

# Collins Writing Exchange

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

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## A Note to Our Readers

### Do You Know Where You Are?

As we enter the last third of the school year, and hopefully warmer weather for those of us in the Northeast, now is a good time to evaluate the progress we are making with our students.



- Have your students completed writing from a balance of genres: narrative, informative, opinion/argument, text-based?
- Have they engaged in a [range of writing experiences](#), including informal (Types One and Two), formal (Types Three and Four), and “published” (Type Five)?
- Are there skills or [Focus Correction Areas](#) (FCAs) that most students have mastered that can be retired in favor of more challenging FCAs?
- In what areas are your students still struggling? What will you choose as your priority FCAs for the last few months of the school year? For a helpful list of FCAs for content, style, organization, and mechanics, check out [Writing Roadmap](#).
- What new strategies will you try as you address areas of student learning that still need work? More Type Two Writing to increase retention? Oral reading to improve editing skills? Using past papers to teach key FCAs? See our [past newsletters](#) for more on each of these and other proven strategies.

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## Featured Assignment

### You Be the Judge: Evaluating an Answer

Help students develop their evaluative thinking, build an argument, and refine their writing skills all in one assignment! In many classrooms, students view themselves as mere producers of writing and their teachers as judges of their writing. [Three-Step Editing](#) trains students to be more critical of their own writing and arms them with the tools they need to improve. This assignment takes Three-Step Editing further as students develop a written evaluation of another student's work, essentially taking

over the job of the teacher as the grade-giver. This assignment, or a pared-down version, can be used multiple times throughout the year as students score and critique essays from peers, other classes, or released samples from state tests or the AP exam.

In math classes, students who are asked to score examples of geometric proofs, algebraic procedures, and other open-ended responses benefit from building error analysis into their routine while improving the way they communicate math ideas.

Here are just a few other benefits:

- Students gain a better understanding of your classroom scoring system or the ones encountered on common high-stakes assessments.
- Your choice of samples to evaluate gives you an opportunity to call attention to common errors—in both writing and subject-area content—and highlight well-executed skills while reviewing key content.
- Students practice supporting their ideas with concrete evidence, a critical argumentative skill.

Select the ready-to-use assignment for your grade level.

## You Be the Judge

Evaluating an Answer

- [Primary](#)
- [Elementary](#)
- [Middle/High](#)

## Strategies That Work

# Focused Editing Tasks

Too often, teachers resort to the vague statement “Be sure to check your work” before hurriedly collecting student writing. Students need direct instruction and guided practice as they learn to become proficient editors of their own work. Three-Step Editing ([see January 2022 Exchange article](#)) and the You Be the Judge assignment will help, but occasional activities like these alone are not enough to build new habits. Students need concrete instructions when it comes to checking their work, and they need to visibly show that they have done so. Focused Editing does just that.

The image shows a student's handwritten work on a 'You Be the Judge' form. The form has several sections for feedback and student information. The student has written '1' in the number field, 'Ryan' in the name field, and '20' in the date field. The feedback sections are filled with handwritten notes: 'FCA Clear opinion statement ✓ Yes!', 'FCA 3 reasons x 3 examples ⊕ Sincere + meaningful examples!', and 'FCA 5 AP letter format ✓ Good job!'. At the bottom, the student has written 'Title: Persuasive Writing' and '★ x Dear Mrs. Gibson'. A handwritten note at the bottom right says 'I hope you'll share this with your brother!'.

[View more of Ryan's paper.](#)

Ryan's Focused Editing Tasks, as shown on the first page of his writing, are directly tied to the assigned FCAs and encourage Ryan to show "proof" that he has met each FCA.

- Underline your opinion statement.
- Circle each of your three reasons.
- Star each part of the friendly letter.
- Number your five paragraphs.

Learn more about how to use [Focused Editing Tasks](#). When used regularly and combined with [Oral Reading](#), it peels back the curtain on revising and editing and helps students take accountability for their writing.

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## Administrators' Corner

# Freshen Up Your Faculty Meetings and Foster a Culture of Writing

We all know that isolated training, no matter how productive and well received, is never enough to make a lasting impact. If you want teachers to embrace Collins Writing as a critical part of your school culture and keep the use of the [Five Types of Writing<sup>SM</sup>](#) growing in your building, it is important to keep Collins in the conversation. Faculty and department meetings are the perfect time to reinforce the common language of Collins Writing, share best practices, and let teachers know that you are there to provide support.

Consider carving out 10-15 minutes per month to facilitate school-wide discussions and mini sharing sessions during existing meeting times. The following activities are easy to implement and require minimal planning but go a long way in showing teachers that you value the strategies they are learning.



[Download "Helping School Leaders Foster a Culture of Writing"](#) for detailed explanations of the activities.

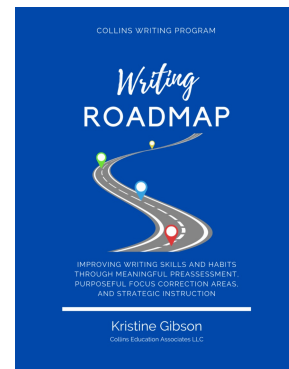
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## More Staff Support

# Looking for Collins Support?

1. Ease your workload and tighten instruction with [Writing Roadmap](#). This popular digital resource includes specific instructions for selecting and using FCAs to improve writing and 15 pages of student-friendly, ready-to-use FCAs for any assignment.

- Download the [single-user PDF](#).
- [Schedule training](#) with the author, Kristine Gibson.
- Purchase [Writing Roadmap video module](#).



2. Recalibrate your implementation of Collins Writing. Administer this quick [self-survey](#) at your next faculty meeting and reach out to your favorite CEA consultant for help filling in the gaps.

3. Offer your staff an asynchronous Collins refresher. Purchase [Introduction to the Collins Writing Program](#) a six-module video course presented by [Dr. John Collins](#).

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## Quick Links

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
(PD) OPTIONS

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

FREE  
RESOURCES

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

ESSENTIAL  
CONVENTIONS

Check Mate™ and other resources to tackle teachers' biggest writing pet peeves!

EXCHANGE  
ARCHIVE

All previous newsletters with FREE writing assignments in every edition!

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