

***It is what you Say!***  
***Six Traits: Developing Word Choice***

**Developed by:** Jan Bryan, Ed. D., AlphaSmart, Inc.

**Grade level:** Intermediate Grades – Middle School

**Content areas:** English Language Arts  
Six Traits Writing – Developing Word Choice

**Invitation:** We've all heard it. We've all said it. "It's not what you say. It's how you say it." Well, when writing, it *is* what you say - because *what* you communicate in your writing and *how* powerfully you communicate it are determined by the *words you choose*. In this lesson, students use writers' tools to develop a rich vocabulary and add punch to their prose.

**Assessment:** Teachers will know students understand the power of word choice as they use a thesaurus to create synonym clusters, word links and word walls.

**Technology Tools**

Dana by AlphaSmart or Dana Wireless  
Printer  
Computer  
AlphaWord software  
PiCo Map <http://www.goknow.com>

**Additional Resources**

**Internet sites:**

Learn about Six Traits writing from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory  
<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/scoring.asp?odelay=3&d=1&r=1#definition>

Merriam-Webster online dictionary and thesaurus  
<http://www.m-w.com>

Play with words. Find rhymes, search synonyms and see relationships among words at Lexical FreeNet.  
<http://www.lexfn.com>

Poetry4Kids offers links to excellent vocabulary development resources  
<http://www.poetry4kids.com/links/resources.html>

## National Standards for Students

### National Educational Technology Standards

- Understand basic concepts and operations
- Practice responsible use
- Use technology tools to enhance learning, collaborate, publish and promote creativity.
- Use telecommunications and a variety of media and formats to communicate.

### National Council of Teachers of English

- Employ a wide range of writing strategies
- Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions
- Conduct research
- Use technological and information resources
- Participate in literacy communities

For a detailed explanation of NETS for Students visit: [http://cnet.iste.org/students/s\\_stands.html](http://cnet.iste.org/students/s_stands.html)  
Learn more about NCTE Standards at: <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

## Step-by-Step

### Step 1: Preparation

Study the six traits of writing. Several sites offer resources and teaching ideas. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory offers extensive resources for the six traits. Access their site at <http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/departement.asp?d=1>.

Be sure students understand the following terms:

Thesaurus  
Synonym  
Antonym

Set up several strips of butcher paper to use for word walls.

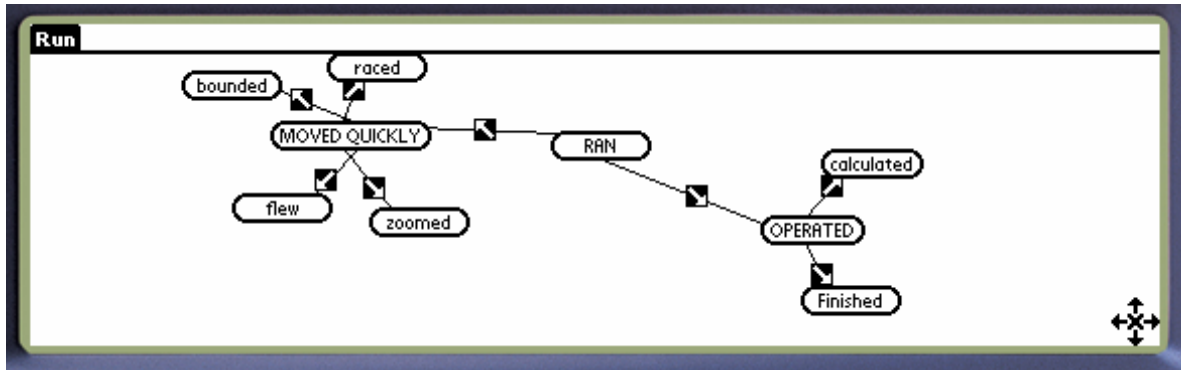
### Step 2: Synonym Cluster

Once students are comfortable with the term "synonym," teach them synonym cluster strategy. Launch PiCo map and give a common verb, such as "run." Challenge students to come up with as many words as possible that are synonymous with "run." Create a cluster web using PiCo map.

Optional: Challenge students to find more than one key meaning for a term. For example, "ran" can refer to moving quickly or completing a task. "The team ran quickly" and "The sales manager ran the numbers" are both appropriate uses of the verb "ran."

### Step 3: Share maps

Students work with a partner to merge maps. (To merge maps, student 1 and student 2 their synonym cluster map open. Student 1 beams to student 2. Student 2 accepts the beam on the *current map*.)



### Step 4: Round-Robin Beaming Edit

Working in small groups, students edit sentences to add power. Use traditional resources, online resources and AlphaWord's built in thesaurus. Launch AlphaWord, open a new document and enter the following text:

*When he saw the squirrel, the small dog ran across the yard.*

Underline the word "When." Save the file as "Ran." Beam the file to one student in each group. That student opens the file and replaces the underlined word with a more powerful word or phrase. Remove the underline and select another word or phrase to underline.

For example:

*When he saw the squirrel, the small dog ran across the yard.*

*At the moment he saw the squirrel, the small dog ran across the yard.*

Save the file and beam to the next student in the group. Clear the file after beaming. Continue editing the sentence until almost all words have been replaced. Share sentences. Here's an example of a completed Round Robin Beaming Edit

*At the moment he spied the bushy-tailed acorn warrior, the miniscule friend-of-man bolted the full measure of this urban acre.*

### Step 5: The Wall of Fame and the Golden Line

Students print sentences and post on a wall of fame. Use metallic markers to highlight powerful word choices in each sentence. Seek "the golden line" or the phrase with the most intriguing word choices.