

Traits Writing™



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Traits Writing

Introduction to PD Live

Welcome to PD Live, the area of **Traitspace** for teachers who are interested in watching best practice in action. Here you'll find focus lessons and mentor text lessons to watch, enjoy, and be inspired by.

What are you going to see?

You'll see students discovering what the traits are, what they're not, and how to use them to make their writing strong and clear. There is at least one lesson for each trait—Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions. After my brief on-camera introduction to each lesson, you'll enter the classroom to observe a teacher carrying out the lesson. Periodically, I point out specific things she is doing, in order to give you a good sense of the thinking behind her teaching.

How can these videos help you implement your Traits Writing program?

Traits Writing provides a framework for teaching the skills students need in order to write well. By breaking down each of the traits into four key qualities and spiraling those key qualities throughout the year, the program gives you a roadmap for success. Students improve by leaps and bounds as they learn about the traits and their key qualities and learn strategies to apply the key qualities in their writing. From year to year, students learn new things about each key quality to help them grow as writers over time.

These video lessons allow you to see just what trait-based instruction looks like. In a workshop setting, teachers discuss and demonstrate how to prewrite, draft, revise, and edit, using the language of the traits, just as I recommend in Traits Writing. I hope you find their work inspiring as you assess your own students' writing and carry out the lessons in the Teaching Guide. In the *Traits Writing Implementation Guide*, you'll find additional information on planning and giving lessons.

Will you see what a Traits Writing classroom looks like?

Yes, you will get a good sense of what a Traits Writing classroom looks like—and what makes it work so well. The Traits Writing classroom is a happy place, filled with discussion, laughter, hard work, and very smart teachers. Look for how the writing process, writing workshop, and writing traits come together to motivate students and give them the skills they need in order to become capable, confident writers.

Since the video lessons predate the publication of Traits Writing, they don't always focus on individual key qualities, as the lessons in the program do. For instance, in a lesson on Organization, the teacher may focus on writing beginnings, writing endings, structuring the body, and using transition words. In Traits Writing I take this thinking one step further by devoting one lesson to each key quality.

Despite that difference, you'll see terrific lessons that capture the energy and excitement of trait-based instruction. You'll see how easy it is for students to succeed when lessons are targeted and interactive. Most important, you'll see in action exemplary teaching—the kind of teaching that inspired Traits Writing in the first place.

What should you look for as you watch each video?

In a nutshell, look for all the elements of an effective writing lesson, namely:

- a clear introduction by the teacher that spells out what students will do and what they will learn
- use of writing models: teacher-created pieces, student-created pieces, and high-quality children's literature
- opportunities for students to respond to models by answering open-ended questions or sharing ideas of their own
- opportunities for students to write. You will not only see students learning about the traits, but also observe them applying the traits to their own work. This combination of modeling, responding, and applying is a part of every lesson in Traits Writing.
- a wrap-up that summarizes the lesson's central skill and motivates students to practice it independently
- high levels of engagement by teachers and students—even new teachers and reluctant students

Should you watch the videos in any particular order?

I suggest beginning with the “Getting Started” lesson, which is designed to spur students' big-picture thinking about writing. Then watch an Ideas video, since all writing begins with a great idea. From there, choose trait-specific lessons as desire or need dictates. What's most important is choosing the videos that will be most useful to you, and not following a prescribed sequence.

Do you have to watch them all at once?

No. Since the lessons are freestanding and short—no more than ten minutes each—you can watch them one by one, on your schedule. But if time allows, watch some or all of them in one sitting. You might also consider asking colleagues to join you and discuss the lessons after the screening. Which elements would you like to incorporate as shown? What would you modify to meet the needs of your students? These videos will get you started as you launch Traits Writing in your classroom.

If you have questions about what you're seeing on PD Live, whom can you ask?

Contact your regional Scholastic sales representative, Scholastic Customer Service at 1-800-SCHOLASTIC, or the Culham Writing Company at 1-503-372-0600. We're always happy to help.

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