

# Traits Writing™

A Complete K-8 Program from Ruth Culham

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## Debbie Godsell

4th Grade Teacher

Writing: The subject many teachers dread to teach and grade. Traits Writing has helped me become a more effective writing teacher and has produced positive results in my students. This is the first year I have taught the Traits Writing curriculum in my classroom. This curriculum provides a simple approach to teaching the six traits of writing. The student handbook is presented via short, colorful writing lessons, with one main writing project per unit. Students enjoy working together to rewrite the weekly warm-ups. The mentor texts have allowed my students to listen to professional writers talk about how they approach writing and offer tips to my students. I have noticed improvements in my students' word choice. They are using strong, vivid verbs as well as choosing better words to create meaning. Lessons, such as narrowing the topic, starting with a great beginning and using the five senses to describe have benefited my students' writing in a refreshing way. The scoring rubrics make it easy for teachers to correct and grade students' writing. Using the Traits Writing curriculum has helped my students become better, more confident writers.

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## Kimberly Volk

4th Grade Teacher

Ever wonder how you can teach your students to become better writers? Where will you find the time? How will you gather great examples of writing techniques? The solution? The Traits of Writing Program.

Writing is no longer an "extra" subject to be taught in elementary school classrooms. Students today are expected to create narrative, expository, and persuasive pieces as early as kindergarten and first grade. College and Career Readiness are the new "buzz words" in our public schools, and strong writing ability is part of that picture. As a fourth grade teacher, I am responsible for preparing students for fifth grade and beyond. The 6 Traits of Writing has helped make the writing portion of this new era of teaching a little bit easier.

Daily lessons, of just 10-15 minutes, followed by daily writing for another 20 minutes, has had quite an impact on students' final pieces. Ideas, Voice, Organization, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, Conventions, and Presentation are all presented in short, mini-lessons that make sense to students. The use of cute "Trait Mates" who offer simple words of advice also add a special touch.

My favorite part of the program is the use of Benchmark papers to demonstrate what weak and strong papers look like. Projecting these on the board has allowed us to have class discussions on the strength and weaknesses of each piece. This has really helped my students understand how to incorporate the lessons into their personal writing. The next step of showing students a real author's piece of writing further solidifies how the traits are used. Finally, the Traits website's use of video to give students a chance to "meet" the famous authors has been a terrific visual aid.

As a teacher of Language Arts, the 6 Traits Writing Program has allowed me to incorporate all the elements of this subject: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The students have enjoyed using this program, and I have noticed marked improvement in the use of various techniques in their writing.



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## **Libby Allison**

First Grade Teacher

I love teaching writing traits in first grade. It is wonderful to have a researched-based program I can follow as a teacher. The supplemental materials, the traits books, along with the trait space program and workbooks, all combine to make an easy to teach program.

My students already know, and can implement, all the writing traits. They have memorized the writing process with the simple acronym that the traits program taught them in the first weeks. The books that go along with each story are really fun. It is a great way to start off the new writing topic each week. I have enjoyed watching the children grow as writers this year!

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## **Amy Hatcher**

5th Grade Teacher

Beep Beep, the timer went off. For three minutes, my students were to revise a paragraph about a topic that I had given them. It was a long three minutes, as I walked from table to table, seeing several of them looking into space, tapping their pencils, and saying, "I don't know what to write." It was August; the beginning of the school year, and it was my job to teach 125 students how to become better writers. Not only was it my goal to teach them to become better writers, but I also wanted them to love writing class and to have fun while doing it. Uh oh, I thought! This is going to be a long year.

This was my first experience with the weekly quick write in the new writing program I embarked upon. I am not sure when it happened, but somewhere along the way, pencils stopped tapping and started writing, blank stares became focused in thoughtful writing, and no hands went up to ask for help. Now when I ask my students to write, they are equipped with the ability to think about varying their sentences, to use vivid words to paint a picture in the mind of their readers, and to add voice that is appropriate for the writing format. My students have greatly improved their writing, not only in skill but in confidence as well. Three minutes of writing has turned into 5 minutes and some still want to write more. They don't balk at writing, and they love to share. I not only feel that the 6 plus 1 writing traits program has improved the writing skills of my students, but I feel that my writing has improved as well!

I must admit in the beginning, I was not entirely on board with another new writing program. Having taught for over ten years, I had seen several of the latest and greatest ways to teach writing, but I quickly learned that the variety of activities, the common language, and the flexibility it gave me to be creative actually made teaching writing easy and a lot more fun!

