

September 2016

# *The Collins Writing Exchange*

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

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## *Featured Writing Assignment*

### **Ideas for Getting to Know Your Students**

A new school year means getting a fresh start with new students. Sharing information through writing is an excellent way for students to get to know one another and for teachers to get an early indication of writing abilities and needs. Try these ready-made writing projects and accomplish both goals at once.



- **Primary:** "I Am Unique"
- **Upper Elementary:** "Describing a Family Member"
- **Middle School:** "Writing a Personal Essay"
- **High School:** "Writing a 'Who Am I?' Autobiographical Sketch about a Classmate"

#### Special Note:

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

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## *Worth Noting*

### **Calkins and Ehrenworth on the Conditions for Writing Growth in Schools**

In the July/August issue of *The Reading Teacher*, Lucy Calkins and Mary Ehrenworth reviewed the steps needed to accelerate student writing growth. They focus on levers for lifting student writing that are supported by sound research.

One lever they cite is developing a "shared vision within the school of good writing and good writing instruction." Collins Writing teachers will be reassured by the article, as many of the tenets of the Collins approach including frequent writing, clear goals, focused teaching, and specific feedback are prominently featured in

the article. Read a [summary](#) of effective methods for teaching writing or go to the complete article, "[Growing Extraordinary Writers: Leadership Decisions to Raise the Level of Writing Across a School and a District.](#)"

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### Convention Wisdom

## By the Way, Don't Forget the Comma



Ah, comma problems! Yes, omitted commas drive teachers crazy. On the other hand, unnecessary commas can also be a distraction. As a matter of fact, the commas you've seen in the first four sentences of this piece are among the most problematic for writers. Yes, commas setting off introductory phrases or elements such as those in these sentences are often misused or overlooked. Help your students avoid this common problem by downloading an excerpt from our popular *Check Mate* resource with reminders for this and other pesky comma rules:

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

### Special Note:

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.

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### Quick Links

## Collins Formatted Paper Saves Time and Offers Consistency

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FCA	pts.	Name
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		Title:

To help your students set up their papers for a writing task quickly and efficiently, use the free downloads of Collins paper. Choose among primary, elementary, and upper grade paper for using Focus Correction Areas (FCAs), as well as paper for Type One or Type Two writing. Find all of these plus other useful resources such as symbolic FCAs for kindergarten writers on our [Free Resources](#) page.

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### Upcoming Events

# John Collins in Pennsylvania, Math Writing, AMLE Speed Learning Sessions, and More

- **September 27, 2016:** [How Did You Get That? Improving Open Responses in Math](#), grades 2-12, Instructor: Bill Atwood, IU10, West Decatur, PA
- **October 18, 2016:** [Reading and Writing Informative Text](#), grades 3-12, Instructor: John Collins, IU7, Greensburg, PA
- **October 19, 2016:** [Improving Student Performance Through Writing Across the Curriculum](#), grades 3-12, Instructor: John Collins, Johnstown, PA
- **October 19, 2016:** [Develop a Strong Foundation of Writing Skills Through the Collins Writing Program](#), grades K-2, Instructor: Kristine Gibson, Johnstown, PA
- **November 17, 2016:** [Opinion and Argument Writing](#), grades 4-12, Instructor: John Collins, IU13, Lancaster, PA
- **December 8, 2016:** [Math + Writing = A Formula for Success](#), grades 2-12, Instructor: Kristine Gibson, [AMTNJ](#) 26th Conference, East Windsor, NJ

Kristine Gibson will also be presenting three Speed Learning Sessions at the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) 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.



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## *Institutes*

### **Stretch Your 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.

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 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**

Our goal is to make our newsletter a useful link to ideas, research, and resources. 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](#) and receive future issues directly.

Missed a previous issue? [Read it now.](#)

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