IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Through Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum

SAMPLER

John J. Collins, Ed.D.
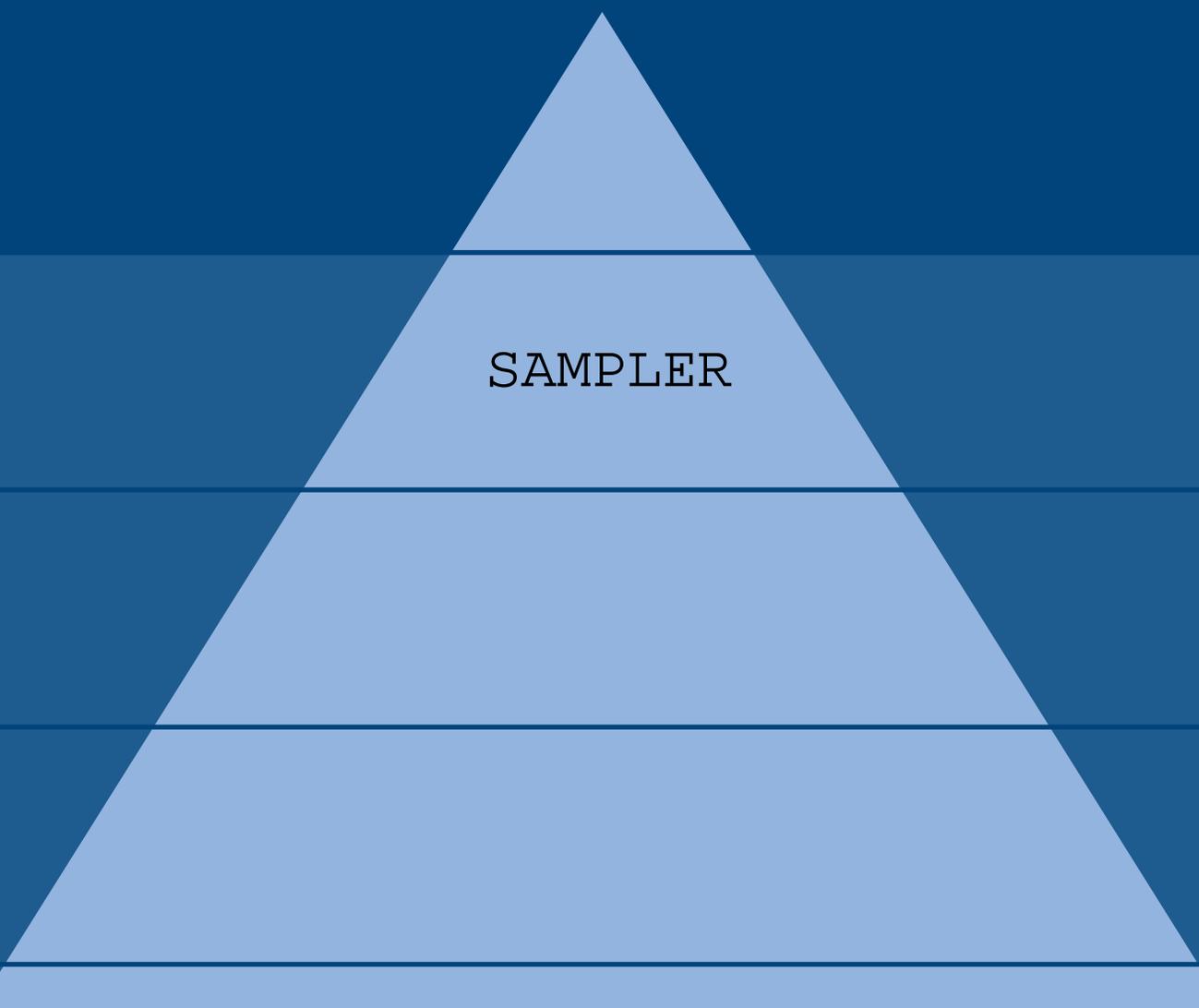
THE COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM

IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE
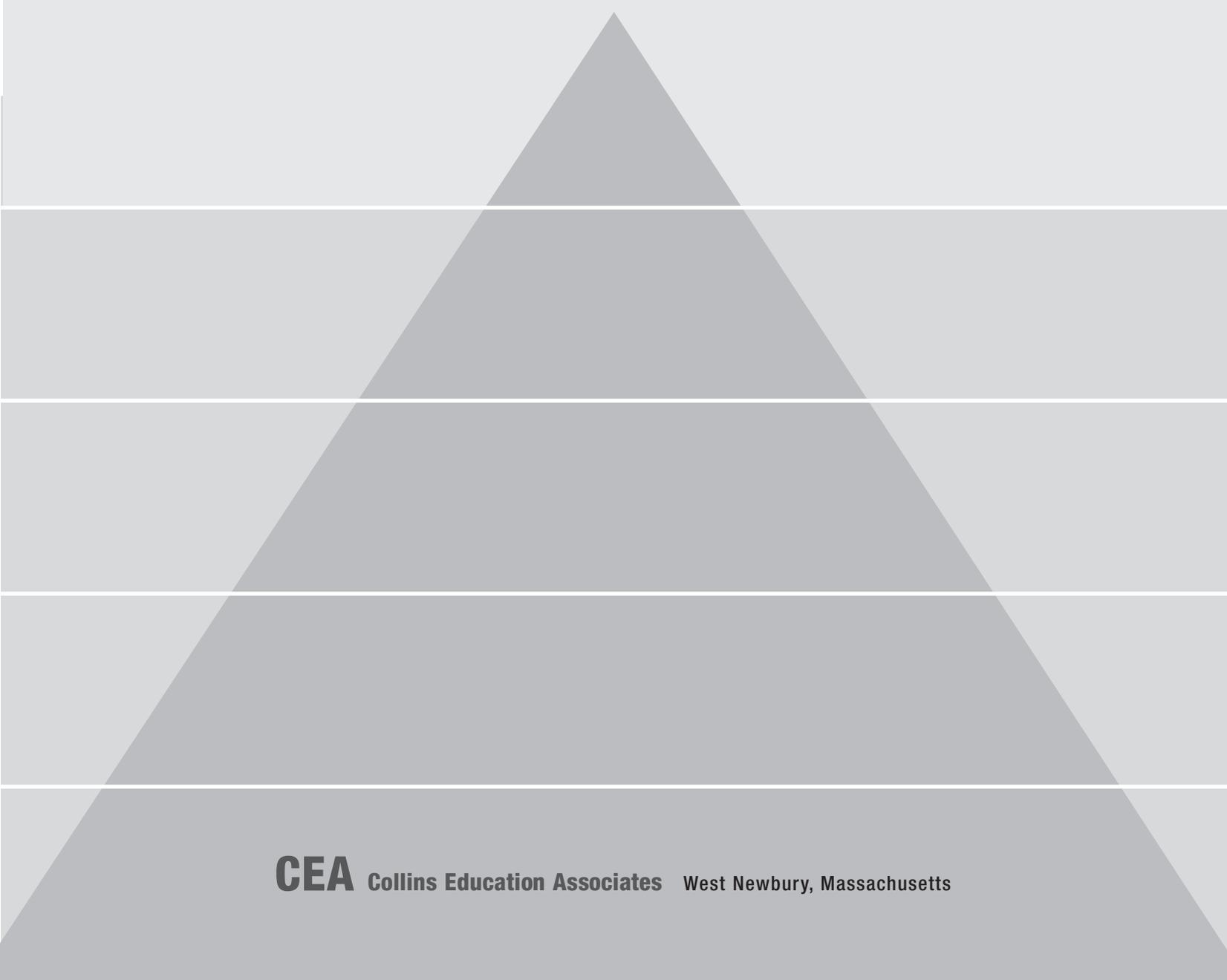
Through Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum

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Introduction

This book, *The Collins Writing Program,* is an expanded version of the highly successful *Developing Writing and Thinking Skills Across the Curriculum* (over 200,000 copies sold) originally published in 1992. Since the original publication, my colleagues and I have presented more than ten thousand workshops, conducted countless model lessons to demonstrate the program, and facilitated teacher discussions about writing skills in every imaginable school setting. As a result, we have learned a great deal about the strengths of this program and have been asked a lot of questions. This new book answers these questions and provides help to teachers, schools, or school systems that want to implement a coordinated writing across the curriculum program.

During the last twenty-five years, we have seen a shift from a demand for writing workshops primarily for ELA teachers to a demand for whole school or district workshops with teachers in every content area. The shift is driven by two separate factors: the expansion and change in the way we test students and the recognition that writing improves student learning. Anyone who has been teaching over the last few years has seen a dramatic expansion in the number of grades tested and in the very nature of the tests themselves. Tests now have open or constructed response questions where students must not only create an answer to the question but explain the answer or the process used to get the answer. With the addition of writing tests on the SAT and ACT, our only true national tests, writing has joined with reading as the second essential test-taking skill. If students cannot write, they cannot pass many state tests no matter how well they read or know the content.

But more important than the driving force of testing, writing has become a predominant focus because educators are recognizing that writing helps students understand and remember content like no other teaching technique. Douglas Reeves describes the powerful effects of writing on student achievements in his book *101 Questions & Answers About Standards, Assessments, and Accountability* where he describes his research of 90/90/90 schools. These are schools that are "quite unusual because their student populations include at least 90% free and reduced lunch students, 90% minority students, and 90% or more of students who meet or exceed state academic standards" (p. 121). He found that these schools shared four characteristics:

> They shared a *laser-like focus on student achievement*, an issue that dominated every faculty meeting, staff development presentation, and even the casual discussions among teachers and administrators. These schools *emphasized student writing*, with weekly writing assessments

and a common scoring guide, or rubric, to provide clear feedback on student performance. The teachers routinely *collaborated on scoring* so that they were able to give consistent feedback to the students. Students were afforded *multiple opportunities* to succeed on assignments.

Mike Schmoker writes passionately about the power of writing in *Results Now*, a book length critique of the state of literacy education in our country. He makes a plea for reading and writing to be at the center of the curriculum in all subjects. He states:

> The value of writing becomes clear only when we understand how it enables students to connect the dots in their knowledge. A deeper look at writing reveals its impact on our ability to learn and think at the highest levels, across the disciplines. Writing literally makes students smarter. We don't hear nearly enough about these benefits in education courses…. The very act of writing—and revising—teaches us to identify and correct contradictions, to refine and improve and clarify our thoughts—*to think* (Hillocks, 1987). Writing may very well exercise the critical faculties in a way that can't be matched (pp. 62–63).

The problem is clear—we need to ask our students to write more. But to demand more writing and thinking, especially writing, requires more teacher work in an unending cycle of assignment giving, student response, and teacher feedback—sometimes for more than one hundred and fifty students. The time needed to complete just one cycle can be overwhelming. Yet if a teacher were to give assignments requiring written products without evaluating them, students, being only human, would stop completing the assignments or would do them in a perfunctory way. Academic tasks performed without adequate feedback can be counterproductive.

Schmoker provides a general answer:

> A drastic shift and a new awareness are needed here. As Anne-Marie Hall advises, "Write more; grade less" (1994). The research is strong that students are far better off when we score their work for only one or two criteria that we have just finished teaching carefully and explicitly—and with the help of exemplars that add immensely to our best attempts to describe or define "voice" or "effective transitions" or "thoughtfully placed details" in a paragraph. Students need limited amounts of specific feedback—and they need it quickly, with the opportunity to correct or revise. Marzano and others have shown that we can be vastly more effective while spending only a fraction of the time we now spend on grading (pp. 168–169).

This book presents a model for a writing-across-the-curriculum/writing-to-learn program that explains exactly how to "write more—grade less" by defining five types of writing assignments and the outcomes expected for each. The Collins Writing Program has been designed for *real teachers* working under *real conditions*. My goal is to give teachers, schools, and districts a *unified, research-based program* that *can be used in all classrooms in all subject areas from grades four to twelve.*[*] To achieve this goal, the program provides techniques that require the student to be the intellectual worker in the room. This is a challenging, demanding program for students—not for teachers.

The Collins Writing Program is not designed to turn all teachers into English teachers. Science, math, foreign language, career and technical education, health teachers, and others all have more than enough of their own content to cover. Rather, this program is designed to help teachers in all content areas help students achieve academically by requiring students to think on paper. Teachers accomplish this goal by using frequent, usually short, writing assignments to increase students' involvement in lessons, check on their understanding of concepts, or promote their thinking about content.

Here are some examples of writing assignments that the program suggests students might do to engage actively in the content of the lesson:

● List relevant information they "know" about a new concept or topic just before it is presented to them

● Put a concept from the text or another source into their own words—to "translate" it or summarize it

● Make a connection between a concept from class and something else they know about or have experienced in their own lives

● Explain how ideas are similar (despite their differences) or different (despite their similarities)

● Give an example that illustrates a general statement or give a general statement that explains some examples

In addition to having students write about the content of the course, the program can be used to encourage them to reflect on what they are doing to take respon-

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[*] The Collins Writing Program is a K to 12 program, but I have found it impossible to write a specific, practical book for teachers that covers this wide range of grades. Therefore, the book you are reading is focused on grades 4 to 12. Gary Chadwell, my longtime associate, has adapted this book for grades K to 5 in *Developing an Effective Writing Program for the Elementary Grades.* It is available from Collins Education Associates. Our website, collinsed.com, provides information about all of our products and additional research and studies that support the effectiveness of our approach.

sibility for their own learning and understanding. Here are some examples of writing assignments that can help students become more reflective learners:

- Write about an assignment they've been given—what approach they might take or problems they think they might have

- Write about an upcoming test to find out what they don't fully understand and what they feel they do know

- Write about a test they just took, before the results are in, to reflect on their level of knowledge and understanding

- Write about their progress in class and their involvement in discussions and other activities—perhaps to make suggestions about how the class could be better for them and what they could do to make it that way

- Write about the personal significance of a subject—what they like best about it, how they'll use it someday

In addition to actively engaging students in the content of the course and requiring them to reflect on their approach to that content, the program can be used to refine listening and speaking skills. As you will see, some types of assignments require that the students read their writing out loud and listen critically to writing that is being read to them. These are extremely important steps, not only because they improve the quality of the final written product, but because they reinforce two skills—listening and speaking—that should be considered the most essential skills we teach, along with thinking and writing.

The Collins Writing Program has six chapters. "Chapter One: Five Types of Writing Assignments" provides a detailed description of the different types of writing assignments that form the basis of the program. "Chapter Two: Creating Types Three and Four Writing Assignments" explains how to create assignments that, because of the elements they contain, actually help to develop student writers. "Chapter Three: Essential Writing Assignments" describes four assignments that can become the bases of an effective writing program in any subject area. "Chapter Four: Highly Recommended Assignments" describes seven assignments that help teachers engage students in thinking about their thinking and help teachers learn about their students on a more personal level. "Chapter Five: Classroom Snapshots: Adapting the Collins Writing Program to Your Students" describes how the program might be implemented in different classes with students of different levels of experience, responsibility and motivation. Finally, "Chapter Six: Clarifying Expectations Outside the Classroom" discusses the need for clear communication about the program's expectations, especially to parents.

Five Types of Writing Assignments

This chapter describes the five different types of writing assignments that make up the Collins Writing Program. These assignments fall on a continuum from Type One to Type Five: Type One writing emphasizes idea generation without attention to the craft of writing, while Type Five emphasizes close attention to all aspects of craft and content. Each type has a different purpose; therefore, it is important for teachers to be certain about the type of writing they want and to communicate clearly to students which type is expected.

For years, researchers who studied learning processes have known that it is best to separate the creative (idea generating) and critical (idea evaluating) processes because the effective use of one hinders the effective use of the other. The system described in this chapter defines different types of writing and, by doing so, removes the psychological barriers to creativity by establishing times when it is all right to be "just creative" (Type One), times when a controlled progression of creative and critical thought are required (Types Two through Four), and times when the critical function is at its peak (Type Five).

The program helps students grow as thinkers and writers because it states explicitly what students must do to be successful. It takes away one of the primary obstacles to good writing: fear—fear of evaluation by unknown or hidden criteria and fear of failure. In addition to developing valuable thinking, learning, and writing skills, another major benefit of this program is that it saves teachers time. Writing assignments cease to be a punishment for teachers, who must prove to students that their work "counts" by correcting and evaluating every line. The Collins Writing Program provides a way for teachers to quickly evaluate student work and still have it count.

✏️ Type One Writing

DEFINITION: Type One writing is writing to get ideas on paper, brainstorming. It is the idea generating, recollecting, data gathering, exploring, or questioning phase of the writing and thinking process. Type One writing is timed and requires a minimum number of items or lines, a quota. Questions and/or guesses are permitted. Evaluated with a check (✔) or minus (—).

Type One writing is the perfect response to the question, how do we get students to write more without overwhelming the teacher? It's a way to make writing a natural occurrence. In her book, *The Nine Rights of Every Writer,* Vicki Spandel has the "right to write badly" as one of her nine rights. She goes on to say,

> In many classrooms, writing is an event: ***Time for writing!***
> The more we adopt this approach, the more unnatural we make writing feel—and the more pressure we put on students to make every writing act a performance to remember. . . . Our students will be stronger, better writers when it feels as natural to write in school as it feels to read, and when it is as integral to learning in all subjects (p. 71).

Of course a conscientious teacher may ask if frequent, ungraded writing makes any real difference in the quality of students' writing. Professional writers have long advocated free writing as a critical technique, and in a carefully designed study published in *Education and Treatment of Children,* Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley found that timed free writing periods dramatically improved the quality of student writing in the fourth grade. Their results showed "an examination of writing samples over time from students with the highest and lowest writing rates showed improved writing quality in terms of more concrete details and more sophisticated organization" (p. 249). It's powerful when conventional wisdom and carefully designed research studies complement one another.

Most Type One writing assignments are completed in class in less than ten minutes and are a great way to overcome writer's block. Typically they follow the rules of brainstorming by requiring students to write a specified amount in a specified time. Unlike brainstorming, Type One writing is usually done individually and many times without benefit of a class discussion. An important objective of Type One writing is to give everyone time to think about a topic. It can also quiet down highly verbal students (the 20 percent who do 80 percent of the talking) and provide teachers with a sense of how much students know about a particular area or topic.

Type One writing assignments commonly replace or precede classroom discussion. For example, one of the most effective uses of this type of writing is at the beginning of a unit. Rather than introducing the unit with a lecture or asking a class of students to tell what they know about the unit, a teacher asks all students to write a specified number of lines about everything they know about the topic. "If you do not know much or, for that matter, anything about the topic, write questions." I sometimes follow Type One assignments with an activity that asks a few individual students to read their papers while the class categorizes the ideas into three columns: facts about the topic, questions about the topic, and miscellaneous. While one student reads, the others listen and tell me where to list what was just read. Students must be active listeners to categorize and evaluate the ideas being read. It's a wonderful way to start any lesson, does not require at-home preparation, and gets students talking, listening, and thinking about a topic they will be studying.

Format for Type One Writing: Type One writing requires just one draft. Students only need to put their names on the first line, right-hand side, and "Type One" on the first line, left-hand side of their papers, and remember to skip lines. Masters with the correct format for the different types of writing are at the back of this book. You may find it helpful to copy some of these pages until the students have the proper format mastered.

Form: Type One writing can take almost any form, but it is often a list, rambling essay, or personal reflection. Some teachers call it a learning log or response journal, but because of the quota and time limit, it tends to be more structured than the traditional log or journal. Type One writing can even take the form of a graphic organizer or chart where students display information in a graphic form. It can mix facts and questions. While the most obvious Type One assignments respond to directions like, "Tell me everything you know about a particular topic, or predict what will happen if . . . ," a more interesting use of Type One writing asks students to write in an imaginative/narrative style—writing to tell a story—rather than in an analytical/expository style—writing to explain or prove to a teacher that the student knows something. For example, a social studies teacher might ask students to write fifteen to twenty lines of dialogue between two historical figures who have met in the afterlife and are sharing thoughts and experiences. The important thing to remember is that these pieces do not have to be polished—they just have to be attempted.

Audience: The only audience for Type One writing is the student writer. The teacher plays the role of a quick evaluator who does not carefully read the paper but checks to see if the amount of writing required was generated and that the student attempted to interact with the topic. Teachers typically will skim a sample of Type Ones from a class to get a sense of the class' prior knowledge in relationship to a new unit.

Evaluation: The only evaluation criterion for Type One writing is that each student must write something in an atmosphere of either no risk or relatively no risk. For students who are not very fluent writers or who need a concrete goal, the sole criterion is the number of written lines, written within a time limit. It is important to use number of written lines rather than sentences. A teacher who requires sentences must read and correct sentence structure, and that is not the purpose of Type One writing. For example, the teacher gives the assignment, "Write ten lines telling what you know about Siberia, and if you cannot think of ten lines of information, list questions." Then the teacher can evaluate the assignment by simply looking at the length and need not read it to see if it was written in sentences. The objective is to help students discover what they know, not to see if their writing is in complete sentences.

Example A, on page 6, is a Type One response written by an eighth grade student to the assignment about Siberia. It has been evaluated with a check because it has ten written lines. Obviously, it was easy to evaluate and the student made it easier by numbering the lines. The correctness of the content and the level of writing skills are not at issue here. The student simply was required to think about a topic and capture questions and possible areas of knowledge or misunderstanding. By using this Type One assignment, the teacher had a chance to assess what the student knew at the time. If the student had not written ten lines, the grade would be a minus. Evaluation for Type One writing should be kept very simple, based on one easily observable trait. An extensive list of possible Type One assignments is on pages 7 to 9. You may want to keep a copy of these pages at your desk for ready reference.

FAQ

Type One writing has a time limit. I have special needs students who are not to have timed tests. What do you suggest?

ANSWER: Because Type One assignments are supposed to be non-threatening (no right or wrong answers) and are graded simply, I would try to modify the time restriction for Type One assignments. My guess is that the non-timed requirement is for tests and quizzes and Type One can easily be considered an exception. But if everything must be non-timed, I have had good success changing the quota (ten lines in four minutes) so that a student in question does not need to produce as much (say, five lines) within the time limit. In this way you have made a reasonable accommodation and have given the student an opportunity to practice writing under time-pressure—a life-long skill. The value of the time limit is that it helps students get down to work immediately and discourages perfectionism because of the pressure of the time limit. I think of Type One as an effort grade rather than an academic grade. ▪

How important is the correct formatting of the papers?   FAQ

ANSWER: The format is a means to an end, not the end. The Collins Writing Program is not about how to head a paper, but if students learn to head the paper the same way, it has significant advantages. First, the heading becomes one less thing to worry about. No student energy needs to be expended trying to figure out what the teacher wants, and when it becomes automatic, there are fewer papers without names; by the second year of the program, it's routine. When students get to Type Three and Type Four writing, the papers have the student record focus correction areas (explanation to follow). If the students write the focus correction areas, the teacher has proof the students know the evaluative criteria and the points. Also, parents and other interested individuals (other teachers, school administrators, curriculum coordinators, etc.) know about your standards for a particular paper. The heading of the paper communicates, at a glance, the type of writing and the evaluation standards.

In addition to the heading, we get questions about the necessity of skipping lines. I am a proponent of skipping lines for a number of reasons: first, skipping lines provides space for students to edit without making a mess of their papers. I find many students are unable to deal with an extensively edited draft because it becomes so messy. They toss the draft away and begin with a fresh sheet. Skipping lines permits editing that is easier to understand, recopy, or retype. Because Type One writing is likely to generate information that could become the basis of Type Two through Type Five writing assignments, having space for revisions, corrections, and elaboration is critical. A second reason to have students skip lines is that papers are easier to read. It has been my experience that double-spaced papers take approximately twenty percent less time to read than single-spaced papers. Any formatting system that can save twenty percent of a teacher's time is worth instituting. A third reason is that double spacing allows more room for teacher or peer comments, and the comments can be placed so that they are easier to understand. Finally, if papers are double-spaced they can be used later for editing practice on new skills. If students keep papers in folders, they have a great source of relevant practice sheets. ■

My favorite follow-up to a Type One writing assignment is the below-the-line activity. In this activity, the students draw a line across the paper where the Type One writing has ended. They then partner up with another student and share each other's writing, adding a specified number of additional written lines "below the line," thus adding to their original list. I find that asking students to "add three additional lines of information or questions that you did not have on your original list" focuses the discussions and makes the students more accountable than just asking students to share.

Tip!

EXAMPLE A

Type One   Joe Smith

10/15

X
1   Siberia is one of 11 states that used to make the
X
2   up the Soviet Union. It is a cold poor country
X
3   that has a few oil sourses. What are some
X
4   political leaders? What are the people like?
X
5   What do they eat? (fish?) What is their
X
6   financial status? What is their currency.
X
7   What are activities kids do to pass the time?
X
8   What is their schooling like? What are some
X
9   problems that face the region? What are
X
10 current things happening. What are some
X
11 cities? What famous people are from Siberia?
X
12 Would they rather live in the US? Why?

Sample Type One Writing Questions

Type One writing gets ideas on paper—brainstorming. Type One is **timed** and requires a **minimum number** of items or lines. Questions and/or guesses are permitted. Evaluated with a check (✔) or minus (—).

For Activating Prior Knowledge:

▶ In eight* lines or more (or five or ten lines, depending on the time you want to take), write the things you know or questions you have about _____.

▶ Even though we have not read or discussed it yet, what does the term (or concept or phrase) _____ mean to you? Fill at least four* lines.

▶ What do you think this (picture, formula, abbreviation, notation, chart, word, mark, or phrase) means? Why do you think so? Fill seven* lines or more.

▶ What do you think a _____ looks like? Describe it in six* lines or more.

▶ How do you think a _____ behaves (or is solved or is constructed)? Fill eight* lines or more.

For Reflecting About Learning:

▶ What were the most important (or interesting, surprising) points to you from yesterday's discussion about _____? Fill six* lines or more.

▶ On the topic we discussed yesterday, fill eight* lines or more about the ideas you understood best. Least.

▶ Think about and write down two* "hard questions" about _____.

▶ On last night's homework, explain what was the hardest part for you to solve (or understand, complete, read, collect, and so on)? Fill five* lines or more.

▶ If you were going to solve (or do or read or study) _____, what would you do differently? Give your explanation in at least six* lines.

_____
*To enhance the brainstorming aspects of this Type One prompt, establish a quota of writing and time limit appropriate for the task.

▶ Now that we have finished our unit on _____, make a list of at least ten* terms that would appear in a book chapter on this topic.

▶ What went well with your group project (or experiment or performance)? What would improve the group's work? Fill five* lines or more.

▶ What kinds of questions (or problems, reading assignments, laboratory activities, new vocabulary, writing assignments, and so on) are hard for you? Fill six* lines or more.

▶ As you think about what we did in class (or lab) today, what was (the easiest, most fun, most challenging, something you would like to do again, differently)? Fill at least seven* lines.

▶ Based on today's discussion, do a 3-2-1 reflection. Write down three things you found interesting, two things that were a bit confusing, and one thing you would like to know more about.

▶ What are two* ways you would go about solving this problem?

▶ Write at least four* examples of _____.

▶ What are three* ways we can get the same (result, solution, answer, outcome)?

▶ List three* (tools, formulas, instruments, reference materials) you think were used to accomplish this.

▶ When you are preparing for a test, what techniques do you use to help you remember important facts? Fill six* lines or more.

▶ Think about the test you just completed and how you prepared for it. What should you have spent more time studying? Less time? Why? Fill six* lines or more.

▶ What are some of the things you do that make you a good (reader, writer, test taker, problem solver, study mate)? Fill five* lines or more.

▶ Describe something that you can do better now than you could last year. Fill six* lines or more.

▶ When I teach this unit on _____ to next year's class, what do you think I could do to make it better? Tell me in ten* lines or more.

_____

*To enhance the brainstorming aspects of this Type One prompt, establish a quota of writing and time limit appropriate for the task.

For Predicting:

▶ For the upcoming test, what questions do you think I might ask that would require a short, written answer (as opposed to a multiple-choice, true-false, or matching answer)? Give at least four* questions.

▶ In five* lines, predict what would happen if _____. Explain why you think so.

▶ In five* lines, describe what might have caused the scene you see in this picture.

▶ Before we (go on this field trip, conduct this experiment, study this unit, collect this data), write eight* lines about some of the things you hope to find out.

For Making Connections:

▶ What relationship does _____ have with current events or your daily life at home or school? Fill at least six* lines.

▶ How do you think _____ and _____ are related? Fill five* lines or more.

▶ How is _____ (this type of problem, concept) similar to _____ (another type of problem, concept)? Fill seven* lines or more.

For Creative Thinking:

▶ What do you think someone in this situation (in a story, news event, and so on) would be thinking? Be worried about? Be happy about? What do you think the other person in this situation would be thinking? Fill at least eight* lines.

▶ Describe a way of doing this routine task (such as reviewing home-work, passing out lab materials, distributing calculators, signing out instruments or supplies) so that it would be more interesting or efficient to do. Tell me in six* lines or more.

▶ What if (electricity emitted sound waves, numbers 0-10 had assigned colors, copy machines did not exist, houses could not be built with right angles, and so on)? What would life be like? Fill at least ten* lines.

_____
*To enhance the brainstorming aspects of this Type One prompt, establish a quota of writing and time limit appropriate for the task.

✎ Type Two Writing

DEFINITION: Type Two writing shows that the writer knows something about a topic or has thought about the topic; it is best used as a quiz. It usually has a number in the question.

Type Two writing assignments ask for definitions, facts, explanations, opinions supported with details, evaluative comments, or new applications. It is identical to the open response or constructed response questions on many state tests. In Type Two writing the evaluation criterion is that the content must be clear and correct. Because no points are deducted for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, Type Two writing is an ideal mode for some students who have weak mechanical skills. In reality, there is a natural limit to the number of writing mistakes a student can make on Type Two writing because the response might be unintelligible. Good ideas will be lost if the writing is terribly poor. But Type Two writing asks teachers to "separate the dancer from the dance" and evaluate the content, not the way the content is expressed.

Type Two writing is best used in lieu of individual questions to students in class to encourage active participation by all students in the same way Type One writing does. For example, rather than ask a few students if they know the answer to a question, give a Type Two assignment that asks all students to answer a question in writing. You then have a choice of evaluation strategies depending upon the importance of the questions and the amount of time available. (The section on evaluation that follows provides some options.)

The key to successful Type Two writing assignments is that the prompt or question must be clear and have a definite answer. This does not mean that the answer must be a verbatim response from the text or class notes. Rather, the best Type Two assignments help students make their own meaning by translating concepts into their own words. Vague questions encourage vague answers, and vague answers are difficult and time consuming to evaluate. Below are some examples of Type Two assignments in different subject areas.

● From our class discussion, give a one- or two- sentence definition of sportsmanship. Then describe a situation from your own experience that illustrates your definition.

● Give a five- to ten-line summary of last night's reading. Include two to three main ideas.

● List at least ten materials you will need to conduct this experiment.

● Explain at least four steps you would take to solve the problem on the board and then use the steps to solve it.

● Explain two mistakes that a student made when creating this graph.

Format for Type Two Writing: As in Type One writing, students only need to put their names on the first line, right-hand side, and "Type Two" on the first line, left-hand side of their papers. Remember to skip lines to leave space to refine the answer and make it easier to read. There is only one draft.

Form: Because Type Two writing is primarily used to quiz students, it most frequently takes the form of an open response question, list, or definition. Type Two assignments should encourage students to write what they know or how they feel in response to a prompt, but discourage them from adding lines or pages to pad their answers. Good answers or ideas can be obscured in the fog of their own words. As students have experience with Type Two writing, they will begin to learn the distinction between padding a response and using writing as a tool to develop and elaborate ideas.

Audience: The audience for Type Two writing is the teacher, who has high expectations about the content of the writing but not about how flawlessly the content is expressed.

Evaluation: Type Two writing is best for a question that requires a limited, specific, predictable response. Open-ended questions are served better with Type One writing, where the writer has free rein, or with Type Three writing, where the writer knows the specific criteria for success. *I have found that questions or prompts that have quantity specification are good candidates for Type Two writing.* For example, list the *three* possible causes for this chemical reaction, define *three* of the five terms on the board, explain the *two* main points we discussed during yesterday's class, or indentify *two* errors in this solution.

Evaluation systems for Type Two writing should be kept as simple as possible, permitting the teacher to skim the paper looking for the correct response. I find that the best evaluation systems are point systems because they are quick and easy to use. The teacher and the situation will determine how difficult the point system should be, but for many students who would rather sit back and relax, especially during last period, a Type Two writing assignment can be a real wake-up call. Of course, there are a number of alternative evaluation strategies for Type Two writing (e.g., points for each correct answer, letter grade off for each definition missed), but to be successful they should be simple, quick, and require that the teacher only skim the written work looking for the "correct" response.

Type Two writing is quiz writing and should not be used for a major test. The more frequently Type Two writing is given, the better. Students get used to the approach and the teacher can get enough Type Two writing grades from each student during the course of a marking period to be able to use these results to make a report card grade as reliable as possible. Type Two grades are also very helpful in determining the effort grade.

As the frequency of Type Two writing increases, the number of papers that the teacher needs to evaluate decreases. For example, if a teacher decides that evaluating five Type Two responses per student per quarter is reasonable, then that teacher can give twenty Type Two writing assignments and collect only a twenty-five percent sample each time. Yet, the students will have to engage in twenty writing and thinking experiences, giving each one maximum effort because they will never know if an individual piece will be collected.

It is the potential for frequent, easy-to-evaluate writing assignments that gives Type Two writing its real power. In the April 1991 issue of *Educational Leadership*, Frank Dempster's "Synthesis of Research on Reviews and Tests" examines all the research available on the effects of testing on student understanding and retention of content. He states: "Research on learning—specifically research on the effectiveness of tests—has found consistently that tests do more than test; they also promote learning."

He goes on to provide details about his findings: 1) testing, especially if it is conducted soon after material is introduced, promotes learning; 2) frequent, spaced testing results in higher levels of achievement than does infrequent testing; and 3) the use of cumulative questions on tests is one of the keys to effective learning. He concludes his review by stating, "More frequent use of properly spaced reviews and tests in the classroom can dramatically improve classroom learning and retention. Another potential benefit . . . suggests that spaced repetitions encourage highly constructive thinking." Dempster's conclusions should not be news to teachers for whom the question has always been how to create and evaluate frequent tests, especially if they are essay tests.

Tip! One simple way to begin implementation of the Collins Writing Program is to ask students to write down two questions that could be fairly asked at the beginning of tomorrow's class. Creating two questions is a Type One assignment because there is no one correct answer. In fact, I am frequently surprised by what my students think is important in class versus what I am attempting to teach.

These Type Ones are great closure activities. Don't be surprised if students ask if they can use their notes to create the questions. And, of course, you should let them—it's a great review. At the end of class, walk around to make sure that students wrote the required number of questions, giving a check or a minus and call on a few students to read what they wrote. When you hear some good questions, point them out, write them in your plan book and ask them the next day as a Type Two quiz. When I gave the Type Two quiz the next day, I usually rolled a die to see what row or group's paper I would collect and grade so that I did not have to grade everyone's papers. No one knows whose quiz will be collected, it's always random, and I can usually grade four to six Type Twos between classes. This technique of creating questions at the end of class and asking one at the beginning of the next encourages note taking, daily review of notes, ongoing formative assessment, and a check to see if the class was clear— a terrific payoff!

More recent research compiled by David Glenn in the June 8, 2007 *Chronicle of Higher Education* confirms and deepens Dempster's conclusions. In "You Will Be Tested On This," Glenn summarized the effects of "effortful retrieval":

> A student who has just read a complex article full of unfamiliar facts about 17th-century Poland will retain that information much better if he is quizzed—thus forcing him to retrieve the data from memory— than if he simply rereads the article two or three times. . . . Instructors should take a few minutes to give quizzes, preferably in short-answer format, at the beginning or end of each class session. . . . Instructors might consider it a nuisance to construct and grade the quizzes, he says, but it's far worse to allow students to go 12 weeks between hearing a lecture and coughing up facts on a final exam. Students who wait to cram for a final exam rarely retain the material over the long term, even if they perform reasonably well on the final (p. A14).

Example B is a Type Two response written by an eighth grade student in response to the question, "In a short composition, write what you know about Siberia, including and numbering ten facts." The evaluation of the paper was 60 because the student only listed six facts. "Siberia is the most exciting place in the world" is, of course, an opinion, not a fact.

EXAMPLE B

```
                                    60
        Type Two                                    Joe Smith
    X                                                10/19
    1       Although it is the largest region in the Soviet
    X
    2       Union It only has 9% of the population. The
    X
    3/4     Population is 25 million Lung cancer is a big
    X
    5       problem in Siberia Siberia is about the same
    X
    6       size as the U.S.A. Siberia is the most
    X
    7       exciting place in the world. Siberia is very
    X
            desolate.
```

The evaluation was based solely on whether or not there are ten correctly stated facts about Siberia in the piece and not about the missed periods. This type of assignment is better than a typical multiple choice exercise because it requires students to assemble the information themselves and can be given spontaneously without the need to prepare a multiple choice test. Also, it is very easy to grade because, in this case, the criteria are limited to ten facts and the student has numbered the facts, or at least what he thought were the facts, about Siberia.

A helpful list of Type Two prompts is on pages 15 to 16. The questions have been arranged to reflect the six categories of Bloom's Taxonomy. As you can see, Type Two questions do not need to be limited to the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (remembering and understanding) but can also be used at the higher levels (evaluating and creating). You may want to keep a copy of these pages at your desk for ready reference.

Sample Type Two Writing Questions

Type Two writing shows that the writer knows something about a topic or has thought about the topic. It is the correct answer to a specific question, graded as a quiz. **One draft.**

Note: Type Two writing prompts can span the full range of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, from remembering to creating. (The taxonomy was revised in the 1990's by Lorin Anderson, a student of Bloom's. The categories here reflect the revised taxonomy.)

Remembering—recalling information:

▶ Define five* _____ key words.

▶ List five* facts about_____.

▶ Describe three* characteristics of all _____.

▶ Describe two* ways that _____ occurs in everyday living.

▶ Locate three* (cities, rivers, attributes, etc.) of _____.

Understanding—explaining ideas or concepts:

▶ Paraphrase (write in your own words using about the same number of words) the following passage. Be sure to include the two* key points.

▶ Summarize the three* most important points from our class yesterday (or today's class or last night's reading).

▶ In your own words, write the meaning of _____ in a way that a classmate would understand and be able to answer on a test.

▶ Explain the three* steps that must be taken in order to get an answer to this problem (or question, situation, etc.).

Applying—using information in another familiar situation:

▶ What two* strategies that we have talked about might you use to (solve, connect, figure out, repair, set, etc.) the following?

▶ Describe at least two materials* (or resources, chemicals, colors, instruments, tools, sources, etc.) needed to do (or solve) the problem.

Analyzing—breaking information into parts to explore relationships:

▶ Explain two* ways that _____ and _____ are similar.

▶ Describe three* ways that _____ and _____ are different.

_____

*or some other appropriate number

▶ _____ and _____ are alike in some ways and different in others. Describe two* ways they are similar and two ways* they are different.

▶ Explain two* ways that you could tell the difference between a _____ and a _____.

▶ Tell three* things wrong with this statement (or work order, blueprint, description, problem solution, lab report, etc.).

▶ Explain two* ways that data could be shown to support this answer.

▶ Describe a pitfall to avoid in doing this experiment (or problem, design, performance, lab report, etc.).

Evaluating—justifying a decision, checking, critiquing, judging:

▶ Explain two* reasons why I would not give this answer full credit on a test.

▶ Give two* reasons why this cannot be a correct answer for this problem (or question). Explain.

▶ Give three* reasons you can tell this is not a _____.

▶ What are three* things you could change to make this sketch (or comparison, blueprint, proof, explanation, pattern, recipe, report, etc.) better?

▶ Tell three* reasons why _____ can't or doesn't work. Explain.

▶ Rank and justify our ranking of these three* projects.

Creating—generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things:

▶ All but one of the following operations (or animals, objects, events, tools, ingredients, etc.) belongs to a category because they have several common characteristics. Give this category a name and give two* reasons why one does not belong in this category.

▶ If the answer is _____, write two* questions that would go with that answer.

▶ What two* changes would you recommend in yesterday's class that would help make the material more clear (interesting, relevant to your lives, etc.)?

▶ What are three* possible results if Hitler had won the war?

____
*or some other appropriate number.

Services from Collins Education Associates

Collins Education Associates (**CEA**) is a consulting and training organization made up of associates selected because of their outstanding teaching ability and commitment to our program. Our most popular workshops and services are described below.

Half-Day and Full-Day Workshops

Developing Writing and Thinking Skills Across the Curriculum: A Practical Program for Schools

This is our basic workshop. It demonstrates ways of using writing activities to increase students' understanding of course content, classroom involvement, and motivation to learn. A key theme is actually saving teacher time and effort in preparing and conducting lessons as well as in processing student work. For teachers of grades 4 and above in all subject areas.

A Writing Program That Works

This workshop demonstrates how to build three critical teaching strategies into an effective program of writing instruction using the Cumulative Writing Folder. For teachers of Language Arts and English (grades 4–12) for whom teaching of writing is a primary responsibility.

Writing in the Elementary Grades

This workshop offers elementary grade teachers practical strategies for helping their students gain writing fluency and comfort with the writing process. The strategies help your students discover writing as a rewarding form of self-expression and a tool for learning in all curriculum areas. For teachers in grades K-6.

Extended Training

CEA also offers three- to seven-day courses. These popular courses reflect the realization that most significant change requires extensive training. The major focus of our courses is on intensive instruction in the use of the Five Types of Writing, Cumulative Writing Folder, and three key teaching strategies: oral reading, focus correcting, and using students' past writing to teach new skills. Other topics include motivating students to write, diagnosing writing weaknesses, using efficient techniques for giving feedback on papers, teaching techniques to improve writing style, writing as a way to foster learning, teaching students how to be resources to themselves during the peer editing process, and creating effective writing assignments.

Because we custom-tailor our training to meet the needs of our clients, we design our multi-day courses only after consulting with the host and the participants. Many of our courses are offered for graduate credit through arrangements with universities throughout the country.

Consulting Services

A basic assumption in our work is that writing instruction is most effective when it is supported by a program—a unified set of teaching techniques and expectations about student writing that is developed and reinforced over a period of years. But program development takes time. Individual teachers can improve the teaching of writing after having attended a half-day or one-day workshop, but it is rare for a school or school system to develop and implement a writing program as a result of a half-day workshop. Based on these realities, we have fashioned a number of program development services that normally only small-group or one-to-one instruction can provide. Listed here are some examples of consultant services available to schools or school systems:

Grade-alike group meeting: Meet with consultant by grade level to discuss implementation issues.

Team meetings: Meet with consultant in teams (different subject areas) to discuss writing and to integrate approaches and strategies.

Demonstrations: Watch consultant teach a writing lesson modeling specific techniques.

Peer coaching: Plan and teach a lesson with consultant.

Selecting FCAs by grade level: Establish a scope and sequence of instruction and align them with learning outcomes.

Troubleshooting and developing common standards: Examine students' writing in order to standardize practice and develop additional strategies for teaching and editing.

Collins Writing Program Publications & Materials

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	ITEM #
Collins Portfolio (pkg. of 25 folders)	202-C
Cumulative Writing Folder (pkg. of 25)	201-C
Primary Cumulative Writing Folder (pkg. of 25)	206-C
Teacher's Implementation Portfolio (pkg. of 25 folders)	CE-013
Editing Phone	230-M
BOOKS, CDs & BOOK/CD BUNDLES	
Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance Through Writing & Thinking Across the Curriculum (Book only)	208-B
Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance & Teacher Resource Masters CD ROM (Book & CD)	308-BCD
Teacher Resource Masters CD for Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance (CD only)	108-CD
Implementing the Cumulative Writing Folder Program	203-B
Developing an Effective Writing Program for the Elementary Grades	211-B
Selecting and Teaching Focus Correction Areas	215-B
Writing Strategies for the Primary Grades	219-B
Writing Projects for the Elementary Grades	213-B
Twelve Assignments Every Middle School Student Should Write	225-B
High School Writing Projects: Prompts and Projects for Thinking and Learning Across the Curriculum	216-B
A Survivor's Guide to the Research Paper: Five Structured Assignments to Lead Students Through Their First Research Paper	210-B
Summarizing, Persuading, and Preparing for the SAT: A Writing Project for College-Bound, High Schools Students	212-B
Writing About Literature: Ideas for the High School English Teacher	218-B
Letters from a Trunk: A Writing Project About Twentieth-Century America	217-B
Improving Writing Skills in Career and Technology High Schools	205-B
Seven Sentence Building Activities to Develop Advanced Writers	226-B

POSTERS	ITEM #
Five Types of Writing	204-P
Writer's Marks	209-P
Essential Primary Grade Focus Correction Areas	220-P
Essential Elementary Grade Focus Correction Areas	221-P
Essential Middle School Focus Correction Areas	222-P
Essential High School Focus Correction Areas	223-P
Revision & Editing Symbols	224-P
ESSENTIAL CONVENTIONS	
Level P (Grades 2-3): Check Mate (pkg. of 25 folders)	335-C
Level P (Grades 2-3): Check Mate Classroom Poster	336-P
Level A (Grades 4-6): Check Mate (pkg. of 25 folders)	340-C
Level A (Grades 4-6): Check Mate Classroom Poster	341-P
Level B (Grades 6-9): Check Mate (pkg. of 25 folders)	345-C
Level B (Grades 6-9): Check Mate Classroom Poster	346-P
Level B (Grades 6-9): Check Mate Teacher Resource Guide	348-FF
Level C (Grades 9-12): Check Mate (pkg. of 25 folders)	350-C
Level C (Grades 9-12): Check Mate Classroom Poster	351-P

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