

Trait Six: Strengthening Conventions

The Editing and Final Draft Stage

Background (Grades 1 to 5)

Writing conventions such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar help make a student's essay clear and understandable. When the audience can finish reading, without having to stop to try to figure out what was actually intended, the value of learning these writing conventions becomes clear.

There are three main elements of Standard English Convention that we are primarily concerned with: Sentence Structure, Conventions of Usage, and Conventions of Punctuation. "Conventions" is just another way of saying the standard practices and expectations that people follow on a daily basis."

Four Key Qualities for Strengthening Conventions (Culham, 2008)

There are four key qualities students need to consider for mechanical correctness:

Students should:

1. Apply spelling rules correctly.
2. Use correct punctuation and paragraphing skillfully.
3. Use capital letters consistently and accurately.
4. Applies grammatically correct phrases and sentences.

In addition, each kind of writing has its own conventions. For instance:

Narrative writing must have characters, setting, plot

Descriptive writing must appeal to senses through use of vivid, colorful, precise vocabulary.

Expository writing must inform, clarify, explain, define, instruct.

Persuasive writing must present argument based on facts and logic and attempt to sway the reader's opinion.

Create a poster that you and the students can reference during the writing process, or provide one that they can insert in their writing folder or book.

Teaching Strategies

To introduce the traits and its key qualities, consider the age and interests of your class.

Note: Primary writers are too young and inexperienced to show control over sophisticated conventions, but there are ones they can follow to make their writing correct and understandable including using the following:

imitation and real letters

upper- and lowercase letters

conventional spelling of simple words

phonetic spelling of both simple and sophisticated words

end punctuation

capital letters at the beginning of sentences, proper nouns, and in titles

's' for plurals and possessives

contractions

indented paragraphs

Primary: Primary writers who learn the basics of conventions understand how important they are to the reader. By showing students how published authors use conventions in these books, you invite students to acknowledge the role of the best conventions should look in their own pieces.

“We are not proposing a weekly skill focus on convention skills (usually grade-level specific), rather we propose that Conventions in the primary grades be taught systematically through mentor texts in read-alouds. In dialogue while engaging in guided reading, fluency development, or writing processes we have hundreds of daily opportunities to teach lessons by pointing out how authors use conventions and encouraging students to use them daily as well.” (Culham, 2018)

Students will learn new editing tasks over the year for primary students to learn in a cumulative fashion.

Intermediate: As students become skilled in writing, once having mastered the foundational skills, they are ready to enter the next level of writing.