Collins Writing Exchange

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

Administrators' Corner

Helping School Leaders Foster a Culture of Writing

To support your teachers with Collins Writing, it's important to know how teachers (and students) are doing in real time. Finding out how well Collins Writing is being implemented in your school doesn't need to be a formal or time-consuming process. It's as easy as chatting with students as you walk through the halls. In a school where Collins Writing has become a seamless part of the culture, students will be able to answer "yes" to all of the questions below:

1. Do you know the difference between a Type One and a Type Two assignment? Does your teacher assign these types of writing? If so, how often?
2. Do you know what a Focus Correction Area (FCA) is? How do they help you as a writer?
3. Does your teacher ask you to read your papers out loud so you can hear how they sound and listen for mistakes?

Click here for the full list of questions and ideas for how to incorporate your findings during faculty meetings.

By keeping up dialogue about Collins Writing, you encourage broader levels of implementation and invite questions about how to improve writing practices.

See last month's tip and learn the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions posed by school leaders using the Collins Writing Program.

Tip of the Month

The Power of the Short Type Three Writing Assignment

Bigger isn't always better, even in writing. One of the biggest misconceptions about Type Three writing is that Type Threes must be long. In fact, "writing short" has numerous benefits, such as forcing writers to weed out extraneous information, encouraging focus and clarity, and zeroing in on key content. Short pieces also take less time to write and less time to grade—a win-win!

MAKING A SHORT TYPE THREE

A Type Two Prompt:

Identify the five stages of cell division and briefly describe each.

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Focus Correction Areas (FCAs):

- **5 stages/name and describe in order**   (Answer to the prompt/quantified when possible)
- **6 or more cell vocabulary, circled**   (# of content vocabulary, circled)
- **Labeled diagram**   (Teacher's choice: a content FCA to refine the response, a grammar pet peeve, etc.)

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Short Type Three

While many teachers rely primarily on Type Two writing for short content area pieces, short Type Threes like the one above offer a powerful alternative, increasing expectations without significantly increasing time spent.

For further explanation and examples of short Type Threes in various content areas, see our Turning Type Twos into Threes guide sheet.

You can also check out some examples in the PDF Turning Ten Type Twos into Type Threes, which includes FCA lists.

Featured Writing Assignment
The Argument Essay: Parts 3 and 4 of a Multi-Part Series

ARGUMENT WRITING

Part 3: Gathering Evidence

One of the most challenging aspects of argument writing is developing reasons and evidence to support an opinion or claim. The **HELPS Focus Sheet** encourages students to go beyond personal feelings and incorporate information from outside sources to build evidence in multiple categories: **H**istorical, **E**conomic, **L**iterary, **P**ersonal, **S**cientific. The T-chart format allows students to analyze both sides of an argument and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of each side before committing to their final opinions or claims.

- **HELPS Focus Sheet**
- **HELPS Focus Sheet Explanation for Students**
- **HELPER Focus Sheet** (Elementary)

Even if a comprehensive argument paper isn't in your plans, teachers can use the HELPS Focus Sheet to build higher-order thinking skills in response to content area reading. As an alternative or follow-up to the Ten Percent Summary, ask students to read a relevant article from your subject area and complete the HELPS Focus Sheet from the bottom up. Students will first record the author's claim and then briefly summarize and categorize the author's reasoning in the table. This gives students practice analyzing arguments while building real-world knowledge in your subject area.

Part 4: Developing Claim Statements

A solid claim is the backbone of an argument essay. A claim should be engaging, debatable, and backed by research, evidence, and academic reasoning. This single sentence packs a lot of punch, and most students need support in getting it right. Our recommendation? Use FCAs to set criteria for writing claims. Practice writing basic claim prompts before developing prompts for full argument essays. Our templates make it easy for students to learn the critical elements of a strong claim and help them put theory into practice.

- **Basic Claim Template**
- **Claim/Counterclaim Template**
- **Opinion Statement Template** (Grade Five and lower)

Parts 1 & 2: Need a Rewind?

Revisit last month's Exchange to review Argument Writing Part 1: Choosing the Right Prompt and Part 2: Diagnosing Student Needs. Check out the Type Three Writing assignments below, too. And tune in next month for more on argument writing.

- **My Book Review** (Grades K-3)
- **Book of the Year** (Grades 3-6)
- **The Short Persuasive Essay: Taking a Stand on an Issue** (Grades 7-12)
- **Evaluate an Answer** (Math)
- **SAT Writing in Shop** (Career & Technical)

Looking for More Collins Writing?

Our menu of virtual and in-person training options is always growing, especially during this time of hybrid/virtual instruction. We offer an array of options designed to support (or jump start!) your Collins Writing implementation and improve writing practice. Contact us to learn more about customizing workshops or coaching sessions just for your staff.

Want to attend training on your own? View our Public Schedule for upcoming live and online events which includes several after-school webinar opportunities for new and long-time Collins users.

More links of interest:

FREE RESOURCES

Ready-to-Use Type Threes, FCA Lists, Graphic Organizers, and More!

PUBLIC PD SCHEDULE

Upcoming Live and Online Events in Your Area

ESSENTIAL CONVENTIONS

Check Mate and Other Resources to Tackle Teachers' Biggest Writing Pet Peeves!

WORKSHOPS & INSTITUTES

From Collins Basics to Expert-Level Training—Find It Here!

EXCHANGE ARCHIVE

All Previous Newsletters with FREE Writing Assignments in Every Edition!

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