

School District of Fort Atkinson **SIX TRAITS ASSESSMENT RUBRIC** (used with permission from Madison Metropolitan School District)

	IDEAS	ORGANIZATION	VOICE
5 STRONG	<p>The paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader’s attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The topic is narrow and manageable. ▪ The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original. ▪ Insight – an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant – is an indicator of high level performance, though not required. ▪ Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable. ▪ The reader’s questions are anticipated and answered. ▪ Reasonably accurate details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable. 	<p>The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution. ▪ Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect. ▪ Details seem to fit where they’re placed; sequencing is logical and effective. ▪ Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on. ▪ Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience. 	<p>The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling and engaging. The writer “aches with caring,” yet is aware and respectful of the audience and the purpose for writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, sensing the person behind the words. The writer takes a risk by revealing who they are and what they think. ▪ The tone and voice give flavor and texture to the message and are appropriate for the purpose and audience. ▪ Narrative writing seems honest, personal, and written from the heart. ▪ Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic, and brings the topic to life by showing why the reader needs to know this and why they should care. ▪ This piece screams to be read aloud, shared and talked about.
3 DEVELOPING	<p>The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is pretty easy to see where the writer is headed, though more information is needed to “fill in the blanks.” ▪ The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics. ▪ Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose. ▪ Support is attempted, but doesn’t go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line. ▪ The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme. 	<p>The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie up all loose ends. ▪ Transitions often work well; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy. ▪ Sequencing shows some logic, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the ideas. In fact, sometimes it is so predictable and rehearsed that the structure takes attention away from the content. ▪ Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter. ▪ The organization sometimes supports the main point or storyline; at other times, the reader feels an urge to slip in a transition or move things around. 	<p>The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing manner. Only one or two moments here or there surprise, delight, or move the reader. ▪ Voice may emerge strongly on occasion, then retreat behind general, vague language. ▪ The writing hides as much of the writer as it reveals; it could have been written by a number of people because there is little that is unique or distinctive about it. ▪ The writer seems aware of an audience, but often weighs words carefully or discards personal insights in favor of safe generalities.
1 BEGINNING	<p>As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The writer is still in search of a topic, brainstorming, or has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way. ▪ Information is very limited or unclear. ▪ The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts. ▪ Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what the writer is trying to say. 	<p>The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion: there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no real lead to set up what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up. ▪ Connections between ideas are confusing or not even present. ▪ Sequencing needs work. ▪ Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa. ▪ Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line. 	<p>The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the writing is lifeless or mechanical; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic. The paper reflects more than one of the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who is this writer? The writer does not seem to reach out to an audience, or to anticipate their interests and questions. ▪ The writer speaks in a kind of monotone that flattens all potential highs or lows of the message. ▪ The writing may communicate on a functional level, but it does not move or involve the reader no matter who is the intended audience. ▪ The writer does not seem sufficiently at home with the topic to take risks, share personal insights or make the topic/story personal and real for the reader.

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	WORD CHOICE	SENTENCE FLUENCY	CONVENTIONS
5 STRONG	<p>Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Words are specific and accurate; it is easy to understand just what the writer means. The words and phrases create pictures in your mind. ▪ The language is natural and never overdone; both words and phrases are individual and effective. ▪ Lively verbs energize the writing. Precise nouns and modifiers add depth and specificity. ▪ Striking words and phrases often catch the reader’s eye and linger in the reader’s mind. (You can recall a handful as you reflect on the paper.) ▪ Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot... 	<p>The writing has an easy flow, rhythm and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores the meaning. ▪ Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings add variety and show how each sentence relates to and builds upon the one before it. ▪ The writing has cadence; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. ▪ Sentences vary in length as well as structure. ▪ Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if used, sounds natural. 	<p>The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words. ▪ Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style. ▪ Punctuation and capitalization are accurate and guide the reader through the text. ▪ The writer may manipulate conventions-especially grammar and spelling for stylistic effect. ▪ The piece is very close to being ready to publish. ▪ GRADES 7 AND UP ONLY: The writing is sufficiently long and complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions.
3 DEVELOPING	<p>The language is functional, even if it lacks energy. It is easy to figure out the writer’s meaning on a general level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Words are adequate and correct in a general sense; they simply lack flair and originality as they are used in the writing. ▪ Familiar words and phrases communicate, but rarely capture the reader’s imagination. Still, the paper may have one or two fine moments. ▪ Attempts at colorful language come close to the mark, but sometimes seem overdone (thesaurus overload!). ▪ The words and phrases are functional-no more no less. 	<p>The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, but they are usually grammatical. They hang together. They get the job done in a routine fashion. ▪ There is at least some variation in sentence length and structure. Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike. ▪ The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (e.g., connecting words and phrases like however, therefore, naturally, after a while, on the other hand, to be specific, for example, next, first of all, later, but as it turned out, although, etc.) that show how sentences interrelate. ▪ Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading: others may be stiff, awkward, choppy or gangly. 	<p>The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words, but more difficult words are problematic. ▪ Terminal (end of sentence) punctuation is usually correct; internal punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons, dashes, colons, and parentheses) is sometimes missing/wrong. ▪ Most words are capitalized correctly; control over more sophisticated capitalization skills may be spotty. ▪ Paragraphing is attempted but may run together or begin in the wrong places. ▪ Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time. ▪ Moderate (a little of this, a little of that) editing would be required to polish the text for publication.
1 BEGINNING	<p>The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language is so vague (e.g., It was fun time, She was neat, it was nice, We did lots of stuff) that only the most general message comes through. ▪ Persistent redundancy distracts the reader. ▪ Jargon or clichés distract or mislead. ▪ Words are used incorrectly, sometimes making the message hard to decipher. ▪ Problems with language leave the reader wondering what the writer is trying to say. 	<p>The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling or awkward; they need work. ▪ Phrasing does not sound natural. The patterns may create a sing-song rhythm that lulls the reader to sleep. ▪ Many sentences begin the same way—and may follow the same patterns (e.g., subject-verb-object) in a monotonous pattern. ▪ Endless connectives (and, and so, but then, because, and then, etc.) create a massive jumble of language in which clear sentence beginnings and endings get swallowed up. ▪ The text does not invite expressive oral reading. There is little to no “sentence sense” present. Even if this piece was flawlessly edited, the sentences would not hang together. 	<p>Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words. ▪ Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect. ▪ Capitalization is random and only the easiest rules show awareness of correct use. ▪ Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable, and affect meaning. ▪ Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text. ▪ The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning. ▪ Extensive editing (every line) would be required to polish the text for publication.