

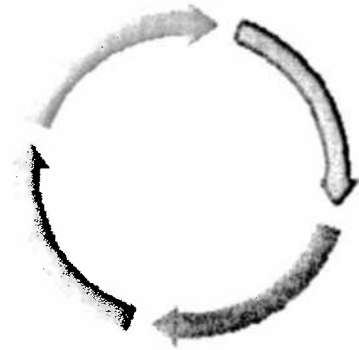
Six Traits of Writing Parent Handbook

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Writing is an integral part of your child's education. The process begins before kindergarten and continues through life. Understanding how to communicate in writing is an essential component of the PA state standards. This handbook contains information to help you support your student writers at home as I work with them at school. The traits provide a language for describing the qualities that most readers and writers think are important in good writing.

Writing is a process

Prewriting
Drafting
Editing
Final Product
Publish



Prewriting Stage

Think, List, Observe, Experience, Brainstorm, Research (Gather Evidence and Information), Select topic, Collect Vocabulary

Primary - Experience, Explore, and Draw a picture

Drafting Stage

Take notes, Focus on content, Double space, Discuss, Seek assistance

Primary - Drawing, Verbally composing, Writing

Editing Stage

Revise, Rethink, Rewrite, Read aloud, Seek response from others, Focus on content, Check for meaning, Check for adherence to six traits, Make changes (additions, deletions), Focus on mechanical correctness

Primary - Name on paper, Title on paper, Spaces between words, Left-out words

Final Draft - Publishing - Presenting Stage

Check for proper format (newspaper, letter, essay, etc.), Share product with appropriate audience, Polish and recopy, Focus on format and appearance, Seek feedback and reflection

Primary - Punctuation, Capital letters, Spelling

Tips for Parents to Encourage Student Writing

- Coach - don't write - for your child. Question, listen, and talk about writing together. Students need to do their own drafting, revising, and editing with you at the sidelines.
- Look first for what is done well in the writing and offer praise. Writing is a challenging task. Children need encouragement to be successful.
- When working with your child, focus on ideas and content first. Save editing until the ideas are clear, complete, and focused.
- Listen attentively as your child reads writing to you.
- Encourage even the youngest writers to "read" their writing aloud whether it is scribbles, drawings, or strings of letters. Talk about the story.
- Read aloud to your children - no matter the age. Discuss good examples of writing from newspapers, magazines, poetry, descriptions from travel brochures, and instructions on toys, games. Read from fiction and non-fiction.
- Let your child SEE you write.
- Share your own writing with your children. Ask for their feedback on your effort.
- Turn off the TV.
- Visit the library.
- Read, read, read! Better readers make better writers!

Ideas and Content

A paper with good ideas and content is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details contribute to and enrich the central theme or story line.

Ideas are the heart of the message in the writing. They are what we have to say and the reason we are writing. To write well, it is important for us to really know about our subject. It is either connected with our own experiences or else we have researched the topic thoroughly.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Ideas and Content are:

- Is my message clear?
- Do I know enough about my topic?
- Did I make the topic interesting with details?
- Is my topic the right focus (not too large or too small)?
- Did I **SHOW** what was happening rather than just **TELL**?



Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency gives our writing a sense of rhythm and grace. The writing has an easy flow when read aloud. Sentences are well-built with varied structures that invites expressive oral reading. Sentences need to be clear and powerful, creating just the right meaning. This is accomplished through logic, creative phrasing, parallel constructions, alliteration, and a variety with sentence length and structure.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Sentence Fluency are:

- Do my sentences begin in different ways?
- Are some sentences long and some short?
- Is it easy to read my work out loud with expression?
- Have I used transitions to help my sentences fit together?



Word Choice

Word Choice enriches and enlivens our writing. Using the right words in a precise manner adds energy and clarity to our work. Writing with strong Word Choice conveys the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. As we choose words for our writing we use language to "paint a picture" for the reader.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Word Choice are:

- Will my reader understand my words?
- Did I use words that sound natural to my style?
- Were my words accurate, original, and appropriate?
- Did I use strong, energetic verbs?



Voice

Voice gives our writing personality, flavor, and style. Through voice, the reader understands what we care about. When a writer creates a paper with good Voice, the words speak directly to the reader in a style that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. The writing demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of the audience.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Voice are:

- Does this writing sound like me?
- Did I say what I think and feel?
- Does my writing have energy and passion?
- Is my writing appropriate for my audience and purpose?



Organization

Organization gives direction to our writing. It is the internal structure that provides the backbone to which all the pieces are connected. The organization helps enhance and showcase the central theme or storyline. The order, structure, and presentation of information moves the reader through the text.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Organization are:

- Does my paper have a good opening that gets the reader's attention?
- Did I tell events or details in the best order?

- Are my details linked together?
- Does my paper have a good ending?

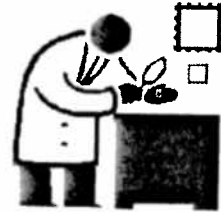


Conventions

Once our writing is complete, we are ready to edit and proofread. It is time to prepare our writing so others can read it and enjoy it. The writer who uses conventions correctly and effectively demonstrates an understanding of grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, and paragraphing.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Conventions are:

- Did I use enough paragraphing?
- Is my spelling correct?
- Did I use end marks correctly?
- Did I use capital letters in the right place?



Presentation

Presentation combines both visual and verbal elements. It is the way we "exhibit" our message on paper. Even if our ideas, words, and sentences are vivid, precise, and well constructed, the piece will not be inviting to read unless the guidelines of presentation are present. Think about examples of text and presentation in your environment. Which signs and billboards attract your attention? Why do you reach for one CD over another? All great writers are aware of the necessity of presentation, particularly technical writers who must include graphs, maps, and visual instructions along with their text.

Some questions parents can suggest their children ask to direct attention to Presentation are:

- Is the writing easy to read?
- Is the page balanced and uniform?
- Did I use the right style and format?

