

Collins Writing Exchange

Practical Ideas, Tips, and Resources for Improving Learning Through Writing

Tip of the Month

Retrieval Routine Crash Course

Most Collins users know all about [Type Two writing](#) and how this act of “retrieval” helps students remember and retain what they learn. And what teacher doesn’t love routines, especially routines that don’t take too much time *and* make a big impact?

What if we could combine the retrieval effect of Type Two writing with a quick, easy-to-use instructional routine that gets kids thinking, learning, and writing every day of the week? *The Retrieval Routine* combines research on learning and memory, habit development, and even formative assessment into a series of short, classroom-friendly activities to help students understand and retain essential content.

“A more meaningful way to give [students] some control is to allow them to write their own exam questions. And then promise you will use some proportion or version of those questions on the actual exam.”

James Lang in *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* (2016)

Make a Question Monday and Take It Tuesday are the first two steps in the Retrieval Routine and help put students in the driver’s seat as they review key content on a weekly basis.

Make a Question Monday

- ◆ **Activity:** Teacher and/or class creates a quiz question or questions.
- ◆ **Assignment (Type Two):** Create a fair, clear question I can ask tomorrow about _____. The question should help me discover how well I taught and should require you to remember and think about important information.
- ◆ **Benefit:** Students share questions and teacher reacts with suggestions to make the questions clearer, to include more academic vocabulary, or to narrow the scope so they can be completed in five to ten minutes. With repetition, students will become better question writers and better thinkers about the content. In addition, they will be motivated to create good questions because these will be their quiz questions on Tuesday!

Make It Tuesday

- ◆ **Activity:** Students answer one of the previous day's questions in writing.
- ◆ **Assignment (Type Two):** Respond to the following question, created yesterday, in ___ lines or more.
- ◆ **Benefit:** Like all Type Two writing, this activity is quick, everyone is involved, students receive immediate feedback, and the teacher gathers formative assessment data. And even more, students have taken ownership of the content addressed and know what to expect, building accountability in a low-stakes, high-expectation environment.

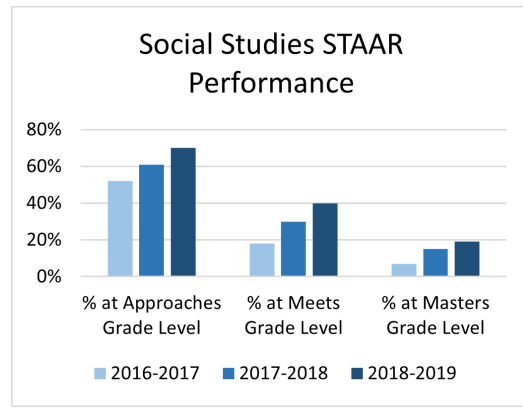
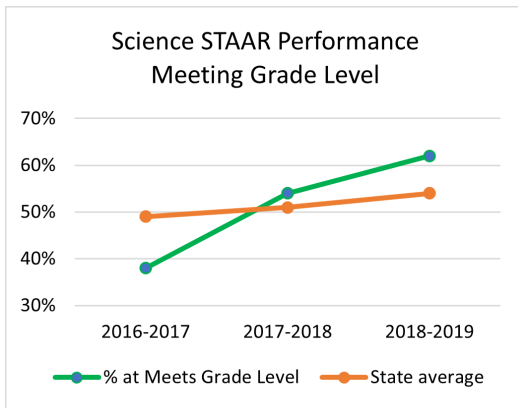
For additional classroom tips on Steps One and Two and to learn about Work Together Wednesday and Throwback Thursday, [preview *The Retrieval Routine* book](#) and laminated [desktop Summary guide](#) in our [online store](#) with special introductory pricing.

Another Collins Writing Success Story

Bridgeport Middle School (TX) Profile

In 2016, Principal Travis Whisenant began working with Dr. Collins to bring the Five Types of Writing to his Texas middle school. Just three years later, Bridgeport Middle School reported its highest standardized test scores ever in social studies and science. Principal Whisenant attributes this success directly to Collins Writing, and, in particular, the [Retrieval Routine](#).

Bridgeport's concerted training and support efforts had paid off, Whisenant explains. The focused and ongoing training provided clarity for how cross-curricular writing ought to look in classrooms. Teachers had a clear language and routines in place, and they had a support system that encouraged their efforts.



See the [full profile here](#) or [learn more from Principal Whisenant](#) as he discusses why he chose Collins Writing, steps that made the biggest difference, and how his staff and students responded to the new cross-curricular writing focus.

FEATURED RESOURCE

Go-To Type Three Assignments for All Content Areas

All too often, we view writing, particularly more formal writing like [Type Three](#) assignments, as an “event.” But the fact is, writing need not be time-consuming to be valuable, and great Type Three assignments, much like the Retrieval Routine, can be used over and over again with evolving topics across all content areas.

These [Go-To Type Threes](#) are perfect whether you’re teaching about prime and composite numbers, comparing systems of government, summarizing nonfiction texts, reviewing the process of mitosis, or critiquing student artwork. They are ready to use (or modify), target current content while offering key writing skills practice, and are designed to be completed in as little as 15 to 20 minutes



[Compare & Contrast](#)



[Ten Percent Summary](#)



[Evaluate an Answer](#)



[How-To](#)



[Vocabulary Riddle](#)

QUICK LINKS

Quickly diagnose student writing skills and habits and plan purposeful



assignments and instruction with [Writing Roadmap](#). Watch the [overview video](#) with author Kristine Gibson. Or, [download the PDF](#) of the Preview booklet.

NEW! Retrieval Routine

An easy-to-implement, 4-step routine that establishes good academic habits, builds classroom stamina, and improves learning.

Check Your Collins IQ

Try a sample of our quick self-assessment survey to review Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Collins implementation strategies.

Essential Conventions

Check Mate™ and other resources to tackle the rules of writing that are teachers' biggest pet peeves!

Free Resources

Ready-to-use Type Threes, Focus Correction Area lists, graphic organizers, and more!

PD Options

Everything you need to know about our PD options, workshops, institutes, and courses.

Blog Posts

Proven strategies and tips for improving writing instruction.

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