**Specific, Vivid Word Choice**

Sophisticated writing emphasizes specific, vivid word choice—words that create a visual image, words that most clearly reflect the writer’s meaning. No writer has perfected the art of word choice—the quest to find the best word to describe meaning serves as a constant challenge. Throughout your writing experiences this year, you should begin to experiment with word choice and carefully reflect on words before you include them in your writing.

Let’s begin by thinking about overused words that fail to create a vivid image in a reader’s mind or words that do not have a specific or clear meaning.

**Examples of Vague, Unclear, Overused Words**

Good Very A lot

Bad Really Big

Stuff Pretty Little

Things Nice Okay

**Tips for Success When Choosing Words:**

1. Avoid unclear, vague words (such as the ones listed above).
2. Use words that appeal to the senses: colors, sounds, smells, touch sensations.

Example: scalding instead of hot

Chuckle instead of laugh

Teal instead of blue

1. Use the most specific synonym possible.

Example: sprint instead of move

Explain instead of said

1. Replace confusing pronouns with the actual word the pronoun represents.

Example: The students completed many homework assignments before they caught on fire. \*Replace they with the assignments.

**Word Practice:**

Example: He has a really nice personality

List four better words or phrases to describe what makes his personality nice.

\*considerate \*compassionate \*outgoing \*carefree

1. I have a really bad pain in my leg.

List four better words or phrases to describe the kind of “really bad” pain in my leg.

2. She has very ugly hair.

List four better words or phrases to describe “very ugly” hair.

3. I saw a pretty good movie over the weekend.

List four better words or phrases to describe the “pretty good” movie.

**Sentence Practice:**

\*\*Circle the most specific word to complete the sentence.

1. Please put your (stuff, books, belongings) away.
2. I have some (directions, information, things) to give you.
3. We (went, traveled, journeyed, marched) up the hill.
4. I tried to (warn, tell, communicate to) you to study for the test.

**Paragraph Practice:**

\*\*Rewrite the following paragraph to replace all of the vague words with more specific words. Try to be as clear and meaningful as possible to create a vivid image in your reader’s mind.

The weather outside was really nice. I had a chance to do a lot of great stuff with my friends. I have pretty nice friends. At the end of the day, we ate a big meal with all of my favorite things. What a nice time!