



## Helping School Leaders Foster a Culture of Writing

### Tip #4: Faculty Meetings

If you want teachers to embrace Collins Writing as a critical part of your school culture, it is important to keep it in the conversation. Faculty 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 schoolwide discussions and mini sharing sessions. The following ideas are easy to implement and require minimal planning but go a long way in showing teachers that you value the strategies they are learning.

#### **Tip #4**

During faculty meetings, professional learning community meetings, and department meetings, try the following:

- Use Collins assignments the way you expect teachers in classrooms to use them. For example, list four strategies to prevent bullying that we reviewed at last month’s faculty meeting and discuss which one you think is the most effective (Type Two).
- Select a Collins Writing Program Question of the Week/Month. Choose from the list below or create your own and pose one of these questions as a Type One, setting a line quota (usually 5–7 lines) and a time limit (usually 2–3 minutes). After writing, ask faculty to share their thoughts with one another or with the large group.
  - Are students able to produce more text in the same amount of time when you give a Type One assignment, as compared to earlier in the school year?
  - Have students come to expect frequent Type Two quizzes? Why is that? How has Type Two writing improved learning in your classroom?
  - What routines do you have in place that help you manage Type One and Two writing? How do you ensure that students are receiving feedback on their answers without lugging piles of papers home every night?
  - Do students ever suggest Focus Correction Areas<sup>SM</sup> (FCAs) for assignments that you give?
  - Do you ever change FCAs for different students in your classes? How? Do you change FCAs to challenge the most advanced students in your classes?
  - What tips do you have for managing the grading of Type Three and Four writing?
  - How frequently do you provide time for students to revise and edit their work? How do you scaffold this process? What strategies have you found to be successful?
  - Have you put into practice any of the Collins Writing Program highly recommended assignments: the Short Persuasive Essay, Ten Percent Summary, Comparison and Contrast, or Vocabulary Cards? How do students seem to receive them?
- Ask teachers to identify one Collins strategy that’s working for them and to bring one piece of evidence that demonstrates the strategy. After a quick Type One (five lines: What’s working and why?), break teachers into small groups to share their successes. If you have a little more time, ask each group to share a one-minute summary of one member’s success story with the whole group.

- Take a minute or two to “shout out” Collins strategies observed in individual classrooms, recognizing teachers who are using Collins Writing successfully and reinforcing good teaching strategies.
- Choose one teacher each week/month to lead a five-minute Collins Crash Course. The selected teacher will explain or demonstrate a successful Collins technique (like Focused Editing or Throwback Thursday) that you have observed in their classroom, providing a quick “takeaway” for others to try.
- Ask teachers to bring one or two samples of recent student writing, particularly Type Three and Four assignments, with a particular purpose in mind—e.g., Bring one writing sample that impressed you this month, bring one sample that demonstrates a common writing problem you see, or bring one piece in which the student used a lot of content vocabulary. (For more on this, see [Using Student Writing Samples to Improve Teacher Instruction](#)). Facilitate a discussion of why each piece was selected. As an added bonus, consider collecting and scanning copies of these shared samples to store in a school database that teachers can access when they need models of student writing for their instruction.

For more faculty meeting ideas and implementation tips, see the Administrators’ Corner in [Exchange](#) issues 51, 52, and 53.

In conclusion, one of the best ways to ensure that the Collins Writing Program, or any program, is implemented is to simply look for physical evidence and ask specific questions. While this recommendation sounds obvious, the combined experience of our many associates over three decades of work in schools tells us these practices don’t always happen. We find that most school leaders assume that a program is being used if the professional development experience that introduced it was well received. But teachers need more: They need help to refocus their energies, change habits, and sort through priorities. By using the questions and strategies listed here, you can provide the leadership necessary to sustain change without significant costs in time or money.