NAME:

Writer's Stylus ▸

Portfolio 8

A CLERESTORY LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: WRITING

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REVISION SKILLS CHECKLIST: Grade 8

DANGLERS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify phrases.
- ☐ Examine each phrase. If a phrase lacks connection to another sentence component, revise the sentence to make the connection obvious by adding the connection to the phrase, placing the connection in an position where the relationship is obvious, or by moving the phrase to follow the sentence's main clause.

DEFINITIONS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify any terms that may not be familiar to your intended audience.
- ☐ Develop definitions for each term.
- ☐ Try including the definitions in the manuscript. If they clarify your meaning without distraction, keep them.
- ☐ If the definitions cause a distraction, consider revising the draft by using more familiar terms that do not need to be defined for the reader.

IDEA REDUNDANCY

- ☐ Read each paragraph and section to identify ideas communicated more than once. Revise to eliminate the redundancy.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify modifying phrases.
- ☐ Check the location of each modifying phrase and its intended "target."
- ☐ If the "target" is missing, rewrite the sentence to include it.
- ☐ If the modifying phrase and target are separated by other possible "targets," restructure the sentence to keep modifying phrases and targets together.

OVERUSED PHRASES

- ☐ Read the draft to identify common phrases.
- ☐ Ask yourself if the common phrase represents overused phrasing. Is it what you expect to hear in the given context? If so, it is likely a cliche. [Susan Bell (2007) offers this guiding question: "Am I writing new words to fit this moment and this story?" (p. 136)]
- ☐ Revise the sentence with fresher language.

PARAGRAPH UNIT

- ☐ Read the draft one paragraph at a time.
- ☐ For each paragraph, ask: "What do I want to say here? What point do I want to make?" (Provost, 1985, p. 44).
- ☐ Identify the sentence that states that idea. If no such sentence exists, consider adding one.
- ☐ Review every sentence in the paragraph. If any do not develop or support the central idea, consider moving or deleting them.

QUOTES & ATTRIBUTIONS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify quotes or dialogue.
- ☐ If the attribution appears at the beginning or end of the sentence/section, try moving it to the first logical break in the quote.
- ☐ Use enough variety in placing attributions that your text reads smoothly.

SENTENCE VARIETY

- ☐ Read the draft aloud to identify passages that seem to lose momentum.
- ☐ Review those sections to examine sentence construction.
- ☐ Revise to vary sentence lengths and/or types.
- ☐ Continue revising until an oral reading reveals continuous momentum.

SHOWING NOT TELLING

- ☐ Read the draft to identify sentences/paragraphs/sections that explain something.
- ☐ Ask yourself if it is possible to show the same ideas through action or dialogue. If so, make the revisions that entrust the reader to reach appropriate conclusions.

TELLING DETAILS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify details (adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, similes).
- ☐ For each detail, ask, "Does this provide the reader with a new image—one that deepens understanding?" If not, consider deleting the detail.
- ☐ For each target, identify the three most significant details. If you have included more than three, consider scaling back the description. If you have fewer than three, be sure you've provided adequate description for the reader to be able to envision what you're describing.

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TOOLS vs. CLARITY

- ☐ Review the draft to identify all examples of literary tools (e.g., alliteration, metaphor, allusion).
- ☐ For each literary tool, ask if its use decreases the clarity of your intended message. Delete any tools that negatively affect clarity and revise the sentences to improve clarity.
- ☐ For each literary tool that does not lessen clarity, ask if its use improves the text. Delete any that do not improve the text and revise the sentences as needed.

TRANSITIONS

- ☐ Read the draft sentence by sentence, focusing on the flow (or lack of it) from one to the next. Do the same with paragraphs and sections.
- ☐ If transitions are rough, try one of the following:
  - Repeat a word from a previous sentence in the next sentence to establish a continuity of thought
  - Use a signal word—e.g., *later, meanwhile, after*
  - Rework the sentence/paragraph/section to base the transitions on an obvious "thread," such as chronology (i.e., an obvious thread frees the writer from being too concerned with transitions)

VERBS TO NOUNS

- ☐ Read the draft to identify nouns formed with a suffix.
- ☐ Identify the verb from which the noun was formed (e.g., *action* formed from *act*).
- ☐ Revise the sentence by using the verb form. If the meaning stays the same, consider keeping the revision.

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ADOPTING A GREYHOUND

"Do you think we should get a dog?" That question opens a window of opportunity for a family searching for a cuddly, loving family member. Little do they know at that point, the decision will not be simple. There are the cute, fuzzy, hyperactive puppies or the well-trained, helpful, energetic adult dogs or the calm, sleepy, laid-back older dogs. One breed of dog, the greyhound, is so type-cast as a racer that pet owners often over look the potential for a wonderful family pet. Originally, greyhounds traveled with explorers and generals and lived in the palaces of Europe in the company of royalty.

Outstanding hunters, these sight hounds are the fastest runners of all breeds, capable of sprinting up to 45 miles per hour. (Sight hounds like greyhounds are hunting dogs that use sight rather than scent to pursue prey.) Thus, the American greyhounds are bred almost exclusively for racing, raised in racetrack kennels, and retired after two to five years. Sadly, owners find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place, and the retired racers are often sold to research facilities or euthanized (put gently to death). Although racetrack owners are hoping they won't make waves, recently, animal lovers have begun to come to the rescue. Adoption centers have opened so retired racers at many racetracks can live out their days in loving homes. A greyhound named Liza found her loving home with Melissa Pickell.

While waiting in her lonely kennel, Miss Pickell adopted Liza at the local racetrack to rescue her from euthanasia. She reasoned that this was an inexpensive way to purchase a

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healthy, pure-bred dog. "Liza was a shy, sweet, quiet companion for our other dog," Melissa recalled. "She surprised us by not fitting the stereotype of the speed racer. Liza was not a high-energy pet. She loved to play in water and snow, but was often a couch potato, sleeping on her back with her legs straight up in the air," Miss Pickell added.

Dog lovers do not have to look very far to find these gentle giants ready to love and be loved.

While doing a quick online "greyhound" search, one can turn up many greyhound adoption groups. Perhaps now the family's question will no longer be, "Do you think we should get a dog?" but instead, "Which greyhound should we choose?"

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MY QUESTIONS

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