

Using the K-2 Six Traits Assessment for Beginning Writers

Continuum of Developmental Writing

(Adapted from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon)



How to Use the Continuum of Developmental Writing

When you examine the Continuum of Developmental Writing and a regular 6 Traits rubric, you will notice that they are VERY different in *form* and *function*.

The Continuum for Developmental Writing is designed to document specific new writing skills as they are acquired, step-by-step. The standard 6 Traits rubric, on the other hand, is NOT developmental; instead, it assesses a range of performance across the traits (beginning to strong) and is applicable to writers of all ages, given that there is enough text to evaluate against the criteria (usually beginning in 3rd grade).

If you look closely at the continuum, you will notice that by the time a writer demonstrates skills described at the “3” level, the language in the descriptors is similar to those in regular 6 Traits criteria. This is because the criteria by which we evaluate writing are present in the earliest of writing pieces – on a developmental continuum. As a general rule, most young writers are best served with the Continuum of Developmental Writing.

The Continuum of Developmental Writing is designed to help students build a common vocabulary and vision for good writing.

Teachers of primary students may ask, “Can we actually use the traits with writers who are still working on creating a complete sentence? Orientating letters in the same direction? Drawing?” Research supports that this is the best time to start! Teachers of primary students can begin building a strong foundation using the language of the traits to respond to student writing, drawing and even storytelling. The traits are there from the beginning.

The Continuum of Developmental Writing also helps us to monitor student progress through the developmental levels. Finally, the Continuum of Developmental Writing also assists teachers in knowing – what comes next – with a developing writer and guides mini lessons, conferences and future instructional activities.

If you have any questions on how to use the Continuum of Developmental Writing, please do not hesitate to contact your building 6 Traits Trainer, principal, Naomi Gray or Amy Oakley.