

Summer 2016

The Collins Writing Exchange

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

Featured Writing Assignment

Challenge: Writing Clear Explanations

Explaining! Students do it all the time to tell how things work, clarify steps in a procedure, or elaborate their thinking. Whether they do it in school or out of school, writing effective explanations can be hard for many students as it involves being clear, sequential, and precise.

Students need practice and guidance to improve in this writing mode, so select one of the fun assignments below and use your end-of-the-year time (or your summer session) to build important writing skills. Each is a fully developed lesson plan ready to use now.

- **Primary:** "Here's How You Do It!"
- **Upper Elementary:** "Making and Explaining a Tangram Puzzle"
- **Middle School:** "Advice from a Middle School Expert: A How-To Guide"
- **High School:** "Writing a Troubleshooter's Handbook for the Homework Hotline"

Special Note:

As you plan ahead for next year, consider having a Collins Associate demonstrate these and other lessons in your school's classrooms. Contact us at info@collinsed.com or at 1-800-932-4477.

Summer Reading Recommendations

Catching Up on Professional Books and Articles



The most popular article by far in our summer issue last year was our feature on suggested summer reading. We even had inquiries about whether we would do it again this year. The answer is an enthusiastic yes!

Since the next couple of months gives all of us the opportunity to catch up on some of our postponed reading, we once again asked Collins Associates to recommend books and articles they feel would be of interest to our Collins community. So without further ado, we present our [summer 2016 reading](#)

[suggestions](#).

Worth Noting

Action Research Project Reinforces the Power of Type Two Writing

If eighth-grade students were engaged in frequent, low-stakes graded writing activities (Type Two writing) during a unit of social studies instruction, would they retain more content knowledge? That's the question that Gettysburg Area (PA) Middle School teacher Alisha Sanders set out to answer this past fall.

With a carefully designed study, Sanders found that Type Two writing does indeed make a difference in content retention. To see how Sanders went about the investigation and the compelling results she found, check out an [overview of the study](#). You can also see her [complete action research project](#), "The Efficacy of Low Stakes Writing on Content Knowledge Retention."

Type 2: Civil Rights, 1	Date 7/1/16
x	In 7 lines, give 2 examples of how civil rights of African Americans were impacted by state and local governments in the South. Number each example. 6/8
x	
1	one example of how CIVIL RIGHTS OF AFRICAN
x	7

Special Note:

Collins Education Associates appreciates very much Alisha Sanders's willingness to share her impressive study with other Collins Writing Program users.

Convention Wisdom

One-Minute Writing Clinic: Capital Letters

Even though we begin teaching them as early as kindergarten, capitalization rules are still challenging for many writers. Some basic rules such as capitalizing the first word of a sentence simply require practice (in some cases, a lot of practice, especially for those students who seem to feel that capitalizing the first word of a sentence is somehow unfair to the rest of the words in the sentence). Other rules are subtler, such as which words to capitalize in a title.

Even experienced writers are vexed by capitalization. In fact, missing or unnecessary capitalization is #8 on Lunsford and Lunsford's Top Twenty, a study of the most frequently made mistakes by college freshmen. Though capitalization rules seem straightforward to some, we must continue to help students be vigilant with these fundamental rules. In the sentences below there are nine capitalization fixes needed. Can you find them?

Our school's chapter of Thespian society recently went on a field trip to Times square in New York city. We had hoped to see *Hamilton*, but the tickets were just too expensive. Instead, we went to see *Fiddler On The Roof* at the historic Broadway theatre. We learned a lot about jewish culture and tradition. That will help us a lot if our theatrics II class decides to stage the play next October around homecoming.

Did you find all nine? See our [answer key](#) to check your answers. Download a PDF excerpted from our popular *Check Mate* student folders with essential capitalization rules for your students:

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

Looking for more tips on navigating the rules of writing? See *Check Mate*, the student guide for capitalization and other essential conventions, or order the *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide (\$25 for the PDF version; \$30 for the hard copy) from our web store. You can also [download free Samplers](#) of each Teacher Resource Guide to try with your students.

Quick Links

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Are a Popular Resource

One of the most frequently selected resources on our website is the [FAQ page](#), with clear, concise answers to questions that come up regularly in our workshops and follow-up sessions. Check out the page, and if you don't see an answer to your question, let us know. We will answer it for you and possibly feature it in a future issue of the *Exchange*.

Upcoming Events

John Collins in Pennsylvania, Bill Atwood in Vermont, and More

- **July 11-15, 2016:** [Designing an Effective Writing Program to Meet the Challenges of the Common Core](#), grades K-8, Instructor: Bill Atwood, Bennington, VT
- **August 2, 2016:** [More Writing, Less Grading! An Introduction to the Collins Writing Program](#), grades K-5, Instructor: Kristine Gibson, Orrville, OH
- **August 26, 2016:** [Improving Student Performance Through Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum](#), grades 4-12, Instructor: John Collins, Pittsburgh, PA
- **September 27, 2016:** [How Did You Get That? Improving Open Responses in Math](#), grades 2-12, Instructor: Bill Atwood, West Decatur, PA

We will also be presenting at AMLE, the Association for Middle Level Education, in Austin, Texas, in October. [View AMLE and more events here](#). New offerings are added regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, check back soon.



Institutes

Stretch your PD Dollars!

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

Would you like to speak to a Collins Associate about offering a professional development session in your school or district? [Email](#) or call us at 800-932-4477 to learn about options or 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.

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About Our Newsletter

Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

We truly appreciate your interest in our e-newsletter and hope you will share it with others. 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](#) and receive future issues directly.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now.

[Spring 2016](#) ~ [Late Winter Post Script 2016](#) ~ [Late Winter 2016](#) ~ [Winter Post Script 2016](#) ~ [Winter 2016](#) ~ [Fall 2015](#) ~ [Back-to-School 2015](#) ~ [Summer 2015](#) ~ [Spring 2015](#) ~ [Late Winter 2015](#) ~ [Winter 2014](#) ~ [Fall 2014](#) ~ [August-September 2014](#) ~ [Spring/Summer 2014](#)

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