Teaching the Traits:
Ideas, Strategies, and Activities for the 6-TRAIT Model

Ideas and Content

The Memo

Get hold of a real memo - perhaps one from your school office that has been approved for you to use. Assess it for ideas. Is it clear? Easy to follow? Identify three things you could do to improve it.

The Textbook

Break students into groups and give each group a different textbook. Ask them to identify a short passage that works well in terms of idea development. Rate it for ideas. Present it to the class (this can be done by reading it aloud) and ask the class to rate it for ideas. Then let the group present their rating and compare it with the rest of the class. Encourage the group to identify one very specific thing that makes idea development work within the passage.

Newspaper Articles

Break students into groups, and give each a newspaper or section of a newspaper. Ask them to identify one passage strong in ideas and one passage weak in ideas. Ask each group to use their passages to teach a lesson on idea development. They might ask the class to rate the passages, to compare details or language - or to identify 3 strengths or 3 weaknesses for the passages.

What's Missing?

Choose an article—a short newspaper article works well—that is missing some key information. Read it to students and ask them to identify questions they have. Use this to point out that writing that is strong in ideas does not generally leave readers with numerous questions.

Fact of the Day

Ask one or two students each day to dig up an interesting, little-known fact on a topic of their choice. The point of this lesson is to encourage students to dig for information that goes beyond the obvious.

Obvious—or Not?

Assemble research materials on several different topics. Break students into groups, and ask each to choose one of the topics. Before doing any research, ask them to brainstorm a list of "obvious, well-known" facts on their topic. Then, see if they can find, by digging through their research material, a list—just as long—of intriguing, interesting facts. Post the results—with the pairs of lists side by side—so every group can see what the others came up with. Talk about the differences and why it is important to go beyond the obvious.

Note It—or Not?

Some bits of information are worthy of note-taking and some aren't. Do your students know the difference? Pull a piece of informational writing from the Internet or from an encyclopedia. Ask pairs of students to very quickly read through the article and circle those things on which they would make notes IF they were doing research. Compare what various teams noted. What makes information noteworthy?

Interviews

What makes a good interview question? Surely not *Where were you born? Where do you live now? Boring! What about, What's your favorite film? What would you like to be doing in 5 years? What do you fear most? What's your first vivid memory? Did you ever have to eat something you weren't sure you could eat?* Brainstorm a list of 6-10 good interview questions. Then ask students to interview each other in pairs—give each person 4-5 minutes to ask questions. Then ask each to imagine he/she is doing a biography and to write an interesting lead based on the interview information. Read as many aloud as you have time for.

Observation

Begin with any object, or person, or live animal. Gather everyone around to observe and make notes. (Detailed artwork works well for this activity, too.) Brainstorm as many details as you can till the whole class is *exhausted* thinking up ideas. Rest assured—you have still missed something! What was it? Remember—good writers notice what others miss.

Shoes

Ask each student to bring in one shoe—old, new, worn, from another time—whatever. Make a display. After 2 or 3 days of observing, ask each student to write one of the following:

- An advertisement for the shoe (as it would have appeared when the shoe was new)
- A poem about the shoe or its owner
- A brief description of the shoe's owner
- A anecdote in which the shoe played and important part

Then, have students share their writing and discuss the ideas that were included and why. How/why did different individuals include different ideas? How did the writer's purpose affect the ideas that were used? How did the form or genre of the piece (advertisement, poem, description, anecdote) affect the ideas that were used?

Imagine…

Ask your students to imagine that they quit school today. What will they be doing 10 years from now? Twenty? Do a 10-15-minute quick write and read some of the results. Warning to student writers: Do NOT make your predictions too obvious (e.g., *I should have stayed in school because I am unemployed now*). Creativity is the name of the game here.

Other Quick Writes

Do a 10-minute quick-write on any one of the following topics:

- Lost
- Back off
- Thank goodness
- Water
- Lines
- Endless
- Goodbye
- The last one

Read some of the results aloud. Discuss the different ideas different writers include on the same topic.

Who Gets the Job?

This lesson has two parts—both excellent for teaching ideas (conventions and voice, too!).

Part 1: Ask students to look through the want-ad section of the paper and then to write an advertisement for a job opening. They can be inventive, so long as it's (conceivably) a real job. Have them meet in

groups to share their ads and offer one another suggestions on wording or the need for additional information that might not be clear. Rewrite the ads and post them—each with three tags numbered 1, 2, and 3.

Part 2: Each student must read through the want-ads, then take one tag from each of three of the want ads—their choice, though it will be first come, first served! Each will then write three short letters of application-one for each of the advertised positions they've selected. The letters should be signed with pseudonyms and turned into the want-ad writers anonymously (they can be pinned to a bulletin board on envelopes). Each want-ad writer should receive three letters. Each should read the letters carefully and choose the one that will get the job. Ask several students—or more if time permits—to read their want-ads and their letter of choice and to explain why that person would be chosen to receive the job. How important are the following factors:

- Clarity
- Voice
- Conventions
- Detail

Organization

Writing Leads

Ask students to choose one piece of writing they're currently working on. Write five different leads for that piece. Then, meet in response groups to share the leads and talk about which are most effective. (Try the same activity with conclusions!)

Leads That Work – or Not!

Ask each student to find an example of a good lead—from a book, newspaper article, or whatever. Then, find an example that does NOT work. Make a bulletin board display of both collections. (Again, do the same with conclusions.)

Where Does It Go?

Find an article (or story) with fairly clear organization. Reprint it with two of the lines missing. Put those on an overhead or chalkboard. Ask students, working with a partner, to see if they can identify where the missing lines would go.

Getting Rid of Rubble

One of the hardest things for student writers to do is to get rid of deadwood—information that does not matter and so does not add anything to the quality of the writing. Begin with a short article, essay, or narrative you think is well done. Then, add some excess baggage—up to three lines or so—at the beginning or end or both. Ask students to be critical content editors, getting rid of anything they think is unneeded. Compare their cuts to the writer's original. (This is an excellent warm-up to content editing of their own work.)

Which One?

Choose any new picture book students have not heard (you can also use a newspaper article). Write the ending three different ways (one being the original). And print them so you can put them on an overhead.

See if students can identify the author's original. Which one do they like best? It might not be the original!

End It!

Find any short story or article (poems work, too!) that has a fairly unpredictable ending. Read it aloud. Then ask students to write an ending for it. Share endings aloud as a class or in smaller response groups to talk about which work best.

Easy to Follow?

Ask students to find an example of a recipe or set of directions that is particularly easy to follow. Score it for the trait of organization and write a short critique on its organizational structure.

Merry Mix-Up

Take a similar recipe or set of directions (students can actually do this themselves, in groups), cut it apart, and mix the parts up so they're totally out of order. Have groups trade sets and see which groups can put their sets in order most quickly.

Which One Doesn't Belong?

Take any short passage—a letter or memo, or piece of a story or article will do—and rewrite it, adding *one line that does not fit.* Slip it somewhere in the middle, so they must read very carefully. See how long it takes students to find the extra line. Too easy? Then next time, add two or three lines. Now, ask students to create the lesson, adding the extra line—then trade with other groups. Immediately following this lesson, ask them to look at their own writing, taking out any excess baggage.

Grouping Similar Ideas

Group students and ask each group to choose one topic—for example, hyenas, solar energy, computer monitors, or whatever. Ask students, in groups, to dig up at least 20 different interesting tidbits of information on their topic. Write each tidbit on a 3x5 card. Then, exchange 20-card stacks among groups, so no group has its own notes. Ask students, in groups, to arrange the cards they've received from the other group as if they were going to do a research paper on the topic. They should think of the lead and the ending. They should also feel free to get rid of any cards that contain redundant or obvious, too well known information, keeping just the best details. At the end, they should have similar ideas grouped together, a sense of which information will be shared in the lead and conclusion, and an overall sense of the order of the whole piece. Ask three or more groups to describe their process.

What Kinds of Organization Are There?

How many ways are there to organize information? Begin a collection of essays, reviews, critiques, stories, directions, descriptions, etc., each with its own kind of organization. You can come up with labels (e.g., comparison-contrast) for the organizational patterns you find, or describe the strategies the writer uses (e.g., begins with a strong conclusion, then defends it with evidence), or both. Try to find at least seven different ways to organize information. As a follow-up, ask students to try at least three of these different ways of structuring information in their own writing.

Compare

Compare the organization in a recipe to that in, say, a poem. Why are they so different? What does organization have to do with the writer's purpose?

Selection or Evolution?

Do writers choose a method of organizing information, or does it simply flow out of the writing? This is a good philosophical question for secondary students to ponder. Ask them to choose a side. Each side will present "evidence" by citing specific written works and talking about how they are organized. Is it likely the writer chose the organization in advance or just fell into it? At the end of the arguments, ask the class to vote: selection or evolution?

Could You Make a Film of It?

It is often argued that one sign of well organized information is that it can be made into a film. Ask students to find an example of a piece they think is "filmable," and to do a brief storyboard-type layout of how they would film the piece, scene by scene. Where would the close-ups occur? The slow motion? Would any parts be skipped over? Why?

Bad—On Purpose!

Sometimes we learn the most by doing what does not work. Begin this lesson by asking students to identify a well-organized piece. Then ask them, in groups, to rewrite it—only with poor organization (ideas: remove the lead, weaken the transitions, put things out of order, etc.) Ask groups then to trade pieces, and to try rewriting one another's badly organized samples to improve the organization. Compare the "improvements" to the originals, talking about what makes organization work.

Make a Collection

Ask students to assemble a collection of pieces they consider strong and weak in organization. Post them and talk about the kinds of things that make organization work.

What Did We Miss?

Based on your collection of strong and weak organization samples, do a quick review/critique of any one of the organization rubrics. Does it cover all the bases? Did we miss some important things we should have emphasized? Did we emphasize some things too much? Based on this discussion, your students may wish to develop their own rubric or their own poster for this important trait.

Voice

Voice through Music

Each piece of music has a kind of voice of its own. To see how true this is, create a voice collage through a collection of highly diverse music, e.g., Wille Nelson, Mozart, the Beatles, Luciano Pavarotti, Aretha Franklin, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Beethoven, etc. See if students can come up with a one-word description for the "voice" within each piece of music.

Dressing with Voice Day

Have a "dress with voice" day in which students have freedom to choose something original—a hat, shoes, tie, special shirt, socks, or whatever. If your dress code allows, you may wish to experiment with make-up or costumes, too. Show that voice is a form of personal expression, and shows up in many forms—including dress.

Just Listening

Choose your favorite books—or editorials, journal articles, poems, whatever. Read them aloud. You don't have to do the whole piece, either. A segment often makes the point. Just let students *hear* the voice.

Encourage *Them* to Read Aloud, Too

Ask students to read aloud, also. This is often less intimidating in small groups, so you might ask them to bring a favorite passage to a response group, in which everyone will share. Ask them to first, spend some time making their selection—something that could be read in five minutes or less—and second, to put plenty of feeling into it, almost as if they were trying to wake someone up. Liveliness is the key. Some students may wish to perform their readings for the whole class.

Bring In Other Voices

Wonderful recordings by professional actors and writers abound. These people may have nothing on you when it comes to reading aloud with expression and flair, but there is much to be said for bringing another voice into the classroom to be heard.

Play "Whose Voice Is It?"

Keep it simple at first, focusing on voices your students are likely to know. You might begin with just one or two voices—one might be Jerry Seinfeld, one Edgar Allan Poe. Can they tell which is which? As this task becomes too simple, add one or two more voices, but always focusing on those your students are likely to know. Don't forget to look at such sources as song lyrics, TV or film scripts, or poetry. There's another way to play the game, too. You don't always have to name the *author*. You might ask students to identify which piece came from a newspaper, which from an encyclopedia, textbook, best seller, advertisement, business letter, etc. The voice in each piece will be a little different-because the purpose and audience are different. And remember - even if you cannot identify a voice, you can describe it. What kind of voice is it? Businesslike, philosophical, serious, humorous, sarcastic? Describing voices is an important skill, too.

Imitation

Take a short passage from any writer whose voice is distinctive, and re-write the passage in another voice: e.g., Jerry Seinfeld as Hamlet, Winnie the Pooh as Edgar Allan Poe, an encyclopedia article as David Letterman or Toni Morrison or the Beatles might do it. Let your imagination run wild.

What Voice Is Appropriate?

Ask your students to do a little role playing. They might write a letter to a business requesting information—or making a complaint (letters written for an invented situation, of course, need not be sent). One interesting way to do this is to divide students into groups, then have each group invent a situation for which a memo or letter response or request would be necessary. Groups can then exchange "situations," spend sometime discussing the best way to handle it (Who is the audience? What kind of voice is appropriate?), and drafting a letter they think would be appropriate. Let each group that came up with the original situation discuss and assess the effectiveness of the letter they received.

Shifting Voices

Different audiences and different situations require different voices. You might ask your students to create one short piece for two completely different audiences: e.g., an introductory brochure to the new aquarium in town for an audience of children 6-10, and one that would be mailed to overseas visitors coming to your city for the first time. Or, do different pieces that reflect different perspectives. For

instance, write a traffic accident report as a police officer on the scene would describe it, and a news summary of that same accident that could be read by a TV anchor. Older students might try something a little more difficult: How to install new software as you would write it for computer-savvy adult users, and as you might write it for young computer beginners. Or an account of a Civil War battle by a Confederate soldier and another written by a Union soldier. Be creative in thinking about how factors like age, experience, knowledge, or perspective influence voice.

Moments of Voice

Voice, like personality, tends to have ups and downs, even within a short piece. Choose a piece to assess for overall voice; then see if students can identify those moments when voice is strongest. You may even wish to graph the voice with a horizontal line graph, showing with the rises and dips how voice—like the stock market—has its ups and downs.

Take Voice Out or Put Voice In

For this activity, you need to begin with a piece that has some voice, but is not overwhelming. Then, divide students into two groups—those who will write more voice in, and those who will take more voice out! You can divide the two groups into smaller teams or into pairs for the actual writing task. Read the results and talk about the factors (details, fluency, etc.) that make voice stronger or weaker.

Two Versions – Same Topic

Select two totally different writings on the same topic. Let's say your topic is astronomy; you might choose one passage from Carl Sagan's book *Cosmos*, and one from the encyclopedia. Assess both for voice, and talk about differences in purpose and audience. Sagan's book has far more voice than an encyclopedia, obviously, but is there an important reason for this? How is voice influenced by the writer's perceived purpose and audience?

How Much Is *Too* Much

Can writers overdo voice? Ask your students to explore greeting cards, advertisements, editorials, reviews, brochures, and political speeches or voter's pamphlets (to name a few sources) for examples of voice that might be overdone or go too far. Post the results and discuss them.

Collect Voices

Ask students to look for moments of voice—just *moments*, not whole books—and to bring them in to add to a bulletin board display. Enjoy watching your collection grow and reading the results.

Define It

The greatest writers of our time have tried their hand at defining voice. What's your take on it? Post their definitions along with some of your own—and watch your understanding of voice bloom and blossom.

Word Choice

At a Glance

We spend a lot of time assessing student work. Why not let them be the assessors of everyday language? Bring some newspapers, catalogs, junk mail, menus-any writing that is common in everyday life. They can assess it in one of two ways (or both): underline words and phrases that work especially well, and

circle those that are vague, unclear, jargonistic, or otherwise ineffective; OR, simply score the piece on the trait of word choice.

Get Rid of Some Oldies

If you ever listen to an oldies radio station, you know there are some words you just cannot bear to hear even one more time (nice, special, fun, great, dude—hey, you know what they are). Make a list of those, too. You can even stuff them into a box and have a formal burial, if you wish.

Identify the Heavy Words and Phrases

In any piece of writing, some words and phrases are asked to carry most of the weight, most of the meaning. Poetry—along with many song lyrics—is heavy-language rich. So is much narrative writing. Shakespeare, of course, is a classic example. Give your students an excerpt from any piece in which you think language is used especially well; you can choose any piece from poetic to technical. Ask students to circle, or otherwise identify the "heavy" words and phrases? Then compare; did you identify the same words?

From General to Specific

Draft a short memo or letter in which you use extremely—even annoyingly—general language: e.g., *Let's all do our best and our major goals are likely to be achieved!* Give students, in pairs, an opportunity to do some revision, making the language as specific and vivid as possible. You will need to grant some editorial license here since the message in the original is not likely to be clear!

Defining Terms

Got a piece of reading coming up that contains some difficult terms? You could make up the usual list or do the usual vocabulary quiz, but instead, why not ask students themselves to come up with the words they feel are most important to learn in order to understand the passage? First, read the passage, and then ask students to identify the words whose meaning is vital to understanding. Never mind for now if students know those meanings. Assign each pair of students one, two, three or more words—depending on how many you have identified. Ask them to create a definition for each challenging word that will be memorable—one that will make it simple for others in the class to learn the word or term as it is used in the passage. Put all results together to make a glossary of terms; you can print this out or just post it. Part 2: Now, ask students to create a multiple choice test item for each word they have defined. If the glossary has done its job, everyone should do well. You may also wish to read through the passage one more time with the help of the glossary.

Curing Thesaurus-itis

Do you have students who think the thesaurus is the answer to brightening up a dull vocabulary? This is a lesson in exploring the nuances of thesaurus definitions. First, group students in teams of three or four. Then, assign each team a word that has multiple thesaurus synonyms. For example, "old" might mean

- Elderly
- Along in years
- Over the hill
- Superannuated
- Obsolete

- Outdated
- Wise
- Fossilized
- Primitive
- . . . and that's only the *beginning* of the list

Ask students to choose 6-10 of the most interesting diverse variations on their word theme, and to create a lesson in which they make the nuances of meaning clear. They can do written or oral definitions, give a quiz, dramatize the meanings - or do anything they wish to make the meanings clear, and to make the

point that synonyms are not all interchangeable! Each word is slightly different. If you do this activity more than once, and if you save your synonym lists, your students will have lots of fresh ideas from which to borrow.

Here Today – Gone Tomorrow!

Ask each student to identify one word commonly used today that will probably NOT be part of our common vocabulary in 50 years. Create a brief argument for how and why this word will fade from common use.

Avoiding Jargon

Much of the writing done in the world of business is highly jargonistic. Sometimes—depending on the audience—this actually works. But writing done for a general audience needs to be clear and jargon-free. Begin with a jargonistic sample (technical manuals are a good source or perhaps you have a friend in a technical industry who can provide you with a sample). Then see if your students—perhaps working in pairs—can rewrite the piece to make it more user friendly and less jargonistic. Read revisions aloud to compare. Which ones rate highest for readability? Why?

Word Play

Language doesn't have to be serious all the time. Word association games are great poetry starters, for instance. They're easy to do and can lead to some wonderful personal poetry. Think metaphorically . . .

- If I were a color, I'd be…
- If I were a food, I'd be…
- If I were a city, I'd be…
- If I were an animal, I'd be…
- If I were a piece of furniture, I'd be…

Add to this list. Put your ideas together and create a poem!

Listen for What's Striking

When students work in response groups, ask them to listen for words or phrases that strike them. Jot them down—this is terrific feedback for the writer. This lesson works very well with any professional writing you care to share, too—fiction or nonfiction. When you've finished reading, have students compare notes to see if they are indeed moved by the same things.

Collect Favorites

Aren't there some words of which you just love the sound? Build personal word banks of favorite words. You can do these in journals—but of course, it's nice to post them, too. That way, writers can borrow.

Sentence Fluency

Hunt Up the Transitions

Turn your students into sleuths, hunting for the transitional words and phrases that link sentences and ideas together: e.g., *however, therefore, moreover, on the other hand, nevertheless, next, because of this,* and so on. Ask students to circle or otherwise note these transitions first in the work of others, then in their own. Talk about how much transitions influence fluency. If you want to get really tricky, you can

rewrite a piece, leaving all the transitional words out; just leave blanks to fill in. Can your students come up with transitions that make sense?

Read Aloud

Read writing with strong fluency out loud for your students. And don't go for just the literary, creative stuff. Poetry, for instance, is highly fluent. But many nonfiction samples have their own version of fluency, which often means shorter, more direct structure. In your discussions, talk about the different faces of fluency, and how (as with all traits), they're highly influenced by purpose and audience.

Ask Students to Read Aloud

Reading aloud encourages students to read interpretively, and with expression. When students read with expression, they're far more likely to write with expression, too. So encourage them to read to one another, in pairs, in small groups—or sometimes, as a whole class.

Variations on a Theme

Students may enjoy engaging in readers' theater (small group enactments of selected passages) or choral readings. College bookstores and theater gift shops abound with books that feature short dramatic passages in which students can interact and dramatically interpret text from various plays as they read aloud. Numerous books lend themselves to choral reading, in which students may participate in small groups to do an interpretive reading through single or multiple voices—or any mix thereof.

Read-Arounds

Choose one passage that allows for expressive reading. Divide students into groups of three or four and give each group the passage to read aloud (each should read it silently first), and let them take turns. Only, for this game, the rules are a little different from what they might expect. They must know at the outset the order in which they'll read. The first reader begins the passage but can stop at any time (even after only a line, or after two paragraphs) and the second reader must immediately jump in and begin reading. He or she can then read for as long as he or she wishes, and reader 3 jumps in, etc. The reading does not end when the passage is finished. The idea is to keep going, keep adding more expression, more nuances of meaning—and for each reader to eventually get a crack at each part of the passage since the starting-stopping points are completely arbitrary. Each time around, readers should feel they're performing slightly better. Allow about ten minutes—or as much time as is needed for the group to go through their passage a minimum of three or four times. See if any group will do an oral presentation at this point to the class.

Lots of Ways to Say It

Pick one sentence –e.g., *Change often results in stress.* Give students two minutes to rewrite this sentence in as many ways as possible without altering the meaning. Put a few on the chalkboard or overhead to compare.

Word Tallies

Have students actually count the words in each sentence and make a list. If they're all the same (say, 10 or 11 words), the rhythm is likely to be a little monotonous. It doesn't hurt to have some 15s and 16s mixed in with some 4s and 5s. On the other hand, if many sentences are VERY long, writers may wish to check whether meaning is clear. Gary Paulsen gets by with that, and so does Garrison Keillor - but most of us need to take a breath now and then. Purpose counts, too. In a highly technical piece, 8-word sentences may be just right to keep the reader on track. But in a narrative piece, stubby sentences like that could sound choppy and irritating. As with all traits, think purpose!

First Words Count

Have students list, on a separate sheet of paper, the first four words in each sentence they have written. Do they see a pattern? Could be time for some variety. Are all the beginnings different? Readers usually like that!

Get Rid of Wordiness

Wordiness is a pesky problem that hurts performance in virtually all traits. Want strong writers? Give them at least one wordy sentence per day to rework: e.g., *Of all the many things that bother me about bad writing, the fault that really annoys me most is wordiness - the tendency to put in more words than you need.* This can be shortened to read: *Of all possible writing faults, none is more annoying that wordiness.*

Basal Breaks

Basal readers are often deliberately written in a choppy, repetitive style so that young readers won't get "lost" (assuming they can stay awake). Turn your writers loose in teams of two or three to see what they can do to smooth the fluency in 2-3 pages of basal text. Read the results aloud.

You Can Do It, Too!

Anything can be written in basal style. Students can learn a lot by taking the fluency out of a passage. Depending on the age of the students, you might begin with Roald Dahl's *The Twits*, Winnie the Pooh, and Edgar Allan Poe story, some Walt Whitman—even Shakespeare—and re-do it in basal style. Talk about what had to be given up in achieving that style.

A Trip to the Symphony

Fluency isn't just one thing; it's a whole symphony of sounds. Have students gather information on one topic—gardening, building a deck, driving, or whatever. Then, rewrite it in at least three completely different modes, noting how the fluency changes: e.g., a dialogue as part of a film script, a poem, a newspaper article, an advertisement, the opening page of a novel.

Collect

Look through Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Gary Paulsen, A. A. Milne (how about your own writing?) for samples of fluency - a line or two will do. You don't need a whole book. Create a display of Fluency Comes Alive.

Fluency Comes Alive – Out Loud!

Ask each student to select one short passage to read aloud as an illustration of fluency. Form a big circle, and go through the readings quickly, but with plenty of time to allow for expression. Hear and discuss the many voices of fluent writing.

Conventions

Keep It Manageable

Some people can do a triple twist back flip high dive off a 20-foot platform. Some can edit 20 pages without breathing hard. But for those students who find conventions challenging, keep the task manageable in terms of length or kinds of errors that must be corrected. Otherwise, they will learn to keep

it manageable for themselves by writing very short papers that have 5-word sentences and boring, simplistic words.

Practice Often, but Keep It Short!

Practice editing daily. Let students practice on text that is not their own—perhaps even yours—at first. Then, transfer skills to their own work. Don't try to catch every error in the world every day. Keep editing practice short so you can do it often.

Keep It Focused

Until students become very skilled, work on one or two kinds of errors at a time: e.g., terminal punctuation, quotation marks, commas in a series, words or letters left out, redundancy. Get VERY GOOD at one skill, then move on.

The Editors' Vocabulary

Teach copy editor's symbols so students can think and talk like editors—even if they'll be doing a lot of their editing on the computer. Knowing the symbols opens their eyes to the possibilities.

Team Edit for Practice

Have students work individually at first, so each does as much as he or she can, then check with a partner to see how they've done.

Do __NOT__ Rely on Partners When a Grade Hangs in the Balance

Few student editors are truly skilled enough to provide the kind of editing help a student needs when a grade is at stake. Well-meaning student editors may actually offer recommendations that result in more errors. Not fair! When a piece is to be graded, students should be their own editors with as much skilled help (you, an older student, an aide, a parent volunteer) as you feel is appropriate.

Make Every Student an Editor

Even the youngest students can check to see if their names are on their papers. That's the beginning of editing. How much should we expect? Ask yourself, *How much can they do without my help?* That's what you should expect.

Become Error Collectors

They're everywhere: on TV, in books, in the papers, on billboards, in advertisements. You notice them, don't you? Collect them and put them on overheads. See how quickly your students can spot them. Get them noticing, too.