A TEACH BIG TEACHER GUIDE

Think BIG Tank

Noticing Awareness

The noticing skills students need before editing and revising can begin

EDITORS IN CHIEF EDITION

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Teach BIG Writing Academy · 2026

START HERE

The short version

This guide turns five curious minutes each morning into an editor in the making. Your students already wonder about the world. This guide teaches them to see what is really there: on a picture, on a page, and then on their own page.

The idea is one sentence. Before students can edit, they need a trained eye and ear. That stage is called Noticing Awareness. It comes before editing the way phonological awareness comes before phonics: daily, visual and oral, with no paper and no correcting at first.

Everything here fits the routine you already use. One question, one look, one notebook line. Four lenses focus the looking, growing Noticing Awareness into The Editor's Eye. Twelve skills name what grows. Ten activity types keep it fresh. Five levels let every student see the climb to Editor in Chief.

> *We teach conventions and we teach the writing process, but we assume the student can see what is on the page. Many cannot yet. That is the gap this closes.*

WHAT IS INSIDE

ONE	Three stages, one climb: from noticing the world to Detail Sense
TWO	Why the analogy holds: the phonological awareness table
THREE	Four lenses and twelve foundation skills
FOUR	Ten activities that train the eye, with examples
FIVE	The week, the five minute shape, and the way to Editor in Chief
SIX	How to use the 365 questions all year

SECTION ONE

Three stages, one climb

From noticing the world to checking a page without being asked.

Every student in your room sits somewhere on this climb. Name the stage out loud so students can feel themselves move. Read the row that matches your class, then aim one step higher.

STAGE	LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR ROOM	THE STUDENT CAN SAY
1. NOTICING AWARENESS. The foundation. Students study a picture, an object, or a sound in silence, then name details no one else named. No paper. No correcting. The world is the text.	I can find small details that most people walk past.	
2. THE EDITOR'S EYE. The transfer. Students carry the same noticing to print. They compare what is on the page with what should be there, fix what is wrong, and add, remove, move, or replace words to make it better.	I can use what I notice to check a page and make it better.	
3. DETAIL SENSE. The habit. Students reread and repair without being asked, in the world and on the page. The habit is automatic, the way fluent reading follows phonics.	I can catch details on my own, without a reminder.	

Two names that work together

WITH ADULTS Say Noticing Awareness. It sits on a scope and sequence, in a lesson plan, and in a family conference.

WITH STUDENTS Say The Editor's Eye. It belongs on the wall chart, on badges, and on the four lenses below.

SECTION TWO

Why the analogy holds

Phonological awareness comes before phonics. Noticing Awareness comes before editing.

Ask a teacher what comes before phonics and the answer is quick. Phonological awareness. The ear work. Hearing that cat and hat rhyme, counting the beats in elephant, pulling the first sound off sun. It is oral, it takes five minutes, it needs no worksheet, and it predicts how easily a student will learn letters and sounds.

Ask what comes before editing and the answer is usually a list. Capitals, periods, spelling, handwriting. But those are the letters and sounds of writing. They are the phonics of editing, not the awareness underneath it.

In plain words

Noticing Awareness is the ability to see and hear what is really there, to hold a picture of what should be there, and to notice the difference. It is taught without writing, in short daily looks and listens, before a student is asked to correct a page.

It is not grammar, spelling, or a replacement for editing instruction. It is the on ramp to all three. A student with strong Noticing Awareness learns the conventions faster, because the conventions finally have somewhere to land.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS	NOTICING AWARENESS
Hear the whole word	See the whole page
Hear syllables and beats	See the big parts: picture, paragraph, sentence
Hear onset and rime	See word parts and sentence parts
Hear individual sounds	See individual letters, marks, and spaces
Blend and segment sounds	Put the parts back together and check the meaning
Add, remove, substitute sounds	Add, remove, move, replace on the page
Oral, daily, five minutes	Visual and oral, daily, five minutes
No paper, no correcting	No paper, no correcting

An editor works in two directions. Editing looks down at the marks: is this correct? Revising looks up at the whole: is it clear, is it complete, is it right for this reader? The twelve skills below serve both, grouped into four lenses that grow harder in the order students usually grow.

The last line of each skill names the area it grows into. Codes shift by grade, so the area is named and not the code.

SECTION THREE

Four lenses, twelve skills

Each skill is something an editor does, sized so a young student can practice it in two minutes.

LENS 01	LENS 02	LENS 03	LENS 04
Look closely	**See the structure**	**Hear the language**	**Check like a reader**
What is there, and what is not.	Order, pattern, and completeness.	The sound of a sentence.	Marks, self check, another pair of eyes.

1. Visual noticing LENS 01

LOOKS LIKE A student can look at one picture or one page for thirty seconds and then name five things no one else mentioned. An older student finds a repeated word on a page without being told what to look for.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT An editor cannot fix what was never seen. Most missed errors are not unknown rules. They are unseen marks.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Thirty Seconds More. Show an image. Everyone looks in silence. Then each student names one thing, and no one may repeat.

GROWS INTO Print awareness, visual literacy, and editing for conventions.

2. Same and different LENS 01

LOOKS LIKE A student compares two pencils, two sentences, or two drafts and names one difference precisely, not only that they are different.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Every correction is a comparison between what is there and what should be there. Same and different is the muscle underneath.

TWO MINUTE MOVE One Change. Show two nearly identical sentences. Students find the one word that changed, then say what it did to the meaning.

GROWS INTO Vocabulary, conventions, and revision for word choice.

3. Spotting what is missing LENS 01

LOOKS LIKE A student sees the tree, the soil, and the water pail, then asks where the sun is. An older student sees a story with a setup and no ending.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Revision is mostly addition. The editor question is what the reader needs that is not here yet.

TWO MINUTE MOVE What Did the Artist Forget? Show a picture with one important thing removed. Students name it and explain how they knew.

GROWS INTO Revision for adding detail and information, inference, and text structure.

4. Sequencing and order LENS 02

LOOKS LIKE A student puts four pictures in order, then notices that a recipe step is in the wrong place.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Order carries meaning. A sentence, a paragraph, and a set of directions all break when one piece lands in the wrong spot.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Switch Two. Give a four step routine with two steps swapped. Students find the exact place the order breaks.

GROWS INTO Text structure and organization, revision for moving text, and comprehension of sequence.

SECTION THREE, CONTINUED

5. Patterns and breaks in patterns LENS 02

LOOKS LIKE A student completes an AB pattern, then notices that every sentence in a paragraph starts with I except one.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Editors read for the pattern, then for the one place it breaks. That is how a repeated word, a tense slip, or a missing comma shows up.

TWO MINUTE MOVE One of These Is Not Like the Others. Three sentences follow a pattern and one does not. Students name the pattern before they name the odd one.

GROWS INTO Conventions, spelling patterns, and revision for sentence variety.

6. Holding a picture of complete LENS 02

LOOKS LIKE A student knows a sentence needs someone or something, plus an action. A student knows a story needs an ending, and notices a page with no title.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT An editor carries an internal picture of a complete piece and measures the draft against it. Without that picture, done only means I stopped writing.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Is It Finished? Show two versions of one short piece, one complete and one missing a part. Students say what is still needed and where it belongs.

GROWS INTO Text structure, revision for completeness, and composition.

7. Precision of words LENS 03

LOOKS LIKE A student swaps big for enormous and can say why. An older student notices that said appears five times in one paragraph.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Revising is choosing. An editor needs an ear for the almost right word, because almost right is what makes a reader stop.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Almost Right. Read a sentence with a vague word, such as The dog was very big. Students replace it with one precise word and defend the choice.

GROWS INTO Vocabulary, revision for word choice, and author purpose.

8. Listening for what sounds wrong LENS 03

LOOKS LIKE A student hears a missing word when the class sentence is read aloud, or hears where a run on sentence should stop.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT The ear catches what the eye forgives. Reading aloud is the oldest editing tool there is.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Read It Twice. Read a sentence once smoothly and once with one word missing. Students name what disappeared.

GROWS INTO Fluency and prosody, conventions, and revision for sentence boundaries.

SECTION THREE, CONTINUED

9. Does this make sense? LENS 03

LOOKS LIKE A student stops mid sentence and says that does not make sense, or asks a partner to read it back.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT It is the most valuable editing question there is. Most errors that matter are meaning errors, not rule errors.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Nonsense Detective. Read a short paragraph with one swapped word. Students find the exact spot where meaning breaks.

GROWS INTO Comprehension monitoring, revision, and editing for clarity.

10. Self checking LENS 04

LOOKS LIKE A student rereads without being told, uses a checklist, and finds one thing to fix.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT An editor is the first reader of their own work. Self checking is a habit, not a talent, and habits are built in small repetitions.

TWO MINUTE MOVE One More Look. After any task, sixty seconds with one question: what is one thing you can find? Students mark it and do not fix it yet.

GROWS INTO The writing process, editing, and revision.

11. Small marks: dots, lines, spaces LENS 04

LOOKS LIKE A student notices the dot on the i, the difference between a period and a comma, the space between two words, a capital that should be small.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Conventions live at the scale of a mark. An editor has to see at that scale without losing the whole page.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Dot Hunt. Give a short paragraph with the periods replaced by commas. Students circle every mark that is doing a job, then say which job.

GROWS INTO Conventions for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, plus handwriting and letter formation.

12. Reader perspective LENS 04

LOOKS LIKE A student asks whether the reader will know who she is, or reads a partner piece and says where they got confused.

WHY AN EDITOR NEEDS IT Revising is an act of imagination. The editor reads as someone who does not already know what the writer knows.

TWO MINUTE MOVE Read It Cold. A partner reads the piece aloud while the writer listens without explaining. The writer writes down the first place they wanted to interrupt.

GROWS INTO Author purpose and audience, revision, and comprehension.

SECTION FOUR

Ten activities that train the eye

Questions are one way to make a student look. These are ten more, each ready to run tomorrow.

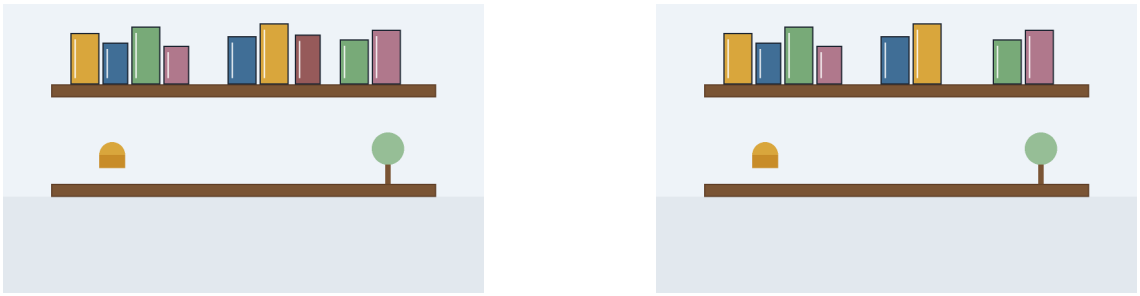
The tag on each activity tells you what it feeds. EDIT means fix what is wrong. REVISE means add, remove, move, or change words to make a page better. Most activities do both. The tag names the stronger pull.

1. Spot the difference EDIT

TRY IT Two versions of the same paragraph with three marks changed: a capital, a period, and a doubled word. Students circle every difference, then name which ones change the meaning and which are only surface.

TRY IT AGAIN Two photos of the same classroom shelf taken a week apart. Students list five differences, then say which one a reader of the room would need to know about.

EDITOR'S EYE Each circled mark is The Editor's Eye comparing what is there with what should be there.



Try it in your room: these two shelves hold exactly one difference. Answer: the small red book on the top shelf.

2. What changed? EDIT

TRY IT Three versions of one sentence shown in order. Students name what changed from one to two and from two to three, then choose the clearest version and defend it.

TRY IT AGAIN Four photos of the same plant over a month. Students name the change and then the moment it first became visible.

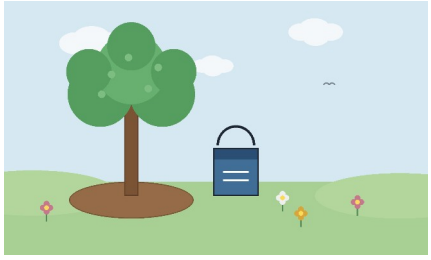
EDITOR'S EYE Naming what changed from one version to the next is The Editor's Eye comparing drafts.

3. What is missing? REVISE

TRY IT The tree with healthy leaves, soil, and a water pail, but no sun. Students name what is missing and explain how they know it belongs.

TRY IT AGAIN A thank you letter with a greeting and a body but no name at the end. Students add the missing part and say why a reader needs it.

EDITOR'S EYE Asking what the reader still needs is The Editor's Eye reading for completeness.



Show this garden and ask what the artist forgot. Answer: the sun. The tree, the soil, and the water pail are all here.

4. Odd one out EDIT

TRY IT Four words where three follow one spelling pattern. Students name the pattern first, then the odd one.

TRY IT AGAIN Four sentences where three end with a period and one ends with a question mark but is not a question. Students explain what broke.

EDITOR'S EYE Finding the one that breaks the pattern is The Editor's Eye spotting the slip.

5. Put it in order REVISE

TRY IT A four step recipe with two steps swapped. Students reorder it and name the clue word.

TRY IT AGAIN Five sentences from a story, out of order. Students arrange them first to last.

EDITOR'S EYE Restoring the order is The Editor's Eye repairing structure.

6. Find the hidden pattern REVISE

TRY IT A paragraph where every sentence begins with Then. Students revise two sentences to break the pattern.

TRY IT AGAIN A list of spelling words that all double the final consonant before ing. Students state the rule, then predict a new word.

EDITOR'S EYE Naming the repeated opening is The Editor's Eye catching the pattern.

7. Fix the sign EDIT

TRY IT A photo of a real sign with a misspelling, borrowed from the school hallway. Students fix it and say who reads it.

TRY IT AGAIN A classroom label with a capital in the middle of a word. Students repair it, then check the room for more.

EDITOR'S EYE Repairing a real sign for real readers is The Editor's Eye doing its daily job.

8. Sound it out EDIT

TRY IT Read a sentence aloud twice, once with a word missing. Students name the gap, then find it in their own writing.

TRY IT AGAIN Partners read aloud. The listener holds up a finger where it stops making sense, and says why.

EDITOR'S EYE Hearing the gap in a read aloud is The Editor's Eye listening before it marks.

9. Zoom in, zoom out REVISE

TRY IT Show a page from far away, then close up on one word. Students say which errors need which distance.

TRY IT AGAIN Read one sentence alone, then in the paragraph. Students say whether it still belongs.

EDITOR'S EYE Choosing which distance each error needs is The Editor's Eye working at two scales.

10. Detective notebook REVISE

TRY IT Each student keeps a page with four boxes, one per lens, and records one find a day. On Friday, they choose one find and write what it would change.

TRY IT AGAIN A class notebook holds cases: a sign, a sentence, a photo. Students initial the case they solved and add the clue that gave it away.

EDITOR'S EYE One chosen find that would change the page is The Editor's Eye at work.

SECTION FIVE

The week, and the way up

Ten minutes a day. One question, one look, one notebook line.

The week keeps the morning question and gives it a partner. Monday and Wednesday feed curiosity. Tuesday and Thursday feed the eye and the ear. Friday is where a student becomes an editor with an audience. Month by month, the Friday habit becomes Detail Sense: students reread and repair without being asked.

DAY	FOCUS	HOW IT RUNS
Monday	**The question. 5 min.** Read it. Look for thirty seconds. Then talk.	
Tuesday	**Look closely. 7 min.** Spot the difference, what changed, or what is missing.	
Wednesday	**Question, plus one line. 7 min.** The question, then one notebook line: I noticed ___.	
Thursday	**Words and marks. 7 min.** Fix the sign, sound it out, or odd one out.	
Friday	**The Friday Editor's Chair. 10 min.** One student shares a before and after. The Editor's Eye in action: the class turns the four lenses on the page.	

THE FIVE MINUTE SHAPE, WITH THE LOOK BUILT IN

TIME	STEP	WHAT HAPPENS
0:00	**Look.** Thirty seconds of silence.	
0:30	**Wonder.** Read the question aloud.	
1:00	**Idea.** I think ___ because ___.	
2:00	**Compare.** Partners share one difference.	
3:30	**Investigate.** What could we check?	
4:30	**Next step.** Our idea so far.	

> *I do not know yet either. Let us think about what we notice and how we could find out.*
> THE LINE TO PRINT ON A POSTER

SECTION FIVE, CONTINUED

Five levels to Editor in Chief

A level is earned by evidence: three finds, one repair, one before and after. Levels 1 to 3 build Noticing Awareness, Level 4 is The Editor's Eye, and Level 5 shows Detail Sense. Post the ladder where students can see it. Let them point to where they stand.

LEVEL	THE STUDENT CAN SAY	EVIDENCE
Level 1. Spotter. I can find one thing no one else noticed.	Three finds recorded in the notebook.	
Level 2. Inspector. I can say what is missing and what is out of order.	Repairs one picture and one set of steps.	
Level 3. Listener. I can hear what sounds wrong and choose a better word.	Names a gap in a read aloud and replaces one weak word.	
Level 4. Editor. The Editor's Eye: I can check my own page with the four lenses.	A before and after of their own writing with three changes marked.	
Level 5. Editor in Chief. Detail Sense: I can lead a conference and explain a choice without a reminder.	Leads one Friday Editor's Chair and keeps the class notebook for a week.	

Graduation is not a certificate. It is a job. The Editor in Chief runs the Friday Editor's Chair, keeps the class notebook, and is the first reader for the room. Hand over the certificate, the gold lens pin, and the notebook in the same moment.

SECTION SIX

How to use the 365 questions

One question for every day of the year, in the companion collection.

The companion collection holds 365 questions in categories, one for every day of the year. Each question comes with a short teacher answer in the Teacher Edition (Think BIG Tank 365 Teacher Edition), so the thinking stays curious and the facts stay straight.

THE FOURTEEN CATEGORIES

Use them in order or in any order. Each question stands alone.

- Food and kitchen mysteries
- Water and weather wonders
- Earth sky and space
- Plants and growing things
- Animals and tiny neighbors
- Bodies senses and minds
- Motion light and sound
- Everyday objects and inventions
- Patterns words and possibilities
- What if and what next
- Small Details Most People Miss
- Noticing Words and Marks
- What Is Missing?
- Same or Different?

MAKE IT WORK FOR EVERY STUDENT

- **Read every question aloud.** Choose and rephrase for your students. For the youngest students, add a short form of the question or a picture cue, so the idea arrives before the sentence does.
- **Keep the same daily shape.** The five minute shape on the previous page never changes. When the steps stay still, students spend their thinking on ideas, not on what comes next.
- **Press with followups, not answers.** What did you notice that makes you think that? What else might explain it? What could we compare or observe? What would make you change your mind? What are you wondering now?
- **Keep curiosity connected to accuracy.** Some questions have established explanations. Others allow several defensible answers. Label the current thinking Our idea so far, and return to it when the class has more evidence.
- **Stay safe with materials.** For classroom investigations, choose age appropriate materials and procedures yourself. Students can plan an investigation without carrying it out at once.

Start tomorrow with one question and thirty seconds of silence. Watch what students say next. Curious and watchful is what an editor is: Noticing Awareness growing into The Editor's Eye, and The Editor's Eye settling into Detail Sense.

Prepared by Randi Whitney · Teach BIG™ Writing Academy™ · 2026