

Fall 2015

The Collins Writing Exchange

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

Featured Writing Assignment

Opinion/Argument Writing Is Key for All Grades



National writing assessments show that many students have trouble developing an opinion or argument effectively. With today's standards emphasizing that ability, it is clear that students need ongoing support and practice with opinion/argument writing.

Choose one of the assignments below to help students write a strong argument. Each lesson is a fully developed plan including prewriting activities and graphic organizers.

Primary (K-3): [My Book Review](#)

Intermediate (3-6): [In My Opinion](#)

Middle School: [News with a View](#)

High School: [Taking a Stand](#)

Writing in Science

Matching Word Choice to Audience Is Vital in Science Writing

"All science writing is not the same," points out Dr. Judith Sumner, a Collins Associate and national science consultant. "Some science writing is done in an informal, magazine style for a general audience. Other writing is more formal, like that done in research-based writing or lab reports," she adds.

Sumner emphasizes that both styles are useful and supports the suggestion from Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that students should write about science for different audiences. A key to affecting a more formal or informal tone is student word choice. Use this [link](#) for a list of precise, scientific alternatives to informal terms and an activity for differentiating formal scientific sentences from more informal sentences.

Word choice—the key to a professional scientific style:

Informal

absurd
though
since
about
miraculous
..

Scientific

questionable
although
because
approximately
unexplained
..

Classroom Strategies That Work

Type One Writing . . . Before, During, and After Learning

Type Two Writing is used by many teachers as formative assessment to see where students are in their understanding of content. Dr. John Collins has designed three versatile [Type One Writing prompts](#) that can be used regularly for formative assessment:

- at the beginning of a new instructional unit
- during the unit of instruction
- at the end of a unit

A [blog post](#) by Dr. Collins describes how these brief, informal assignments such as the one below can be used in all disciplines and with all ages. Check out the blog and begin using the prompts with your students today!

Type One—Create Quiz Questions
Create a fair, clear, and challenging prompt that I can ask
at the beginning of our next class about the content
we have covered.

FAQ: Collins Associates Answer Frequently Asked Questions

What Should I Do About Numerous Non-FCA Errors?

Limiting corrective feedback on student papers to the focus correction areas (FCAs) is a welcome change from traditional practice for teachers and students alike. But that may mean that some students get papers back with numerous uncorrected errors on them. How do we manage this issue without feeling we are not doing our jobs as conscientious teachers?

FCAs

Clear statement of opinion 50 pts.

2-3 reasons & details 40 pts.

End marks 10 pts.

Collins Associate Kristine Gibson addresses this question, suggesting several [options](#) depending on the reason for the errors.

Convention Wisdom

Using Commas with Two or More Adjectives

After learning to place a comma between two adjectives that describe the same noun (*the bright, sparkling star*), it is common for young writers to over-generalize this rule. But the comma is not necessary in all situations. Can you tell in which sentence below the comma is needed and in which it is not (the adjectives are italicized)?



Her scarf had *three, little* spots on it.
The family has a *long, proud* history of military service.

See the Tip Sheet below from *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide for Level A (grades 4-6) for two helpful tests you can use to determine if a comma is necessary.

Download a Tip Sheet on comma usage to try with your class:

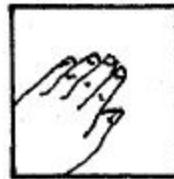
Level P (grades 2-3): [Commas with Items in a Series](#)
Level A (grades 4-6): [Commas with Two Adjectives](#)
Level B (middle school): [Commas with Sentence Interrupters](#)
Level C (high school): [Special Reminders for Titles, Initials, and Dates](#)

Quick Links

Free Resources: Symbolic FCAs for Primary Writers

Having students write focus correction areas (FCAs) at the top of their paper reminds them about essential criteria for the task and serves as an assessment guide for the teacher. What about those students for whom writing the FCAs on their paper is too time consuming or developmentally inappropriate?

Symbolic FCA



What It Means

Big Picture – Your picture must be at least as large as your hand

The answer: symbolic FCAs that are pre-printed on the student's paper. Use our [symbolic FCAs](#) and [formatted paper](#) to save you and your students time.

Upcoming Events

View Our Fall Schedule, Plan a Session

As always, late fall is a busy time for Collins Associates. We have a variety of public workshops and institutes scheduled across the country this fall, as well as next spring. [View the schedule](#) for upcoming events, and plan to attend. 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 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!

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. *The Exchange* is issued six times a year.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now.

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

BUY 10, SAVE 10%
on our popular
Collins Primary Writing Folder

Buy 10 or more packages of the [Collins Primary Writing Folder](#) (Item 206-C) and get 10% off the regular price of \$21. **Save \$2.10 per shrink-wrapped package.** Each package contains 25 student writing folders, 25 Writer's Checklists with editing symbols and frequently misspelled words, a classroom poster with revision and editing symbols, and a teacher's guide with focus correction areas (FCAs) for opinion, informative, and narrative writing, as well as for style and writing conventions.

[Preview Folder](#) [Buy Now](#)

Note on Web Orders: Place your online order at the regular price and we will adjust your order amount to reflect the 10% savings when we process it.

Offer Expires 12/31/2015.

