

COLLINS WRITING

Best Practice Writing Instruction
for All

Collins Writing: Improving Student Performance

- Blends best practices into a unified, flexible approach
- Focuses on thinking skills
- Stresses both *teaching* and *using* writing—with a strategic focus
- Engages students and increases productivity

Frequency – of writing experiences

Focus— of instruction

Feedback—on strategic goals



Key Elements of the John Collins Writing Method



FIVE TYPES OF WRITING—reasons we write/ways we revise

FOCUS CORRECTION AREAS--Skills to assess; limit to three

READING WRITING OUT LOUD--Essential revision tool

SEVEN ELEMENT ASSIGNMENTS--Structured, intentional

ESSENTIAL ASSIGNMENTS—Purposeful, best value lessons

DIFFERENTIATION—Meet the needs of all learners

STUDENT WRITING COLLECTION--Evidence over time



Summarized from Collins education Associate Materials



Five Types of Writing

Type 1: Capture Ideas

Type One writing gets ideas on paper—brainstorming. Type One is timed and requires a minimum number of items or lines. Questions and/or guesses are permitted. Evaluated with a check (✓) or minus (-).

Type 2: Respond Correctly

Type Two writing shows that the writer knows something about a topic or has thought about the topic. It is a correct answer to a specific question, graded as a quiz. *One draft.*

Type 3: Edit for FCAs

Type Three has substantive content and meets up to three specific standards called focus correction areas. It is *read out loud* and reviewed to see if the draft meets the following criteria: completes the assignment, is easy to read, and meets standards set by the focus correction areas. Revision and editing are done on the original. *One draft.*

Type 4: Peer Edit for FCAs

Type Four writing is Type Three writing that is *read out loud* and critiqued by another. *Two drafts.*

Type 5: Publish

Type Five writing is of publishable quality. *Multiple drafts.*

For All Types

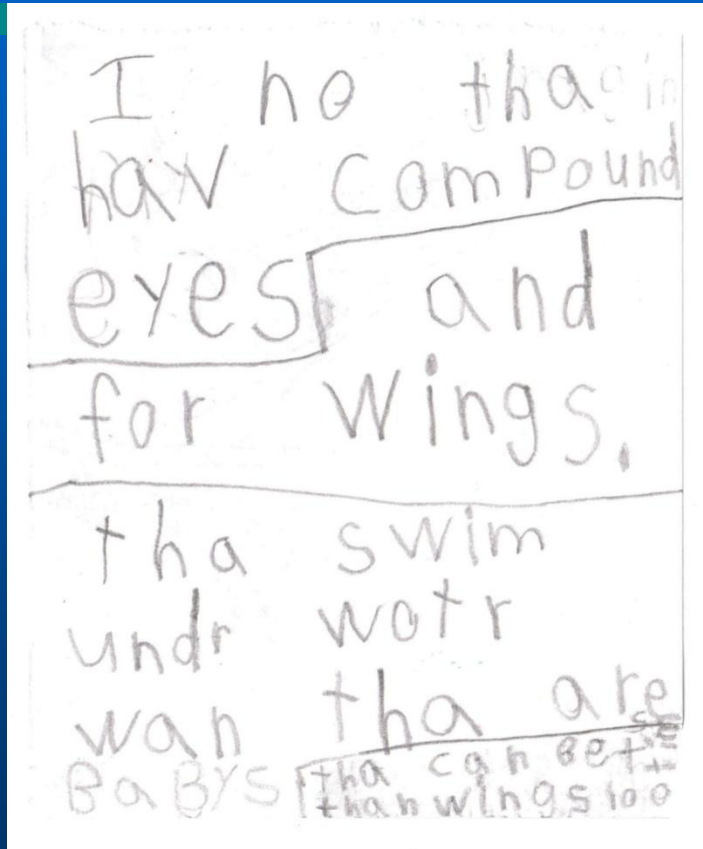
For all types, skip lines. For Types One and Two, label the type on top left-hand side of paper. For Types Three and Four, list focus correction areas on top left-hand side. Type Three and Four papers should be saved and used to practice editing skills.

Type One Writing

Open-ended quick-write—no “correct” answer

- Fluency and getting ideas on paper
- Quick and flexible
- Sentences, questions, stream of consciousness
- Consistent format—label and skip lines
- Easily assessed

Student Work



I know they have compound eyes and four wings.
They swim under water when they are babies.
They can beat their wings 100 times.

- **Type One Writing builds fluency. It is thinking on paper. Given five minutes, this first grader wrote three things she knew about dragonflies.**

Type One Writing Prompts

For Activating Prior Knowledge:

- In eight* lines or more, write the things you know or questions you have about _____.

For Reflecting About Learning:

- Think about and write down two* “hard questions” about _____.

Type One Writing Prompts

For Predicting:

- Before we (go on this field trip, conduct this experiment, study this unit), write eight* lines about some of the things you hope to find out.

For Making Connections:

- How is _____ (this type of problem, concept) similar to _____ (another type of problem, concept)? Fill seven* lines or more.

Type Two Writing

Quick-write with a “right answer”—a quiz

- Fluency and formative assessment
- Flexible, use any time
- Consistent format—label and skip lines
- Usually has a number in the prompt
- Simple, informal assessment

Type Two Writing Prompts

Remembering — recalling information:

- List five* facts about _____.

Understanding — explaining ideas or concepts:

- Summarize the three* most important points from our class yesterday (or today's class or last night's reading)

Type Two Writing Prompts

Applying — using information in another familiar situation:

- What two* strategies that we have talked about might you use to (solve, connect, repair, etc.) the following?

Analyzing — breaking information into parts to explore relationships:

- Describe two* ways _____ and _____ are similar and two* ways they are different.

Type Two Writing Prompts

Evaluating — justifying a decision, checking, critiquing, judging:

- Give two* reasons why this cannot be a correct answer for this question. Explain.

Creating — generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things:

- If the answer is _____, write two* questions that would go with that answer.

Type Three Writing

A composition with specific criteria

- Substantive content and meets up to three specific standards called focus correction areas (FCAs).
- Create a draft, read it out loud, and review for criteria
- One, self-edited draft
- Assessed on focus correction areas

Type: 2

Name:

Write 10 words or phrases that describe the characters and the setting in the story.

Geneva is a house nurse,
 Lulu is the second youngest
 Juice is an illiterate person.
 Pa has no job so it's hard and it's the
 winter.
 Tupte is the baby sister until the new
 baby comes.
 Setting: Faulstich house, School, Country.

Type: 1

Name:

Write about your favorite part in the story so far. Fill 5 lines.

My favorite part was when
 Juice found a bike and Markey,
 Charleen, and Juice fixed the bike.
 But the bike was too small for Markey,
 Charleen, or Juice so they gave it
 to Lulu.

Student Work

Responses to Karen Hesse's *Just Juice*

Type: 3

Name:

Points _____

Date: 11/03/06

Write a 5 sentence paragraph.

Start with a topic sentence.

Use capital letters and periods.

Topic: Explain who Officer Rusk is.



Topic: Officer Rusk is a truant officer

- x officer feels sad about Juice because she doesn't go to school.
- x officer Rusk looks for children who are not in school.
- x officer Rusk is worried about Juice.
- x officer Rusk drives children to school.

5/6 Learning Specialist incorporates Type 1, 2, and 3 writing assignments into reading comprehension lessons.

"They are learning to use writing to help them organize their thinking. I am using Type 1 and 2 daily."

Student Work

Type Three

Writing looks at content and writing craft. This first grader knew that his dragonfly piece needed three picture details with one label, a sentence with a capital & period, and spaces between words.



Student Work

This grade one sample shows differentiation at work. Since this student is more advanced, she wrote more than one sentence about her topic. The FCAs were adjusted for her.



Butterflies are colorful. Butte-
rflies are powdery. Butterflies
are patterned.

Student Work



This grade one student was successful with two of the three focus correction areas: (1) Three picture details and (2) writing a sentence with capital and period. The student needs to work on the third FCA—spaces between words. Limiting an assignment to three FCAs makes it easier to assess student's progress and areas where growth is needed.

Type Four Writing

A revised composition that has multiple criteria

- Read aloud by the author (self-edited)
- Read aloud by another (peer-edited)
- Usually two drafts
- Assessed on focus correction areas
- Most effective and efficient of all of the types at improving writing skills.

Type Five Writing

Writing of publishable quality

- Self- and peer-edit
- Teacher conference and edit
- Usually requires multiple drafts
- No FCAs—everything counts
- Considered a major project because of the amount of time and effort required

Teaching FCAs

- Step One—Focus Teaching
- Step Two—Focus Practice
- Step Three—Focus Assigning
- Step Four—Focus Correcting

Focus Correction Areas for Primary and Elementary

COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM

Essential Primary Grade FCAs

There are dozens of potential focus correction areas (FCAs) that can be used with beginning writers. FCAs should be selected depending upon the topic, purpose, audience, and skill of the writer. The FCAs listed here are among the most helpful for guiding primary-aged writers to quality compositions.

- 1 Multiple Ideas on a Topic**
(specific alternatives: Details Labeled on Drawing; Three or More Details; Topic Sentence + Detail Sentences; Story Elements—Characters, Setting, Problem, Solution)
- 2 Logical Order of Ideas**
(specific alternatives: Chronological Order; Beginning-Middle-End)
- 3 Careful Word Choice**
(specific alternatives: Describing Words; Powerful Verbs; Specific Content Vocabulary)
- 4 Capitals**
(specific rules may include: Initial Capital for Own Name; First Words of Sentences; I; Familiar Names)
- 5 End Marks (. ? !)**
- 6 Complete Sentences**
(specific alternatives: Capitals/End Marks; Complete Thoughts)
- 7 Format**
(specific alternatives: Name on Paper; Left to Right; Wrap Around Sentences; Skip Lines; Collins Format)
- 8 Best Handwriting**
(specific alternatives: Correct Letter Formation; Space Between Words)

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COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM

Essential Elementary Grade FCAs

There are dozens, possibly hundreds, of potential focus correction areas (FCAs). FCAs should be selected depending upon the topic, purpose, audience, and skill of the writer. The FCAs listed here have proven to be among the most helpful for guiding elementary-aged writers to quality compositions.

- 1 Clear Writing Topic**
(specific alternatives: Topic Sentence; Clear Statement of Opinion; Clear Request)
- 2 Logical Order of Ideas**
(specific alternatives: Beginning-Middle-End; Chronological Order; Steps in Order; Transitions)
- 3 Relevant Details and Support**
(specific alternatives: Three or More Reasons with Details—or Examples, Events, Facts, Differences, or Similarities)
- 4 Sentence Variety**
(specific alternatives: Vary Sentence Beginnings; Vary Sentence Lengths)
- 5 Rich Language**
(specific alternatives: Vivid Adjectives; Powerful Verbs; Specific Content Vocabulary)
- 6 Capitals**
(specific rules may include: first words of sentences; names; I; days of week; months; holidays; geographical names)
- 7 End Marks (. ? !)**
- 8 Complete Sentences**
(specific alternatives: Capitals/End Marks; Avoid Run-ons; Avoid Fragments)

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Focus Correction Areas for Emergent Writers

FCAs for Emergent Writers

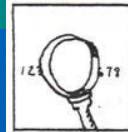
Can we use focus correction areas with emergent writers? Yes. There are times when teachers want even their young pre-writers and beginning writers to get ideas down in a more formal way. Rather than the quick, informal writing done in Types One and Two, Type Three Writing involves more time, care, and thought. The focus correction areas used in Type Three Writing provide both guidance and accountability for beginning writers.

Many kindergarten and first grade teachers introduce focus correction areas to their emergent writers with symbols. By putting these symbols on students' papers, teachers remind students about specific accountabilities for their drawings or writing. Below are examples of symbolic FCAs that teachers use and some ideas for applying them to writing experiences. Copy and use these symbols, or create your own.*

Symbolic FCAs for Emergent Writers

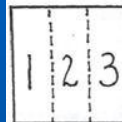
| Symbolic FCA | What It Means | Possible Writing Experiences |
|---|--|--|
|  | <i>Big Picture</i> – Your picture must be at least as large as your hand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a character from a story • Show an event from a story or learning experience • Show what you would do in a certain situation |
|  | <i># of Colors</i> – Use at least (4) realistic colors (add the appropriate number in the blank) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw yourself doing a favorite activity • Predict what you think will happen at the end of this story • Draw a picture of someone following a class rule |
|  | <i>Space Between Words</i> – Put a finger space between words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell about your favorite game • Describe something you like to do in a certain season of the year • Tell how to solve the problem in the picture |

* Permission is granted by the publisher to reproduce the symbolic FCAs for single classroom use.



of Details – Give at least (3) details in your picture (add the appropriate number in the blank)

- Describe your favorite character from the story
- Show (two) or more things a plant needs to grow
- Draw a picture of you at one of the class learning centers



Ideas in Order – Give information in chronological order

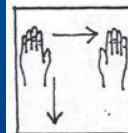
- Show three things we did on the field trip
- Show how to do a certain activity
- Show the things we do each morning when we arrive at school

OR



Beginning-Middle-End – tell the details from the beginning, middle, and end of the story

- Recall events from a story we have read
- Tell about a special day or event



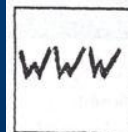
Left to Right/Top to Bottom

- Describe two things in the classroom that are the shape of a square (or triangle, and so on)
- Tell things that you have learned about butterflies



Best Handwriting – Careful Letter Formation

- Tell what makes a person a good friend
- Describe the people who live with you
- Tell about your favorite part of the story



Spelling – All word wall words must be spelled correctly

- Tell about what you did at the library (or at art)
- Tell how you made the soup (or snowman or drawing and so on)

Four Essential Assignments

- The Ten Percent Summary

Telling the main points of a non-fiction article

- Vocabulary Cards

Using cards to master technical vocabulary

- Similar but Different

Comparing and contrasting when differences are subtle

- Short Persuasive Essay

Taking a stand on an issue



Seven Highly Recommended Assignments

- “Who Am I?”

An autobiographical sketch about a classmate

- Class Log

Creating a description of class for an absent student

- Create A Test

Creating a test for the unit your class has just studied

Seven Highly Recommended Assignments

- Study Guide

Predicting, explaining, and answering essay questions

- End of Unit Reflection

Writing a letter to future student describing how to do well in class

- It's a Must!

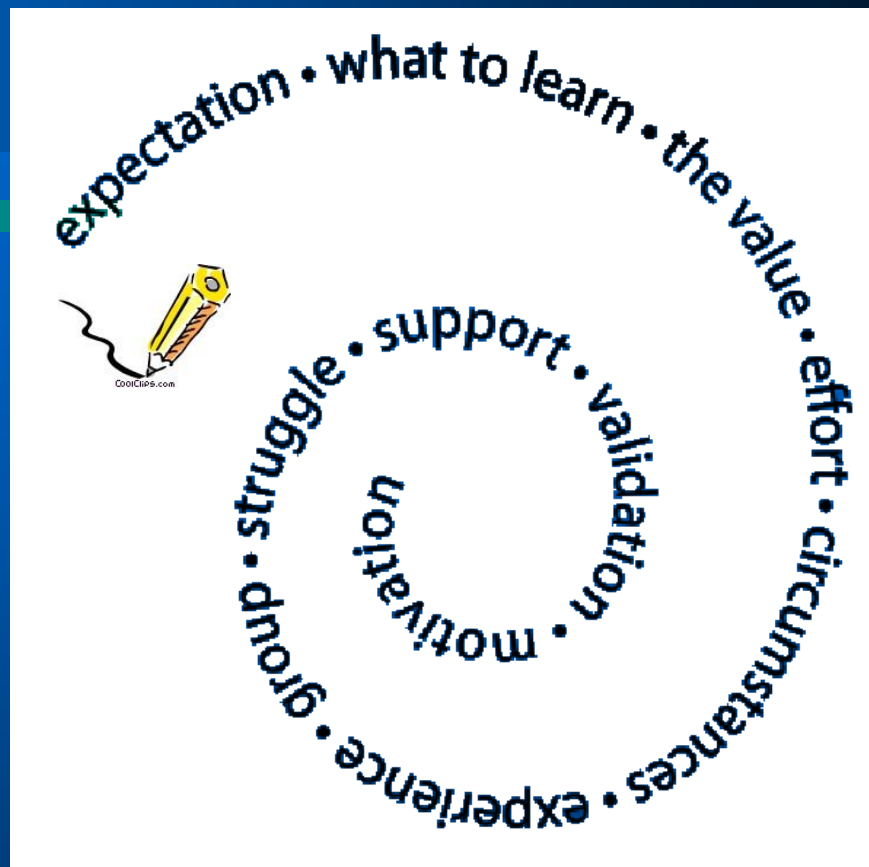
Thoughtful recommendations about the important aspects of this class

- Letter to Next Year's Teacher

Reflecting on what you have learned



We must create a writing environment where students know the purpose for writing and get support with authentic writing forms. Students also need frequent opportunities to share their voice with an attentive and responsive audience. These conditions enhance student motivation.



Motivated writers value writing and are more focused on both learning tasks and skill expectations.

Seven Element Assignment

1. Summary and Rationale
2. Writer's Purpose(s): Give a reason for writing
3. Writer's Role: Writer's stance or point of view
4. Audience: Who will be reading the writing
5. Form: Letter, report, poster, essay, poem, etc.
6. Three Focus Correction Areas *
7. Procedure—sequence of lesson

(*Include Optional FCAs: to accommodate or challenge)

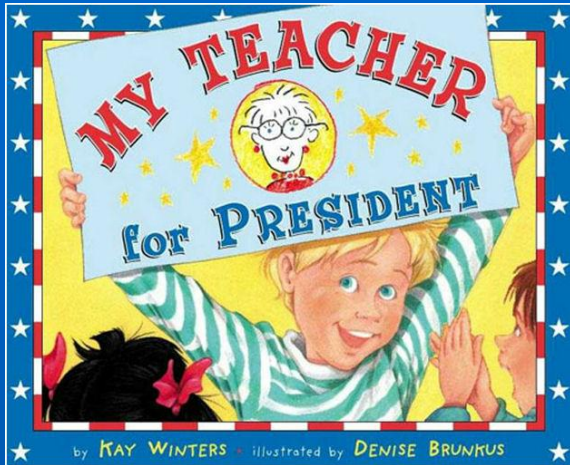
When you finish...

- * Read your report out loud in a one-foot voice. Check for any confusing parts.
- * Edit your FCAs following your teacher's directions.
- * Option if going on to Type Four: Have a partner read your paper out loud to you. Get feedback on your FCAs. Write a second draft with all your improvements.

From *Improving Student Performance Through Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum*,
John Collins, 2008, p. 59.



Seven Element Lesson



Second Grade

1. Assignment Summary: Write a letter explaining why your teacher would be a good president.
2. Purpose: to persuade.
3. Writer's role: Candidate supporter
4. Audience: peers/ community
5. Form: Letter
6. FCAs: Include... (1) 1 Detail from book (2) 3 Sentences (3) Picture of teacher
7. Procedure: After listening to the Kay Winters' story, think of your own teacher and write a letter in support of his/her presidency!

Dear Editor of the Addison Independent,

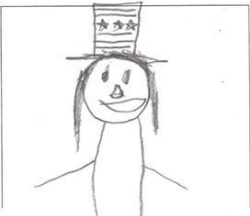
I think my teacher, Mrs. Q

Would make a very good president, and here's why.

She loves the Dictionary. She likes to Recycle things. She is interested in history.

And that's why my teacher would be a good president!

Sincerely,



Dear Editor of the Addison Independent,

I think my teacher, Miss Flint


Would make a very good president, and here's why.

she is really good at signing important papers. She cares about me and my class mates. She makes you's work.

And that's why my teacher would be a good president!

Sincerely,

"She is really good at signing important papers. She cares about me and my classmates. She makes you work."



Collection/Record of Student Writing

Cumulative Writing Folder

Student: _____ Grade: 5

STUDENTS: You need to write often and look back at your past writing assignments to see how you can improve. Use the work in this folder to help you do that. It will be a record of much of what you have written this year. The work will help you, your teachers and parents to see your growth, effort, variety, many accomplishments and creativity as a writer.

FCAs: FCAs are "Focus Correction Areas", or specific writing skills you are working on correcting. They are the two or three areas of your writing that you are focusing on in an assignment or piece of writing. Your teacher will let you know what skills you should be focusing on for each piece of writing.

Rules for First Draft Writing

1. Write in pencil.
2. Be sure you know what the Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) are for this writing assignment.
3. Skip a line between each line you write.
4. Leave a one inch (1 inch) margin on each side of the paper.
5. When you have finished your first draft, READ IT ALOUD.

Ask yourself:

- a) Did I complete the assignment?
- b) Does my writing piece sound right?
- c) Is it smooth and easy to read?
- d) Have I checked the FCAs? (Focus Correction Areas)

Record of Assignments

| Date | Composition Number | Title or Topic | Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) | Strengths | Areas of Growth |
|----------|--------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------|-----------------|
| 9/2/08 | # 1 | Parts of Speech pretest | | | |
| 10/9/08 | # 2 | Sentence frame | 1) s-mile 2) exact words 3) caps/end. | | |
| 10/27/08 | # 3 | Leads | | | |
| 9/11/08 | # 4 | Autobiography | 1) caps. 2) s. fr 3) end para. | | |
| 10/1/08 | # 5 | Necap Review items | | | |
| 11/6/08 | # 6 | Harris Burdick #2 | 1) complete sen. 2) punctuation 3) beginning mid. end | | |
| 11/1/08 | # 7 | Harris Burdick # 1 | Same as up → | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Writing assignments are numbered and recorded in a student folder. Pieces can be used as models or revised further. The collection also shows student growth over time.



One writes
to make a home
for oneself,

on paper,
in time,
in others' minds.



-- Alfred Kazin

