

Aldeen Foundation 2008
ISNA Educational Forum 2008: Track: Curriculum & Standards
Instructor: Asiyah Teruel
Topic: Developing Life Long Writers
Written by: Amal Sakr Elhoseiny

What does “literacy” mean? According to Webster’s Universal Dictionary, literacy is the ability to read and write. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Society, literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Even speaking and drawing are forms of writing. A person’s oral development is connected to his/her writing.

Stages of writing: Scribble, mock handwriting, mock letter, real letters plus inventions, acceptable English letters, invented words, traced words, words copied incorrectly, words copied correctly, words written incorrectly without coping, words written correctly without coping, invented spellings of a group of words, words written without spaces, words written with spaces, words written with spaces

Writing process: prewriting: think about topic, drafting: write first copy; spelling is secondary to ideas, revising: reread think of ways to improve (word choice, detail. etc), editing: correct mistakes (grammatical and spelling), publishing: make final copy

Teachers can evaluate the same writing piece differently because they may stress different aspects of writing. That is why a common evaluation is needed for students, teachers and even parents. There are six (+ 1) characteristics to evaluate writing. They are called 6+1 writing traits. It is a model used for assessing and enhancing writing which is developed and simplified by Ruth Culham (2003). These traits are also linked to the various parts of the writing process. It demonstrates what is expected, how to reach the goals, and how to be properly trained to become a good, strong writer for life.

The traits are:

- Ideas (main idea and supportive details)
- Organization (internal structure: beginning, middle and ending in sequence)
- Voice (tone, style, purpose, individuality & communication with audience)
- Word Choice (precise language and phrasing to create a vivid image)
- Sentence Fluency (complex sentence structure, rhythm, cadence)
- Convention (editing/ spelling, punctuation, grammar) it is not recommended to focus on this trait to early in a student’s writing as it may hinder the development of a strong writer
- Final trait (+ 1) / Presentation (handwriting, formatting, layout)

Tips for teaching traits to primary writers: Help students to develop a writer’s vocabulary. Look for what students are doing well not for mistakes. Let writing take many forms: pictures (illustrate a picture book), dictation, oral storytelling, labeling (models, charts, and maps), and text.