

SUNY COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

The Power of the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing on Second Graders'
Writing

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Abstract

Twenty-three second graders from a suburban primary school in upstate New York were the subjects of this research study. The purpose of the study was to determine if students' writing improved after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework. The participants completed a narrative essay prior to instruction. Students worked through the entire writing process, from first drafts to revising, then editing, and ultimately to final copies. These essays were evaluated using a rubric that was based on the six traits or characteristics of good writing. Students then received instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework twice a week for a twelve week period of time. Finally, at the end of the twelve weeks, students wrote another narrative essay, following the same format and as the initial essay. These writing pieces were assessed and compared to the first narrative essays by using the same rubric.

The research hypothesis stated that students' writing would improve after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework. A *t* test was used to compare the mean rubric scores for pre and post 6 + 1 Traits written essays. According to the data, there was clearly enough evidence to support the hypothesis with a *p* value of at the 95 % confidence level.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| CHAPTER I STATEMENT OF PROBLEM..... | 1 |
| Purpose..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Need for Study..... | 2 |
| CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... | 4 |
| Purpose..... | 4 |
| Writing Instruction in a Time of Reform..... | 4 |
| Improving Student Writing: Conferencing and Revising..... | 9 |
| Emotions, Attitudes, and Perceptions of Student Writers..... | 12 |
| CHAPTER III DESIGN OF THE STUDY..... | 16 |
| Purpose..... | 16 |
| Research Questions..... | 16 |
| Methodology..... | 16 |
| Subjects..... | 16 |
| Materials..... | 17 |
| Procedures..... | 17 |
| Analysis of the Data..... | 19 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CHAPTER IV RESULTS OF THE STUDY..... | 20 |
| Purpose..... | 20 |
| Findings..... | 20 |
| | |
| CHAPTER V FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA..... | 24 |
| Purpose..... | 24 |
| Conclusions and Implications..... | 24 |
| Implications for the Classroom..... | 25 |
| Implications for Further Research..... | 27 |
| REFERENCES..... | 29 |
| APPENDICES..... | A |
| Rubrics by Individual Traits..... | A |
| General Rubric for Traits..... | B |

CHAPTER I

Statement of Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' writing improve after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework.

Introduction

To say that writing is an important skill to master, would be a gross understatement. It is an integral part of all school subjects for students at every grade level. The inability to write well may have far reaching negative consequences, just as proficiency in writing can lead to great success in school as well as adulthood.

Beyond the relevance of masterful writing as a way to serve one well in school and career, writing has become an area where students are expected to reach higher skill levels than ever before. State standards and assessments are making students and teachers accountable for attaining a measurable level of mastery in writing in a variety of ways. The pressure is mounting for all students, even at the primary level, to perform

to a certain standard of writing excellence. For this reason, it is imperative that educators are knowledgeable about teaching writing and are able to guide their students toward reaching these goals.

School districts, administrators, and educators seem to be on a never-ending quest to discover the best practices, programs, and strategies for helping their students succeed. The ability to express oneself and communicate through writing is the foundation with which these successes may be realized. Thus, many studies have been conducted to research the most effective ways to teach children in today's classrooms. The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework is an approach to teaching writing that has garnered much attention in recent years. It is designed to provide a common language among educators and students and identify the characteristics of good writing for all grade levels. The goal, then, is for students to understand and embrace these attributes and implement them in their daily writing.

Need for the Study

Students must be equipped with a greater understanding of the writing process and the steps they need to follow in order to produce quality pieces of writing. With the added pressures and responsibilities for students, teachers must be prepared to help children maintain a positive

attitude toward writing. Students' emotions and perceptions regarding writing can greatly influence their performance in the classroom.

Fostering a love for writing is the best gift a teacher can give her or his students.

The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework appears to envelop all of the characteristics of a sound approach to writing instruction. It values every aspect of what constitutes "good" writing and corresponds to most other writing rubrics and assessments. Further, it stands to increase motivation and foster self-reflection, as each trait of writing is taught and studied separately. Students evaluate their own writing pieces as well as those of others throughout the entire process. If students can understand and thus utilize the individual components of exemplary writing, perhaps their writing skills could be brought to a higher level than ever before. By studying the power or effectiveness of the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework, data can be assessed to determine if greater strides in teaching writing might be made.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' writing improve after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework.

Writing Instruction in a Time of Reform

In this time of reform, educators are faced with the challenge of finding a balance between promoting a love and an understanding of writing in their students, and focusing on achievement in district and state writing assessments. The struggle is evident in every grade level, as teachers seek out the best practices for students' success in both sides of the dilemma. This increased focus on writing has caused teachers to attend to writing more than they have in the past (Cantrell, 1999; Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, & Jones, 2001). While greater accountability can be a good thing, such high-pressure stakes are not necessarily conducive to the best teaching and learning environment. It is becoming more and more apparent that the state curriculum and writing tests are

dictating teachers' instructional practices (Brindley & Schneider, 2002). In a study by Brindley and Schneider (2002), fourth grade teachers indicated that while preparing their students for the state exam limited their creativity and instructional freedom, they also felt that they became more structured, organized, and skilled at teaching writing. And while anxiety and criticisms may abound, it becomes obvious that current testing focuses on writing expression more than ever before. Thus, it appears that the only way to teach writing is the labor intensive practice of reading and revising drafts and experimenting and refining the thought process (Scimone, 1999).

The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework classifies and describes the characteristics of good writing, such as; ideas and content, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions, (+ 1 stands for presentation) while correlating to New York State standards and rubrics. Each trait is introduced in isolation and examined over a period of time, as decided upon by the teacher. The framework connects reading and writing by using authentic literature to model the traits. Special attention is given to purpose and audience, since these will change from piece to piece. With a greater emphasis on writing as a process instead of a strong focus on the product, students stand to increase their sense of ownership and responsibility for their writing (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

A major component of the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing is the emphasis on revising as an integral part of the writing process, and as separate and distinct from editing. As students understand and evaluate their own and others' writing, they are more likely to become reflective learners, increasing their motivation and achievement. The fact that the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing is an open *framework*, as opposed to a more confining *program*, allows teachers to still use many of the activities that they already have in place. They simply need to reorganize some of their instruction so that it corresponds to the concepts within the new structure. Rather than discard what works, the framework offers educators a structure to build on those successful techniques (Jarmer, Kozol, Nelson, & Salsberry, 2000).

Numerous studies have determined that there has been a shift from skills-based instruction to an emphasis on the writing process (Bridge & Compton-Hall, 1997; Cantrell, 1999; McBride, 2000; Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, & Jones, 2001). From brainstorming and organizing ideas, to drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, teachers are guiding their students through the stages of the writing process. In one particular study, first grade students who were taught the writing process were able to write sooner, producing longer texts and greater word choice (Stahl, Pagnucco, & Suttles, 1996). For many educators, these are welcome

changes that inspire greater expectations for their students (Cantrell, 1999; Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, & Jones, 2001). On the other hand, with pressure from their administration and the public to improve test scores, and rubrics driving the curricula, many teachers are feeling compelled to teach to the test. Thus, educators may turn away from a constructivist approach and lean more toward a fragmented view of writing instruction, teaching students skills that will be measured on assessments. Many teachers believe that the performance assessments are creating anxiety for students and teachers, while failing to address the issue of fairness across diverse populations (Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, & Jones, 2001).

Maintaining authenticity and keeping student motivation high can become difficult when test preparation is a top priority. According to Graham and Harris (1988), the development of writing requires, not only time spent writing, but also proper support and encouragement well designed instruction, and guidance in mastering skills and strategies. Nevertheless, many positive outcomes have been realized with the institution of standards based assessments. Teachers have reported that students are generating writing pieces from a wide variety of genres within and across the curriculum. Writing types, such as persuasive, compare and contrast, and analytic pieces, that are likely to appear on a statewide

test, become standard fare for classroom instruction. Journal writing and open-ended writing tasks are regularly implemented in many classrooms. In addition, research indicates that there is an increase in the time students spend on writing, greater use of peer and teacher conferences, and a new realization that younger students are capable of far more quantity and quality of writing than was ever thought in the past (Bridge, 1997; Cantrell, 1999).

Teachers are using a wide range of children's literature and actively engaging their students in reading, as a means to enhance their writing performance. Higher-level writing activities have replaced many traditional skill and drill lessons. Educators are reflecting on their teaching practices and realizing that students need to take greater responsibility for their writing (Cantrell, 1999; Casey & Hemenway, 2001; Strickland, Bodino, Buchan, & Jones, 2001).

Not to be overlooked as a strategy for helping students find their way in an assessment-oriented time, ongoing professional development is seen by educators to be a necessary part of a well-rounded writing program (Strickland et. al., 2001). As one would expect, teachers' underlying views about teaching and learning influence their approach to instruction (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000). With

higher writing expectations for students, teachers must be equipped with the best and most effective instructional strategies by which to teach them.

Improving Student Writing: Conferencing and Revising

Increased expectations and standards, with an emphasis on assessment of the written product, have led educators to search for ways to help students improve their writing. First and foremost, students must be motivated and engaged in order to give their writing piece the attention that it needs. Publishing is one way to invite interest and communicate meaning to a real audience (Conner, 2000). In addition, students' awareness of what they are trying to accomplish is imperative, as is feedback regarding their success (Graham & Harris, 1988).

Students must first be clear about what constitutes good writing before they can attempt to produce it. In many classrooms, the focus is on grammar corrections as opposed to creatively composing with an emphasis on student control of the written language (Thomas, 2000). The research suggests that children tend to perceive good writing as that which is conventionally or mechanically correct (Kos & Maslowski, 2001; McBride, 2000; Olson, 1990). Editing for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, dominate the bulk of student modifications. It is imperative

that students and educators first understand that revising and editing are *not* interchangeable terms. Revising is the process by which changes are made to the ideas and content, organization, word choice, voice, and fluency of a piece of writing. Students must take greater responsibility for their own content revisions, as teachers wean themselves away from the role of primary reviser (Thomas, 2000). The more that students internalize the planning and evaluation processes during the writing conference, the more sophisticated their abilities will become (Graham & Harris, 1988).

Editing is the final step before publishing, whereby the piece is polished, and the conventions, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and paragraphing are addressed. Students need teacher support, modeling, and feedback to help them focus more on the importance of revising before they tackle editing.

Writing conferences can provide important information for students to use in the revising and editing process (McIver & Wolf, 1999; Nickel, Power, & Hubbard, 2001; Olson, 1990;). Conferences can take the form of teacher to student and peer to peer arrangements. Having students interact with their own text and the work of others can lead to greater planning and idea generation and more effective communication in their writing (Dale, 1994; McIver & Wolf, 1999). The writing conference is the ideal time for teachers to demonstrate, by modeling, the strategies used

by good writers. Questions are an important part of the conference conversation. Asking open-ended questions gives students a chance to reflect on their writing and allow them to offer their teachers knowledge about their thinking and idea development (McIver & Wolf, 1999; Nickel, Power, & Hubbard, 2001). Whole class instruction attempts to meet the needs of all students, but educators know, only too well, that this objective is not often met. One-on-one conferences enable the teacher to offer individualized instruction in the context of the student's own writing assignment (Nickel, Power, & Hubbard., 2001). Peer conferences can be especially helpful in that students basically speak the same language. That is to say that children may relate to each other on a level that an adult teacher may not totally understand. Further, since there is typically only one teacher to twenty or more students, peer conferences can be a viable way for children to give each other critical feedback and continue their work (McIver & Wolf, 1999). As Burns (2001) reported, "When children talk about their writing, they have greater opportunities to develop ideas and to make decisions about how their writing will proceed" (p. 459). Once skills and strategies are taught, students need time for social interaction and conversation to help internalize these new concepts.

While trying to understand the complexities of helping students improve their writing, there are some pitfalls that must not be ignored.

Writers can easily be overwhelmed by too much information or critical feedback at one time (McIver & Wolf, 1999). Moreover, criticism can be hard to take, especially when students feel ownership of their writing piece. Teacher input is not always welcome at certain points in the students' writing process. Questioning children or offering suggestions may at times threaten ownership of the piece, causing them to shut down (Nickel, Power, & Hubbard, 2001). Modeling may not be effective if students are not developmentally ready to learn and adopt the strategies being taught. Students may also regard revision as an end in itself and not actually use it when rewriting their final copies (Olson, 1990). Despite the problems, conferencing, revising, and editing can make significant inroads in improving student writing.

Emotions, Attitudes, and Perceptions of Student Writers

As students in the classroom are required to write far more than ever before, it behooves us, as educators, to examine their concepts about writing. This information could prove to be invaluable in helping students learn to appreciate writing as they work toward increasing their abilities. The more knowledgeable we are about students' attitudes about writing, the more we can adjust our instructional practices to meet their

needs (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). Ironically, however, research has shown that as students improve their writing skills, their enjoyment of writing decreases as did their feelings of competence (Shook, Marrion, & Ollila, 1989). Similarly, as children age and climb from grade to grade, their attitude toward writing generally declines (Kear et al., 2000; Knudson, 1992). This is especially distressing, considering the positive relationship between motivation and learning.

Casey and Hemenway (2001) studied and followed a group of students from third through twelfth grade. They conducted interviews with the children in the third, sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades. The students' love for writing in third grade began to disintegrate as they moved up in the grades. Consistent with the findings reported by Shook et al. (1989) and Kear et al. (2000), the research indicates that students are led to become increasingly focused on the mechanics or conventions at the expense of the ideas and content, voice, and style of their written pieces. In their efforts to teach students to write grammatically correct sentences, teachers may actually stifle the creative process and limit the students' desire to fully express themselves in their writing. This observation seems more apparent when the students are allowed little choice and ownership of their writing tasks (McBride, 2000). Often, tedious assignments, coupled with negative feedback, contribute to

students' pessimistic perceptions about writing. These attitudes help shape children's self-concepts and influence their behavior (Shook, Marrion, & Ollila, 1989).

Children's emotional status regarding writing is also dependent upon their proficiency as writers. Highly capable writers are more likely to construct meaning and make connections in their writing, while poor writers are less likely to be engaged in their writing assignments (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000; Shook, Marrion, & Ollila, 1989). Less able writers tend to depend on external conditions to motivate them to write unlike stronger writers who internalize the purpose for writing. According to a study conducted by Brand and Powell (1986), highly able writers experienced more positive emotional change during writing and less negative feelings than writers who were less able did. Yet, even competent writers may lose their inspiration for writing under certain circumstances.

Several researchers have suggested that children enjoy writing more at home than in the school environment (Shook et al., 1989; Casey & Hemenway, 2001). Given the absence of time constraints, freedom to choose any topic of interest, and the unconditional acceptance of one's written product, it is easily understood why writing at home would prove to be more pleasurable for most children. The classroom does not always

allow students true ownership of their writing. Criticism and negative feedback from the teacher can turn a joyful attitude about writing into a sorrowful or apathetic one. All the more reason to encourage self-reflection and provide positive feedback for the traits that are strongest, and suggestions for improving weaker traits, one at a time. Students will tend to see strengths and weaknesses in writing samples and the work of others before they are able to recognize these in their own writing (Jarmer, Kozol, Nelson, & Salsberry, 2000). Therefore, it is essential that students practice and write everyday.

CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' writing improve after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework.

Research Question

Does instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework improve students' writing?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of twenty-three second graders from a suburban primary school in upstate New York. The fifteen males and eight females were heterogeneously grouped in a regular education classroom.

Materials

The materials for this study will include:

- ◆ Instructional and assessment rubrics
- ◆ Revising and editing checklists
- ◆ Student writing exemplars, all based on the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework
- ◆ A variety of literature from several genres
- ◆ An overhead projector.

Procedures

This study took place over a twelve-week period of time. Prior to the introduction of the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework, students wrote a narrative essay within the confines of structured choice. Structured choice allows students to write, for example, about their favorite place, but gives them the freedom to select the specific location. Students worked through the entire writing process, from first drafts to revising, then editing, and ultimately to final copies. These essays were evaluated using a rubric that was based on the characteristics of good writing.

Students then received instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework twice a week for twelve weeks. Each of the six traits was taught in isolation for two weeks. It should be noted that although the traits were taught one at a time, students were accountable for all traits once they had been introduced.

A basic format was followed for each trait as it was explored. Initially, an instructional 1 through 4 rubric (see Appendix A) was presented and discussed. Then student examples from other classrooms were read, analyzed, and scored by the students and teacher, using the rubric. A variety of literature was read to the students which exemplified the particular trait that was being studied. This, in turn, led to discussion, brainstorming, and a short writing piece focusing on the featured trait. Students were instructed in revising and editing techniques based on the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework. Finally, at the end of the twelve weeks, students wrote a narrative essay, bringing it from a first draft through the revising and editing process, and culminating in a final copy.

The completed essays were assessed using a 1 through 4 comprehensive rubric (see Appendix B) designed to address all aspects of good writing. These writing pieces were then compared to the narrative essays written prior to the twelve-week period, also graded on the same rubric.

Analysis of Data

The data collected for the study were analyzed quantitatively. Essays written prior to the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing instruction and those written after the twelve-week period of training were assessed on a four-point rubric. The evaluation tool was designed to evaluate ideas and content (details), organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Both essays were then compared and contrasted for differences in these areas and evidence of growth and improvement in the students' writing skills.

CHAPTER IV

Results of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' writing improved after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework.

Findings

The twenty-three regular education students who participated in the study received a full twelve week period of instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework. Lessons were taught at least three times per week during that period of time. The order that the traits were taught was as follows: Ideas and Content, Organization, Word Choice, Voice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions. Each trait was focused on for approximately two weeks. As a new trait was introduced, traits that were already taught were reviewed and discussed. The expectation was that once a trait was addressed, it was to be incorporated into the students' writing.

The data indicated that the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing instruction had a positive impact on the students' writing. A *t* test was used to compare the mean rubric scores for pre and post 6 + 1 Traits written essays. The average rubric score for the essay before receiving 6 + 1 Traits training was 2.09, while the mean essay score after receiving instruction was 2.91. Employing a 95 % confidence level, the research hypothesis proposed that the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing instruction would have a positive impact on the students' writing, thus increasing their essay rubric scores. According to the data in Table 1, there was clearly enough evidence to support the hypothesis with a *p* value of 0.000000000404 at the 95 % confidence level.

Table 1

t Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

| | Df | Mean | s.d. |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Pre 6 + 1 Traits | 22 | 2.09 | 0.67 |
| Post 6 + 1 Traits | 22 | 2.91 | 0.60 |

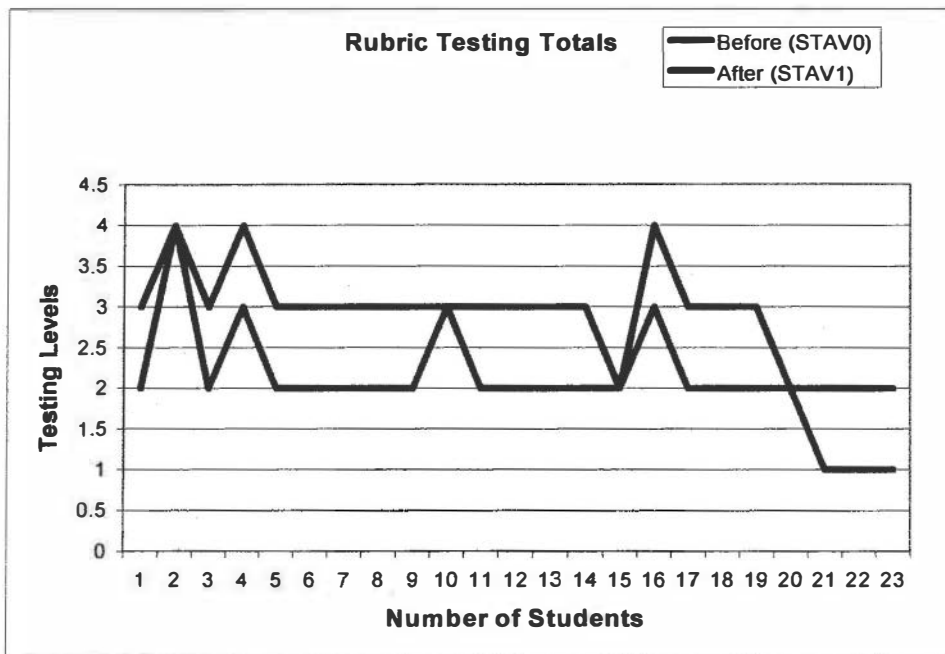
***p* = 0.000000000404**

In addition, of the 23 students who participated in the study, only 4 students showed no growth between their pre 6 + 1 Traits essay and their

culminating essay after receiving instruction in this area. The remaining students presented positive gains without exception. Table 2 demonstrates this point by graphing the rubric testing totals.

Table 2

Compared Rubric Scores



Upon closer inspection, the traits of Ideas and Content, Organization, and Word Choice showed the greatest areas of improvement, with sentence fluency and conventions demonstrating the least gains. Although the essays were ultimately scored holistically on a 1

through 4 rubric, individual traits were first analyzed and highlighted according to particular criteria. Table 3 shows that the greatest gains were made in the trait of Word Choice, with an impressive average increase of 0.91. The students also demonstrated the greatest proficiency in this trait with an average rubric score of 3.04. A close second was the trait of Ideas and Content with an average gain of 0.82. Organization, though third, still showed a respectable average gain of 0.70.

Table 3

Pre and Post Means for Specific Traits

| | Ideas and Content | Organization | Word Choice |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Pre 6 + 1 Traits | 2.09 | 1.87 | 2.13 |
| Post 6 + 1 Traits | 2.91 | 2.57 | 3.04 |

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if students' writing improved after receiving instruction in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework.

Conclusions and Implications

The data seem to validate that the use of the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework was a viable way to improve the writing of the students in this study. The general gains in the essay rubric scores and the statistical tests support the claim that this writing structure had a positive impact on the students' writing. Of the 23 students, only 4 had scores that showed no improvement, while all others demonstrated growth by gaining one rubric point.

Although all six traits were taught and practiced, the most visible areas of advancement were made in Ideas and Content, Organization, and Word Choice. For second graders, these concepts may be easier to

grasp than the more elusive and abstract trait of Voice. Sentence Fluency and Conventions tend to be traits that are more easily mastered in the upper grades, as well.

The significant overall gains that were made, imply that the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework did indeed have an impact on second graders' writing. The twelve-week period of consistent focus and practice using the traits seemed to be the key to the positive growth the students experienced.

Implications for the Classroom

Few teachers would argue the fact that writing is an integral part of teaching and learning in the classroom. It is a skill that students will utilize for their entire educational careers and on into adulthood. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers consistently practice the best teaching strategies. Professional development should be an ongoing feature of the school year and made readily available to educators. Teachers should be given opportunities to meet, discuss, and share what they have found to be effective instructional approaches to teaching writing. As teachers struggle to find a balance between creative freedom and the structure required in mandatory assessment pieces, districts must be willing to provide in-service training for their teachers. Writing consultants and

specialists could be hired to help educators learn and implement the 6+ 1 Traits of Writing Framework into everyday practice.

Clearly, the 6+ 1 Traits of Writing Framework can be used with any writing program that a district may choose to implement. Its basic premise, that certain components should be present in any piece of good writing, neither interferes with nor sabotages any writing curriculum. One great advantage would be the use of a common vocabulary among teachers and students. If all educators were trained in this framework, students would have consistent instruction throughout their school years. teachers would still be free to exercise their personal teaching styles.

Classroom teachers can examine the question of how to improve scores for assessments without sacrificing writing quality. Higher scores on tests do not always translate into better writing. Rubrics should *guide* but not *drive* the writing instruction. Students should be apprised of the standards and expectations without being consumed by them.

To increase motivation and engagement in the task, students should be given choice of topic as often as possible when they write. If the purpose for the writing is authentic, children will have a greater chance of connecting with it. Writing will be more meaningful if it is integrated with all subject areas, and not just assigned in isolation as a way to accumulate grades. The 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework can be utilized for any

genre, subject, or topic, through literature and writing. Once the vocabulary is introduced and understood, great strides can be made in these areas.

Achieving higher standards and raising assessment scores is an topic for all grade levels to address. Whether exams are given in fourth, eighth, or eleventh grades, the test is a kindergarten through twelfth grade issue. If educators and administrators work together to incorporate the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework into their curriculum, the quality of students' writing may very well improve.

Implications for Further Research

Much research has been done on the subject of students writing in the classroom. As studies have sought to help educators understand how to instruct their students better, more questions are being raised than ever before. Professional development is one area that has not been fully explored. For example, what types of workshops have the greatest positive effects on student writing? Do teachers actually use the strategies that are learned in professional development seminars? Is it more effective to have educators attend workshops outside of school or have writing consultants visit and model in their classrooms?

As the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing Framework gains popularity and credibility, what are the implications for the timing of its introduction in a child's academic career? Further research could be conducted to determine when to begin teaching it and if continuity throughout the grades will make it more effective.

Another point to address for further research is to study the outcome of "teaching to the test" as its own separate genre. So often teachers feel compelled to prepare their students for assessments. Perhaps a study could be employed that would determine if it is beneficial to set aside an actual time for teaching to the test. The information garnered by this research could prove to be invaluable for educators.

Frequently students are encouraged and rewarded for reading in school. Many teachers are aware of the reading-writing connection and the influences each has on the other. How highly correlated is skill in reading to skill in writing? Do children who love to read also love to write? Do students who read more produce better writing? Is there a relationship between the level of text that the student is able to read and the level of sophistication of his or her writing? Teachers would be well served if they had the answers to some of these important questions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Rubrics for the Individual Traits

IDEAS AND CONTENT

Ideas and content are the **heart** of the message, the **meat**, or main “stuff.” They are also the spicy supporting details that hold the reader’s attention.

- 4 The paper is ***clear*** and ***focused***. It holds the reader’s attention. All of the ideas make sense. Spicy details make the piece ***very*** interesting.
- 3 The paper is ***mostly*** clear and focused. The ideas make sense. More spicy details are needed.
- 2 The paper does not have a very clear focus. ***Some*** of the ideas make sense. The details do not hold the reader’s interest.
- 1 The paper has no real focus. The ideas do not make sense. It is hard to figure out what the paper is trying to say.

ORGANIZATION

Organization holds the piece of writing together. It is a complete "**cheeseburger**." (Top bun, meat (with details), bottom bun)

It has:

- ◆ an inviting introduction (opening, beginning)
- ◆ well planned sentences that have an order that makes sense
 - ◆ a satisfying conclusion (closing, ending)

4 The order of the paper is **totally** clear and easy to follow. It is a **complete** cheeseburger. It has a top bun that grabs the reader's attention, details that make sense and fit in the right places, and an interesting bottom bun.

3 The order of the paper is **mostly** clear and easy to follow. There is a top bun but it may not grab the reader's attention. The bottom bun could be more interesting.

2 The paper does **not** have a clear enough order. It makes some sense but the top or bottom bun is missing. Some of the sentences could be changed around to have a better fit and make more sense.

1 The paper has no real order. The ideas are jumbled up with no connections to each other. It's like a list of stuff. There is no top or bottom bun.

WORD CHOICE

Word Choice helps to create a picture in the reader's mind. It is the **precise** use of language to **create meaning**. You must search for "**just the right**" **word or phrase** for each sentence to inspire a mood or impression for the reader. Every word counts.

- 4 The words and language create a strong, clear, and complete picture in the reader's mind. Powerful verbs give the writing energy. Words are original, meaningful, imaginative, and *spicy*.
- 3 The words and language try to create a clear picture in the reader's mind. Some words are original and meaningful but there could be more *spice*. There are **some** powerful verbs.
- 2 The words and language give the basic meaning but don't paint a clear picture for the reader. The message is too general ("It was wonderful." She was special.") The language is not *spicy* enough. Certain words may be overused.
- 1 The words and language don't help the reader understand the message of the piece. Some words are used incorrectly. The reader may be confused by some of the words. The same words are used over and over and over.

VOICE

Voice is the connection between the reader and the writer.
It gives the piece life, energy, individuality.

Voice:

- ◆ is a writer's personal style
- ◆ makes each piece unique; it's different for each writer
- ◆ can change as the purpose and audience changes

- 4 The paper has a unique style and has the writer's personality in it. You would know exactly who wrote the paper even if there was no name on it. The reader can see and feel everything that the writer sees and feels. The paper is strong enough to make the reader laugh or cry. The writer is very interested about the topic!
- 3 The paper has *some* style. The writer's personality shows in *some* parts of the piece. The paper may hold your attention but it isn't strong enough to make you laugh or cry.
- 2 The paper does not have enough style or personality yet. The reader cannot really see and feel what the writer is trying to show. The writer does not seem to be very interested in the topic.
- 1 The paper has no real style or personality. You would not know who wrote the piece if there was no name on it. The writer does not seem at all interested in the topic.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

Sentence Fluency is the rhythm or beat of language.

It makes the reading "smooth."

- ◆ Sentences are "**well-built**" and begin in **different** ways.
- ◆ Long, short, and medium length sentences work together.
 - ◆ All sentences make sense.

4

The paper flows like a river. It has a smooth rhythm that makes it **very** easy to read. The sentences are long, short, or medium in length. They all make sense. All of the sentences begin in different ways.

3

The paper **mostly** flows smoothly. **Some** sentences are different lengths (some may be too long). **Some** of the sentences begin in different ways.

2

The paper does not have a very smooth flow. The sentences are all about the same length. Short, choppy sentences make the reading a bit bumpy. **OR**, some sentences are too long. **Many** of the sentences begin in the same way.

1

The paper does not flow at all. It is hard to read out loud. Some of the sentences do **not** make sense. It is hard to tell where one sentence ends and the next one begins. **Most** of the sentences begin in the same way.

CONVENTIONS

Conventions make a piece *polished, edited, and easy to read.*

It includes:

- ◆ punctuation
- ◆ spelling
- ◆ grammar
- ◆ capitalization
- ◆ paragraphing

4

The paper is totally **edited, polished, and easy to read.** It is completely ready to publish! The punctuation and spelling is correct. Capitals and lower case letters are right where they should be. The paper has good grammar. (**EXAMPLE:** *Sally and I* raced to the store. **NOT:** *Me and Sally* raced to the store.). Paragraphs are indented correctly.

3

The paper is **mostly** edited and polished. Punctuation is used correctly and the piece is still easy to read. There are some spelling mistakes on bigger words. **Most** of the paragraphs are indented in the proper places. Grammar is **mostly** correct.

2

The paper is not edited or polished enough yet. The paper is readable but there are errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Paragraphs are not indented properly.

1

The paper is not edited or polished. Mistakes in punctuation, grammar, and spelling make the piece very difficult to read. Capitals are missing or in the wrong places.

APPENDIX B
General Rubric for the Traits

6 TRAITS WRITING RUBRIC

| <u>6 TRAITS</u> | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| IDEAS/CONTENT | The paper is clear and focused . It holds the reader's attention. Spicy details make the piece very interesting. | The paper is mostly clear and focused with some spicy details. More spicy details are needed. | The paper does not have a very clear focus. The details do not hold the reader's interest. There are not enough details. | The paper has no real focus. It is hard to figure out what the paper is trying to say. |
| ORGANIZATION | The order is totally clear and easy to follow. It's a complete "cheeseburger." The top bun grabs the reader's attention. The bottom bun is interesting. | The order of the paper is mostly clear and easy to follow. The top and bottom buns could be more interesting. | The order of the paper is not clear enough. The top or bottom bun is missing. Some sentences might sound better in other places. | The paper has no real order. The ideas are jumbled up with no connections to each other. It's just a list of stuff. There's no top or bottom bun. |
| WORD CHOICE | Original, meaningful, imaginative, and spicy words and language create a clear, strong, and complete picture in the reader's mind. Powerful verbs give the writing energy. | The words and language try to create a clear picture in the reader's mind. There are some powerful verbs and spicy words. | The words and language give the basic meaning but don't create a clear picture for the reader. The words are not spicy enough. Some words are overused . | The words and language don't help the reader understand the piece. Some words are used incorrectly or over and over . The reader may be confused . |
| SENTENCE FLUENCY | The paper flows with a smooth rhythm that makes it very easy to read. All sentences make sense , are different lengths , and begin in different ways . | The paper mostly flows smoothly. Some sentences are different lengths and some begin in different ways. | The paper does not have a very smooth flow. The sentences are all about the same length. Many are short and choppy . Many sentences begin the same way. Some sentences are too long . | The paper doesn't flow at all. It is difficult to read out loud. Some sentences don't make sense. It's hard to tell where sentences begin and end. Most sentences begin the same ways. |
| VOICE | The paper has a unique style. The writer's personality shows through. The reader can see and feel what the writer sees and feels. The writer is excited by the topic. | The paper has some style and some of the writer's personality shows through. The writer has some interest in the topic. | The paper does not have enough style or personality. The reader cannot see or feel. The writer isn't very interested in the topic. | The paper has no style or personality. The writer isn't interested in the topic at all. |
| CONVENTIONS | The paper is completely polished, edited, and easy to read. Capitals, punctuation, spelling, paragraphs, and grammar are totally correct. | The paper is mostly polished, edited, and easy to read. Capitals, punctuation, spelling, paragraphs, and grammar are mostly correct. | The paper is not edited or polished enough . The paper is readable but there are errors in spelling, capitals, grammar, punctuations, or paragraphs. | The paper is not edited or polished. Mistakes in grammar, spelling, capitals, or punctuation make it very difficult to read. |