

December 2016

The Collins Writing Exchange

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

A New 2017 Workshop by Dr. John Collins

The Big Three



Dr. John Collins is introducing a powerful new workshop in January. It's designed specifically for teachers who feel they don't have the time for writing or that writing is not relevant to their content area.

The new workshop, *The Big Three: Research-Based Practices That Make the Greatest Impact on Student Achievement*, shows teachers how to increase student engagement and understanding of new content using these key strategies:

- The Retrieval Routine
- Ten Percent Summaries
- Compare and Contrast Grids

Teachers of grades 3 through 12 will leave this fast-paced workshop with a resource package that will allow them to use all three strategies immediately.

Tell me more! [Details & Registration](#)

Special Year-End Issue

The Best of 2016

The Top 5 Articles, Links, and Resources

Thanks to your continued interest in *The Collins Writing Exchange*, we have grown and improved our newsletter this year. Our eight *Exchange* issues this year had over 16,000 readers! In case you missed any editions, below are the most popular articles and links from 2016 based on reader clicks.

Featured Writing Assignment ~ January 2016

#1 Spotlight on Informative/Explanatory Writing

Today's standards place an emphasis on informative writing that reflects its importance in our everyday lives. In school, informative/explanatory writing is important in all subject areas, as it involves instructing, summarizing, describing, clarifying, or giving information in a variety of ways to the reader.

To help your students develop the specific organizational and writing skills needed for effective informational writing, choose one of these assignments. Each lesson is a fully developed plan with prewriting activities and graphic organizers.

- Primary (K-3): [Writing an Expert's Alphabet Book](#)
- Intermediate (3-6): [Describing a Family Member](#)
- Middle School: [Collecting and Interpreting Data](#)
- High School: [Similar, but Different: Comparing and Contrasting When the Differences Are Subtle](#)

Special Note:

Want to see a Collins Associate demonstrate these and other lessons in your school's classrooms? See the [In-District Consulting and Coaching](#) page of our website.

Worth Noting ~ September 2016

#2 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."](#)

Convention Wisdom ~ September 2016

#3 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.

FAQ: Featuring Collins Associate Bill Atwood ~ March 2016

#4 How Do I Find Time for Writing in Math Class?

Most teachers realize that writing can be, or should be, an important part of their math instruction. But what about the time it takes? Is it worth it?

Bill Atwood, author of [How Did You Get That?](#), emphasizes that writing need not take a lot of time to be beneficial. He also stresses that writing means "more students will be engaged and more students will be thinking." See Bill's complete answer to the question: ["How do I find time for writing in my math class?"](#)



Summer 2016 Reading Recommendations ~ June 2016

#5 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 give 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](#).

Upcoming Events ~ A New 2017 Workshop by Dr. John Collins

The Big Three

Research-Based Practices That Make the Greatest Impact on Student Achievement



<i>Date</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Location</i>
January 10, 2017	Four Essential Writing Assignments Details Register	Kristine Gibson	4-12	MUJC, New Providence, NJ
January 12, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Columbus, OH
January 17, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Sturbridge, MA
January 18, 2017	Tell a Story About a Time... Improving Narrative Writing	Bill Atwood	1-8	SERESC, Bedford, NH
January 19, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Chelmsford, MA
January 20, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Wallingford, CT
January 23, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Lebanon, NH
January 25, 2017	Designing Curriculum-Based Writing Assignments	John Collins	4-12	CIU13, Lancaster, PA
January 26, 2017	The Big Three	John Collins	3-12	Fort Washington, PA
February 6, 2017	Meeting the Challenge of the PA Core (Day 2)	Kristine Gibson	K-3	AIU8, Altoona, PA
February 9, 2017	Math and Science Vocabulary	Bill Atwood	2-12	SERESC, Bedford, NH
February 28, 2017	<i>How Did You Get That?</i> Improving Open-Ended Responses in Mathematics Details Register	Kristine Gibson	4-12	MUJC, New Providence, NJ

[View more training events here.](#)

New offerings are added 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.

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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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