



Collins Education Associates

The Collins Writing Program

A Writing Across the Curriculum Program with Over 35 Years of Proven Results

The Collins Writing Exchange

May 9, 2024 Issue #75

Let's Get Ready to Cross the Finish Line!

It seems like we were just welcoming you to a new school year, and now here we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Regardless of grade or subject area, it is important to close the year with reflection and summary activities that encourage students to look back at their growth and celebrate how far they've come. In this last *Exchange* of the 2023-2024 school year, we offer some suggestions for prompts that can be used to do just that.

[Click here](#) for the full list of prompts, or see below for a sampling of prompts to get you started:

Type One

- What were the three hardest things we did this year and why? (1.5 minutes)
- What two pieces of advice would you give someone coming into this class next year? (2 minutes)

Type Two

- Identify four major topics in this course/class/subject and rank them in order of importance. Number one is most important and number four is the least. (no more than 5 minutes)
- Describe two things you now know about (course title or subject area) that you didn't know at the start of the year. (3 minutes)

Types Three and Four

Turn any of these Type One and Two reflections into Type Threes/Fours by creating FCAs that help students to refine their responses.

Or, use our popular and fun "Letter to Next Year's Teacher" for your grade band. While this assignment was originally designed for students to reflect specifically on their writing, don't let that scare you! Teachers of *any* content area can use this assignment to get students reflecting on their year of learning.

**K-2
Assignment**

**3-5
Assignment**

**6-8
Assignment**

**9-12
Assignment**

By this time of year, many of us are on auto-pilot,



Year-end reflections aren't just for students!

Teacher Reflection Prompt and Template

just counting the days until summer. But if you can spare 5-10 minutes for your own year-end reflections – why not while students are writing theirs? – you'll find some real benefits to pausing and looking back on your year.

You can use many of the same prompts from the student list above, or, for another option, try this "letter to self" activity that helps to recap the year and provide meaningful insight.

No matter which reflection options you choose, save your responses and take a look at them at the start of next school year to help you celebrate past successes, remember what didn't work as well, and recalibrate your planning for the year.

If you're looking for even more ideas for end-of-year wrap-up, read the attached by our friend and most respected colleague, Dave Stuart, Jr.

End of Year Value Booster: Ask Them

You can learn more about Dave and the resources he offers later in our newsletter.



We Want to Hear from You!

Connect with Us and Get Free Stuff!

We would love to see how your students respond to any of this month's wrap-up activities! We would also like to see some of your personal responses to the above activities.

Send these to cmcdonough@collinsed.com for a chance to be published in our newsletter and receive \$25 in free products!

***Topic of the Month:
The Flexible, Fabulous, Functional FCA
Focus Correction Areas: The Magic Bullet of
Collins Writing Across the Curriculum***

We all know that Focus Correction Areas are a highly effective and efficient way to assess writing.

- They give the writer a sense of how they will be evaluated and which skills they need to demonstrate.
- They provide the teacher with an assessment focus and provide a tool to gauge the level of proficiency.
- They take the subjectivity out of grading in a way that all parties - students, parents, teachers, and even administrators – understand.

FCAs not only encourage understanding of expectations, they support success.

But, contrary to what some believe, FCAs don't just work for assessing *writing*. They can be used to communicate expectations and provide feedback on *all kinds of assignments!* In our daily work in schools, we find teachers who are using FCAs in lots of out-of-the-box ways and enjoying the clarity they provide for a plethora of school assignments.

They use them for **oral assignments**:

- Maintain appropriate eye contact
- Use an appropriate volume for the room
- Include and explain one chart

They use them for **charts or graphics**:

- Titles are appropriately linked to data
- Axis intervals are evenly spaced
- Data is clear and accurate

They use them for **assessing pieces of art**:

- The piece uses at least these two tools (name tools)
- The piece shows use of these three strategies (name strategies)
- The piece has a title that clearly captures its meaning

They even use them for **peer-review of student presentations**:

- Questions/comments are specific to presentation
- At least three positive elements are named
- One place for improvement is identified with an example

This is fantastic! Imagine a classroom where all assignments are assessed using the same method...where kids, parents, and teachers all speak the same language...where assessment is about building success, not avoiding failure. FCAs make all of that possible!

So, feel free to think outside the box and use the flexible, fabulous, AND functional FCA, well, *everywhere!* If they can simplify writing assignments, you'll love seeing them work their magic across all genres of assignments!



Speaking of FCAs, we received this great idea from a teacher in Massachusetts about how she uses FCAs to prepare for the state test, and we loved it!

"In the days prior to MCAS, we look at our list of FCAs (usually 13-14 of them) and take the first letter of each. We make silly

**NEW FOR
PRIMARY TEACHERS**



FCA STAMPS!

And one final bit of news on FCAs especially for our primary grade teachers – We now have **FCA Stamps** available for purchase in our **online store!** Our stamps are

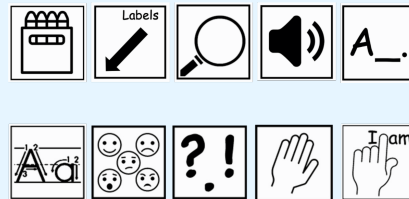
sentences out of them and practice remembering what each letter stands for. Then, on the day of MCAS, students write their sentences from memory onto their scrap paper. Remembering each of the FCAs gives them an automatic checklist for their writing."

Andrea Lewis, M Ed.,
Silver Lake Regional Middle School,
Kingston, MA

Andrea will be receiving \$25 in free materials from us this month as a thank you for sharing her work with us. Please send us some of your ideas or student work. We love hearing about all the incredible Collins work being done in classrooms!

quick and easy to add to our primary paper and are a great tool for differentiating FCAs for students at all levels. For example, when differentiating, pre-stamp two whole-class FCAs on a sheet of primary Type Three paper before running it through the copy machine, and then stamp the third FCA on student papers over-the-shoulder to target specific learning needs in the moment.

Available Stamps



Don't see the stamp you're looking for?
Contact us to place a customized order.

The Person We Want to Have Dinner With - Dave Stuart, Jr. -

Fellow educator and author Dave Stuart, Jr. is not new to the world of education, but one of his most recent blog posts, [Forty Things I've Learned So Far](#), really caught our attention. We at CEA are a community of learners, and we are especially passionate about the power of writing to enhance learning. So it's no surprise that Number 12 on Dave's list resonated strongly with us:

A major reason our students learn so little is that we have them write so infrequently across the school day. This is almost entirely due to misunderstanding what writing is and how learning works.

-Dave Stuart, Jr.

More and more, we are learning through extensive research about the measurable and profound impact writing has on learning. So here was Dave speaking our language, and we just knew we had to connect with him. Dave graciously agreed to talk with CEA Associate Cheryl McDonough, and, through a series of Zoom calls and emails, we learned just how in sync our perspectives on writing and learning really are.

While Cheryl didn't actually have the opportunity to sit down and have dinner with Dave, she was so excited after speaking with him, that she turned their interaction into a technically-accurate, fictitiously-retold narrative of their conversation. Enjoy!

The Person We Want to Have Dinner with: Dave Stuart, Jr.

"The Person We Want to Have Dinner With" will be a recurring feature in the Exchange. If you know someone who might be a great "dinner date" for us, let us know!

Exciting Resources to Start Next Year: All on Sale!



Stock Up Now at our Year-End Sale
and Sail into the New School Year
Ready to Write!

10% OFF storewide with code
SUMMER10

Or get 25% off select products
(shown below, priced as marked)



Don't Miss This Once-a-Year Sale
Ends June 15, 2024

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**Meeting Real World
Literacy Demands in
Career and
Technical Schools**

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CTE-Focused
Online Course
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All CTE Teachers
Vermont State University
June 5-October 30, 2024
Four Zoom Sessions

**How Did
You Get
That?**
Seven Strategies for
Improving Written
Responses in Math

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Math-Focused
Online Graduate Course
Grades 2-8
Vermont State University
June 11-July 25, 2024
Eight Zoom Sessions

Writing Without Borders:
Using Writing and
Thinking Across the
Curriculum as a Tool for
Improved Student
Performance in Every
Content Area

**LEARN MORE &
REGISTER**

Cross-Curricular
Online Course
Graduate/Undergraduate
Credit Available
Grades 4-12
Vermont State University
June 12-November 6, 2024
Four Zoom Sessions

Book Summer or Fall Training for Your Staff Now!

Here's just a sampling of some of the great topics available...

The Art of Writing
in the AI Era

The Retrieval
Routine

Writing Roadmap

Supporting &
Sustaining CW in
Your School

See our [Full List of PD Offerings](#) or
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