

Dear Parent(s):

This year your child will be writing a great deal because I want my students to be intellectually active. To achieve this purpose, I will be using the Collins Writing Program, which involves giving five different types of writing assignments. Some assignments are designed simply to help students get their ideas on paper or to discover what they already know about a topic. These assignments are called **Type One** assignments and are evaluated very simply—did the student do it or not? Type One assignments are not designed to be compositions or essays. They are simply ways to guarantee that your son or daughter is thinking about a topic.

Type Two assignments require that students provide the correct information in response to a specific question. In Type Two writing, I do not judge the quality of the writing—just the content. Type One and Type Two writing assignments are designed to be completed quickly and to promote thought.

Type Three and **Type Four** writing assignments are designed to produce ideas and to develop writing skills. Type Three and Type Four writing assignments use a concept called focus correcting. Focus correcting is based on the belief that student writing improves more quickly when the student works to improve a few writing problems at a time. It will be hard for me not to correct every error on every paper, but this year, for Type Three and Type Four assignments, I will be indicating errors on each paper in usually three areas. These areas will be explained and announced in advance so that my students can focus their energies on them. The focus correction areas will be listed on the top left-hand side of each Type Three or Type Four writing assignment.

Type Five writing assignments are the most difficult because they require the student to produce publishable work, that is, work that is as free as possible from all errors. In some cases students will do a Type One assignment, edit and revise it so that it becomes a Type Three or Type Four, and finally polish it so that it becomes a Type Five. The Collins Writing Program will help me encourage my students to think, take chances, formulate ideas, and polish their ideas into finished compositions.

Parents often ask, “How can I help?” Here are a few suggestions: First, be aware of the five types of writing assignments and realize that sometimes writing assignments will not have to be perfect. Be a helper and an encourager, not a critic. Provide a quiet place to write with good lighting and a dictionary. Talk about the assignments and help your daughter or son get many ideas. And, if you are asked to review a composition, read it out loud. Ask if it sounds right. You’ll be surprised at how many of their own mistakes they will be able to hear.

If you have any questions or comments about this program or about anything else we are doing, please call.

Sincerely,