

## Games Teachers Play

### Ideas – the piece’s central message and details that support that message

Focus, Focus, Focus

Select a broad topic such as “video games.” Divide the group into three parts: narrative, informational, opinion. Ask each group to narrow the topic so it would generate the type of writing they were assigned. Rotate three times. Record each of the examples so there are at least three possible different topics for each mode of writing for students to use as starting points for writing.

### Organization – the internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning

Sentence Strips

Find a passage from a book that has five or more sentences that contain sequence and transition words. Type them up as separate sentences and cut them apart. Put the sentences in little baggies. Then have students open, lay them out, and put them in an order that makes sense. Compare to the original. Use fiction and nonfiction examples.

### Voice – the tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

Thumbball: Emotion Mania

Use a model sentence such as, “It’s been a day I’ll never forget.” Toss the ball to a student and wherever the student’s thumb lands, ask him or her to repeat the sentence matching the tone/voice. If they wish, extend the sentence to make their voice selection clear without using the emotion word. Have that student toss the ball to another until everyone has a chance.

### Word Choice – the specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey mean and enlighten the reader.

Paint Strips

Get paint strips/chips in color hues from a local paint store. Target a word that kids use frequently such as “good.” Write it on the lightest color hue. Brainstorm other words that are synonyms but a more interesting way of saying “good.” Rank the words by favorites and write the #1 choice at the top, next to the brightest color. Label other words down the strip. Repeat in small groups until there are many color strips—a visual Thesaurus—for students to refer to as they write.

### Sentence Fluency - the way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it’s “read” with the ear as much as the eye.

Thumbball: Numbers

Select a topic: For example, weather. Toss the ball to a small group of students and ask them to create a sentence on that topic using number of words where the catcher’s thumb lands. Have the students toss the ball to another group and ask them to create a new sentence that continues the thought of the sentence before with the new number of words. Record and discuss each sentence as the piece builds and comment on their length and how they sound.

### Conventions – the mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, grammar and usage) guides the reader through the text easily.

Punctuation Matters

Share examples of how punctuation changes meaning. Try these to start. Ask students to create examples of their own.

What scares you more?	Which shift do YOU Prefer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watch out – man eating grapes!</li><li>• Watch out – man-eating grapes!</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You will be required to work twenty four-hour shifts.</li><li>• You will be required to work twenty-four hour shifts.</li><li>• You will be required to work twenty-four-hour shifts.</li></ul>