

Creating a Six-Traits +1 Metaphor

I asked my seniors think of a metaphor that could be used to help them remember the Six Traits +1 that we use in discussing and assessing writing. They could work in small groups and either design a poster or create a dimensional model to illustrate their choice.

This is an example of a metaphor one group seniors demonstrated.

Six-Traits Doll closet: Ideas and Content -- Outfits on hangers
Organization -- How the closet is arranged
Voice -- T-shirts with personality and attitude
Sentence Fluency -- Pants: shorts, mid-length, long
(patterned or plain)
Conventions -- Underwear -- foundation garments that
make an outfit it but shouldn't show
Word Choice -- Shoes -- need to match the outfit

Six-Traits Tool Box: Ideas and Content -- Square
Organization -- Tool box
Voice -- Hammer
Sentence Fluency -- Saw
Conventions -- Nuts and bolts, nails
Word Choice -- Drill and bits
Presentation -- Is the model logical and memorable?

Applying the Traits to Autobiography

Since the seniors are writing their autobiographies this spring, they prepared for the assignment by analyzing an autobiography of their choice using the six traits model and sharing their findings orally with their classmates. Posters generated as visual aids for their speeches were posted in the hall to remind each other about the traits and how they were used by published autobiographers. Students logged ideas and strategies from the speeches which could help them with their own books.

Not only was the analysis of what they read generally better than that done by students in previous years but also the students this year have been asking more pointed questions about how to improve their writing. I see more evidence of thoughtful revision and have had several students indicate that their drafted material was simply not good enough for the book. Their discussion of why not focused on traits that the writer felt were weak in his or her work. Many students were particularly concerned with fluency and voice.