



# *The Collins Writing Exchange*

Ideas, Tips, and Resources on Writing from [Collins Education Associates](#)

---

---

## *Featured Writing Assignments*

### **Taking a Stand: Opinion/Argument Writing**

Though it has been historically a weak area of writing for U.S. students, opinion/argument writing is improving as greater emphasis is placed on it. Select one of the ready-to-use assignments below with Focus Correction Areas (FCAs), graphic organizers, and other prewriting steps included. Note that we're also providing an assignment tailored especially for career and technology high school students, too.

- [My Book Review](#) (Primary)
- [Book of the Year](#) (Elementary)
- [News with a View](#) (Middle School)
- [Taking a Stand on an Issue](#) (High School)
- [Making Thoughtful Recommendations](#) (Career & Tech High School)

#### *Special Note:*

To support your teachers' use of the program, consider having a Collins Associate demonstrate opinion/argument assignments or model other lessons in your classrooms. [Email](#) or call us at 800-932-4477.

---

## *Collins Writing Tip of the Month*

### **Effective Focus Correction Areas**

Selecting FCAs effectively is a critical step in a Collins Writing classroom. Using FCAs with student writing tasks helps clarify expectations, focus instruction, and simplify feedback.

That's why Collins Associate Kristine Gibson points out that "some FCAs are better than others." Kristine has outlined helpful guidelines for deciding on FCAs that can

work in classrooms like yours.

## FAQ Series

For details, see her FAQ ["How do I select FCAs that will work effectively for my students, including ELs and special needs students?"](#)

### Strategies That Work

## Shortcuts to Grading Students' Writing

Kim Marshall's [Marshall Memo](#) provides weekly summaries of noteworthy articles from a broad range of educational journals and newsletters. He recently summarized a 1980 article from *Learning* magazine because, he said, it was a classic and, therefore, still relevant.

Marshall's summary of Eric Johnson's article, ["Ten Shortcuts to Grading Children's Papers,"](#) reinforces many of Collins Writing's key strategies, such as pre-teaching potential problem areas, proofreading by reading drafts out loud, and resisting overcorrecting.

### Convention Wisdom

## One-Minute Clinic: Holiday Apostrophes

The holiday season means an opportunity to be remembered by family and friends through your holiday greeting cards. But be careful to be remembered for your thoughtfulness and not convention errors.

Apostrophe errors seem to flourish this time of the year. Is it "Season's Greetings from the Smith's" or "Seasons' Greetings from the Smiths"? Actually, neither is correct.

Look at the sentences below from a family holiday card and find the sentence that has no "holiday apostrophe" problems. Can you identify the problems with the other sentences?

1. *Season's Greetings from the Smiths!*
2. *Well, it's everybodys' favorite time of the year, especially the Smiths'.*
3. *Were especially proud that our newest son's-in-laws grades were so good: all As and one B.*
4. *And a heads up: We'll be sending everyone CD's of our favorite songs from the 1990's as a preview to February's theme party.*

See the [answer key](#) to check your answers.

Collins Writing Program <b>Essential Conventions Check Mate - Level A</b>	<b>Tip Sheet</b> RULE #5. APOSTROPHES ● <b>SPECIALIZED RULES</b>
Apostrophes are mainly used to show missing letters and possession (ownership), but they can be tricky. Maybe that is why so many mistakes are made with this little punctuation mark. Here are a couple of special rules to help you use the apostrophe correctly.	

Download a PDF with essential apostrophe rules from our *Check Mate* student folders, as well as a Tip Sheet on Specialized Apostrophe Rules from the Teacher Resource Guides:

- **Level P (grades 2-3)**    [Check Mate](#)    [Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level A (grades 4-6)**    [Check Mate](#)    [Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level B (grades 6-9)**    [Check Mate](#)    [Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level C (grades 9-12)**    [Check Mate](#)    [Tip Sheet](#)

*Special Note:*

*Check Mate*, the student guide for essential conventions, can help your students with apostrophe problems and other convention rules. Or try the [Essential Conventions](#) Teacher Resource Guide (\$25 for the PDF; \$30 for the hard copy). You can also download [free samplers](#) of each Teacher Resource Guide to try with your students.

---

### Quick Links

## Standards-Based FCAs for Informative Writing

Informative writing is used in every content area. It may come in the form of explanatory, descriptive, or research writing, but it is an essential mode of writing in which we want all students to develop confidence and comfort.

We have carefully reviewed current K-12 writing standards and identified high-priority FCAs for each grade. Use the links below to see the informative FCAs for each grade, along with a brief description of each and examples to clarify them.

### Informative FCAs:

- [Grades K-2](#)
- [Grades 3-5](#)
- [Grades 6-8](#)
- [Grades 9-12](#)

Be sure to visit the Focus Correction Areas section of our [Free Resources](#) web page to preview and download detailed information about narrative, informative, and opinion/argument FCAs. Each set of FCAs includes FCA grids, related vocabulary, and teaching suggestions.

---

### Upcoming Events

## Kristine Gibson in New Jersey; Gary Chadwell in Ohio; John Collins and Bill Atwood in Pennsylvania



Date	Location	Session	Grades	Presenter
12/20/17	Morris-Union Jointure Commission,	<a href="#">Four Essential Writing Assignments: Preparing for the NJ Student Learning</a>	4-12	Kristine Gibson

	New Providence, NJ	<a href="#">Standards</a>		
1/17/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#">Cross-Curricular Literacy: The Smart Path to PARCC Success</a>	3-8	Kristine Gibson
1/23/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#">How Did You Get That? Improving Open-Ended Responses in Mathematics</a>	3-12	Kristine Gibson
1/25/18	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<a href="#">Coffee with Kristine: Connect, Share, and Fine-Tune</a>	K-3	Kristine Gibson
1/25/18	Lincoln IU #12, New Oxford, PA	Text- and Evidence-Based Writing: TDA, BDQ, and SAT <a href="#">(Details to Come)</a>	3-12	John Collins
1/30/18	Central Susquehanna IU, Milton, PA	<a href="#">Collins Writing for Math: How Did You Get That?</a>	2-12	Bill Atwood
2/1/18	CIU #10, State College, PA	<a href="#">Coffee with Collins (online session)</a>	3-12	John Collins
2/1/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#">More Writing . . . Less Grading! A Manageable Approach to Writing Across the Curriculum</a>	K-5	Kristine Gibson
2/16/18	Lebanon, OH	Meeting the Challenge of Ohio Literacy Standards with the Collins Writing Program <a href="#">(Details to Come)</a>	6-12	Gary Chadwell
2/27/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#">More Writing . . . Less Grading! A Manageable Approach to Writing Across the Curriculum</a>	6-12	Kristine Gibson

We add new sessions to the list regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, [check back soon!](#)

### *Collins In-Service*

## **Professional Development for Your Staff**

Would you like to speak to a Collins Associate about offering a [professional development session](#) in your school or district? [Email](#) us or call us at 800-932-4477 to learn about options and pricing or to set up a FREE phone consultation. We offer highly competitive rates and will customize the training to suit your school's needs.



## Save PD Dollars!

Host a [Collins Institute](#) in your school or district and open it up to outside participation to underwrite some or all of the costs of the workshop.

### WHY OFFER A COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM INSTITUTE?

To earn **FREE TRAINING** for your school or district!

[Click to Learn More!](#)

---

#### *About Our Newsletter*

### Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

Our goal is to make our newsletter rich with ideas, research, and resources related to writing and thinking skills instruction. We hope you share *The Collins Writing Exchange* with colleagues who might be interested.

For those of you who had this issue forwarded to you, [join our mailing list](#) to receive future issues directly.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now at [The Collins Writing Exchange Archive](#). Or click on a recent edition:

#### [November 2017](#)

*LUCI, K-12 Academic Vocabulary Lists, S "T" A r t 10% Summary Organizer, Virtual Training Menu, and More*

#### [October 2017](#)

*The Book Commercial, College Essay Editing Checklist, the Power of Past Papers, and More*

#### [September 2017](#)

*Six Writing Principles, Coffee with Collins, Parents Do Matter, and More*

#### [June 2017](#)

*Coffee with Collins, Summer Reading List, No-Strings Peer Editing, and More*

---

---

Collins Education Associates | 800-932-4477 | Fax 978-363-2212 |  
[info@collinsed.com](mailto:info@collinsed.com) | [www.collinsed.com](http://www.collinsed.com)