



Collins Education Associates

The Collins Writing Program

A Writing Across the Curriculum Program with Over 35 Years of Proven Results

The Collins Writing Exchange

May 8, 2025 Issue #83



Bring Out the Power Tools!

"If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking."

— Richard Buckminster Fuller

Every teacher needs a toolbox for building solid academic skills, critical thinking, and content-area understanding. Collins teachers have three power tools at their disposal to build active cognitive engagement and use writing to help clarify thinking and convey ideas.

Read more about each Collins *Power Tool* below...

Summary Writing

In this structured assignment, students read content-based nonfiction texts or articles (typically around 500-1000 words depending on reading level) and use the **Ten Percent Summary Focus Sheet** to identify central ideas in their own words. To prevent the copying-and-pasting that is common among inexperienced summary-writers, word count is capped at 10% of the length of the original article (i.e., A 750-word

Argument Development

Students wrestling with the many high-level skills required of argument writing need a framework to follow, and that's exactly what we offer. The **HELPS Focus Sheet** provides a structure for outlining and analyzing possible reasons to support an argument. Our **Claim Template** helps students compose well-written thesis statements—arguably the most crucial step in developing an effective argument essay. And our **Scaffolded Argument**

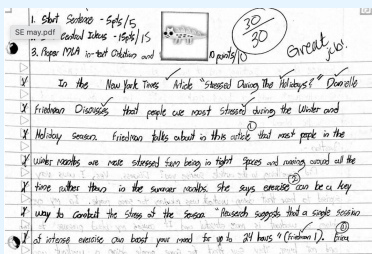
Sentence Expansion

Who ever said Type Threes need to be long? Our newest—and perhaps favorite—power tool is a **one-sentence Type Three assignment** that packs a big punch. Teachers provide a content-based “kernel sentence” on which students are asked to expand, and carefully selected FCAs guide students in how to do so. For example, an art class might expand the kernel sentence, *"The artist painted,"* with these FCAs: 2 facts, proper nouns capitalized, and 2 vocabulary words,

article must be captured in 3-5 paraphrased central ideas that total no more than 75 words). Add our S“T”Art sentence, and voila! You have a Ten Percent Summary!

Why teachers LOVE it: It provides students with a consistent and predictable structure that maximizes focus on central ideas as opposed to minute details, and the 10% cap on word count minimizes plagiarism. The S “T” Art sentence can be used for all kinds of text-based responses, like those that appear on state assessments. And the Focus Sheet and FCAs make grading quicker.

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
— Dr. Seuss



Essay walks both teachers and students through the entire process from start to finish using a series of Type Three assignments and argument-specific FCAs.

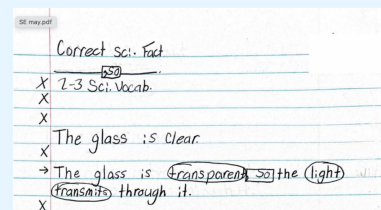
Why teachers LOVE it: Our structure can be easily applied to any argument essay and can be modified for grades 3-12. Both the HELPER Focus Sheet for elementary and the HELPS Focus Sheet encourage students to broaden their research and consider all the evidence before finalizing their claim, while the Scaffolding Essay streamlines the entire process and provides an opportunity for feedback throughout the writing process rather than waiting until the very end when everyone is exhausted!

"But no matter what students remember in 5, 10, or 30 years, they will always need to know how to argue. How to reason. How to think. Good Thinking can help us prepare our students for the things that really do matter most."
— Kristi Loudon

resulting in ***"Picasso painted some of his best work during the 1950s, including his children Paloma and Claude, using his signature brushwork and layering."***

Why teachers LOVE it: What's not to love? It's quick, it helps students review content, it gets them using content vocabulary in context, it's easy to grade, and it helps students to write more sophisticated sentences without getting bogged down in the grammar jargon of an English class! Teachers love the ease of use and students love how doable it feels.

Sentence Expansion is "a teaching, learning or assessment tool in any subject."
— Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler



Thank you to Mr. Tidwell, science teacher at Indian Lake MS in OH, for sharing his student work with us!

Looking for More on these Power Tools?

What do the experts have to say? *Why add these Power Tools to your toolbox? Because ...* summary writing, argument writing, and sentence expansion build solid academic skills, critical thinking, and content understanding. See the research...

Why Practice Summary, Argument, and Sentence Expansion?

For even more from the experts and Case Studies that demonstrate our success, visit [Why Choose Collins Writing](#).

Stock Up on Power Tools



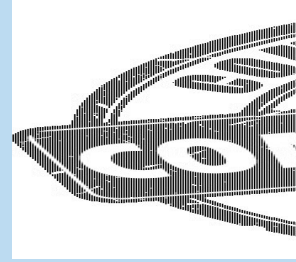
Desktop Guides and More

Ten Percent Summary Desktop Guide

Sentence Expansion Desktop Guide

Seven Sentence Building Activities to Develop Advanced Writers

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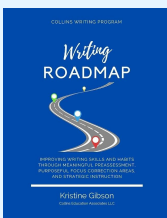
Also in the works:

Using Literacy in the CTE Environment Desktop Guide

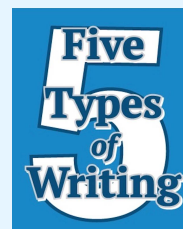
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Writing Roadmap
Improving Writing Skills and Habits Through Meaningful Preassessment,



Introduction to the Collins Writing Program
An At-Your-Own-Pace Introduction to the

Purposeful FCAs, and Strategic Instruction

*Three one-hour, pre-recorded video modules are **highly recommended for teachers of writing.***

Anytime, Asynchronous Access

Instructor: Kristine Gibson

Five Types of Writing

*Six one-hour, pre-recorded video modules that are **great as an introduction or a refresher.***

Anytime, Asynchronous Access

Instructor: Dr. John Collins

*How can we help your students grow as writers, thinkers, and learners?
Have an idea for a training topic? Send it to **Cheryl McDonough**.
If we take your suggestion, we will send you a free print or PDF item of your choice from our online store!*

Online Course Being Offered Summer 2025 Both Graduate and Undergraduate Credit Available Registration Coming Soon!



Using Work Keys to Unlock CTE Skills and Understanding: Effectively Prepare CTE Students for both Class and Test Success

Designed for educators in career and technical schools to create practical strategies and techniques to improve student literacy skills while tackling the challenges of the ACT Work Keys Test. Teachers will become familiar with all portions of the test while generating effective strategies and techniques to benefit students in class, on the test, and within their career or profession.



Conversations with Collins

Educational Norm on YouTube
Featuring our very own **Cheryl McDonough**. Cheryl has a passion and a great love for teaching. Tune



If you'd like to showcase your use of a Collins Power Tool, **send it to us** and receive a free resource if we feature it in a future Exchange!

Next Month: The Origin Story of Collins Writing with John Collins and The Next Chapter with Kristine Gibson

Come back to hear from founder John Collins and current CEO Kristine Gibson. Have a question for either of them? Send it to **Cheryl**,

in to hear her insights and ideas that
are sure to motivate!

and we will try to get the answer!

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