



Six Trait +1 Analytic Model for Writing Assessment

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Six Trait + 1 Analytic Model for Writing Assessment offers teachers more useful writing assessment tools to help students as they revised their written work. Its goals are to help teachers become more confident and competent assessors of student writing, to help them use their knowledge of good writing to help students develop their writing skills, to help teachers use models of strong and weak writing as instructional tools to develop students' writing skills, and to assist students in becoming more critical of their own writing so they can revise their work more successfully.

The program is built on three premises. First, teachers and students must learn how to assess writing. Second, students use models of strong and weak writing to assist them in producing their own good writing. And, third, students think and work more like professional writers as they consistently and accurately apply the language of the 6 + 1 traits.

The use of specific traits to teach and assess writing is the focus of Six Trait + 1 Analytic Model for Writing Assessment. Ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation are used as the key concepts to help teachers and students develop writing skills. In large-scale assessments of student writing, when teachers score student writing by systematically analyzing and rating it, they learn a great deal about student writing. The developers of Six Trait + 1 demonstrate that students write better when they learn how to use criteria of quality writing that is developmentally appropriate to rate their own writing.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

Six Trait + 1 Writing is being used throughout the country in urban, suburban, and rural districts. Many of the districts using Six Trait + 1 Writing have very diverse student populations. The program is also used in France, China, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and England, and it is still expanding.

Content

- student writing assessment traits:
 - ideas
 - organization
 - voice
 - word choice
 - sentence fluency
 - conventions
 - presentation
- models of good writing
- instructional strategies and materials to teach the traits

Context

- diverse student populations including large populations of minority and low-income students
- diverse school settings including rural, urban, and suburban schools



STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Training in the six-trait scoring process requires two days. Participants learn the definitions of each of the six traits, have opportunities to practice assessing student writing for each of the six traits, receive instruction in how to teach the traits to students, and develop plans for “mini-lessons” for each trait. Training is supported by an array of instructional enhancement tools including videos and teacher manuals. The manuals include scoring guides written for teachers and for students at each grade level.

In addition, classroom activities designed to help students develop skills in each trait are provided. Teachers receive sample student essays to share and discuss with their students, as well as strategies for teaching students how to assess their own writing using the six-trait assessment model. *A Writing Teacher's Action Handbook* is designed to enhance the writing of students in grades 3 and beyond. It guides teachers in scoring writing, developing writing assessments, and developing student writing skills. *Six-Trait Focus Lessons* contains model lessons for teaching the skills associated with quality writing. The lessons help teachers use student writing as a tool for teaching about revising for excellence.

A Training of Trainers Program is also available to allow schools and districts to implement the program at limited expense. In addition, three and one-half day Creative Writing Institutes are held across the country to provide intensive training. Follow-up assistance is also available for teachers through visitations, electronic means, and telephone contacts.

Process

- training
- modeling
- practice opportunities
- lesson designing
- resource materials
- videotapes

Intended Audience

- individual teachers
- entire departments
- entire school

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

When students receive instruction in the traits of good writing and examples of how these traits appear in both good and poor writing, their writing skills improve. In one assessment, fifth-graders' achievement in the first trait, *ideas*, was significantly higher than those in the treatment group, indicating that teachers' learning and direct instruction in this trait positively contributed to student performance.

EVIDENCE OF INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



The writing of students who had direct instruction on assessing writing using the six-trait analytical model improved more than the writing of students who did not have such instruction. Six classrooms of fifth-graders were recruited to participate in the study and were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control groups. Classrooms were in different schools and districts and were selected to represent different educational contexts (rural, suburban, urban, size of school, size of district, expenditures).

Two writing assessments were collected from both treatment and control students. One assessment prompt was expository and the other narrative. One prompt was randomly distributed at the pre-test, and the other one was used at the post-test. Scoring was done by experienced raters and controlled for impact. Matched pre- and post-test scores were examined using analysis of variance.

Pre-test scores of the treatment and control groups were very similar on all six traits. Post-test scores were significantly different for the trait of *ideas*—the trait given the most emphasis in the staff development program and in classroom instruction. The traits of *organization* and *voice* tended toward significance. The differences between the treatment and control groups for other traits, which were not directly taught in the treatment group, were not significant. Evaluators conclude that the results lend credibility to the premise that student writing improves to the extent that instruction addresses the features of writing deemed most important, and that instruction includes analysis of how these traits are exemplified in good and poor writing.



Six Trait + 1 Writing Assessment is an inexpensive and easily implemented program that can make a difference in student performance. It provides teachers and students with common criteria for success, which makes positive results more likely. While the research study is limited, the program has promise of helping both teachers' and students' achievement in writing.

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DOCUMENTATION

Arter, J., Spandel, V., Culham, R. & Pollard, J. (1994). *The Impact of Training Students to Be Self-Assessors of Writing*. Paper presented at AERA, New Orleans.

Spandel, V. (1996, January).Criteria:The power behind revision. *Writing Teacher*, 9-12.

