



# The LeafLIT

## A Literacy Publication

### What's Cooking in Writing Writing in the Content Area

No matter what the subject, combining content and the Writing Traits is a sure recipe for achievement. Let's sample a dish of Math and Writing. When students are asked to write a constructive response for a math problem, at times it may seem as if they have lost their ability to write at all. Here's an example of a student response implementing the Writing Traits for a simple math problem:

$$7 + 5 = \underline{\quad}$$

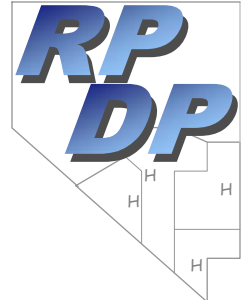
"When I add two groups together, it is basically counting. For example, if I had one group of Yu-Gi-Oh

Cards with 7 and a new package of 5 cards, when I lay them out and count them all, I have 12 altogether. So you can see, the sum of the two groups together is the same as adding the two groups."

If we look at the writing trait *IDEAS*, we determine what it is we want to convey: the main idea. In our student example, the idea of constructive response is in the topic sentence. Next, the writing trait *ORGANIZATION* is seen in this piece with the topic sentence, use of transition words, and a conclusion. This writing may be short but it has

the flow of a good, solid piece. In addition, by adding detail and using personal examples, the writer demonstrates the trait *VOICE*. You may think that voice would be too difficult to add to math writing; however, this sample shows the student's personal taste. Also, within the conclusion, there is an example of *WORD CHOICE*. By including math vocabulary, the student conveys a firm understanding of the math concept. When writing and content area are mixed well, the student's outcome is sweet success.

Written by Michell Guldner,



Bill Hanlon, Director

**RPDP Literacy Team:**

Shan Cannon

Rosemary Holmes-Gull

Kathryn Kinnaird

Hattie Leday

Holly Lee

Robyn Markovic

Sherrilynn Rakestraw

### Picture This!

Writing in a typical class not only takes many shapes, it is also performed at various speeds. Our tip of the month is a simple classroom management tool that can assist a teacher in determining at a glance the progress of students in writing. Select a wall or bulletin board to label with the writing process, leaving 6-12 inches between each step. Then string yarn under the steps and symbols or pictures of the writing steps. Next, take instant or digital head shots of each student. Once developed and labeled with their names, hang pictures on the string using clothes pins. As students advance through the writing process, they move their picture along the path. A quick glimpse at the board and the teacher can assess the progress of the students.

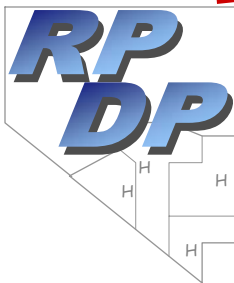
To teach [writing] well, we do not need more techniques and strategies as much as we need a vision of what is essential. It is not the number of good ideas that turns work into art but the selection, balance, and design of those ideas. Writing does not begin with desk-work but with life-work.

Lucy Calkins

**Southern Nevada  
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515 West Cheyenne, Suite C  
North Las Vegas, NV 89031

[www.rpdp.net](http://www.rpdp.net)



## Resources for Teaching Writing

Creating Young Writers: Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Grades

Vicki Spandel

Writing Workshop, The Essential Guide

Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi

Books, Lessons, Ideas for Teaching the Six Traits

Great Source Education Group

What You Know by Heart—How to Develop Curriculum for Your Writing Workshop

Katie Wood Ray

The Reviser's Toolbox

Barry Lane

## Revision is Not Just Rewriting

**To revise is to re-look, rethink, and reorganize**

Effective revision strategies can improve student writing. Often however, students either skip this step or do minimal work towards accomplishing this task. After working hard to produce a rough draft, students resist going back to make changes. To them it makes perfect sense and doesn't need anything to make it better. In their eyes they have worked hard and asking them to change it is disheartening.

Here is a simple idea that may help students embrace the revision step and enhance the writing traits; it's called the Revision Game. Create a set of eight cards, with each card telling the participants what to do with their paper. For example, *Add three adjectives to your paper, Rewrite a sentence into a question, Replace two weak verbs with strong verbs, & Add three different transition words/time*

*connectors to your paper.*

When two or more students are at the revision stage, they deal out the cards face down. Each player flips over a card and tries to incorporate the card into their paper within five minutes. The players then share what they originally had and what they added. The opponents then determine if it was a successful revision or not. If so, they get two points; if not, they receive one point for trying the task. The students continue until all of the cards have been used and there is a winner.

One final note, don't ask students to rewrite the whole piece in order to add the revisions. Teach them to leave blank lines between their writing while drafting or allow them to cut and paste, or use sticky notes. Remember, you are teaching revision not rewriting.

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