

What *They've* Said; What *They're* Saying

By Mark E. Dressel
CEA Associate

The *Collins Writing Program* consists of the following components:

- > The Five Types - Type One, Type Two, Type Three, Type Four, and Type Five
- > Focus Correction Instruction
- > The 3-Step Process
- > The Seven Element Assignment
- > The Cumulative (Primary) Writing Folder
- > Using Past Papers for Revision
- > Oral Reading
- > The Writing Folder Review Process

Each of the above has been carefully researched and developed as practical, teacher-friendly strategies which allow teachers to implement “best practice” writing instruction in their classrooms.

The following excerpts from recently published books of highly respected experts clearly demonstrate that the *Collins Writing Program* includes as its key components exactly those aspects of writing instruction that the research indicates produce optimal results.

Because Writing Matters. Carl Nagin, Jossey-Bass, 2003

- In the classroom the challenge comes in understanding *when* to focus on *which* aspect of student writing. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Improving writing requires a sustained, school-wide effort. **Collins Writing Program**
- Decades of research have shown that instructional strategies such as isolated skill drills fail to improve student writing. **Focus Correction Areas/Using Past Papers for Revision**
- Most students need models and some direct instruction to gain facility with this kind of writing. **The 3-Step Process**
- This notion of writing as inquiry, problem solving, and discovery has powerful implications for *all* learning. **The Collins Writing Program**
- ... they begin to direct children to write to real audiences. **The Seven Element Model**
- ...they read what they've written out loud, three times. **Oral Reading**
- Looking at a body of student work can yield more data. **Writing Folder Review**
- ...so long as students are given the necessary skills and knowledge to respond critically to one another's work. **The 3-Step Process**
- Teacher encourages students to draw on prior knowledge and interests in their writing as a way to engage their thinking. **Type One**
- Audience and purpose are specifically identified in assignments. **The Seven Element Assignment**

- Students know why they earn a grade. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Students reflect on significant growth, or lack of it, in specific writing skills. **Cumulative Writing Folder - 3rd column**

Best Practice. Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde, Heinemann, 1998

- Teachers must help students find real purposes to write. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- Students need to take ownership and responsibility. **Focus Correction Areas/Oral Reading/The 3-Step Process**
- ...folder systems for evaluating cumulatively. **Cumulative Writing Folder**
- ...focusing on one or two kinds of errors at a time. **Focus Correction Areas**
- ...using reflective portfolios. **Cumulative Writing Folder - 3rd column**
- ...Stop and Write. **Type One and Type Two**

Classroom Instruction that Works. Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jane Pollock, ASCD, 2001

- The teacher structures writing tasks to emphasize specific aspects of writing. **Focus Correction Areas**
- ...provide feedback on the targeted skill or strategy. To help students focus, avoid giving feedback on other aspects of the process. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Mastering a skill takes a fair amount of focused practice. **Focus Correction Areas**
- The idea of “focused practice” is particularly important when students are practicing a complex, multi-step skill such as...the writing process. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Feedback should be “corrective” in nature...provides students with an explanation. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Feedback should be specific to a criterion. **Focus Correction Areas**

Engaging Ideas. John Bean, Jossey-Bass, 2001

- ...most of our students will continue to write their papers on the night before they are due unless we structure our courses to promote the writing process. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- ...the importance of designing short writing assignments that challenge students without overwhelming them. **The Collins Writing Program**
- Long assignments (research papers, term papers) will be more successful if teachers break them into stages. **The Seven Element Assignment (see *Survivor’s Guide to the Research Paper*)**
- For most of our students, structured assignments (rather than open-ended ones) lead to greater growth. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- When asked to read their drafts aloud, students unconsciously correct many of their mistakes. **Oral Reading**
- ...by varying such aspects of the assignment as the audience, the rhetorical context,

- the writer's assumed role, the purpose, or the format. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- ...provide a window into student's thinking that allows the instructor to monitor student progress, to readjust instruction, and to develop teaching strategies that reach different kinds of learners. **Type One and Type Two**
 - Save time by clarifying your grading criteria. **Focus Correction Areas**
 - Hold an in-class norming session. **The 3-Step Process**
 - Save time by designing good assignments. **The Seven Element Assignment**
 - Make limited, focused comments and avoid marking errors. **Focus Correction Areas**

Understanding by Design. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, ASCD, 1999

- Feature a setting that is real or simulated. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- Typically require the student to address an identified audience. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- Are based on a specific purpose that relates to the audience. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- ...to not to confuse the number of factual errors or the quality of the writing with the student's understanding of the time period. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Sometimes, sophisticated *understandings* lurk beneath weakly executed *performances*. **Focus Correction Areas**
- We must beware of *overvaluing*, the articulateness and accuracy of formalized knowledge, a deep-seated teacher habit- *conflating* knowledge with understanding. **Focus Correction Areas**
- At the end of each lecture, students are asked to answer two questions: What is the big point you learned in class today? And, What is the main unanswered question you leave class with today? Harvard professors have called this technique one of the most effective innovations in their teaching. **Type One**
- Periodically, students are asked to review their portfolios and respond to reflective questions. **Cumulative Writing Folder**

Creating Writers. Vicki Spandel and Rick Stiggins, Longman, 1990

- As we become skilled at defining what it is that we are looking for, we can share this secret with our students. **Focus Correction Areas**
- ...we must find a way to define the components of good writing and to talk intelligently about them in a language that student writers can understand and use in revision. **The 3-Step Process**
- ...we should teach students to assess their own writing. **The 3-Step Process**
- ...*it will get better faster, once you stop marking all the errors.* **Focus Correction Areas**
- Focus on *one* kind of error only. **Focus Correction Areas**
- ...reads his or her paper aloud. **Oral Reading**
- There is only one acceptable basis for determining student grades for writing: careful, systematic analysis of students' actual achievements as measured against high-

- quality, agreed-upon criteria. **Focus Correction Areas**
- We must beware of *overvaluing*, the articulateness and accuracy of formalized knowledge, a deep-seated teacher habit- *conflating* knowledge with understanding. **Focus Correction Areas**
- At the end of each lecture, students are asked to answer two questions: What is the big point you learned in class today? And, What is the main unanswered question you leave class with today? Harvard professors have called this technique one of the most effective innovations in their teaching. **Type One**
- Periodically, students are asked to review their portfolios and respond to reflective questions. **Cumulative Writing Folder**

6+1 Traits of Writing. Ruth Culham, Scholastic, 2003

- Students find that if they can break revision down into small, doable pieces, they can manage the process quite well. **Focus Correction Areas**
- One of the beautiful things about using the traits is that you can focus on one aspect and save the others for the next time. **Focus Correction Areas**
- ...so you don't have to fix everything on each individual piece of student writing. Pick one issue at a time to work on and do a good job with it. **Focus Correction Areas**
- The other problems? Well, they will show up again the next time, won't they? That'll be a new game--a new chance to learn another writing skill. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Students are then asked to turn to their own work and select a piece of writing that they feel needs a better beginning. They write new leads. **Using Past Papers for Revision**
- Focused revision makes teaching and learning more effective. **Using Past Papers for Revision**
- R.A.F.T.S. has proven itself to be a valuable and successful strategy for arriving at writing topics in all content areas. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- ...yet many classrooms are silent. And students aren't reading their own work aloud either. **Oral Reading**

Research You Can Use to Improve Results. Kathleen Cotton, ASCD, 1999

- Develop and prioritize learning goals and objectives...sequence them...and organize them into units or lessons. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Assign tasks like those carried out by people in real work settings. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- Have high expectations for student achievement; all students are expected to work hard to attain priority learning goals. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Give students immediate feedback on their written assignments to help them understand and correct errors. **Focus Correction Areas**
- Teach children the scoring systems that will be used to evaluate their work and allow

- them to practice using these systems for self- and peer assessment. **The 3-Step Process**
- Involve students in peer assessment activities, such as peer editing. **The 3-Step Process**

Handbook of Research on Teaching. Virginia Richardson, American Educational Research Association, 2001

- ...taking into account that students would benefit from help with planning, writing, and revising. **The Collins Writing Program**
- Students also run into difficulty when they are expected to act as experts in relation to one another. **The 3-Step Process**
- One way to heighten students' sense of their readers is to manipulate assignments to specify audience. **The Seven Element Assignment**
- ...investigators have found that comments on mechanics and form tend to dominate and overshadow comments on ideas, knowledge, or disciplinary values...often function more to justify a grade. **Focus Correction Areas**

Accountability in Action. Douglas Reeves, Advanced Learning Press, 1999

- By far, the most common characteristic of the “90/90/90 Schools” was their emphasis on requiring written responses in performance assessments...teachers placed a very high emphasis on informative writing. **The Collins Writing Program**
- Another striking characteristic of the “90/90/90 Schools” was frequent external scoring of assessments. **The 3-Step Process/Writing Folder Review**

Leading in a Culture of Change. Michael Fullan, Jossey-Bass, 2001

- If people begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important, the sharing itself becomes a learning culture. **Writing Folder Review**
- ...name knowledge sharing as a core value and then establish mechanisms and procedures that embody the value in action. **Writing Folder Review**
- ...schools have built up all kinds of structural and cultural barriers to sharing. **Writing Folder Review**
- Organizations that improve do so because they create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving, and they set in motion the internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile. **Writing Folder Review**