

Opinion 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 opinion writing in grades K-2. The FCAs shown here do not include all writing skills (style and conventions of language FCAs are not included) but instead focus on the critical, specialized skills that students will need to be effective opinion writers. In addition, these FCAs address many of the other Common Core State Standards. For example, the skills we list as FCAs also impact Standard 5 (revision), Standard 6 (using technology to produce and publish), Standard 7 (conduct short and sustained research), and Standard 8 (gather information).

Opinion writing skills progress developmentally across the grades. The Core introduces opinion writing in kindergarten with Anchor Writing Standard 1: "Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces that tell a reader the topic or name of a book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book." In grade 3, when the tests are introduced, Anchor Writing Standard 1 asks that students "write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons." In grades 4 and 5, "and information" is added to the end of the standard. In grade 6 and beyond, opinion writing changes into argument writing, in which students must cite sources for the information presented. The development goes from using personal reasons to citing research-based evidence to support the author's position.

Opinion Vocabulary: On page 2 is a list of general academic vocabulary words related to opinion 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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Opinion 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, take care to use and define words students will need to understand. Here are some general academic terms related to opinion writing with brief, student-friendly definitions students will need to know.

closure	to close; to end
conclusion	Brings the writing to an end; 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
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 you give to prove a point
facts	information that is true and correct
information	facts about something or someone
introduce	to tell about a topic at the beginning of a piece of writing
linking words	words that connect ideas and reasons together
opinion	what you think or believe about something
point of view	in opinion writing, a position or attitude a writer takes on a subject
reasons	facts or ideas that support a belief, position, or attitude
specific	something special, particular, or exact
statement	something you say (state) or write (e.g., the concluding statement)
support	to back up an opinion with facts, details, and examples
text	any written material
title	the name of a book, story, article, or poem
topic	the subject being written about

The Collins Writing Program
Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) to Address Opinion Writing, Grades K–2
 (Note: For Conventions FCAs, see *Check Mate* Level P)

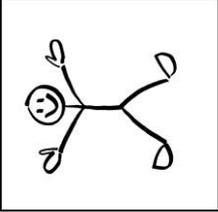
Anchor Standard: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

FCAs for Kindergarten	FCAs for Grade 1	FCAs for Grade 2
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell topic or name of book 2. State an opinion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell topic or name of book 2. State an opinion 3. Give a reason 4. Give closure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell topic or title of book 2. State an opinion 3. Give reasons that support the opinion <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use linking words 4. Give concluding statement or section

FCAs¹

DESCRIPTION

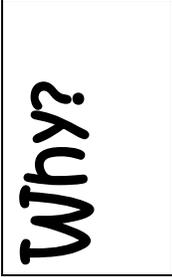
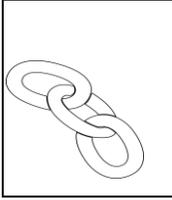
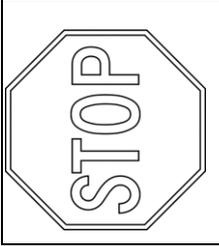
STUDENT EXAMPLE²

1. Tell topic or name of book <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; line-height: 100px;">?</div>	Student introduces the topic or book; Kindergarten students use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing. (W.K.1,2.1) Tip: As proofreading focus, have students highlight or circle the topic or name of book. Tip: Copy symbolic FCAs and paste, or have students paste, them on paper for Type Three writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you go <i>owling</i> you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing. but hope. This is (from) the book of <u>Owl Moon</u>. (gr. 2)
2. State an opinion <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">  </div>	Student states an opinion or preference about the topic or book. (W.K.1,2.1) Tip: As a proofreading focus, have students squiggle underline their opinion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like that phrase because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wanted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. (gr. 2) • . . . my fait (favorite) pot (part) is the hos (horse) (K)

¹ Symbolic FCAs are effective with emergent writers.

² Examples taken from the *Common Core State Standards, Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing, Kindergarten, Opinion, p. 6; Grade 2, "Owl Moon" p. 15.*

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Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) to Address Opinion Writing, Grades K–2
 (Note: For Conventions FCAs, see *Check Mate* Level P)

FCAs ³	DESCRIPTION	STUDENT EXAMPLE ⁴
3. Give a reason (grade 1) reasons (grade 2) 	<p>In grades 1 and 2, student provides facts and details to support reasons. (W.1,2.1)</p> <p>Tip: Challenge students to give 2+ (or a higher number) reasons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like that phrase because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. When other kids are happy that makes me happy. (gr.2)
3a. Linking words (grade 2) 	<p>In grade 2 student uses linking words to connect opinions and reasons (W.2.1)</p> <p>Tip: On the Word Wall, post linking words for students to use (e.g., <i>also, because, but, so then</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like it because it makes me feel good because you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling but you haft to have hope to see an owl. (gr. 2)
4. Give closure (grade 1) Conclusion (grade 2) 	<p>Student provides some sense of closure (grade 1) or a concluding statement or section (grade 2) (W.1,2.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like it because it makes me feel good because you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling but you haft to have hope to see an owl. (gr. 2)

³ Symbolic FCAs are effective with emergent writers.

⁴ Examples taken from the *Common Core State Standards, Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing, Grade 2, "Owl Moon"* p. 15.

Teaching FCAs for Opinion 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. For example, teacher 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, "Let's listen to how this author concludes his writing."

Strategy Two: Use Drawing and Labeling to Develop Fluency

Drawings and labeled drawings begin emergent writers on the road to linking thinking and writing. Drawing and labeling can be used with routine Type One and Type Two Writing. Teachers can also encourage beginning writers to draw as a way of expressing opinion or preferences. For example, "Draw a picture of your favorite part of the book. Then you can tell me why you chose that scene."

Strategy Three: Use Reading to Promote Writing

- Read texts aloud that express opinions 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.
- Both for read alouds and for independent reading, be sure to include texts that express opinions and give reasons, e.g., *A Tree is a Plant* by Robert Bulla, *Bats: Creatures of the Night* by Joyce Milton.
- Use Type Three writing with these specific FCAs for opinion writing.
 - Tell the topic or name of the book
 - State an opinion
 - Give reasons (grades 1,2)
 - Use linking words (grade 2)
 - Give closure (grades 1,2)

Strategy Four: Model FCAs

- Using a document camera or Smart Board, model a Type Three writing for students demonstrating how you might show an FCA. Following a shared class experience, write an introduction that tells the topic. "Today our class saw the film *Bear Island*."
- Gradually model each of the five FCAs for opinion.
 - Bring up the introduction and add an opinion about it. "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 what I thought about it, my opinion."
 - Another step could be modeling how to add reasons that support the opinion, being careful to use linking words.
 - Another session could focus on pointing out the linking words that were used and how they make the text easy to follow. (grade 2)
 - A final session would model how to write a concluding sentence about the movie.

- This modeling process could 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 1–3 FCAs. With emergent writers, teachers may choose to focus on only one key FCA at a time.
- Ask students to write an introduction sentence for another shared or individual experience. They could tell about a book they’ve read, a classroom visitor they’ve met, a trip they’ve taken, or another event.
- Gradually—or over a class session or two—concentrate on other FCAs.
 - an opinion about the experience
 - reasons that support the opinion (grades 1,2)
 - linking words, that is, words that connect the reasons to the opinion (grade 2)
 - give closure or write a concluding sentence about the experience

Strategy Six: Use the Vocabulary of the Standards Frequently

- Be sure to use the language of the FCAs whenever possible. Use the academic vocabulary of the standard so students will become used to hearing and seeing the words and also comfortable applying them in their writing.
- On your Word Wall have a section for frequently used general academic terms. Encourage students to use the words, both orally and in their writing.
- Include linking words on the Word Wall (e.g., *also*, *because*, *but*, *so*) that grade 1 and 2 students can refer to when applying the *Linking Words* FCA in their opinion writing.

Strategy Seven: Repeat FCAs

- Do not hesitate to repeat 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, the standards stress stating an opinion (or claim) and using a concluding statement at every grade level from 1 to 12. As students progress with the skills, some will become habits. Once the skills are habits, FCAs can be refined to direct students’ intellectual energies toward producing writing with more sophistication and nuance.

Strategy Eight: Publish Student Exemplars

- Post 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 gives students examples of clearly written Type Five papers demonstrating the FCAs. It also provides recognition and motivation for students.