

Informative Writing, Grades K-2

Addressing the Common Core Standards with Focus Correction Areas (FCAs)

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) categorize writing into three types: argument/opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative. This document provides Collins Writing Program users with focus correction areas (FCAs) for informative writing in grades K-2. The FCAs listed and described here do not include all writing skills (style and conventions of language FCAs are not included). They focus on the critical, specialized skills that students will need to be effective informative writers. In addition, these FCAs address many of the other standards. For example, they also impact Standard 5 (revision), Standard 6 (using technology to publish), Standard 7 (short, sustained research), and Standard 8 (gather information).

Informative writing skills progress developmentally across the grades. The Core introduces informative writing in kindergarten with Anchor Writing Standard 2: "Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic." In grade 3, when testing begins, Anchor Writing Standard 2 asks that students "write informative/ explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly." In grade 6 and beyond, Anchor Writing Standard 2 asks students to convey ideas and information by selecting, organizing, and analyzing relevant content.

Informative Vocabulary: On page 2 is a list of general academic vocabulary words related to informative writing. It is not a comprehensive list, but it is an excellent starting point.

Critical FCAs List: Beginning on page 3 is a list of critical FCAs. Across the top are the FCAs in abbreviated form for each grade. Below that are three columns with additional information. Column One shows the FCAs, including symbolic FCAs for emergent writers. Column Two has the CCSS description and specific standard reference. Column Three has authentic examples from the CCSS Appendix C, showing student writing that meets the standard.

FCA Teaching Strategies: On pages 5 and 6, you will find strategies for teaching FCAs to mastery. The strategies include activities you are already doing and may be done over a period of days or weeks. Because the FCAs listed on pages 3 and 4 are so critical, the time spent teaching and perfecting them is well worth the investment.

Consistent Terminology: Because the Common Core Standards are for literacy in all subjects, we encourage teachers to use the FCAs across the content areas. Doing so not only provides common language and consistent expectations but reinforces that the traits of effective writing are similar subject to subject.

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Informative Vocabulary: The Core divides vocabulary into two types: domain specific and general academic. Domain specific words and phrases are “specific to a particular field of study,” and, therefore, are more likely to be taught directly. General academic words and phrases are “vocabulary common to written texts but not commonly a part of speech” (CCSS, Appendix A, p. 42). David Coleman, one of the authors of the Common Core, calls general academic vocabulary “the language of power.” Others call it the language of college or the language of opportunity. When students become comfortable with these words in the primary grades, it sets the foundation for learning throughout their school years and beyond.

As you introduce students to the Standards, use and define words students will need to understand. Here are some general academic terms related to informative writing with brief, student-friendly definitions students will need to know.

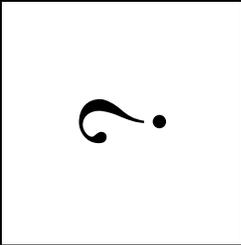
closure	to close; to end
conclusion	a way to wrap up a piece of writing; it comes at the end of the writing and reminds the reader what the central idea of the writing is; it brings closure to the piece of writing; it brings it to an end.
definition	the meaning of a word
details	facts or information about something
e.g.	a Latin abbreviation that means “for example”
evidence	ideas and information that show something is true
facts	information that is true and correct
in order	according to a particular sequence (e.g., <i>first, next, last</i>)
information	facts about something or someone
introduce	to tell about a topic at the beginning of a piece of writing
main idea	the most important idea
opinion	what you think or believe about something
section	a separate part of what you write (e.g., the ending section)
statement	something you say (state) or write (e.g., the concluding statement)
text	any written material
topic	the subject being written about

Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) to Address Informative Writing, Grades K-2

(Note: For Conventions FCAs, see Check Mate Level P)

Anchor Standard: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

FCAs for Kindergarten	FCAs for Grade 1	FCAs for Grade 2
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name topic 2. n details, facts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce topic 2. n details, facts 3. Give closure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce topic 2. n details, facts, definitions 3. Give concluding statement or section

FCAs ¹	DESCRIPTION	STUDENT EXAMPLE ²
1. Intro topic 	<p>Student introduces topic so a reader who has not read the prompt will understand what the writing will be about. Kindergarten students use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing. (W.K.1,2.2)</p> <p>Tip: Have students highlight or underline the topic</p> <p>Tip: Copy symbolic FCAs and paste, or have students paste, them on paper for Type Three writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Big Book About Spain (gr.1) • To day befor (before) We had riyda (writing) groos (groups) Mrs. _____ red (read) us a strorry (story) a baowt (about) frogs. (K)
2. n details, facts n definitions (grade 2) 	<p>Student uses facts, details, and/or definitions (grade 2) to inform the reader about the topic (W.K,1,2.2)</p> <p>Tip: Using a number (n) or a range (e.g., 1-2 facts) gives young writers a sense of how much detail to give.</p> <p>Tip: When using the symbolic FCA, have students write the number in the magnifying glass.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spain is loacted (located) in the south western tip of Europe. • Spain has a lot of fiestas. • Spian . . . has bull fights . . . (gr. 1) • Frogs lad (laid) eggs that look like jele (jelly) . . . (K)

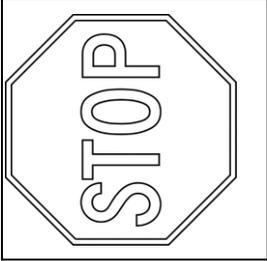
¹ Symbolic FCAs are effective with emergent writers.

² Examples taken from *Common Core State Standards, Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing*, Kindergarten, Informative, p. 11

The Collins Writing Program

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(Note: For Conventions FCAs, see *Check Mate* Level P)

FCAs ³	DESCRIPTION	STUDENT EXAMPLE ⁴
<p>3. Conclusion (grades 1, 2)</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>Student provides some sense of closure (grade 1), or a concluding statement or section (grade 2). (W.1.2.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One day when I am a researcher I am going to go to Spain and write about it!</i> (gr. 1) • <i>It gros (grows) bigr (bigger) and bigr and bigr (K)</i>

³ Symbolic FCAs are effective with emergent writers.

⁴ Examples taken from *Common Core State Standards, Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing, Kindergarten, Informative, p. 11*

Teaching FCAs for Informative Writing at the Primary Level

As you introduce new FCAs to your young writers, consider the following strategies.

Strategy One: Use Mentor Text to Develop Awareness

The experiences young children have before they begin to formally read and write are critical to their literacy development. A teacher's acknowledgement of FCAs while reading aloud can begin to develop awareness of the skills that students will soon apply to their own writing. For example, "Listen to how this author introduces her topic."

Strategy Two: Use Drawing and Labeling to Develop Fluency

Drawing and labeled drawings start emergent writers on the road to linking thinking and writing. As emergent writers start drawing as a way to communicate in writing, teachers should encourage drawing as a way of giving information. For example, "Draw a picture of the things we needed to plant the flowers yesterday."

Strategy Three: Use Reading to Promote Writing

- Read informative texts aloud to students. Point out the FCAs/writing skills the author has used. Discuss with students what the FCAs look and sound like. Gradually work toward asking students to identify for you where they see the FCA/writing skill demonstrated in a text.
- For both read alouds and for independent reading, be sure to include informative texts, e.g., *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles and *From Seed to Pumpkin* by Wendy Pfeffer.
- Use Type Three writing with these specific FCAs for informative writing.
 - Name/introduce the topic
 - Give facts/details
 - Give definitions (grade 2)
 - Give closure/conclusion (grades 1,2)

Strategy Four: Model FCAs

- Using a document camera or Smart Board, model a Type Three writing for students showing how you might accomplish an FCA. Following a shared class experience, write an introduction that introduces the topic such as "Today our class saw the film *Bear Island*."
- Gradually model each of the FCAs for informative writing.
 - Bring up the introduction and add facts/details from the film. "Remember the writing I started about our seeing the film, *Bear Island*? Well, today I'm going to add more. I'm going to tell you facts and details about what I learned."
 - For grade 2 students, another session could be used to add one or more definitions, e.g., "an island is land surrounded by water."

- Another session might focus on writing a concluding sentence about the movie.
- This modeling process may be done over several sittings if necessary. As students become more familiar with the FCAs, the modeling can be done more quickly.

Strategy Five: Practice What Has Been Modeled

- Have students practice each of the FCAs individually, much as was done in the teacher modeling. Remember, Type Three writing can have up to three FCAs. With emergent writers, teachers may choose to focus on only one key FCA at a time.
- Ask students to write an introductory sentence for another shared or individual experience. They could tell about a book they read, a project completed, or a trip taken together.
- Gradually—or over a class session or two—concentrate on other FCAs.
 - add facts/details about the experience
 - add a definition (grade 2)
 - give closure or write a concluding sentence about the experience (grades 1,2)

Strategy Six: Use the Vocabulary of the Standards Frequently

- Use the academic vocabulary of the standards so students will become used to hearing the words and applying an understanding of their meaning.
- On your Word Wall have a section for academic vocabulary words. Encourage students to use the words, both orally and in their writing.

Strategy Seven: Repeat FCAs

- Do not hesitate to repeat the FCAs on multiple Type Three assignments until you feel the students have mastery. One of the advantages of the Core is that it requires the same skill over multiple years and various subjects. For example, students are asked to write informative texts with a concluding statement from grades 1 to 12. As students progress, some of the skills will become habits. Once the skills are internalized, FCAs can be refined to direct students' intellectual energies toward producing writing with more sophistication and nuance.

Strategy Eight: Publish Student Exemplars

- Post or publish some of the best examples of FCAs from student work. They may be complete papers showing 3 FCAs, or smaller pieces showing exemplary work on an individual FCA. Students may have done the writing on their own or after conferencing with the teacher. This practice will give students examples of clearly written papers demonstrating the FCAs. It also provides recognition and motivation for students.