3rd Grade
Language Arts -
6 Trait Writing
Handbook
Mrs. Klumb
Dear Writing Coach,

This year we will be writing every day in 3rd grade. Your 3rd grader will need your encouragement and this booklet will give you support to help guide your writer at home.

Coach - don't write - for your child. Question, listen, and talk about writing together. They need you at the sidelines, while they continue to learn about the writing process.

Always let your child know you read what they brought home. Find something you think is done well, and then offer praise. Writing is a challenging task and they will need encouragement to be successful. Often times sharing writing with a family member or friend will be a required homework assignment.

When looking over your child's writing piece, focus on content and ideas first. Save editing until the ideas are clear, complete, and focused.

Your child will hear me say, "Read like a writer" this year. You can help with this by discussing good examples of writing from: newspapers, magazines, poetry, instructions for toys, and cookbooks.

Read, read, read! Better readers make better writers.

Happy writing,

Teresa Klumb
What is Six Trait Writing?

The “six traits” are writing traits that are the building blocks of successful writing. The Northwest regional educational Laboratory in Oregon has played a key role in developing these traits into a framework that has been working in classrooms across the country.
Throughout the year we will use the 6 Traits of writing.
The traits are simply a way of talking and thinking about writing.

💡 Ideas - a clear point, message, theme, or story line, backed by important, carefully chosen details and supportive information.

🧩 Organization - How a piece of writing is structured and ordered and moves the reader smoothly through the ideas.

🔥 Voice - The fingerprints of the writer on the page - the writer's own personal style coming through in the words, combined with concern for the information needs and interests of the audience.
Word Choice – Language, phrasing, and the knack for choosing the “just right” word to get the message across.

Sentence Fluency – The rhythm and sound of the writing as it is read aloud.

Conventions – editorial correctness and attention to any detail a copy editor would review, including:
- spelling
- grammar and usage
- capitalization
- paragraph indentation
- punctuation

Presentation – focuses on the form and layout of the text and its readability. The piece should be easy to read and pleasing to the eye.
**Classroom Assessment**

At times I will use the traits to assess writing performance in the classroom. They may be assessed for *all* of the traits or *selected* traits that we are focusing on. The scoring criteria can easily be adapted to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities. For example, I may want to score a writing assignment for our life cycle unit. For this assignment I may decide that the most important traits to assess are:

- **Ideas** – Does the student’s writing show a clear understanding of the concept of complete metamorphosis? Does the student present the concept clearly and completely?
- **Word Choice** – does the student use accurate language to describe the four stages of development?
- **Conventions** – are specific terms spelled correctly? Do proper punctuation and grammar make the piece easy to read? Are proper nouns capitalized?

Students will always know what I am looking for in a particular writing assignment. At times they may help create the rubric for grading their own work. Other times we will use a rubric like the one for voice on the following page.
VOICE

5. The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.

A. The writer connects strongly with the audience through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and the use of natural, engaging language.
B. The purpose of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer’s choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.
C. The writer takes a risk by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.
D. Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by the careful selection of ideas that show why the reader needs to know this.
E. Narrative writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author’s ideas or point of view.

3. The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The writing has discernable purpose, but is not compelling.

A. The writing attempts to connect with the audience in an earnest, pleasing, but impersonal manner.
B. The writer seems aware of a purpose, and attempts to select content and structures that reflect it.
C. The writer occasionally reveals personal details, but primarily avoids risk.
D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic, and fails to use ideas to build credibility.
E. Narrative writing is sincere, but does not reflect a unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1. The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.

A. The writer’s ideas and language fail to connect with the audience.
B. The writer has no clear purpose, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.
C. The writing is risk free, and reveals nothing about the author.
D. Expository or persuasive writing is lifeless and mechanical, or lacks accurate information.
E. Narrative: The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernable.
Writing is a Process

Normally the writing process includes these steps:

- Prewriting
  Listing, brainstorming, talking, interviewing, reading, word webbing- or doing whatever puts thinking in motion and makes it easier to begin writing

- Drafting
  Getting first thoughts down on paper without worrying overmuch about organization, completeness, or correctness

- Responding
  Sharing writing with a partner or in a writing group in order to get some audience response in preparation for revision

- Revising
  Taking a closer look at main ideas, details and support, organizational structure, voice and tone, language and phrasing, and fluency- then reworking to make the piece clearer, more concise, more interesting, or more accurate

- Editing
  Thinking like a copy editor; attending to details; proofreading and correcting the text for grammar and usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and paragraphing

- Publishing
  Going public in some way-whether putting a piece up on the bulletin board, making a book in class

The following chart will show you the how the 6 Traits fit into the writing process.
6+1 Writing Assessment Traits and the Writing Process

+1 Traits of Writing™

- closure/publishing
  - presentation

- prewriting
  - purpose
  - audience
  - form

- drafting
  - ideas
  - organization
  - voice
  - word choice
  - sentence fluency

- revising
- editing
- conventions
- responding

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 SW Main, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204
Telephone (503) 275-9500
Assessment and Evaluation Program
How can I help in the classroom or at home with the writing process?

Parents have become very helpful in the classroom during writing times. (I couldn't do it without you!) Knowing the writing process helps you to understand how to assist. Many parents want to jump into the editing stage. This is an important part of writing; however this doesn't always apply to what we are working on.

Once kids understand the Six Traits, they have a better understanding of where to begin during revision. The traits provide teachers and students with a common vocabulary to describe qualities of writing. Six traits break writing down into manageable parts so they can effectively assess and revise their own writing pieces.

Six Trait writing provides a common language to explain WHAT to revise and teaches students HOW to revise. Here is a list of some ways students might think about revisions:

- try a new lead
- rework organization
- cut some extra detail
- expand ideas with new details
- check sentence beginning so they do not all start the same
- varied sentence lengths

I like to use the analogy of a Lego building. Sometimes we have to move the blocks around, other times we take them out, and we often add blocks to the building to make it more interesting. Revising our writing is the same way.
The Germantown School District is using the Write Source Curriculum for language arts instruction. The Six Traits are woven throughout the forms of writing. The traits framework easily applies to a variety of writing styles and purposes.

3rd graders are involved in a variety of writing experiences using the following forms/modes of writing:

- **Creative Writing**
  Poetry is the writing I start the year with so that kids learn about word choice. It is important in poetry to learn specific nouns, strong verbs, vivid adjectives, etc. (Because these skills are not always taught in isolation, many times parents think it isn’t addressed.)

- **Descriptive Writing**
  We will work on creating images in the reader’s mind and use precise details to paint “word pictures” for readers. Writing in paragraph form with a topic sentence and strong organization is emphasized in descriptive writing. (Using paragraphs comes at the end of the year for some.)

- **Narrative Writing**
  This is the most common type of writing in 3rd grade. The purpose is to describe an experience, event, or sequence of events in the form of a story. Ideas are a trait I will emphasize. Although kids want to write more fiction, narrative writing usually turns out better at this age, because they can draw on personal experiences.
• **Expository**  
  This writing explains, clarifies, and provides information. This will coincide most often with science and social studies. Here we will research and find out how to locate information from the library, internet and reference materials.

• **Process Writing**  
  Making pizza is how I introduce this mode of writing. We look at many examples of “how to” articles, and then write about how to make pizza. (Read like a writer.)

• **Persuasive Writing**  
  The primary purpose of persuasive writing is to give an opinion and try to influence the reader’s way of thinking with supporting evidence. The kids will first need to persuade me in writing, with who should get a big bag of treats. Then we will write a speech to be given to the other 3rd grades and parents, everyone will vote on their favorite fruit or vegetable speech. This is done during our health unit in science.

• **Historical Fiction**  
  We will keep a journal of our trip west as we learn about the Oregon Trail in social studies. Through acting out singing around the campfire, illness, forging rivers and playing kid’s games of the time, the 3rd graders will have a wealth of information to write about that period of history.
• **Literary Response**
  Students will have the chance to respond to literature throughout the entire school year. It is important for learners to be able to compare and contrast fiction and nonfiction and we will do this with paired reading assignments.

  Some of the favorite *book reports* we will do are:
  Biography report dressed as the person they researched.
  Mystery book bag reports with props in a bag to retell the story to an audience.
  Flat Stanley imaginary visit journal.

  With all of these modes of writing your child will be practicing speaking and learning skills. I have some mandatory public speaking assignments and other times kids can volunteer to share writing. I never have to worry about volunteers!
**Authentic writing**

If we want our 3rd graders to be motivated to use their emerging writing skills, we have to make writing purposeful, challenging, and real-to-life. This isn’t always easy in the classroom, but we try to give authentic reasons to write.

MacArthur Pen Pals have become a sure favorite and is writing with real purpose. We begin writing in December and met our Pen Pals in June. The culminating picnic is very exciting!
Standards and Test Taking

Summary of Standards for Language Arts

1. Students use general skills and strategies of the reading process
2. Students read, interpret, and respond to literary and nonliterary texts
3. Students locate, use, and communicate information from a variety of print and non-print materials
4. Students use general skills and strategies of their writing process to write for a variety of purposes and audiences
5. Students understand the nature, grammar, and variations of American English
6. Students speak and listen for a variety of purposes
7. Students use media and technology for a variety of purposes

* These standards are listed in more detail in the Germantown School District Parent Curriculum Guide - Grade 3. I cover all of these standards, and many more.

In all subject areas, including language arts, test taking strategies will be taught. They will learn ways to study at home because learning content area material for tests is a jump from 2nd grade. Please help your child learn how to prepare with the study guides that come home. This is also very exciting for 3rd graders! Getting a prize from the treasure chest doesn’t compare to the grin on a face when they did well on a hard test! Please help your child succeed. They have to be taught how to prepare for a test!
The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) will be given this year. This is a standards based test used to show student performance in proficiency in yearly progress in students at school, district, and state levels. To help kids to feel prepared for this, I will give timed writing prompts occasionally. You can help your child prepare by:

- Play word games and encourage expansion of vocabulary.
- Encourage your student to write letters or keep a journal.
- Model writing.
- Look at sample questions at the Department of Public Instruction website: http://dpi.wi.gov/index.html
Reading – Writing Connection

Reading Study Driven by Katie Wood Ray, showed me how to encourage students to read closely to improve the effectiveness of their writing. I will do many studies with the children of published texts that support their learning, lead them to a better understanding of the traits of good writing, and motivate them to become more accomplished writers.

As we read like writers we start by Gathering texts to show the kind of writing we will be doing.

Next we Set the Stage, by setting our writing expectations. (The kids know that they will try to write in this style.) Immersion is when the teacher and student get to know the texts and list the crafts used.

Lastly we are ready to Write Under the Influence by using what we learned through examples of other authors.

After studying the genre “odes”, one of the 3rd graders used what she learned and came up with her own “ode” writing piece.

Student sample of this genre study:

Winter
By Bailey

Winter is snow flakes drifting down from the sky.
Winter is forts with snowman built in top of them.
Winter is snowball fights that never end.
Winter is snow angels that soar through happiness.
Winter is cold that tickles your cheeks and freezes your ears.
Winter is the clouds that are gloomy and gray.
Winter is warm hot chocolate, fires and hot air conditioning.
Winter is hot, warm hugs that fills you up with happiness, joy and all the winter wonders.
Classroom Atmosphere

Students are more motivated to write when they have the support of their classmates. Once children feel like they are in a safe environment and trust those they work with they can begin to develop writing skills in many ways. Students seem to enjoy brainstorming ideas for writing, reading bits to friends as they go along and having a genuine audience for their finished piece. Working together makes the assignment more engaging and realistic.

When you visit our classroom of writers, remember that the discussion going on, is most often constructive. I usually bounce ideas off my colleagues and read other peoples work before trying a specific genre on my own. I give the students these same opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to understand our writing curriculum. Please let me know if you have any questions.