

How to Teach and Assess Writing for ELLs at the Secondary Level Using Traits-Based Learning

Lincoln IU # 12, PA
February 24, 2010

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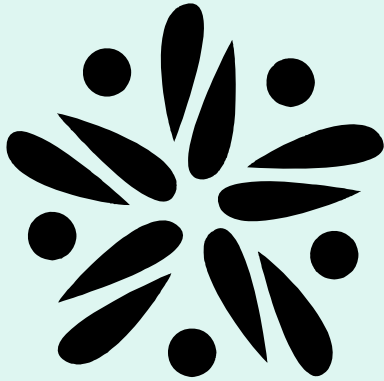
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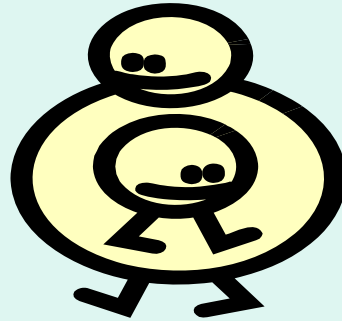
ESOL Secondary Model Classroom
Fairfax County Public Schools

Six Traits

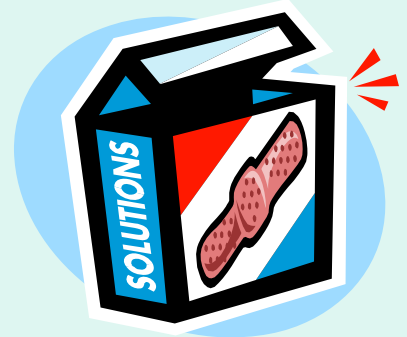
ORGANIZATION



VOICE



CONVENTIONS



SENTENCE FLUENCY



IDEAS



WORD CHOICE



Workshop Goals

- Explore how we assess student writing
 - **What do we look for?**
 - **How do we score/grade?**
- Look at different components of good writing
- Become familiar with 6-Traits to explicitly help students improve writing and provide a common language for class discussion
- Engage in mini-lessons and use literature to highlight all six traits
- Practice the use of the 6-Traits rubric in assessment and to develop inter-rater reliability

"When I first became a teacher, I did not teach writing at all. I assigned it.

That's because the assigning of writing, followed by the collecting and correcting of writing, is what had been modeled for me.

My teachers focused so heavily on the final product (along with due dates, minimum lengths, and conventions) that they scarcely concerned themselves at all with the how of writing, nor did they teach anything like a step-by-step writing process, much less model it. "

~Vicki Spandel

Writing Issues with ELLs

Students:

- **Still have something to say**, even though their grammar and mechanics are still developing
- Need to understand the organizational system of writing in English
- Benefit from explicit help in each trait
- Gain confidence when their strengths celebrated
- Need a structure that allows them to target specific areas to improve

6 Traits of Writing - Descriptors **A**

Ideas

Ideas are the heart of any piece of writing. Ideas are all about information. In a good creative piece, ideas paint pictures in a reader's mind. In an informational piece, strong ideas make hard-to-penetrate text reader friendly. Two things make ideas work well: clarity and details. Good writing always makes sense. And it includes details-not just any old details, mind you, but those beyond-the-obvious bits of information that thoughtful, observant writers notice.

Keys: MAIN IDEA, FOCUS, DETAILS, CLARITY, RESEARCH

Organization

Organization is the internal structure of the piece. Once a writer has assembled his/her information and thoughts, it's time to put things together in a way that makes sense and that holds the reader's attention. The writer must ask, Where do I begin? What do I say next? And after that? How do I wrap it all up? Good organization makes writing as easy to follow as a well-laid-out road map. The reader moves effortlessly from one thought to the next, and his/her interest and understanding grow throughout the piece until-boom! The power of a just-right conclusion brings the discussion to a close (for now).

Keys: LEAD, SEQUENCING, PATTERN MATCHES PURPOSE, TRANSITIONS, PACING, CLOSURE

Voice

Voice is many things: individuality, perspective, expressiveness, sensitivity to audience, enthusiasm for a topic, confidence-and so much more. Voice has the power to hold a reader's attention and to make the reading more enjoyable. It also reveals something of the writer, and the stronger the voice, the deeper the revelation. Even informational pieces can (and should) have strong voice, the kind of voice that resonates from a writer's knowledge of and respect for his/her topic, along with the desire to bring that topic to life for the reader.

Keys: SOUND, TONE CONNECTION TO AUDIENCE, STRONG VERBS, DETAIL, HONESTY

Word Choice

In good writing, the word choice is clear, precise and colorful. It is marked by thoughtful selection of that "just right" word that conveys both the meaning and attitude the writer wishes to project. Good writers learn to spend words like money, making each one count. They also learn that strong verbs give writing energy, while truckloads of adjectives and adverbs do little more than weigh the text down. Strong word choice is free of ponderous, heavy language, written only to impress. It's also free of fluffy language: nice, fun, wonderful, great. IT is clean, clear, and to the point-sometimes quotable.

Keys: VERBS! CLARITY, PRECISION, FRESH WORDS AND PHRASES, SIMPLICITY, NATURAL SOUND, AVOIDING WORDINESS, INFLATION, JARGON AND "WEARY" WORDS

Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of sentences that makes a text both easy and pleasurable to read. When sentence fluency is strong, it is easy to read a text aloud with lots of interpretation and inflection; it dances gracefully from one sentence to the next. Strong sentence fluency is also marked by variety in both sentence length and structure. Variety lends interest to the text and helps keep sleepy readers awake.

Keys: VARIETY, SMOOTH FLOW, TRANSITIONAL PHRASES, DIALOGUE, THE WAY IT SOUNDS TO THE EAR.

Conventions

Anything a copy editor might deal with falls under the heading of conventions: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, grammar and usage. Layout and presentation can be included as well.

Keys: "EDITING CONCERNS;" CONVENTIONAL vs. NON-STANDARD (based on specific purpose)

Process for Teaching a Trait



Ongoing, explicit teaching of trait specifics, including multiple lessons with exemplars



- ☐ Define the trait
- ☐ Review the rubric
- ☐ Give examples that can be assessed
- ☐ Provide writing samples that can be revised in pairs
- ☐ Practice revising a variety of pieces

How do we teach it?

ORGANIZATION

Focus on five mini-lessons:

- 1. Define the trait / Assess student writing**
- 2. Understanding the Concept**
(Group organization activity)
- 3. Sequencing** (Sentence Strips)
- 4. Transitions**
- 5. Leads and Closures**
Leads/Four Corners Favorite

Organization - A



Organization is the *internal structure* of the piece. Once a writer has assembled his/her information and thoughts, it's time to put things together in a way that makes sense and that holds the reader's attention. The writer must ask: Where do I begin? What do I say next? And after that? How do I wrap it all up? ***Good organization makes writing as easy to follow as a well-laid-out road map.*** The reader moves effortlessly from one thought to the next, and his/her interest and understanding grow throughout the piece until-boom! The power of a just-right conclusion brings the discussion to a close (for now).

*** Keys: LEAD, SEQUENCING, PATTERN MATCHES
PURPOSE, TRANSITIONS, PACING, CLOSURE**

Teacher - B

Thoughtful structure guides reader through text like a bright beacon

Provocative opening-enlightening conclusion

Smooth, well-crafted transitions give whole piece cohesion

Structure enhances reader's understanding/ enjoyment of piece

6

Purposeful organization draws attention to key ideas

Strong lead-conclusion that provides closure

Thoughtful transitions clearly connect ideas

Structure helps reader track/process ideas

5

Organization works in harmony with ideas

Functional lead and conclusion

Helpful transition often suggest connections

Structure helpful, but often predictable

4

Reader must be attentive-organization loose or out of synch with ideas

Lead and/or conclusion need work

Transitions sometimes missing or formulaic

Structure relies too much on formula- or necessitates re-reading

3

Hard to follow, even with effort- a faint light in the distance

Lead and/or conclusion missing or formulaic, minimally helpful

Transitions often unclear or missing

Significant re-organization needed-reader often baffled

2

Student - C

My organization will guide you through the text like a light in the dark.

My lead will hook you-the conclusion will leave you thinking.

I link ideas in a way that highlights important connections.

The structure takes you from point to point with a real sense of purpose.

My organization will help you zero in on key ideas.

I have a strong lead-and my conclusion wraps up the discussion.

My transitions show how ideas connect.

The paper's structure helps you keep track of ideas.

My organization works with the ideas.

I have a lead and conclusion. They seem OK.

My transitions are helpful, I think.

You can follow it, but sometimes you know what is coming next.

When I read this over, I feel like moving some parts around.

My lead and/or conclusion could use work.

I forgot some transitions. OR, I followed a pattern (My first reason, second reason)

This is hard to follow at times- OR, you always know what's coming!

I feel like re-organizing everything- beginning to end.

I have no lead or conclusion, OR, it's the same thing you always hear.

My transitions are missing- OR they don't make sense.

This is hard to follow, even when you pay attention.

Assessment Activity

(writing “D” : Brian’s “I gave a dollar...”)

Individually:

- Look at writing sample “D”
- Highlight evidence of organization “rank” on the Teacher Rubric across levels using the “Organization” Teacher Rubric
- Holistically score the writing

In small groups:

- Discuss your rating and why you rated the writing as you did

Writing **D** (“Brian’s “I gave a dollar...”)

I gave a dollar to my friend. Mark Twain once said, “the best way to Cheer yourself up is to try to cheer someone else up.” Ever felt sorry for someone? I did once; a friend of my had no lunch and was really hungry, hungry enough to eats a horse. I thought for a second. I could hear his stomach gurgle. I was thought that I was sad for him. I gave it to him and he shot fireworks out of his head. I duged in my pocket and found a dollar. I felt good no wait great. The great feeling of giving, no other I greater. Even it was my last dollar.

Brian N.

“Stand Up Organization” Mini-lessons

(Introducing the Concept)

Group activity:

- Count off and get into groups
- Stand together by group
- Follow the directions to “organize” and “reorganize” your group

Sequence Strips Mini-lesson

In your small groups:

1. Take out sequence strips from one zip-lock bag
2. Read statements; reach consensus on how to re-order them; and organize them as agreed
3. Be ready to share out why you organized as you did.
4. Repeat with other bags. Leave paragraphs out on table (do not gather until after sharing).

NOTE: *Different groups may disagree on order but must be able to justify/explain rationale for group decision*

Transitions Mini-lesson

In your small groups:

- Look at your “sentence strips” paragraphs and identify transition words and implied transitions.
- Look at **Transition Examples “E”** and explore additional choices

Transitions -Revising

- Look at **Movies “F1”**: How could this be improved by teaching transitions.
- Look at **Movies “F2”**: Highlight the transitions and transitional phrases that the student added. How can you help students to incorporate transitions as they revise?

Leads Mini-lesson

“Choosing a Favorite Lead”

Individually:

- Read the sample leads “G”
- Select two favorite leads
- Write down WHY you liked them

In your small groups:

- Take turns sharing your “favorite” leads and together discuss why you think they are good leads
- Make a list of various factors that make a “good” lead

Leads: Organization

Individually:

- Review **lead categories “H”**
- Take a 3x5 card (don't let anyone see what you will write!)
- Write a lead that YOU would use to begin your own book.
- Turn your card upside-down and pass to presenters

Four Corners Lead Activity

Individually:

- Listen to the four leads the presenters will read
- Determine which lead is by an published writer
- Walk to that corner
- Repeat with new leads.

A Primary Goal of Evaluation

“We must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves.”

Arthur Costa

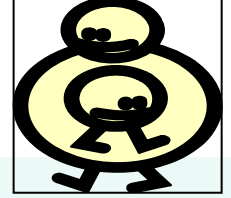
How do we teach it ?

VOICE

Focus on five mini-lessons:

- 1. Define the Trait**
- 2. Describe the Voice You Hear (NPR)**
- 3. Assess a sample- Jimmy**
- 4. Greeting Cards – match for purpose**
- 5. Take the Voice Out**

VOICE - A



Voice is many things: individuality, perspective, expressiveness, sensitivity to audience, enthusiasm for a topic, confidence-and so much more. Voice has the power to ***hold a reader's attention*** and to make the reading more enjoyable. It also ***reveals something of the writer***, and the stronger the voice, the deeper the revelation. Even informational pieces can (and should) have strong voice, the kind of voice that resonates from a writer's knowledge of and respect for his/her topic, along with the desire to ***bring that topic to life*** for the reader.

Keys: SOUND, TONE CONNECTION TO AUDIENCE, STRONG VERBS, DETAIL, HONESTY

Rubrics: VOICE

Teacher - B

- * As individual as fingerprints
 - * *Begs* to be read aloud – reader can't wait to share
 - * Uses voice as a tool to enhance meaning
 - * Passionate, vibrant, electric, compelling
- * Original – definitely distinctive
 - * A good “read aloud” candidate
 - * Voice appealing and well suited to topic/audience
 - * Spontaneous, lively, expressive, enthusiastic
- * Sparks of individuality
 - * Reader might share a line or two
 - * Voice fades at times – acceptable for topic/audience
 - * Pleasant, sincere, emerging, earnest
- * Voice emerges sporadically-not strong or distinctive
 - * A “share-aloud” moment
 - * Voice often distant, not always directed to audience
 - * Quiet, subdued, restrained, inconsistent
- * Writer seems to be in hiding
 - * A hint of voice- text not ready for sharing
 - * Voice faint- OR, not right for audience, purpose
 - * Distant, encyclopedic-OR inappropriately informal

6

5

4

3

2

Student - C

- *This writing is as individual as my fingerprints.
 - *Trust me- you will need to share this aloud.
 - *I use voice to make the message resonate in your head.
 - *Her the passion in my voice? I want you to love this topic.
- *This is original and distinctive. It's definitely me.
 - *I think you will want to read this aloud.
 - *This voice goes with the topic, and reaches out to the audience.
 - *The paper is lively and expressive. It has energy.
- *This writing strikes a spark or two. You might recognize me.
 - *You might share a line or two aloud.
 - *My voice might fade here and there- usually I reach out to the audience.
 - *This paper is sincere. It sounds like I mean what I say.
- *My voice comes out here and there. I'm not sure you can tell it's me.
 - *There could be a “share aloud” moment in there somewhere.
 - *I wasn't always thinking of the audience.
 - *My voice is very faint. It's hard to hear even when you listen closely.
 - *My voice is pretty quiet in this paper. It's a careful, reserved voice.
 - *I'm hiding behind the words. It's not me yet.

Greeting Cards Mini-lesson: What's the Voice?

Individually:

- Choose a greeting card from the pile
- Come up with a message that could go along with your card

In your small group:

- Share possible messages to “match” the mood (“voice”) of your card.
- Discuss how the message might change with a **different recipient**

Voice Mini-lesson: Play “Take it Away”

- Go Back to Writing “J” (Jimmy’s “How to Lose a Girl...”
- Take out the voice

Example: *“Did you ever have a girlfriend that was so annoying? Well now you could get rid of her by five simple and easy steps.”*

There are five steps to get rid of an annoying girlfriend.

Voice: Other Suggestions

Try it in your classrooms using:

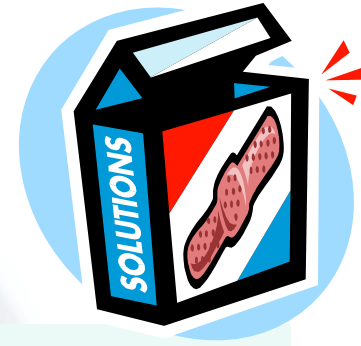
- Sound clips
- Music (*tone/mood/rhythm*)
- Text
- People students know (principal; president)
- Take the Voice Out

Have students discuss how they identified or described the “voice” they heard...

Voice : Tips for Success

- Be yourself!
- Match your voice to your purpose
- Think of your audience as you write
- Know your topic
- Care about your topic
- Think of all writing as a letter to someone

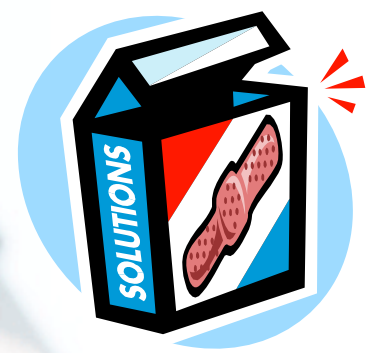
How do we teach it ? **CONVENTIONS**



Focus on three mini-lessons:

- 1. Define the Trait**
- 2. Choose a GRAMMAR FUNCTION and assess a sample**
- 3. Dictation: *The Girls Like Spaghetti*
Read Aloud**

Conventions - A



Anything a **copy editor** might deal with falls under the heading of **conventions**: **spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, grammar**, and **usage**. **Layout** and **presentation** can be included as well.

- **Keys: “EDITING” CONCERNS; CONVENTIONAL vs. NON-STANDARD (based on specific purpose)**

The Wreck (Grammar Function: tense)

One day when I am walking down the street. There was no one around it was pretty quiet and also weird. Then I turn the corner and there is a terrible car wreck. I run all over town looking for help. At least I found a phone and I dial 911. They answer and I say I need help right now!

They told me to stay calm I said ok. first of all they ask me where is the accident at? I did not bother to look at the street signs. So I get the street signs names. I run back to the phone and I told the operator where it is at. She asks me if any one was hurt I said yes.

I was told to go back to the wreck and wait for help to arrive

The Wreck (Just focused on past tenses)

One day when I **was** walking down the street. There was no one around it was pretty quiet and also weird. Then I **turned** the corner and there **was** a terrible car wreck. I **ran** all over town looking for help. At least I found a phone and **dialled** 911. They **answered** and I **said** I need help right now!

They told me to stay calm, and I said ok. first of all they **asked** me where **was** the accident at? I **had** not bothered to look at the street signs. So I **got** the street signs names. I **ran** back to the phone and I told the operator where it **was** at. She **asked** me if any one was hurt I said yes.

I was told to go back to the wreck and wait for help to arrive

The Wreck (conventions corrected)

One day when I was walking down the street, there was no one around. It was pretty quiet and also weird. I turned the corner and there was a terrible car wreck. I ran all over town looking for help! I found a phone and dialed 911. They answered, and I said, “I need help right now!”

They told me to stay calm, and I said, “OK.” First of all they asked me where the accident had occurred. I had not bothered to look at the street signs. I got the street names and ran back to the phone. I told the operator where the accident was. She asked me if anyone was hurt. I said, “Yes.”

I was told to go back to the wreck and wait for help to arrive.

Conventions Rubric - B

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Only the pickiest editors would spot errors* Thoroughly edited-conventions enhance meaning, voice* Complexity of text showcases wide range of conventions* Enticing layout (optional)* Virtually ready to publish <p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Minor errors that are easily overlooked* Edited-conventions support meaning, voice* Sufficient complexity reflects skill in numerous conventions* Pleasing layout (optional)* Ready to publish with light touch-ups <p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Noticeable errors- message still clear* Edited for general readability* Shows control over basics (e.g. cap's , end punctuation)* Acceptable layout(optional)* Good once-over needed prior to publication | <p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Noticeable, distracting errors- may slow reading, affect message* Erratic editing-many things missed* Problems even with basic conventions* More attention to layout needed (optional)* Thorough, careful editing needed prior to publication <p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Frequent, distracting errors get in the way of message* Minimal editing-if any* Numerous errors even on basics* Limited attention to layout (optional)* Line-by-line editing needed prior to publication <p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Serious, frequent errors make reading a real effort* Lack of editing leaves even patient readers struggling* Errors on basics obscure meaning, put up road blocks* No apparent attention to layout (optional)* Word-by-word editing needed prior to publication |
|--|---|

Conventions: Other Suggestions

Try it in your classrooms using:

- Books for mini-lessons (see bibliography):
 - Eats, Shoots, and Leaves
 - Punctuation Takes a Vacation
 - Caught' Ya Again! More Grammar With a Giggle
- **“YOU SAID ITs...”** (straight from student samples)
 - *He came to U.S. five month ago.*
 - *She likes to write her school work with pen then pencil*
 - *A bunny is such a adorable creature with a “true image”.*
- Have **paired/small group editing** sessions
- Use **PVC Pipes** for “Hearing what others hear...”
- Model with first and final drafts

Sentence Fluency - A



Sentence fluency is the **rhythm** and **flow** of sentences that makes a text both **easy and pleasurable to read**. When sentence fluency is strong, it is easy to read a text aloud with lots of interpretation and inflection; it **dances gracefully from one sentence to the next**. Strong sentence fluency is also marked by variety in both sentence **length** and **structure**. **Variety** lends interest to the text and helps keep sleepy readers awake.

Keys; VARIETY, SMOOTH FLOW, TRANSITIONAL PHRASES, DIALOGUE, THE WAY IT SOUNDS TO THE EAR.

Sentence Fluency

Listen to the fluency.....

- Time passes differently late at night.
- A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green.
- His eyes had popped from his head, and they dangled on bloody strings, swaying against his cheeks.

How do we teach it?

SENTENCE FLUENCY

Focus on five mini-lessons:

- 1. Hearing the Rhythm: Fluency Hunt (poetry and picture books)**
- 2. Lining Up: “Return Key” Returns**
- 3. Sentence Rewrites**
- 4. Choral Reading**
- 5. PATTERNED WRITING**

Fluency Hunt Mini-lesson

Individually:

- Take one reading selection from the stack at your table and read it.
- Pick your favorite sentence and determine why you like it

Small Group:

- Take turns reading your favorite sentence to your table.
- Discuss ***why*** you picked it and how you would use this activity with your students.

“RETURN KEY” Returns - K

Students select a piece they have worked on electronically:

1. Save the piece as a different name.
2. Students go through and hit return after every sentence (after every period).
3. Have students analyze sentences.
Are they all the same length? Do they begin with the same words?
4. Use as a springboard for instruction.

Sentence Fluency – Part 2

SENTENCE REWRITES

“I think questions that have no answers shouldn’t be asked because I cannot answer them very well.”

Start with:

“I thought... (changes verb tense)

“Because I cannot... (inverts syntax)

“Many people... (makes subject plural)

“Why shouldn’t questions... (begins with a question)

?

Choral Reading Mini-lesson M

Individually:

1. Read through “*Undivided Attention*”
2. Highlight or underline up to 3 phrases that resonate with you.
3. When prompted, **read that part aloud along with the leader.**

Patterned Writing

Use “patterned text” to help students find their fluency

- The Important Book (Margaret Wise Brown)
- *“If you aren’t from...”* N

Patterned Writing Sample: “If You’re Not From Bosnia”

If you’re not from Bosnia, you don’t know Bosnia. You can’t know Bosnia. You don’t know how they talk. You don’t know what their stores look like. You don’t know how our money looks. You don’t know what our streets look like. You can’t know our streets. You don’t know the watery blackness- the hardest stone. You don’t know the city. You can’t know our city, the ruined, the broken, the cracked city.”

“Patterned Writing” Mini-lesson

- Look at the examples provided (N)
- **Your turn!** Do a “Quick Write” following the pattern of the *“If you’re not from Bosnia...”* piece.
- Be ready to share out.

Ideas – "A"



Ideas are the heart of any piece of writing. Ideas are all about **information**.

In a good creative piece, ideas **paint pictures** in a reader's mind.

In an informational piece, strong ideas make hard-to-penetrate text **reader-friendly**.

Two things make ideas work well: **clarity and details**.

Good writing always makes sense.

And it includes **details**--not just any old details, mind you, but those beyond-the-obvious bits of information that thoughtful, observant writers notice.

- **Keys: MAIN IDEA, FOCUS, DETAILS, CLARITY, RESEARCH**

Rubrics: Ideas

Teacher - B

Student - C

- * Clear, focused, compelling –holds reader's attention
- * Striking insight, impressive knowledge of topic
- * Takes reader on a journey of understanding
- * Clear main idea and significant, intriguing details

6

- * Clear and focused
- * Reflects in-depth knowledge of topic
- * Authentic, convincing info from experience/research
- * Clear main idea well supported by details

5

- * Clear and focused more often than not
- * Writer knows topic well enough to write in broad term
- * Some new info, some common knowledge
- * Main idea can be easily inferred, quality details outweigh generalities

4

- * Clear, focused moments overshadowed by undeveloped, rambling text
- * Writer needs greater knowledge of topic—gaps apparent
- * Mostly common knowledge and best guesses
- * Generalities dominate, writer has weak grip on main idea

3

- * Writer lacks clear vision—still defining topic, key question
- * Writer struggles with insufficient knowledge—writing is strained
- * Broad unsupported observations invented details
- * Filler dominates—main idea wanders in and out of focus

2

- * My ideas are crystal clear- you will not be bored.
- * I know the topic inside out.
- * My details are intriguing-not just things everyone already knows.

- * This paper is clear-it makes sense from beginning to end.
- * It is easy to see what my main point is about.
- * I used research or my experience to make my writing convincing.

- * Most of this paper is clear and focused--Ok-there are a few fuzzy moments.
- * It's easy to tell what this paper is about.
- * I have some great details-but some generalities too. I need more new and unusual ideas.

- * I know what I want to say-but it's hard to get my ideas on paper.
- * At least I stick to my topic-well, most of the time.
- * You can probably figure out what my main idea is about.
- * Details? I have a few- I need more information.

- * This is still confusing, even to me. It rambles.
- * I'm beginning to figure out what I want to say.
- * I think I have a main idea, but I'm not sure.
- * This is sketchy-truth is I don't say much.

How do we teach it?

DETAILS

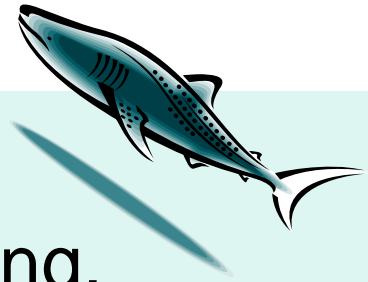
Focus on four mini-lessons:

- 1. Selecting Key Points** (*“Sharks”*)
- 2. Leveling** (*Own sample; “Korean Festival” “Pizza” and 3 Authors’*)
- 3. Questioning**
- 4. Read-Alouds** (*Lunchtime for a Purple Snake*)

Selecting Key Points

"O"

"SHARKS": Details Mini-lesson



Think, Pair, Share:

- Individually, pick out the 6 most intriguing, interesting bits of information. Ignore irrelevant details and common knowledge.
- Discuss your choices with a partner
- Share out:
 - *What happened when you shared your choices?*
 - *Did you agree on all?*
 - *Were there distracters?*
 - *How would this activity help students?*

“Leveling Mini-lesson” “P”

Individual Practice:

Level 1:

First, write ONE sentence about a memorable place, person, or experience, using ONE adjective to describe that person, place, or experience.

Level 2:

Now, write two or three sentences, showing what you said in that one adjective. Don't use the adjective.

Level 3:

And now....put yourself mentally at the scene, in the experience, with the person. See, hear, feel, taste, smell. BE there. Put the reader there, using the most vivid impressions you can call to mind. Let VERBS work for you.

“Questioning Mini-lesson”: *Getting Hector to Think about Details...*

In small groups:



- Look at Hector’s writing (“Wild About Girls” “Q”
- Use the “Ideas” Rubric “B” to evaluate writing
- Come up with 3 or 4 specific questions to lead Hector toward providing more specific details
- Share out

Questioning: Getting Hector to Think about Details...

- How do girls look at boys? Describe.
- You wrote that you're "wild" about girls; how do they make you feel?
- Can you write an example of how a girl you know changed her mind?

?? ??

After Questions...

Individually:

1. Read Hector's revised "Wild About" writing sample focusing on just his ideas again "R"
2. Highlight areas/passages improved
3. Re-evaluate using ***Ideas Teacher Rubric***
"B"

Word Choice - "A"

WORD CHOICE



In good writing, the **word choice** is *clear*, *precise* and *colorful*. It is marked by thoughtful selection of that **“just right” word** that conveys both the meaning and attitude the writer wishes to project. Good writers learn to spend words like money, making each one count. They also learn that *strong verbs* give writing energy, while truckloads of adjectives and adverbs do little more than weigh the text down. Strong word choice is free of ponderous, heavy language, written only to impress. It’s also free of fluffy language: nice, fun, wonderful, great. It is *clean, clear, and to the point-sometimes* quotable.

Keys: VERBS! CLARITY, PRECISION, FRESH WORDS AND PHRASES, SIMPLICITY, NATURAL SOUND, AVOIDING WORDINESS, INFLATION, JARGON AND “WEARY” WORDS

How do we teach it?

WORD CHOICE

Focus on four mini-lessons:

1. Assess a sample- “Patriotism”
2. “Verbs Drive the Piece”
3. Descriptive words – describe an object
4. Picture This- give and laminate picture cards.
5. Funeral-share top 5 words to kill-(think, write, share)

Patriotism- Assess the sample

Individually:

- Read Patriotism “S” Note key words in Descriptors “A”.
- Highlight your verbs. Circle adjectives and other descriptive words.
- Use the Rubric “B” to assess word choice.
- Share your thoughts with a partner.

Strong Verbs Mini-lesson: Building Powerful Language

Individually:

- Choose a set of words from the bottom of "T".
- Fill in the Graphic Organizer.
- Are there other verbs you could add?

In your table groups:

- Share what you picked.
- How could you use this with students who have varying proficiency levels?
- What other activities could you do to help students brainstorm better verbs?

CHART OUT

Descriptive Words Mini-lesson

“DETAILED DETAILS” nitty gritty

Individually:

- Choose a card from the set of yellow cards.
- Quickly brainstorm as many words and short phrases as you can to describe your object. Use your senses. Use colors. Try to compare it to other things.
- Now quickly write one paragraph introducing your object and using your list

DO NOT NAME THE OBJECT !

Descriptive Words: Activity Example

Example:

Smaller than a coffee cup, liquid, solid, clear, bubbles, jelly, tight squeeze, shield, clean, refresher, important, bigger than a pack of gum, too big for a pocket, girls keep in purse, heavy liquid, fighter, clean, colorless, 99.9., more than hands, can sting, fresh, slimy, solid on the outside, liquid on the inside....

Descriptive Words: *DETAILED SHOWDOWN*

At your table:

- Place all the yellow word-cards face up on your table.
- One at a time, read your paragraph aloud as group members try to guess QUIETLY what the object is.
- When the person reading finishes, he/she says 3-2-1 SHOWDOWN and other group members call out answer in unison.
- Discuss what clues helped you select your object.

PICTURE THIS Mini-Lesson

Individually:

- Look at the Patriotism Rewrite (“**S**”). Notice the **verbs**. Find the **figurative language**.
- Choose 6 picture-cards from the pile.
- Quietly choose one picture-card that you could write on (this is what prompted the Patriotism piece).
- Write about/in response to/describe the picture.

Share your writing with a partner:

- Have your partner **underline verbs**, and **circle** **descriptive words**.
- Work together on revising/building words.
- How can you add figurative language as a means of providing specific descriptions?

Bury It! Mini-lesson

The Graveyard:

- Discuss phrases or words that students overuse in daily language or writing.

With a Partner:

- Make a list of words you can **BURY**.



Back at School:

- Designate your graveyard. Find good funeral music. Remember fondly your word. Then bury it. In the future, remind students- the word is dead!

Remember: Start Small ...

The first useful concept is the idea of **short assignments**.

Often when you sit down to write, what you have in mind is an autobiographical novel about your childhood, or a play about the immigrant experience, or a history of –oh, say-say women.

But this is like trying to scale a glacier. It's hard to get your footing, and your fingertips get all red and frozen and torn up....

~Anne Lamott (Bird by Bird)

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- **Online resources available at:**

www.academicesl.com (our website )

http://thetraits.org/scoring_practice.php

Thank you!