

Write Traits[®]
**Research Base and
Program Effectiveness**



Table of Contents

Write Traits® Research Base and Related Resources3
Write Traits® Classroom Kits Program Effectiveness6
 Bentonville Public Schools, AR6
 Estes McDaniel Elementary School, NV9

***Write Traits*[®] Research Base and Related Resources**

The development of the six traits of effective writing as a framework for writing assessment is based on the independent research of teachers in the Beaverton, OR and Portland Public Schools and was influenced by the research of Paul Diederich, Donald Murray, and Alan Purves.

Diederich, P. (1974). *Measuring growth in english*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Jarner, D., Kozol, M., Nelson, S., & Salsberry, T. (Fall/Winter 2000). Six-trait writing model improves scores at Jennie Wilson Elementary. *Journal of School Improvement*. www.ncacasi.org/jsi/2000v1i2/six_trait_model.adp

Murray, D. M. (1982). *Learning by teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Purves, A.C. (1992, February). Reflections on research and assessment in written composition. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 26.

Spandel, V. (2001). *Creating writers through 6-trait writing assessment and instruction*. (3rd ed.) Boston: Addison Wesley Longman.

Student achievement is higher when writing is taught as a process. The *Write Traits* teach students how to evaluate and improve their work within the writing process.

Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). Research on written composition: New directions for teaching. Urbana, IL: *ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills* [ED 265 552]

Holdzkom, D., Reed, L., Porter, H.J., & Rubin, D.L. (1982). *Research within reach: Oral and written communication*. St. Louis, MO: Cemrel, Inc.

Keech, C., & Thomas, S. (1979). *Compendium of promising practices in composition instruction. Evaluation of the bay area writing project*. Berkeley, CA: California University School of Education.

Parsons, G. (1985). *Hand in hand: The writing process and the microcomputer. Two revolutions in the teaching of writing. A manual for secondary teachers*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Department of Education. [ED 264 598].

Wesdorp, H. (1983.) *On the identification of critical variables in written composition instruction*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University. [ED 258 167].

The six traits offer an assessment model that is meaningful and effective because it is aligned with the learning goal of producing better writing.

Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., & Cocking, RR. (eds.). (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.

Stiggins, R.J. (1996). *Student-centered classroom assessment*. 2nd ed. Columbus, OH: Merrill Education/Prentice Hall.

Strickland, K. & Strickland, J. (1998). *Reflections on assessment*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

The *Write Traits* teach students to be self-assessors who are able monitor their own progress as writers thereby improving their ability to transfer their knowledge to new learning situations.

Flavell, J.H.. (1973). Metacognitive aspects of problem-solving. In *The Nature of Intelligence*, L.B. Resnick, ed. Hillsdale: NJ: Erlbaum.

Graesser, A. (Ed.). (1998). SMART environments that support monitoring, reflection, and revision. In *Metacognition in Educational Theory and Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Stiggins, R.J. (1996). *Student-centered classroom assessment*. 2nd ed. Columbus, OH: Merrill Education/Prentice Hall.

Strickland, K. & Strickland, J. (1998). *Reflections on assessment*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

The six traits are taught in the order of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions so that students will be able to develop fluency and complex thinking before they address issues of punctuation and grammar which can hinder the creativity and idea development of young writers.

Graves, D. H. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Routman, R. (2000). *Conversations: Strategies for teaching, learning, and evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Weaver, C. (1996). *Teaching grammar in context*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Grammar and editing are taught as part of the writing process rather than as a separate lesson. Research shows that teaching grammar out of context has no positive effect on student writing ability.

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1994). *A fresh look at writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hillocks, G., Jr., & Mavrogenes, N. (1986). Sentence combining. In G. Hillocks, Jr., *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*. (pp. 142-146). Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Composition Skills and the National Conference on Research in English. Distributed by the National Conference on Research.

Routman, R. (2000). *Conversations: Strategies for teaching, learning, and evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Weaver, C. (1996). *Teaching grammar in context*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Students learn what good writing is by reading sample pieces and evaluating them. Because of the close link between reading and writing, reading is an effective way to develop good writing skills.

Fox, M. (1993). *Radical reflections*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Stotsky, S. (1983). Research and reading/writing relationships: A synthesis and suggested directions. *Language Arts*. 60: 627-642.

Calkins, L. M. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*, (rev. ed.) Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Write Traits® Classroom Kits Program Effectiveness: Bentonville Public Schools, AR

Bentonville Public Schools purchased the *Write Traits® Classroom Kits* for grades 7-8 in August/September of 2004. Bentonville Public Schools administers a district writing assessment in September and May of each school year to assess student progress in writing. The district assessment is scored on a 5-point rubric that evaluates the content and style of students' writing because content and style are the traits that students struggle with the most. The results of the district writing assessment are used in this evaluation to examine the effectiveness of the *Write Traits® Classroom Kits* with seventh and eighth grade students.

District Demographics

Bentonville Public Schools, winner of a 2005 Golden Apple Award for achieving the second highest benchmark test scores in the state of Arkansas, is located in the northwest corner of Arkansas with approximately 24% (Jacoby, 2006) of school-age children in the district from families below the poverty line.

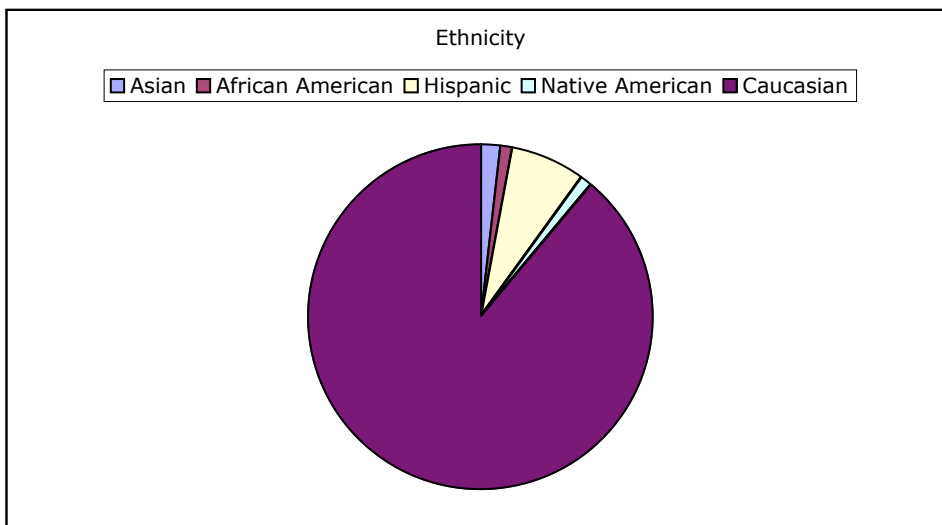
Students: 10,000

Special Ed Students: 943 (9.43%)

LEP Students: 279 (2.79%)

College-Bound: 70%

Ethnicity: Asian 2%, African American 1%, Hispanic 7%, Native American 1%, Caucasian 88%
(Market Data Retrieval, 2004)



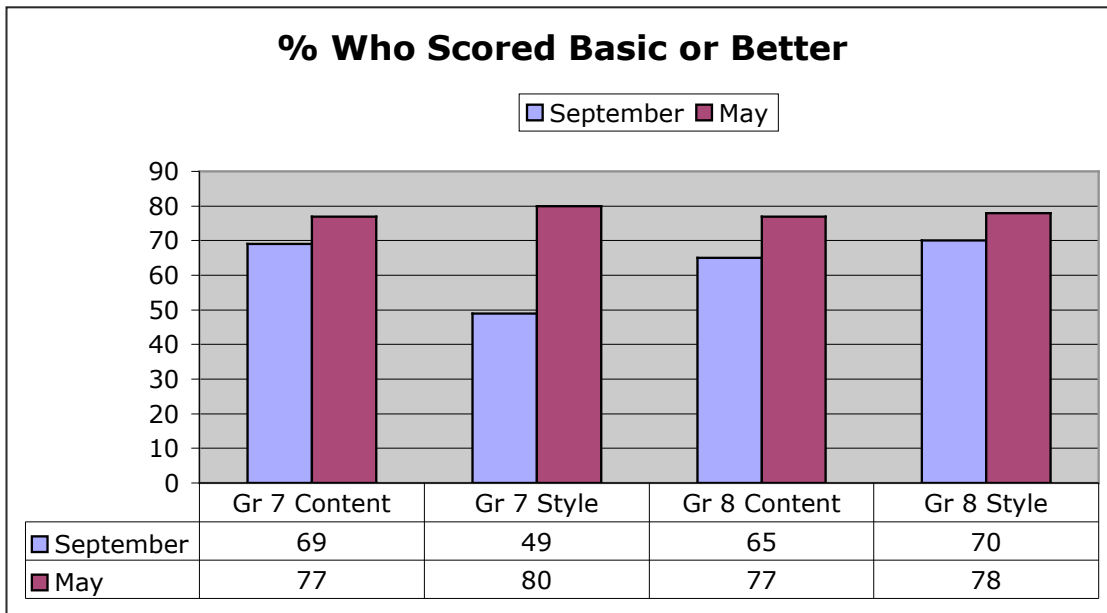
Test Results for Bentonville Public Schools

Results show significant increases in the percentage of students who scored 3 (Basic) or higher on the Bentonville district writing test from the pretest administered in September 2004 to the posttest administered in May of 2005.

Student papers were rated on a scale of 0-5, with 5 considered Advanced.

- 5=Advanced
- 4=Proficient
- 3=Basic
- 2=Below Basic
- 1=Meager attempt at responding to prompt
- 0=Off topic or did not respond to prompt

Seventh grade scores increased 8% on content and 31% on style and eighth grade scores increased 12% on content and 8% on style.



Teacher Comments

Teacher comments indicate growth in student writing in several key areas that align with the 6-traits of effective writing (the backbone of the *Write Traits® Classroom Kits*), including addressing the prompt; clear organization; improved voice and use of dialogue; risk-taking with vocabulary, resulting in better word choice; and complete and varied sentences.

Strengths Found in Seventh Grade Papers:

- Greater use of appropriate dialogue to show voice
- Greater use of examples than in previous writing
- Introduction and conclusion tie together for smooth style
- Strong organization with circular sophisticated style
- Style, tone, and voice are much improved
- Sophisticated use of analogies, similes, and connections
- Students stay on target for the entire paper, papers are longer
- Word choice indicates both work on vocabulary and risk taking to use new words correctly
- Sentences are, for the most part, complete and varied

Strengths Found in Eighth Grade Papers:

- Vast majority of students are able to take a position and establish a main idea
- Students are using their vocabulary words, sometimes almost correctly (great risk-taking)
- Strong organizational skills
- Voice is evident, very few “anybody” papers
- Style is a priority for students to give the reader “memorable moments”
- Addressing the prompt with skill
- Language level is very appropriate
- Word choice indicates both work on vocabulary and risk taking to use new words correctly

Reflections from teachers on best practices indicate strategies that teachers felt improved students’ writing:

- The quantity of writing has increased; therefore, students are better writers
- Teachers concentrate on writing and making reading/writing connections through literacy lab; choice and amount of reading increase and produce better writers
- Focused 6-trait lessons show students how to improve content and style
- Focused vocabulary lessons such as context clues impacts complexity of sentence structure and word choice
- Because teachers don’t grade their own students’ papers, scoring is objective; teachers see all levels of writing; students “try harder” for an “outside grader”; this is true horizontal teaming
- Teachers collaborate to share ideas and best practices and to reflect on writing lessons; it keeps all teachers on the same page
- Using the 6-trait rubric has provided a scaffolding for students and is the basis for peer revising (consistency)
- Teachers use overheads and rubrics to teach anchor papers

Conclusion

The success at Bentonville Public Schools can be linked to several factors including teacher collaboration, a focus on writing and literacy, and an atmosphere that appears to value students and teachers.

Results indicate that the *Write Traits® Classroom Kits* contributed to the improvement of student writing at Bentonville because it gave teachers tools such as anchor papers, 6-trait lessons, models, transparencies, and a common language to facilitate the teaching of writing in an effective way that worked with the district’s teaching philosophy and classroom environment.

**Write Traits® Classroom Kits Program Effectiveness:
Estes McDoniel Elementary School, NV**

This section includes information on Estes McDoniel Elementary School’s results in year one of implementation of the *Write Traits Classroom Kits* in grades 3-5. Estes McDoniel Elementary is located in the Clark County School District in Nevada and the results shown are for the Nevada Analytic Writing Examination, which is administered annually to grades 4, 8, and 11-12.

Nevada Analytic Writing Examination (NAWE) Overview

The Nevada Analytic Writing Examination is a performance assessment to monitor student competency in academic writing skills.

The Nevada State Writing Standards prescribe instruction on the 6-traits of effective writing: ideas, organization, voice, conventions, word choice, and sentence fluency; however, only the first four traits are assessed on the Nevada Analytic Writing Examination (see below).

NV Writing Standards	Assessed on NAWE
Ideas	✓
Organization	✓
Voice	✓
Conventions	✓
Word Choice	
Sentence Fluency	

Student performance on the NAWE is rated on a scale of 1-4 (see below).

Achievement Standards

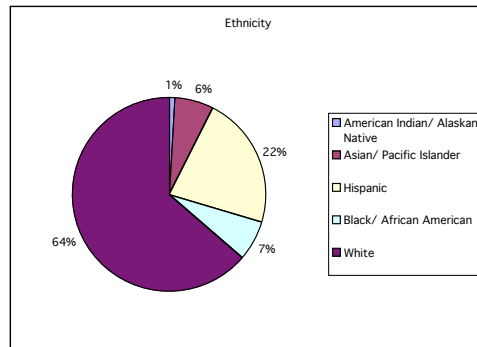
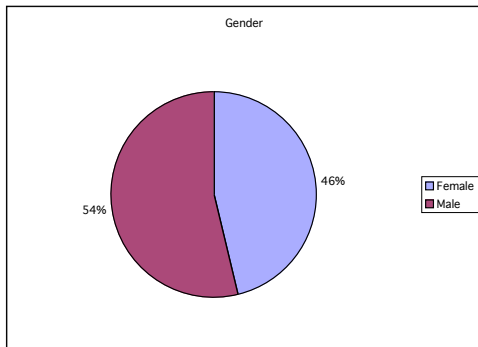
1. Emergent/Developing—Student occasionally/does not apply skills/strategies and requires extensive remediation.
2. Approaches Standard—Student inconsistently /incompletely applies skills/strategies and requires targeted remediation.
3. Meets Standard—Student consistently applies skills/strategies without need for remediation.
4. Exceeds Standard—Student comprehensively/consistently applies and generalizes skills/strategies in a variety of situations.

Students who score in achievement levels 3 (Meets Standard) and 4 (Exceeds Standard) are designated as proficient in the grade-level content area.

Estes McDoniel Elementary School Demographics

Estes McDoniel Elementary is part of Clark County School District. Demographic information below shows the breakdown of student population by gender and ethnicity. (Source—Clark County School District, 2003-2004). Clark County School District demographics are included in the table below for comparison.

Demographic Profile Gender/ Ethnicity	Total Enrollment		Male		Female		American Indian/ Alaskan Native		Asian/Pacific Islander		Hispanic		Black		White	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Clark Co. School District	267,858	100	137,453	51.3	130,405	48.7	2,352	0.9	21,057	7.9	89,417	33.4	37,609	14	117,522	43.9
McDoniel ES	578	100	311	53.8	267	46.2	7	1.2	36	6.2	129	22.3	38	6.6	368	63.7



NAWE Test Results for Estes McDoniel Elementary

Estes McDoniel Elementary implemented *Write Traits Classroom Kits* in grades 3-5 during the 2003-2004 school year and yielded a 20% increase in the percent of students who scored proficient or better on the grade 4 Nevada Analytic Writing Examination administered in Spring 2004.

The results show that prior to implementing the *Write Traits Classroom Kits* in the 2003-2004 school the school writing tests scores increased by 6.6% over the prior year (2001-2002).

The 20% increase in test scores is a significant increase over the prior two years and is also significantly above the district score of 38.4% of students who scored proficient or better.

The growth in writing scores at Estes McDoniel Elementary supports the effectiveness of the *Write Traits Classroom Kits* in improving student writing proficiency and is also a testament to the Estes McDoniel teachers and staff who made writing a school priority.

