

Back-to-School 2015

# The Collins Writing Exchange

Ideas, Tips, and Resources on Writing  
from  
Collins Education Associates

## *Professional Development Is a Mirage? Really?*

**New Study Critiques Professional Development Efforts: Why We Disagree**

A new, two-year study from TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project) claims that professional development efforts in schools make massive investments in trying, but failing, to improve teacher performance.



We respectfully disagree. With a tiny fraction of the time investment and cost cited in the TNTP study, schools are getting results that can only be attributed to improved teacher performance. Not only do teachers value our professional development (over thousands of workshops, our evaluations average 9.3 out of 10), but they see empirical evidence of students' improvement in writing and thinking skills across the curriculum.

Read a recent profile of the [Stoughton \(MA\) Elementary Schools' implementation](#) of the Collins Writing Program and see the gains they have achieved. Compare these and other results cited in implementation [profiles](#) on our website with the findings in the [executive summary](#) of the TNTP study.

## *Worth Noting*

**Meta-Analysis on Effective K-8 Writing Instruction in the Common Core Era**

More than ever, teachers must focus on proven, effective instructional practices to meet current writing standards. This makes the recent meta-analysis done by Steven Graham and colleagues of special note. Graham, Karen Harris, and Tanya Santangelo have synthesized the research on the most common techniques used by effective writing teachers.

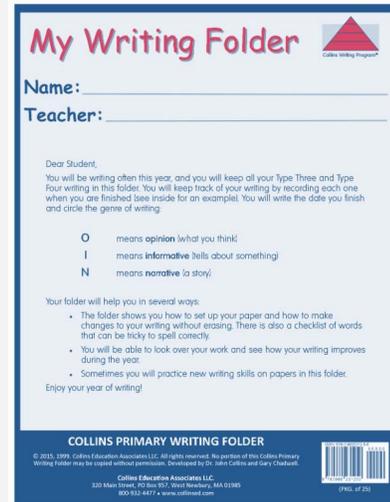
Their findings, published in the June 2015 issue of *The Elementary School Journal*, focus on practices that are all basic tenets of the Collins Writing Program including frequent writing, a process approach to composing, clear and specific goals for each assignment, and formative feedback. Read a [summary](#) of the findings reprinted in the *Marshall Memo*.

# New Writing Folder for the Primary Grades

## Collins Primary Writing Folder Supports New Writing Standards

Our popular *Primary Cumulative Writing Folder*, used in thousands of classrooms around the country, has been updated and renamed the *Collins Primary Writing Folder*. The new folder has the same benefits as the original and provides students with a place to keep compositions so they can reflect on their writing progress and use past papers to practice or apply new writing skills during the year.

The *Collins Primary Writing Folder* has many updates, including a more colorful look, more room for student reflections, and space for recording the subject area and genre of each piece. Each package contains 25 folders and 25 Writer's Checklists, which include frequently misspelled words. Also included in each package are a classroom poster, with revision and editing symbols, and a teacher's guide with potential focus correction areas (FCAs) for opinion, informative, and narrative writing as well as for style and writing conventions. And the price is unchanged at just \$21 per package!



[Preview](#) the new *Collins Primary Writing Folder* or request a [sample](#) to peruse.

## Featured Writing Assignment

### Get to Know Your Students

Writing assignments early in the school year often give teachers an early writing sample to help them get to know their students better. And although it's true that writers write best about what they know, that doesn't have to translate into the dreaded what-I-did-on-my-summer-vacation assignment.

Instead, try this thoughtful, well-organized assignment that guides students to write about an area of personal expertise—a hobby, a sport, a talent, or an area of interest. It's an effective way to get to know your students and build essential narrative writing skills at the same time.

### Writing a Personal Essay Using Your Own Life Experience to Make a Point

**Project Summary:** "Write about what you know." That is the most common advice given to aspiring

The [assignment](#) includes a complete lesson plan, a graphic organizer for prewriting, and a Tip Sheet with examples of interesting leads for personal narratives. The assignment comes from Gary Chadwell's book *Twelve Assignments Every Middle School Student Should Write* and can be easily adapted for elementary and high school writers.

## Convention Wisdom

### The One-Minute Writing Clinic

According to [The Top Twenty](#), a study of common writing mistakes made by college freshmen, using the wrong word is the most frequent mistake. Some of those wrong word mistakes are caused by over-reliance on spell checks (accepting the first word suggested by the software). Many others are related to frequently misused words such as *there/their/they're* or *between/among*.

See if you can spot the problems in the following paragraph (hint: There are 11 fixes to be made; 9 are wrong words).

Its amazing! There quarterback through a completed pass to everyone accept the tight end. He past the ball like he was a pro. Whose going to beat that team. Most teams our going to have alot of trouble with him and I'm not sure your going to see his team lose a game this year.

Did you find them? See our [answer key](#) to check your answers. All levels of the [Essential Conventions Check Mate](#) classroom posters contain a list of frequently misused words as the last rule. To see the list, click on the appropriate level: [Level P](#) (grades 2-3); [Level A](#) (grades 4-6); [Level B](#) (grades 6-9); or [Level C](#) (grades 9-12).

## Quick Links

### Free, Ready-to-Use Resources

Each level of Check Mate, our student guide to essential conventions, has a corresponding Teacher Resource Guide containing helpful Tip Sheets and practice activities such as Daily Quick-Fix Sentences. There is also an expanded list of misused words for each level. Use the links below to download and provide your students with an *expanded* list of frequently misused words.

[Level P](#) (grades 2-3)

[Level A](#) (grades 4-6)

[Level B](#) (grades 6-9)

[Level C](#) (grades 9-12)

Collins Writing Program  
**Essential Conventions Check Mate - Level P**

**Tip Sheet**  
RULE #6. FREQUENTLY MISUSED WORDS  
• MORE MISUSED WORDS  
(Part 1)

Using correct words in our writing is important. Some words get mixed up because they sound the same or because they have a similar spelling but a different meaning. Here are some words that are sometimes confusing.

• A, AN  
The word *a* is used before words that begin with a consonant sound. The word *an* is used before words that begin with a vowel sound.

☞ I need a glass of water.  
☞ He had an apple for dessert.

## Upcoming Events

### View Our Schedule, Plan a Session

Fall is always a busy time for Collins Associates. We have a number of public workshops and institutes scheduled across the country for fall 2015 and spring 2016. View the [schedule](#) for upcoming events.

New offerings are added regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, check back soon.

Remember that you can host a Collins [Institute](#) in your 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 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!



# About Our Newsletter

## Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

The number of subscribers to *The Collins Writing Exchange* increased significantly during the 2014-2015 school year. We truly appreciate your interest and support and hope you will share our newsletter 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. *The Exchange* is issued six times a year.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now.

[Summer 2015](#)

[Spring 2015](#)

[Late Winter 2015](#)

[Winter 2014](#)

[Fall 2014](#)

[August-September 2014](#)

[Spring/Summer 2014](#)

# Offer Ends October

# 15!

For every 3 *Essential Conventions Check Mate* classroom posters you purchase (mixed levels OK), the 4th one is free.

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

NOTE ON WEB ORDERS: Place a regular order [online](#) and we will adjust your order amount for the free posters when we process it.

## Buy 3 Posters, Get the 4th One FREE!

Help students become competent editors by using *Essential Conventions Check Mate* classroom posters in your school. Each classroom poster contains the high utility rules every writer should know.



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## *Contact*



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