

May 2017

The Collins Writing Exchange

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

Featured Writing Assignment

Writing a Reflection: A Letter to Next Year's Teacher

Among our favorite writing assignments are those that involve students reflecting on and analyzing their own work projects. These assignments work well in all content areas and are excellent capstone projects. They require students to reflect on their academic growth as both learners and workers from the beginning of the year.



Focus Sheet

Reflecting on My Learning

Skills

Things I am good at in this class:

What I am getting better at:

Each of the writing projects below is an excellent end-of-the-year reflection that gives students an opportunity to elaborate their ideas and include specific details and examples from their own work products. Each assignment is a fully developed lesson, complete with graphic organizers and suggested Focus Correction Areas (FCAs).

- [Writing a Letter to Next Year's Teacher](#) (grades 1-3)
- [A Letter to Next Year's Teacher About Your Own Writing](#) (grades 3-5)
- [Presenting a Mini-Portfolio to Next Year's Teacher](#) (grades 6-8)
- [Letter to Next Year's Teacher \(and possibly others\)](#) (grades 9-12)

Special Note:

To support your teachers' use of the program, consider having a Collins Associate demonstrate one of these reflective assignments or model other lessons in your classrooms. To learn more contact us by [email](#) or at 1-800-932-4477.

Classroom Activities That Work

Refining Type Two Prompts to Maximize Their Benefit

Frequent use of Type Two writing has numerous benefits for our students, such as active engagement, vocabulary development, and writing fluency. Maybe the most significant benefit, however, is enhanced learning. When students are asked to recall and use information they have learned, it deepens the learning and helps to embed it in long-term memory.



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.

To maximize the effectiveness of Type Two writing, we urge teachers to keep the following guidelines in mind when designing Type Two questions for their students:

- Embed a number in the prompt (e.g., two examples or three similarities).
- Ask students to use higher-order thinking, not just recall facts.
- Use general academic vocabulary terms that mimic the kind used in high-stakes assessments.

To help you refine your Type Two prompts, refer to our summary of [Bloom's Revised Taxonomy](#) of thinking skills and our annotated list of general academic vocabulary for [elementary](#) or [secondary](#) students.

FAQ: Featuring Gary Chadwell, Collins Associate and Author

FCAs and Emerging Writers, Special Needs, and English Learners

Are FCAs appropriate for beginning writers or those with limited language ability? When introduced to the focus correcting strategy, some teachers express concern about students who are not strong writers.

"Focus correcting is an effective strategy for all students, not just typical learners," says Collins Associate Gary Chadwell. See Gary's response to the FAQ: [How Do I Use FCAs with Emerging Writers, Special Needs Students, and ELs?](#)



Gary
Chadwell

Convention Wisdom

One-Minute Clinic: Commas (Again!)



Commas, or "periods with a tail" as a first grader recently described them, are meant to add clarity to our writing. But when commas are used incorrectly or are omitted, the writing can become confusing. Helping our students apply comma rules correctly is challenging and requires practice and vigilance.

Look at the four examples below. Can you identify the one that has no errors in it? Can you identify the problems with the other examples?

1. *The teacher, who was annoyed, announced to the class, "We're going to*

learn the correct way to cut and paste boys and girls!"

2. The young singer who led off the concert had a low, raspy voice.

3. The email was after all, identical to the brief, form letter we had already received.

4. Concertgoers, who want good seats, must arrive early.

See the [answer key](#) to check on your answers. Download a PDF with essential comma rules from our *Check Mate* quick reference guides for:

- [Level P](#) (grades 2-3)
- [Level A](#) (grades 4-6)
- [Level B](#) (grades 6-9)
- [Level C](#) (grades 9-12)

Special Note:

To help your students with commas and other rules of writing, see *Check Mate*, the student guide for essential conventions. Or order the *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide (\$25 for the PDF; \$30 for hard copy) from our [web store](#). You can also download free [Samplers](#) of each Teacher Resource Guide to try with your students.

Quick Links

Standards-Based Focus Correction Areas for Informative Writing

Informational writing, which includes explanatory, descriptive, and research writing, is used in every content area. It is an essential mode of writing, one in which we want students to develop confidence and comfort.

We have carefully reviewed current K-12 writing standards and identified high-priority FCAs for informative writing. Use the links below to see FCAs for each grade level 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 and Cheryl McDonough at AMLE 2017 in Philadelphia, Bill Atwood in Vermont



<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
July 10-14, 2017	Bennington, VT	<u>Designing an Effective Writing Program</u>	K-8	Bill Atwood
July 12-13, 2017	MI Reading Association, Bellaire, MI	The Literacy Demands of the SAT Collins Writing: A Framework for Literacy Across the Curriculum The Literacy Concerns of the Secondary Teacher <u>See page 10 of conference program for session details.</u>	5-12 K-12 5-12	Cheryl McDonough
August 15, 2017	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<u>The Big Three: Research-Based Practices That Make the Greatest Impact on Student Achievement</u>	3-12	John Collins
October 9, 2017	Curwensville, PA	<u>How Did You Get That? Improving Written Responses in Math</u>	K-12	Kristine Gibson
October 19, 2017	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<u>Text and Evidence-Based Writing: TDA, DBO, and SAT</u>	4-12	John Collins
October 19, 2017	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<u>Developing a Strong Foundation of Writing Skills Through the Collins Writing Program (Day 1)</u>	K-3	Kristine Gibson
November 6-8, 2017	AMLE2017, Philadelphia, PA	Blueprint for Powerhouse Assessments (Details to Come)	5-9	Cheryl McDonough
November 6-8, 2017	AMLE2017, Philadelphia, PA	Sessions: <u>Write to Learn: The Power Behind Writing Across the Curriculum</u> <u>A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words: How to Use Graphics to Improve Math Performance</u> <u>Dare to Summarize--Dream Big. Start Small--How to Set the Groundwork for This Critical Skill</u> <u>The Power of Quickwrites and How to Use Them to Improve Content Understanding</u>	5-9	Kristine Gibson

[View more training events here.](#)

Workshops and institutes are being now added for summer and next school year. If you don't see something in your area, check back soon. Or give us a call at 800-932-4477 to arrange a workshop in your area.

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.

Collins Institutes

Save PD Dollars!

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

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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 will share it with other educators. Please forward *The Collins Writing Exchange* to your 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.

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