



## Trait Six: Strengthening Conventions

### The Editing and Final Draft Stage

#### Background (Grades 1 to 5)

Writing conventions such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar help make a student's essay clear and understandable. When the audience can finish reading, without having to stop to try to figure out what was actually intended, the value of learning these writing conventions becomes clear.

There are three main elements of Standard English Convention that we are primarily concerned with: Sentence Structure, Conventions of Usage, and Conventions of Punctuation. “Conventions” is just another way of saying “standard practices and expectations that people follow on a daily basis.”

#### *Four Key Qualities for Strengthening Conventions*

*(Culham, 2008)*

There are four key qualities students need to consider for mechanical correctness:

Students should:

1. Apply spelling rules correctly.
2. Use correct punctuation and paragraphing skillfully.
3. Use capital letters consistently and accurately.
4. Applies grammatically correct phrases and sentences.

In addition, each kind of writing has its own conventions. For instance:

- Narrative writing must have *characters, setting, and plot*.
- Descriptive writing must appeal to the senses through use of vivid, colorful, precise vocabulary.
- Expository writing must *inform, clarify, explain, define, or instruct*.
- Persuasive writing must present an argument based on facts and logic and attempt to sway the reader's opinion.

Create a poster that you and the students can reference during the writing process, or provide one that they can insert in their writing folder or book.

## Teaching Strategies

To introduce the trait, *Conventions*, and its key qualities, consider the age and interests of your class.

**Note:** Primary writers are too young and inexperienced to show control over sophisticated conventions, but there are certain ones they can follow to make their writing correct and understandable including using the following:

- imitation and real letters
- upper- and lowercase letters
- conventional spelling of simple words
- phonetic spelling of both simple and sophisticated words
- end punctuation
- capital letters at the beginning of sentences, proper nouns, and in titles
- 's' for plurals and possessives
- contractions
- indented paragraphs

**Primary:** Primary writers who learn the basics of conventions understand how important they are to the reader. By showing students how published authors use conventions in these books, you invite students to acknowledge the role of the best conventions should look in their own pieces.

“We are not proposing a weekly skill focus on Convention skills (usually grade-level specific), rather we propose that Conventions in the primary grades be taught systematically through mentor texts in daily readings. In dialogue while engaging in guided reading, fluency development, read-alouds or writing processes we have hundreds of daily opportunities to teach mini-lessons by pointing out how authors use conventions and encouraging students to apply them daily as well.” (Culham, 2018) Students will learn new editing tasks every year for primary students to learn in a cumulative fashion.

**Intermediary:** As students become skilled in their writing, once having mastered the foundational skills, they are ready to enter a staged writing process. Typically, at the intermediate level students become accustomed to working the six typical stages of writing: prewrite, draft, get feedback, revise, edit, and publish.

### **Traits and the Writing Process** (Culham, 2015)

**Prewrite:** Discover what you want to say (Ideas, Organization, Voice).

**Draft:** Get it down (Word Choice, Sentence Fluency).

**Share/Feedback:** Find out what worked and what needs work (for one or more traits).

**Revise:** Rework the text to make it clear (Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency). “Revision is greedy...five traits out of seven align with this stage of writing.”

**Edit:** Make the text readable (Conventions: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and paragraphing)

**Finish/Publish:** Polish the final appearance (Presentation).

“We must show and model for students the different options they have for writing but writing well.” (Culham, 2018)