

Six Traits Writing Workshop

WNY School Support Center UB Buffalo Public Schools

Jim Collins

Introduction to Writing Traits and Writing Strategies

Traits and Strategies

1. The Six Traits approach to writing instruction makes writing accessible for all learners by breaking a complex cognitive process into six key component processes.
2. Writers use Writing Strategies to solve problems they encounter while writing.
3. By teaching the Six Traits and Writing Strategies for each of the traits, we teach students to solve problems for the major components of the writing process.

Definition of the Six Traits

The Six Traits are the qualities that teachers, writers, and readers think are important in good writing.

Ideas
Organization
Voice

Word Choice
Sentence Fluency
Conventions

Definition of Writing Strategies

- 1. Writing Strategies are cognitive and metacognitive procedures writers use to control the production of writing. Examples of Writing Strategies are decisions such as:**
 - 1. Ideas: Showing instead of telling to clarify a report of an event**
 - 2. Organization: Using a phrase to connect paragraphs (“But that’s not the only reason ...”)**
 - 3. Voice: Inserting a personal story to engage reader empathy**
 - 4. Word Choice: Changing a cliché to an original expression**
 - 5. Sentence Fluency: Using short sentences when action in a story speeds up**
 - 6. Conventions: Using a sentence fragment for effect**

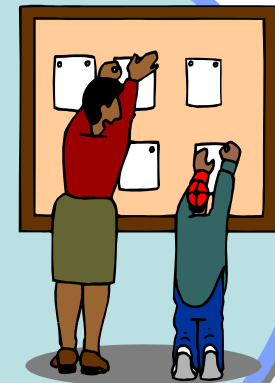
Review of the Writing Process

Planning

Drafting



Publishing



Revising



Editing



6 Traits and the Writing Process



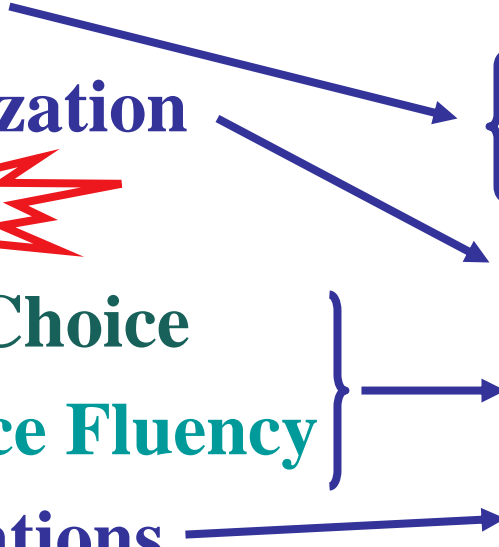
Six Traits and the ELA

Six Traits

- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions

ELA Five Qualities

- Meaning
- Development
- Organization
- Language Use
- Conventions



Ideas

Ideas are the heart of the message. They reflect the purpose, the theme, the primary content, the main point, or the main story line of the piece, together with the documented support, elaboration, anecdotes, images, or carefully selected details that build understanding or hold a reader's attention.

Organization

Organization is the internal structure of the piece. Think of it as being like an animal's skeleton, or the framework of a building under construction. Organization holds the whole thing together. That's why it's such an important trait. Many students say it is also one of the hardest traits to master. Maybe so. Isn't it hard sometimes to organize your room? Attic? Garage? A trip? Absolutely! Organizing your writing is much the same. You have to ask: Where do I begin? What comes next? After that? Which things go together? Which can be left out? How do I tie ideas together?

Voice

Voice is reader-writer connection – that something that makes a reader feel, respond, and want more. It gives writing life, energy, individuality, and zest. Writing that’s alive with voice is hard to put down; voiceless writing is a chore to read. Voice is the personal imprint of the writer on the page, and is so different with each writer. Each voice is unique. Voice is part concern for the reader, part enthusiasm for the topic, and part personal style. Voice also differs with purpose and audience.

Word Choice

Word Choice is the skillful use of language to create meaning. Careful writers seldom settle for the first word that comes to mind. They constantly search for the “just right” word or phrase. Consider the word ‘big.’ Just think of the many different meanings you could create if you wrote....massive, enormous, considerable, numerous, momentous, prominent, conspicuous, or self-important. Notice that these words do NOT all have the same meaning. Yet each of them could mean big.

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and beat of the language you hear in your head. Writing that's fluent is graceful, varied, rhythmic – almost musical. It's easy to read aloud. Sentences are well built. They move. They vary in structure and length. Each seems to flow right out of the one before.

Conventions

Almost anything a copy editor would deal with comes under the heading of conventions. This includes punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage, capitalization, and paragraph indentation. When a paper is strong in conventions, it looks polished and edited. In a strong paper, the conventions are handled so skillfully, the reader doesn't really need to think of them. (You might find some if you look carefully, but they're rare). Correct conventions made reading easier, and so enhance meaning.

Sample Six Traits Lesson

Rewriting Menu Items for Café Word Choice

1. **Trait: Word Choice; Strategy: Make writing interesting by choosing highly descriptive words.**
2. **Model brainstorming descriptive terms for a menu item.**
3. **Let students brainstorm terms for their own menu items. Help where needed.**
4. **Repeat modeling and writing for menu paragraphs.**
5. **Use the rubric for word choice to assess the paragraphs.**

Scoring Rubric for Word Choice

Score of 4

- My words paint a picture.
- My words make the message clear.
- I think this is the BEST way to say it!
- I love the way my words sound and feel.

Score of 3

- I need more imagination here!
- These are some of the first words I thought of.
- There is probably a better way to say it.
- Some of the words and phrases are great, but some need some work.

Scoring Rubric for Word Choice (Continued)

Score of 2

- Some words are really vague.
- These words are not my favorites.
- The words I've used don't paint a picture in your mind.

Score of 1

- Some of my words don't make sense to me when I read them over.
- The words sound dull and boring.

Strategy Thinksheet

Choosing Descriptive Words

for Menu Items

Copy an original menu item:

Ice Cream Sundaes

Decide what we need to know:

**What flavor ice cream?
Toppings?
Sizes and other options?**

Write your descriptions:

Student words here

Rewrite the menu item substituting in your own words:

Student's first try at writing a paragraph describing the menu item.

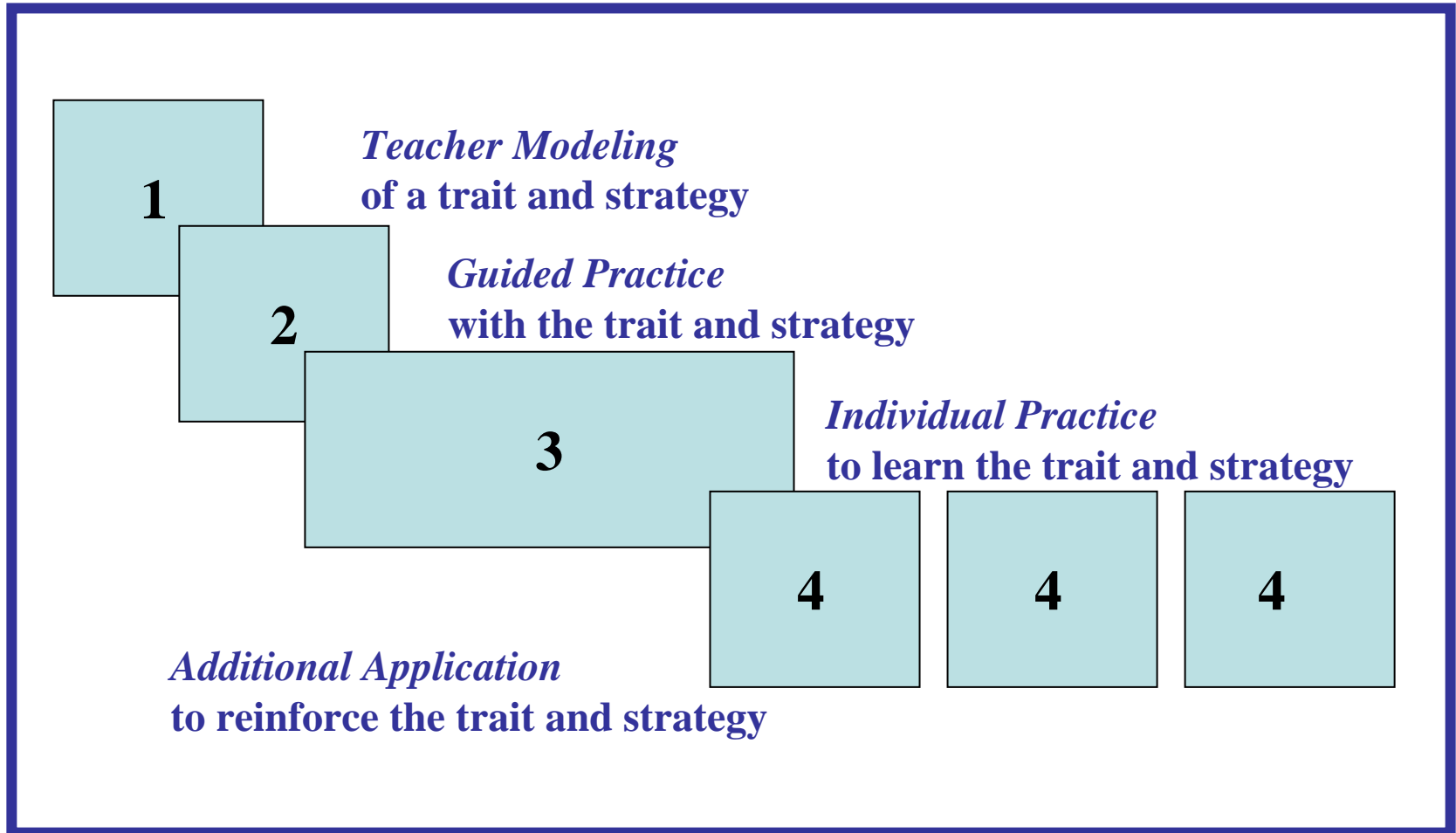
Using Writing to Teach and Learn

Major theoretical assumptions:

1. Writing is an instrument of thought.
2. Reading and writing strategies help in all content areas.
3. Learning to write is both an individual achievement and a social process.
4. The strategies experts use to read and write can be taught to novices.
5. We all encounter learning problems at times.
6. Strategies can help us solve problems.
7. Writing is best taught in a workshop environment.

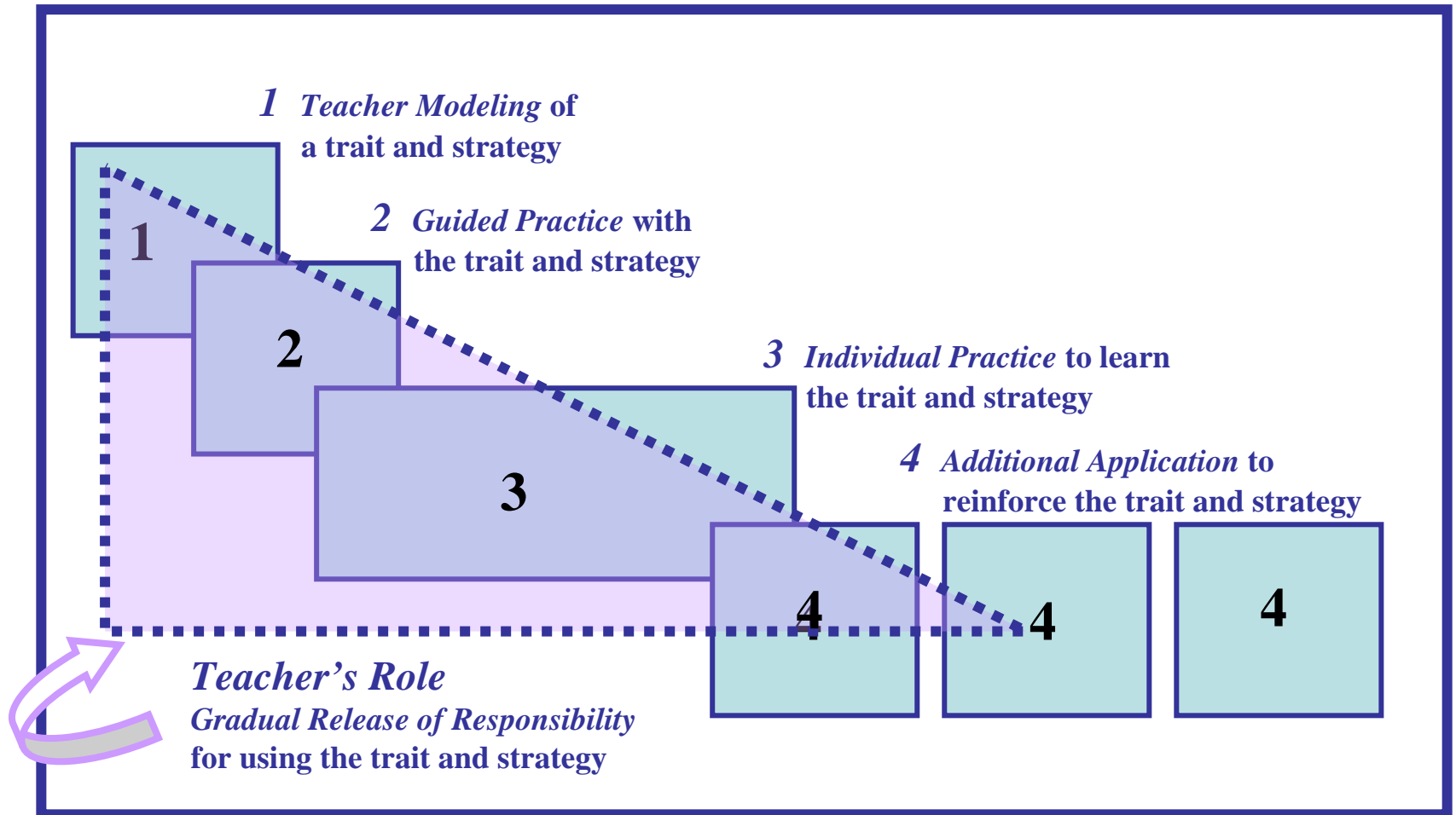
Teaching Process for Traits and Strategies

Within a framework of process-based writing instruction:



Teaching Process for Traits and Strategies

Gradual release of responsibility
within a framework of process-based writing instruction:



Using Writing in the Teaching/Learning Process

Within a framework of content learning and process-based writing instruction:



What's wrong with this picture?

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Get caught reading.
A MESSAGE FROM AAP

Whoopi Goldberg gets caught reading.

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Major Idea: Reading and Writing Can Be Collaborative and Strategic



