

PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN WRITING

The Six Traits writing model presently used in the Madison School District to assess student writing, provides students and teachers with a common language to describe the characteristics of good writing. Students are taught to assess their own writing, as well as the writing of others, using consistent criteria and a 5-point rubric. Self-assessment provides students the “how to” they need to revise their writing. The following questions will guide you as a parent when working with your child on writing assignments.

The traits of a proficient writer. . .

IDEAS

The ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, and the details that enrich and develop that theme.

Questions to ask your child:

- What are the most important things you want to tell your readers?
- Do you have enough information on your topic?
- Is there one detail you think is particularly interesting?

WORD CHOICE

Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

Questions to ask your child:

- Do you have favorite words in this piece? Show me.
- Are there any words you used for the first time?
- Are there any words you were not sure of? Shall we look them up?

ORGANIZATION

Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning, and the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.

Questions to ask your child:

- How did you think to begin where you did?
- Why did you end the paper the way you did?
- Did you tell things in a logical order?

SENTENCE FLUENCY

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of language, the sound of word patterns, and the way in which the writing plays to the ear - not just to the eye.

Questions to ask your child:

- Do your sentences begin in different ways to sound more interesting?
- How do you think it sounds when you read it aloud?
- Would you like me to read your work aloud? What did you hear?

VOICE

The voice is the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer coming out through the words.

Questions to ask your child:

- How would you describe your voice in this piece?
- Who do you see as your main audience?
- What would you like a reader or listener to feel?

CONVENTIONS

Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece; spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, capitalization and punctuation.

Questions to ask your child:

- Have you edited your paper yet?
- Look at the end of each sentence. Is there a period or question mark there?
- Look at each place you began a new paragraph. Do you think they are all in the right spots?