- ___ Demonstrates a basic understanding of etymology.

1.6 Sentence Fluency

- ___ Reads own writing with expression.
- ___ Displays effective variety in sentence beginnings.
- ___ Displays effective variety in sentence lengths.
- ___ Produces writing that is easy to read expressively.
- ___ Uses rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and other "sound" effects appropriately.
- ___ Constructs sentences in ways that make them easy to understand.
- ___ Modifies sentence structure for audience.
- ___ Uses fragments effectively.

1.7 Conventions

- ___ Applies conventions in ways that makes sense to the audience.
- ___ Alters writing conventions appropriately according to content, purpose, audience, and form.
- ___ Understands the vocabulary of writing conventions and uses terms appropriately.
- ___ Knows that conventions are not hard and fast rules but agreements within communities and that these agreements change from time to time.
- ___ Knows that specific rules are determined by publishers who follow a particular "style" that may, in some respects, be unique to their particular publications.
- ___ Uses capitalization to indicate where new ideas begin; capitalizes the word "I" as well as names, places, and things that are one of a kind.
- ___ Uses marks of terminal punctuation—periods, question marks, and exclamation marks—to indicate the ends of statements, questions, and exclamatory remarks.

- ___ Uses marks of internal punctuation—commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, and parentheses—to improve readability and enhance meaning by indicating clause boundaries and logical relationships.
- ___ Uses apostrophes to indicate possession and contractions.
- ___ Uses quotation marks to indicate dialog, to indicate an uncommon use of a word or phrase, and to signal irony.
- ___ Uses the ellipsis to indicate that text is missing or that something repeats indefinitely.
- ___ Uses paragraphs to indicate groups of related ideas and to signal a new speaker when writing dialog; indents or skips a line between paragraphs according to appropriate style.
- ___ Uses hyphens to indicate the breaking of a word, at a syllable boundary, that is continued on the next line.
- ___ Spells words correctly as defined by audience or publisher's style.

1.8 Presentation

- ___ Produces legible writing.
- ___ Produces work that is visually appealing.
- ___ Uses appropriate letter formation, size, slant, and spacing.
- ___ Stays on the lines.
- ___ Uses appropriate margins.
- ___ Uses appropriate fonts and other computer formatting.
- ___ Uses layout techniques that increase readability and visual appeal.
- ___ Uses effective illustrations and other visual components such as diagrams, tables, charts, photographs, etc.

2. Process

How do writers write? What stages do they go through to turn raw ideas into polished pieces? What do writers attempt to accomplish at each stage? How do writers develop and refine their own writing process?

The goal of this part of the writing curriculum is to help students develop an effective and reliable process for creating finished pieces.

2.1 General

- ☐ Knows the stages of the "generic" writing process—pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing.
- ☐ Understands the purpose of each stage in the writing process.
- ☐ Understands the cyclical nature of the writing process.
- ☐ Develops and uses own writing process.
- ☐ Demonstrates an appreciation of or tolerance for the writing processes of others.

2.2 Pre-writing

- ☐ Pre-writes when necessary.
- ☐ Uses a variety of pre-writing strategies.
- ☐ Selects appropriate pre-writing strategies for specific situations.
- ☐ Saves pre-writing materials for use at other times.
- ☐ Develops own pre-writing strategies.
- ☐ Saves pre-writing material for later use.
- ☐ Devotes an appropriate amount of time to pre-writing.

2.3 Drafting

- ☐ Skips spaces between lines to facilitate easier revision when writing by hand.
- ☐ Makes use of pre-writing to generate material.
- ☐ Attends to conventions as they arise in accordance with ability but does not let correctness impact fluency.
- ☐ Writes fluently for sustained periods of time with reasonable production.
- ☐ Handles writer's block effectively.
- ☐ Expresses self freely and unselfconsciously.
- ☐ Puts thoughts into words comfortably and naturally.
- ☐ Demonstrates a willingness to take risks.
- ☐ Writes until ideas are thoroughly expressed, not for word or page counts, arbitrary periods of time, or other quantitative measures.

2.4 Sharing

- ☐ Shares regularly at all stages of the writing process.
- ☐ Acknowledges feedback.
- ☐ Understands feedback, asks for clarification or elaboration when confused.
- ☐ Asks audience for specific help when sharing.
- ☐ Shares parts of a piece when the whole might be too long.
- ☐ Gives other writers an equal opportunity to share.
- ☐ Allows another writer or the teacher to share own writing when unwilling or unable to read own work.
- ☐ Reads own work with confidence in a loud, clear, and pleasant manner.
- ☐ Demonstrates an understanding of the value of sharing to self, others, and the writing community as a whole.

2.5 Revising

- ☐ Uses specific revision strategies to solve common problems.
- ☐ Regularly revises beginnings and endings.
- ☐ Applies feedback from sharing to improve writing; makes good decisions about when and when not to apply feedback.
- ☐ Often makes more than one revision pass.
- ☐ Revises to meet the needs of an authentic audience.
- ☐ Adds material when needed based on own analysis or the requests of others.
- ☐ Re-organizes material to improve sequencing.
- ☐ Deletes material when it is unnecessary or when length requirements apply.
- ☐ Spends more time in revision than in other stages.

2.6 Editing

- ___ Finds own errors.
- ___ Corrects own writing.
- ___ Uses editing marks when necessary.
- ___ Helps other writers edit their writing.
- ___ Asks for specific help with specific conventions.
- ___ Finds and fixes one type of error at a time when engaged in formal proofreading.
- ___ Makes several "passes" over a piece to insure correctness.
- ___ Asks others to review own writing for correctness, accepts feedback and applies it.
- ___ Expend reasonable effort to make writing as correct as it can be using all available resources and strategies.

2.7 Publishing

- ___ Publishes writing regularly.
- ___ Produces finished pieces with legible handwriting.
- ___ Illustrates work when appropriate using drawings, photographs, graphics, artwork, etc.
- ___ Types and formats own writing using a computer or typewriter.
- ___ Keeps a portfolio of work.
- ___ Displays and/or distributes work for appreciation by others.
- ___ Has some familiarity with desktop publishing, computer-aided slideshows, and web publishing.
- ___ Submits finished work for formal publications like school or classroom newspapers, or for other situations like contests, admissions requirements, etc.
- ___ Produces finished writing outside of school without being told to do so.
- ___ Shows good judgment with regard to the publication of personal information and ideas others may find troubling or offensive.

2.8 Assessing

- ___ Expresses judgments of quality using appropriate criteria.
- ___ Produces written reflections about own writing.
- ___ Assesses both process and product of own writing.
- ___ Understands own writing process.
- ___ Accurately assesses own writing and the writing of others.
- ___ Understands own strengths and weaknesses.
- ___ Sets goals for improvement
- ___ Achieves most learning goals.
- ___ Asks for specific help and uses it.
- ___ Sees self as a writer.
- ___ Understands how to improve or seeks to find out.
- ___ Finds writing enjoyable and valuable.
- ___ Focuses on growth and improvement over time rather than on the success or failure of a single piece.

3. Forms

What kinds of writing are most likely to help students become better writers? What kinds of writing should students practice occasionally in order to develop familiarity though perhaps not mastery? What kinds of writing exist in the world today? What kinds of writing are relevant and practical for each individual student?

The goal of this area of the writing curriculum is to expose students to the most common authentic forms of writing that exist in the world today and to help them develop competence in those forms that are most valuable to them.

Note: I recognize that this section could be very long as hundreds of forms of writing exist in the world and new forms continue to arise. In this draft, I have chosen to focus on those forms which I feel are essential for learning how to write and are beneficial to all students. New forms, and new learning goals, should be added as needed, especially with regard to authentic forms in subject areas outside of the Language Arts.

3.1 General

- ___ Uses a variety of authentic forms to express ideas, to demonstrate learning, and to clarify and formalize thinking.
- ___ Knows the difference between authentic and inauthentic forms.
- ___ Chooses own forms.
- ___ Expresses personal preferences about forms, has favorite forms.
- ___ Knows different forms have different requirements.
- ___ Can identify key elements that make one form different from another.
- ___ Has some familiarity with the history of some writing forms, knows that forms change over time in response to technology and culture.
- ___ Understands the connection between content, purpose, audience, and form.
- ___ Practices the forms that are mostly likely to improve own writing ability.
- ___ Focuses on those forms that are most relevant and valuable to own life.
- ___ Uses all modes of argument (narrative, expository, persuasive, descriptive) effectively, can mix and move between them effectively in the same piece.

3.2 Personal Narrative

- ___ Knows that personal narrative writing is the best form for improving writing skills and the basis for all other forms.
- ___ Writes accurately and honestly from own experience.
- ___ Draws connections in personal narrative writing between own experience and the experiences of others.
- ___ Interprets events, draws meaningful conclusions, explores life lessons.
- ___ Effectively explores own beliefs and world view in ways that others find entertaining and thought provoking.
- ___ Relates personal experiences naturally in ways the audience can appreciate.
- ___ Draws on a variety of experiences for material.

3.3 Informational and Expository

- ___ Selects own topics for research based on personal interest within the framework of the curriculum.
- ___ Produces writing with a clear and well-defined thesis.
- ___ Focuses on a narrowly defined topic area or small set of questions.
- ___ Knows how to develop good questions for study, pursues follow-up questions thoroughly.
- ___ Uses a variety of authentic sources such as: original documents, interviews, the experience of colleagues, personal experience, etc.
- ___ Constructs logical arguments that are sound, meaningful, and effective.
- ___ Supports conclusions with reasons and evidence.
- ___ Models informational writing after contemporary newspaper and magazine journalism.

3.4 Persuasive

- ___ Demonstrates strong belief in positions.
- ___ Understands the perspective of the audience.
- ___ Anticipates and handles all reasonable objections.
- ___ Argues respectfully.
- ___ Supports opinions with ample detail.
- ___ Asserts positions with clarity.
- ___ Uses credible and effective evidence to sustain arguments.
- ___ Demonstrates thoroughness by dealing with all relevant aspects of a given issue.
- ___ Occasionally succeeds in persuading some readers.

3.5 Book Reviews and Literary Criticism

- ___ Selects own texts to be reviewed.
- ___ Assesses the quality of the text.
- ___ Draws meaningful connections and comparisons within and across texts.
- ___ Summarizes effectively.
- ___ Offers thoughtful commentary and original insights based on thorough analysis.
- ___ Provides sufficient information to allow others to decide if they would like to read a text.
- ___ Sites sections of the text to support opinions.

3.6 Journaling

- ___ Uses journaling as an opportunity for personal reflection.
- ___ Uses journaling as a means of saving thoughts for use in other writings.
- ___ Uses journaling to record and track progress.
- ___ Uses journaling to increase fluency.

3.7 Correspondence

- ___ Demonstrates an understanding of the formal conventions of various kinds of correspondence.
- ___ Writes letters regularly, replies when written to.
- ___ Demonstrates an understanding of e-mail and instant message etiquette.
- ___ Writes letters of inquiry for research topics and other needs.
- ___ Writes letters to family and friends.
- ___ Writes letters to express opinions about school, community, and the world.
- ___ Writes "thank you" letters.
- ___ Demonstrates familiarity with common business correspondence.

3.8 Note Taking

- ___ Takes notes in ways that are useful at a later time.
- ___ Knows some specific note taking strategies.
- ___ Knows when and when not to take notes.
- ___ Shows good judgment about what and what not to write down.
- ___ Saves notes for later use.

3.9 Fiction

- ___ Occasionally attempts, but may not always finish, short fiction.
- ___ Demonstrates a familiarity with strategies for creating stories, developing characters, constructing plots, etc.
- ___ Demonstrates an understanding of how fiction works.
- ___ Demonstrates a knowledge of common sub-genres.
- ___ Uses information learned through the writing of fiction to improve ability to read fiction.
- ___ Attempts some of the common techniques used by professional fiction writers.

3.10 Test Writing

- ___ Knows how to write appropriately and effectively for tests.
- ___ Understands the criteria of the test and the process of how work will be scored.
- ___ Uses specific test taking strategies when necessary.
- ___ Knows that test writing is not the same as authentic writing, merely a genre of writing that is practiced only occasionally.

3.11 Other Forms

- ___ Has attempted the common forms of newspaper and magazine journalism—straight news, feature story, interview, commentary, editorial, etc.
- ___ Has attempted the commonly used authentic forms of writing in mathematics, the physical sciences, and the social sciences.
- ___ Has attempted to write poetry, songs, and drama.
- ___ Has attempted technical writing.
- ___ Has practiced writing college entrance essays or similar works produced for similar situations.
- ___ Has some familiarity with important business documents—business plan, request for proposal, invoice, job cost estimate, letter of complaint, memorandum, job offer, employment contract, etc.
- ___ Has written a resume.
- ___ Writes successfully in forms that match a personal interest but may not be taught in school: sports writing, travel writing, restaurant and movie reviews, spiritual writing, interactive writing, television and movie scripts, e-mail and instant messaging, etc.

4. Strategies

What is a writing strategy? What are the problems writers face and which strategies do writers use to solve them? Which strategies are most efficient and effective? Which strategies are best for which types of writing? What does it mean to think strategically about writing?

The goal of this area of the writing curriculum is to provide students with a large repertoire of reliable techniques for solving the common problems writers face and to expose students to the idea of thinking strategically about writing.

4.1 General

- ☐ Notices frequent problems and selects appropriate strategies for solving them.
- ☐ Develops a repertoire of strategies for elements in the criteria for quality, for each stage in the writing process, and for relevant forms.
- ☐ Uses a large repertoire of authentic and reliable strategies that can be used in a variety of writing situations.
- ☐ Chooses strategies to match genre, form, or mode of writing.
- ☐ Uses many strategies for selecting effective topics, knows what a good topic is.
- ☐ Uses at least one strategy for creating or refining a main idea, knows what a main idea is and how it functions in a piece of writing.
- ☐ Uses at least one strategy for identifying and clarifying purpose and writing toward that goal.
- ☐ Uses strategies for determining and meeting the needs of an audience.
- ☐ Uses strategies for determining when a piece is finished.
- ☐ Uses strategies for sounding out words independently.
- ☐ Uses many strategies for the creation of supporting details, knows what a detail is and how it functions in a piece of writing.
- ☐ Uses single strategies or strategy sets that are particularly effective for certain forms, genres, or modes of writing.
- ☐ Uses many strategies for creating effective beginnings, often tries several different beginnings for a piece.
- ☐ Uses many strategies for creating effective endings, often tries several different endings for a piece.
- ☐ Uses strategies to identify and correct errors in writing conventions.
- ☐ Uses strategies to determine the meaning or correct spelling of a word.
- ☐ Uses strategies for dealing with writer's block.
- ☐ Uses strategies for effective summarizing.
- ☐ Uses strategies for narrative sequencing and procedural writing.
- ☐ Develops own repertoire of personal strategies based on own writing process.
- ☐ Demonstrates an eagerness to learn new strategies.
- ☐ Thinks strategically about writing.

5. Community

What is a writing community? What value is there in working with other writers when learning to write? How do we create and sustain a supportive environment for writing? What rules or other agreements should we follow so that all writers have an opportunity to learn? What format or structure should we use in our writing classroom?

The goal of this area of the writing curriculum is to provide students with the knowledge and abilities they need to work together effectively as writers and to establish guidelines that assure the success of all participants and the teacher.

5.1 General

- ☐ Contributes to the success of the writing community.
- ☐ Shares regularly.
- ☐ Provides helpful responses to other writers.
- ☐ Conferences regularly with the teacher.
- ☐ Applies conference suggestions offered by the teacher.
- ☐ Peer conferences effectively.
- ☐ Participates effectively in small group sharing.
- ☐ Requests specific feedback and incorporates it as needed.
- ☐ Moves from stage to stage in the writing process independently.
- ☐ Makes good decisions about when to move on to a new piece.
- ☐ Functions independently when required.
- ☐ Requests specific help and applies it effectively.
- ☐ Knows which writers to ask for certain kinds of help.
- ☐ Makes deadlines.
- ☐ Helps others.
- ☐ Participates appropriately.
- ☐ Shares "status" when asked.
- ☐ Works well during work time.
- ☐ Attends well to mini-lessons.
- ☐ Applies lesson content.
- ☐ Takes writing seriously.
- ☐ Has appropriate writing materials.
- ☐ Observes the rules of the writing community.

6. Connection

What is the reading-writing connection? How are reading and writing related? How can we learn about one subject while engaging in the other? What is the value of studying reading and writing as two parts of the same thing? How do we define reading and writing as complimentary processes?

The goal of this area of the writing curriculum is to help students use the knowledge and skills of reading to improve their knowledge and skills in writing and vice versa.

6.1 General

- ___ Analyzes and assesses reading models to learn more about writing.
- ___ Acquires new writing techniques from reading.
- ___ Identifies forms and analyzes their components.
- ___ Applies writing strategies in reverse to improve reading comprehension.
- ___ Demonstrates knowledge of the complimentary nature of reading and writing.
- ___ Imitates texts read in writing.
- ___ Demonstrates an understanding of the connection between expressive reading, sentence fluency, and writing conventions.
- ___ Reads own writing thoroughly.
- ___ Reads the writing of other student writers.
- ___ Learns about the use of conventions from examples in books.
- ___ Analyzes and attempts to emulate the writing style of favorite authors.
- ___ Writes down and keeps favorite passages from other texts.
- ___ Uses sentences in other texts as models for sentence structures in writing.

Official Six Traits Criteria From NWREL

Rater: _____

Paper: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: (1) Read the paper all the way through. (2) Start with the criteria for a “5” and work down. (3) Read each item and enter “Y” for “yes”; “N” for “no”; “S” for “sort of”; Mark your score at the bottom of the appropriate column. (4) You need not mark every item; only those that you feel serve to justify your score. (5) Don’t agonize; trust your gut reaction. (6) There are no right or wrong scores. Just be sure you can justify your assessment using the criteria. (7) Be accurate, not emotional. You’re not giving out a grade or telling someone that he or she is a “bad” or a “good” writer; you’re just trying to find out, as best you can, what the paper’s strengths and weaknesses are.

Ideas

The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

5 ➤ The paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader’s attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story line.

- ___ Ideas are fresh and original.
- ___ The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience and shows insight: an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant.
- ___ Relevant, showing, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.
- ___ The writer develops the topic in an enlightening, purposeful way that makes a point or tells a story.
- ___ Every piece adds something to the whole.

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

- ___ It is pretty easy to see where the writer is headed, though more information is needed to “fill in the blanks.”
- ___ The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.
- ___ Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, or extended enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.
- ___ Support is attempted, but doesn’t go far enough yet in fleshing out the main point or story line.
- ___ Details often blend the original with the predictable.

1 ➤ 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 details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- ___ The writer is still in search of a topic, or has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.
- ___ Information is very limited or unclear.
- ___ The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts.
- ___ Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what’s critical.

➤ Score for the trait of **Ideas**: _____

Organization

The internal structure of a piece, the thread of central meaning, the logical pattern of ideas.

5 ➤ The organization advances and showcases the central idea or story line. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.

- ___ Details seem to fit where they are placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
- ___ An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of resolution.
- ___ Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
- ___ Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.
- ___ Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it.

3 ➤ The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without undue confusion.

- ___ 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.
- ___ Sequencing is usually logical, but may sometimes be so predictable that the structure takes attention away from the content.
- ___ Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes spurts ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter. Transitions often work well; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy.
- ___ 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, or else there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- ___ Sequencing needs work.
- ___ There is no real lead to set up what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up.
- ___ Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa.
- ___ Connections between ideas are confusing or missing.
- ___ Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.

➤ Score for the trait of **Organization**: _____

Voice

The heart and soul of a piece, the magic, the wit. It is the writer’s unique and personal expression emerging through words.

5 ➤ The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. Clearly, the writer is involved in the text, is sensitive to the needs of an audience, and is writing to be read.

- ___ The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, sensing the person behind the words.
- ___ The tone and voice give flavor to the message and seem appropriate for the purpose and audience.
- ___ The writing seems honest, appealing, and written from the heart.
- ___ The writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic, and an effort to bring the topic to life by anticipating the reader’s questions, and showing why the reader should care or want to know more.

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

- ___ The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing manner. Moments here and there surprise, amuse, or move the reader.
- ___ Voice may emerge strongly on occasion, then retreat behind general, dispassionate language.
- ___ The writing hides as much of the writer as it reveals.
- ___ The writer seems aware of an audience, but often tends to weigh words carefully or discard personal insights in favor of safe generalities.

1 ➤ The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the writing is lifeless or mechanical; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic. The paper reflects more than one of the following problems:

- ___ It is hard to sense the writer behind the words. The writer does not seem to reach out to an audience, or to anticipate their interests and questions.
- ___ The writer speaks in a kind of monotone that flattens all potential highs or lows of the message.
- ___ The writing may communicate on a functional level, but it does not move or involve the reader.
- ___ The writer does not seem sufficiently at home with the topic to take risks, share personal insights, or make the topic/story personal and real for the reader.

➤ Score for the trait of **Voice**: _____

Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions
The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader. It is the love of language, a passion for words, combined with a skill in choosing words that creates just the right mood.	The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way the writing plays to the ear—not just to the eye.	The mechanical correctness of the writing.

- 5 ➤** Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way.
- Words are specific and accurate; it is easy to understand just what the writer means.
- The language is natural and never overdone; phrasing is highly individual.
- Lively verbs energize the writing. Precise nouns and modifiers create pictures in the reader's mind.
- Striking words and phrases often catch the reader's eye—and linger in the reader's mind.
- Cliches and jargon are used sparingly, only for effect.
- 3 ➤** The language is functional, even if it lacks punch; it is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.
- Words are almost always correct and adequate; they simply lack flair.
- Familiar words and phrases communicate, but rarely capture the reader's imagination. Still, the paper may have one or two fine moments.
- Attempts at colorful language come close to the mark, but sometimes seem overdone.
- Energetic verbs or picturesque phrases liven things up now and then; the reader longs for more.
- 1 ➤** The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:
- Language is so vague (e.g., *It was a fun time, She was neat, It was nice, We did lots of stuff*) that only the most general message comes through.
- Persistent redundancy distracts the reader.
- Jargon or clichés serve as a crutch.
- Words are used incorrectly, sometimes making the message hard to decipher.
- Problems with language leave the reader wondering what the writer is trying to say.
- Score for the trait of **Word Choice**:

2 ➤ EMERGING
➤ There are brief moments when we get a glimpse of the writer's ability with this trait, but no consistent use. The paper shows promise, a hint of things to come, but there is a need for revision as weaknesses clearly outweigh strengths.

3 ➤ DEVELOPING
➤ The writer is beginning to take control of this trait. The paper shows a balance between strengths and weaknesses. There is definite direction, coherence, momentum, and a sense of purpose, but some revision is called for.

4 ➤ MATURING
➤ The writer is showing more control of this trait including the confidence to experiment. Strengths definitely outweigh weaknesses. One more revision will probably bring it to closure.

5 ➤ STRONG
➤ The writer has control of this trait and is able to use it skillfully to shape the direction of the writing. This is a very strong and controlled performance (though not necessarily perfect). Little or no revision is needed.

- 5 ➤** The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive reading.
- Sentences are constructed in a way that helps make meaning clear.
- Purposeful sentence beginnings show how each sentence relates to and builds upon the one before it.
- The writing has cadence, as if the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning.
- Sentences vary in length as well as structure.
- Fragments, if used, add style.
- Dialog, if used, sounds natural.
- 3 ➤** The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.
- Sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, but they are usually grammatical. They hang together. They get the job done.
- There is at least some variation in sentence length and structure.
- Sentence beginnings are not all alike.
- The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (e.g., connecting words and phrases like *however, therefore, on the other hand, to be specific, for example*, etc.) that show how sentences interrelate.
- Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly. Overall though, it is pretty easy to read the paper aloud with a little practice.
- 1 ➤** The reader has to practice in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:
- Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward; they need work.
- Phrasing does not sound natural, the way someone might speak.
- The reader must sometimes pause or read over to get the meaning.
- Many sentences begin the same way—and many follow the same patterns (e.g., subject-verb-object) in a monotonous pattern.
- Endless connectives (*and, and so, but then, because, and then*, etc.) create a massive jumble of language in which clear sentence beginnings and endings get swallowed up.
- The text does not invite expressive oral reading.
- Score for the trait of **Sentence Fluency**:

- 5 ➤** The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few and so minor that the reader can easily overlook them unless hunting for them specifically.
- Paragraphing tends to be sound; it reinforces organizational structure.
- Grammar and usage contribute to clarity and style.
- Punctuation is accurate and guides the reader through the text.
- Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
- The writer may manipulate conventions—especially grammar and spelling—for stylistic effect.
- The writing is sufficiently long and complex to allow the writer to show skill using a wide range of conventions.
- Only light editing is required to polish the text for publication.
- 3 ➤** 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.
- Paragraphing is attempted. Paragraphs sometimes run together or begin in the wrong places.
- Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning.
- Terminal (end-of-sentence) punctuation is usually correct; internal punctuation (commas, semicolons, dashes, colons, etc.) is sometimes missing or wrong.
- Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words.
- Moderate editing is required to polish the text for publication.
- 1 ➤** Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, capitalization, etc., repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:
- Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (e.g., every sentence that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
- Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable, and may affect meaning.
- Punctuation is often missing or incorrect.
- Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
- The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning. Extensive editing is required.
- Score for the trait of **Conventions**:

Six Traits Criteria For Research Papers

Rater: _____

Paper: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: (1) Read the paper all the way through. (2) Start with the criteria for a "5" and work down. (3) Read each item and enter "Y" for "yes"; "N" for "no"; "S" for "sort of"; Mark your score at the bottom of the appropriate column. (4) You need not mark every item; only those that you feel serve to justify your score. (5) Don't agonize; trust your gut reaction. (6) There are no right or wrong scores. Just be sure you can justify your assessment using the criteria. (7) Be accurate, not emotional. You're not giving out a grade or telling someone that he or she is a "bad" or a "good" writer; you're just trying to find out, as best you can, what the paper's strengths and weaknesses are.

IDEAS

The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

5 > The paper is clear and focused. It thoroughly answers a well-defined key question in understandable, convincing, and expansive terms.

- ___ The main idea, thesis, or research question is clearly defined and detailed. There may be more than one key point, but the paper is not simply a list.
- ___ The writer seems well informed and, as appropriate, draws on relevant information from a variety of resources (e.g., personal experience, reading, investigation, interviews, observations, films).
- ___ The writer continuously anticipates and responds to the reader's informational needs and questions.
- ___ Supporting details (examples, facts, anecdotes, quotations, etc.) are accurate, significant, and helpful in clarifying or expanding the main idea(s).

3 > The paper addresses an identifiable key question by offering the reader general, basic information.

- ___ The reader can identify or infer at least one main assertion or thesis.
- ___ Some support seems grounded in research or experience. Some seems based on common knowledge or best guesses.
- ___ The writer sometimes responds to the reader's informational needs; at other times, important questions are left unanswered.
- ___ More investigation, stronger support, and greater attention to detail would strengthen this paper.

1 > The writer has not yet clarified an important question or issue that this paper will address. One or more of the following problems may be evident:

- ___ The paper may wander or dissolve into a rambling list of ideas. It needs focus.
- ___ Support is either missing, or too vague or questionable, to be helpful.
- ___ The writer does not seem to have the questions, needs, or interests of the audience clearly in mind.
- ___ The writer does not yet have or use the information needed to help a reader understand this topic.

> Score for the trait of **Ideas**: _____

ORGANIZATION

The internal structure of a piece, the thread of central meaning, the logical pattern of ideas.

5 > A strong internal structure gives purpose and direction to the main thesis. The organization propels the reader toward the key point(s) or logical conclusions the writer wants to emphasize.

- ___ The introduction engages the reader and shows where the writer is headed.
- ___ Placement of details, anecdotes, facts, and examples seems well thought out, deliberate, and helpful to the reader's understanding.
- ___ Purposeful transitions guide the reader to key points and conclusions.
- ___ The conclusion effectively resolves leftover questions and shows the reader how everything ties together.
- ___ The reader's understanding of the topic grows throughout the paper.

3 > The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without undue confusion.

- ___ The introduction offers at least a hint of things to come.
- ___ Details, examples, facts, and other supportive features are usually linked to main ideas, though they may sometimes pop up in illogical places.
- ___ Transitions are attempted, but the writer sometimes misses opportunities to guide the reader's thinking.
- ___ The conclusion wraps up the discussion, but may leave loose ends unattended.
- ___ Despite some questions, the reader can follow what is being said.

1 > The organizational structure needs a stronger sense of purpose and direction. The reader may feel confused about what to focus on or what conclusions to draw. One or more of the following problems may be evident:

- ___ A strong lead is needed to set up the paper; it just starts in.
- ___ Ideas and supporting details seem randomly ordered; the reader often wonders where the writer is headed.
- ___ Stronger transitions and connections would help the reader link ideas.
- ___ The reader may miss the whole point or have great difficulty following what the writer is trying to say.
- ___ The conclusion does not help the reader make greater sense of what has already been said.

> Score for the trait of **Organization**: _____

VOICE

The heart and soul of a piece, the magic, the wit. It is the writer's unique and personal expression emerging through words.

5 > The writer addresses the audience in a voice that is lively, engaging, and wholly appropriate to the topic and purpose of the paper.

- ___ The writer's passion and enthusiasm for this topic are evident throughout the piece.
- ___ The writer seems to know his or her audience well and to speak right to them, drawing them into the discussion and showing concern for their understanding of the topic.
- ___ From opening to close, the writer sustains a kind of energy that holds the reader's attention.
- ___ The reader finds himself or herself caught up in this topic.

3 > The writer projects a tone and voice that seem sincere, pleasant, and generally appropriate for the topic and audience.

- ___ Enthusiasm and commitment to the topic are sometimes evident, though often restrained.
- ___ Moments of spontaneity enliven the piece but may be somewhat dampened by a more prosaic voice that seems less involved.
- ___ The writer seems occasionally aware of the informational needs or interests of the audience.
- ___ The reader feels informed but not really "invited in."

1 > The writer seems indifferent to either topic or audience, and as a result, the tone may be distant, flat, jargonistic, stilted, or just inappropriate. One or more problems may be evident:

- ___ The writer does not seem to reach out to the audience or to think how the tone, style, or language of the piece might affect their response.
- ___ The writer seems bored, distracted, or just anxious to be done with it; consequently, it is hard for the reader not to feel the same.
- ___ Moments of excitement, which might have brought this topic to life, just are not there.
- ___ The writer may be writing more for himself or herself than for an audience, and the result is impersonal—calculated more to show off the writer's specialized knowledge than to engage the reader.

> Score for the trait of **Voice**: _____

WORD CHOICE

The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader. It is the love of language, a passion for words, combined with a skill in choosing words that creates just the right mood.

5 - Well-chosen words convey the writer's message in a clear, precise, and highly readable way, often taking the reader to a new level of understanding.

- The vocabulary suits the writer, the subject, and the audience.
- The writer uses the language of the content area with skill and ease, always helping to make meaning clear from context.
- Technical or little-known words are defined or clarified as appropriate, with the writer always taking into account what the audience (probably) already knows.
- The writer consistently chooses explicit, vivid words and phrases that make the message both clear and memorable.

3 - Words are reasonably accurate and make the message clear on a general level.

- Though most language in the paper is both correct and functional, the vocabulary is sometimes inappropriate (too difficult, technical, or informal) for the topic, audience, or both.
- The writer communicates broad concepts but may not have sufficient vocabulary to explore the finer points with precision, detail, or confidence.
- Technical or special terms may sometimes be used without sufficient explanation or contextual clarity.

1 - The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary that restricts what he or she is able to convey, or the writing is so technical and difficult to penetrate that the reader feels shut out. One or more of the following problems may be evident:

- Vocabulary may be inappropriate (incorrect or too general, technical, or informal) for the topic, audience, or both.
- Technical language or specialized vocabulary may be overused, used incorrectly, or missing where it would be really helpful in making a particular point.
- Language lacks the precision needed to convey an explicit, clear message.
- The writer may be using language that "speaks" to an insider but does not help other readers understand or appreciate the topic.

→ Score for the trait of **Word Choice:**

SENTENCE FLUENCY

The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way the writing plays to the ear—not just to the eye.

5 - The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive reading.

- Sentences are constructed in a way that helps make meaning clear. Purposeful sentence beginnings show how each sentence relates to and builds upon the one before it.
- The writing has cadence, as if the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning.
- Sentences vary in length as well as structure.
- Fragments, if used, add style.
- Dialog, if used, sounds natural.

3 - The text hums along with a steady beat, but is more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.

- Sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, but they are usually grammatical. They hang together. They get the job done.
- There is at least some variation in sentence length and structure. Sentence beginnings are not all alike.
- 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.
- Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly. Overall though, it is pretty easy to read the paper aloud with a little practice.

1 - The reader has to practice in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, awkward; they need work.
- Phrasing does not sound natural, the way someone might speak.
- The reader must sometimes pause or read over to get the meaning.
- Many sentences begin the same way—and many follow the same patterns (e.g., subject-verb-object) in a monotonous pattern.
- Endless connectives (*and, and so, but then, because, and then, etc.*) create a massive jumble of language in which clear sentence beginnings and endings get swallowed up.
- The text does not invite expressive oral reading.

→ Score for the trait of **Sentence Fluency:**

CONVENTIONS

The mechanical correctness of the writing.

- Basic conventions are essentially correct; errors are so few and so minor the reader could skip right over them unless searching for them specifically.
- The writer uses titles and subtitles as needed to effectively set off sections of the text.
- The writer uses a table of contents as needed and sets it up with care; each section is easy to locate.
- Footnotes and/or bibliography are formatted and punctuated correctly.
- The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect.
- Only light editing would be required to prepare this text for publication.

3 - Errors in writing conventions, while not overwhelming, begin to impair readability.

- Errors in basic conventions occur often enough or are serious enough to be somewhat distracting and noticeable.
- The writer sometimes uses titles and subtitles, but more frequent or different division of the text would be helpful.
- A table of contents is present but requires some editing in order to be useful.
- Footnotes and/or bibliography are present but require some editing.
- Moderate editing would be required to prepare this text for publication.

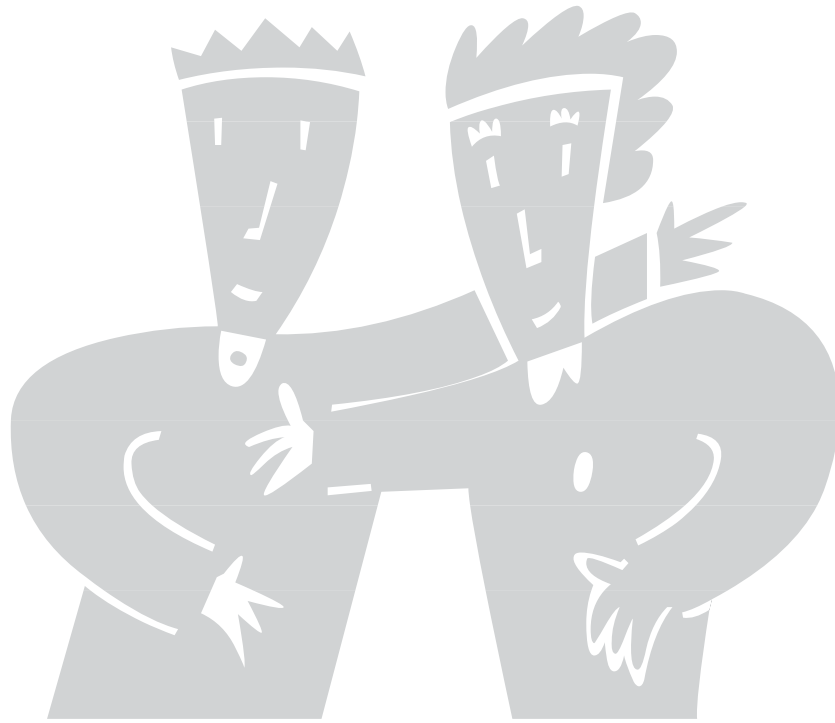
1 - Numerous errors in writing conventions consistently distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. One or more of the following problems may be evident.

- Errors in basic conventions are frequent or serious enough that it is sometimes hard to understand or focus on the message.
- Titles or subtitles would be helpful but are not used.
- A table of contents would be helpful but is not used; if used, it contains many errors that need correcting.
- Footnotes and/or bibliography are needed but are not used; if used, they contain many errors that need correcting.
- Extensive editing would be required to prepare this text for publication.

→ Score for the trait of **Conventions:**

1 - BEGINNING	→ The writer is searching, exploring, struggling; looking for a sense of purpose or a way to begin working with this trait. This is an early performance; there is great need for revision.
2 - EMERGING	→ There are brief moments when we get a glimpse of the writer's ability with this trait, but no consistent use. The paper shows promise, a hint of things to come, but there is a need for revision as weaknesses clearly outweigh strengths.
3 - DEVELOPING	→ The writer is beginning to take control of this trait. The paper shows a balance between strengths and weaknesses. There is definite direction, coherence, momentum, and a sense of purpose, but some revision is called for.
4 - MATURING	→ The writer is showing more control of this trait including the confidence to experiment. Strengths definitely outweigh weaknesses. One more revision will probably bring it to closure.
5 - STRONG	→ The writer has control of this trait and is able to use it skillfully to shape the direction of the writing. This is a very strong and controlled performance (though not necessarily perfect). Little or no revision is needed.

Not Assessable. The paper could not be assessed using these criteria because:



Let's work together to
make your teaching
the best it can be.

Please contact me any time!

Even the best workshops and teaching materials can't meet the needs of every teacher all the time.

That's why we need to stay in touch. Send me an e-mail any time you have a question.

*I'll do my best to get back to you quickly with answers, additional teaching materials,
or other resources.*

Please send suggestions, questions, and corrections to:
stevepeha@ttms.org

T E A C H I N G T H A T M A K E S S E N S E

Learning Patterns

Teach Smarter Not Harder

Imagine a structure 13 years tall, 180 days wide, and five subjects deep. This is a K-12 education. Each cell in this structure represents a single class period in a single subject for a total of 11,700 educational opportunities.

By using *Teaching That Makes Sense® Learning Patterns™* we can reduce this academic load for students, simplify planning and instruction for teachers, and help more kids learn more things in less time and with less teacher effort.

Learning Patterns are cross-curricular tools optimized for successful teaching in any subject or grade. They are designed to be used, re-used, and shared across classrooms without requiring extensive training or preparation.

By analyzing standards documents and the methods of effective teachers, *Teaching That Makes Sense* has identified underlying commonalities in learning targets across the curriculum. These commonalities represent dozens of potential assignments that can be taught and learned through a small set of foundational skills.

Consider exposition. Students consume and create expository information in many ways: they read expository texts, write expository essays, create reports, answer test questions, etc. As varied as expository expression is, it has a simple underlying structure that can be explained by a single *Learning Pattern*.

Some *Learning Patterns* cover skills like narration, exposition, and persuasion. Others help teachers and students with things like assessment, reading comprehension, and memorization. The same patterns can be used across grade levels and subject areas as well, so kids take their learning with them as they grow.

For more information about Learning Patterns click [here](#).



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Agile Transformation

Building Collective Capacity for School-Wide Change

We are discovering better ways of improving schools by doing it and by helping others do it. Through this work, we have come to value:

- **People.** *Individuals and interactions* over policy and politics;
- **Achievement.** *Maximum potential* over minimum competence;
- **Courage.** *Fierce collaboration* over comfortable compromise;
- **Agility.** *Responding to change* over following a plan.

The items on the right are important, but we value the items on the left more.

Agile Transformation is grounded in two principles: **(1)** People are more successful when they enjoy their work; and **(2)** Schools are more successful when they support people in developing the autonomy, competence, and relatedness that makes their work more enjoyable. Features of *Agile Transformation* include:

- **Paired Practice.** Nobody works alone. Everyone has a team and a teammate.
- **Rapid Iteration.** Sprint through big problems one small problem at a time.
- **Making Sense.** What do we do? Why do we do it? How do we know it works?
- **“Stand Up” Sessions.** What did you do yesterday? What are you doing today? What do you need to be successful? Agile leaders remove impediments.
- **Successful Failure.** Fail fast, fail smart. No blame games. Apply what you learn as you move closer to your goal with each iteration.
- **Souls and Roles.** Aligning what we do with who we are.
- **“Just in Time” Solutions.** Handle problems as they arise. Respond as needed.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Essential Elements of Agile Schools

The Qualities of Effective Educational Communities

1. **Agile schools work because people choose to make them work.** We believe in freedom of choice, and that making the choice to participate fully in teaching, learning, and leading is the most important choice we can make.
2. **Agile schools love to learn.** We believe that learning is inherently enjoyable and that giving learners a responsible degree of autonomy in their individual pursuit of knowledge and skill makes it even more so. Agile educators are learners, too.
3. **Agile schools take a constructive approach to failure.** We believe failure is a normal part of success. Kids struggle to learn. Teachers struggle to teach. Administrators struggle to lead. We all experience failure on the way to solving new problems. The faster we fail, the more solutions we try. The smarter we fail, the more knowledge we bring to the next iteration. Instead of looking back at problems, Agile schools look forward to solving them.
4. **Agile schools are always getting better.** We believe there's almost always a better way of doing something, and that it's almost always worthwhile trying to figure out what that better way is. Agile schools value progress, and the appropriate measurement thereof, because progress is the true indicator of learning.
5. **Agile schools empower people to empower others.** We believe that individuals—not systems or policies—are the true sources of power in our schools. Our responsibility is to use our power in service of the greater good, and to teach students how to use their power that way, too.
6. **Agile schools achieve extraordinary results.** We believe in transformative learning that goes far beyond incremental improvements in test scores. Adults in Agile schools also strive for extraordinary achievement in their profession as well.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

Essential Elements

continued...

7. **Agile schools are based on deeply-held beliefs, clearly-articulated values, and a firmly-rooted sense of commitment.** We believe that the most successful schools are those run by people who know what matters most to them and who possess an unshakable determination to get it.
8. **Agile schools are communities where people make a difference and connect with something greater than themselves.** We believe that the drive to contribute is part of human nature. Our role is to guide people in directing their contribution toward its highest and best use.
9. **Agile schools value ownership, positive attitudes, high expectations, and unwavering optimism.** We believe that making a good life is about making good choices, that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right, and that self-mastery is the key to its rightful exercise.
10. **Agile schools embrace the risk inherent in the achievement of great things.** We educate for maximum potential not minimum competence. We believe that all learners have within them extraordinary strengths and untapped resources, and that learning is only limited by our willingness to attempt what has never before been attempted. We welcome change, we innovate, and we seek out challenges that organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.
11. **Agile schools affirm self-knowledge as the most valuable knowledge and self-determination as the most basic right.** We believe that introspection, self-disclosure, and intellectual honesty are essential to personal transformation. We seek to support young people in becoming the adults they want to be.
12. **Agile schools are communities where no one is above the rules, everyone has a voice, freedom is sacred, equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive, and the highest goal of education is contributing to the present and future well-being of individuals who can thrive independently in a modern democracy.** Agile schools value college preparation, career fulfillment, and engaged citizenship, but we value something else even more. Collegiate, career, and civic achievement are important, but they are means to ends, not ends in themselves. Human happiness, meaningful contribution, and sustained well-being of self and community are the ultimate ends to which Agile schools aspire on behalf of the children and families we serve.



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE



“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”