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## RDE #3

**Tammy** ([permalink](#))

Created on Friday, 05/30/2008 4:18 PM by [Tammy](#)

1. I chose to summarize Chapter one of Collins' Improving Student Performance. Chapter one focuses on the five different types of writing assignments. Type one writing is the first step in which the student is writing to get their ideas onto paper. During this type of writing brainstorming, idea generating, questioning, recollecting, data gathering, and exploring take place. Most importantly the audience for a type one writing is only the student. Type two writing is defined as writing that shows that the writer knows something about a topic or has thought about the topic. It is sometimes assessed through quizzes. For this type of writing, the audience is the teacher. Type three writing consists of particular content called focus correction areas that must be met. In a type three writing the student must create a draft, read it aloud, and make revisions especially according to the focus correction areas. Focus correction areas include content, organization, convention, and style. The audience for a type three writing is the student and the teacher. Type four writing is a type three writing that has been read out loud and correct by another student. This type requires two drafts and as stated by the text "is the most effective and efficient of all of the types at improving writing skills." The audience for a type four writing is the student, teacher, and the other person who reviews and edits the paper. Type five writing is defined as publishable quality that can go beyond the classroom without question. The audience for a type five writing is anyone outside the classroom and beyond.

2. "I need to read aloud and write aloud. Voice, after meaning, is the most important element in effective writing. An individual human voice is what we seek in a text, that voice is what keeps us reading and makes us believe what is written. And I must help my student hear the shadow of the voice in the early drafts and remind my student to keep writing out loud so the heard quality of writing will rise from the page." (Murray) (Page 18)

-This quote really jumped out at me because during revision many of us tend to rush through it and overlook the "voice" that is the most effective. It is the writer's own voice that can understand the quality of their own work. I think this quote is great to keep in mind while writing anything because it will improve the revision and the quality of the work.

3. Once again, I just wanted to comment on how well written even this particular Collins' book is. This one has even more charts and examples than the last one. I like that they have students' example and a question and answer part. Both of these are very helpful in understand focus correction areas. The remainder of the book break down the five types of writing assignments and goes more deeply into the subject for better understanding.

4. As I also stated in class, I think the classroom journal is an excellent idea for any grade level. I find it difficult to miss class and then have to ask classmates or the professor to review what was done that day without it taking away from that day's lesson. With our classroom journal, I was able to know everything that went on during the time I missed without interrupting the class. Especially with the summer session, there is much pressure to get everything completed in such a short amount of time. With the classroom journal, it takes some of the pressure off by being able to go back to it to make sure nothing was overlooked or missed.

5. At the back of chapter one if the general guidelines for the five types of writings along with the advantages and disadvantages to each of the five. This is a great addition to the chapter one. The guidelines are perfect for having everytime a writing is done from beginning to end. In the future, I would have the guidelines as a checklist for every writing, as each guideline is completed, I would have the student mark if off the guideline list. Eventually, the students would know exactly what is needed in their writing without the checklist. With the advantages chart, I would use that for what they should be getting out of each type of writing. For example, for type one writing, some of the advantages include promoting writing fluency and taking little class time to complete. If a student is taking extremely long brainstorming, they can refer to the advantages and know that type one requires little time to complete. This could also give a good outlook as to what is expected and what should be gained from each individual writing.

## Comments

1. Your summary of the Collins' approach is very complete and will assist you in remembering how each type of writing is intended to work along the continuum of type 1 (creative thinking) - type 5 (critical thinking).

2. I notice when you put these words into action because your writing is greatly improved over when you don't read your work aloud. Keep this in mind as you should model your best work and live the actions that your preach to your students. Food for thought!

3. I love that you are appreciating the fine work that Collins has produced for educators.

4. Thank you for your compliment on the classroom journal. Yes, it does assist those students who have to be absent to know what was missed and hear it from the perspective of their fellow classmates.

5. I like how Collins shows us the pros and cons of his work as he sees them. This information can assist teachers to improve the approach with additions that Farris recommends in her text.

Friday, 05/30/2008 8:39 PM by [DAVID](#)

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### Christine ([permalink](#))

Created on Monday, 05/26/2008 3:21 PM by [Christine](#)

1. Chapter Three of the Collins Developing Thinking and Writing Skills is about essential writing assignments. The four essential writing assignments include summaries, vocabulary cards, comparisons and contrasts, and persuasive essays. In the text they define summaries as "explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts." The Ten Percent Summary is used to help students write a summary in ten percent of the words of the original text. To help students do this, they can follow the acronym S.A.T. The **S** stands for source of the article, the **A** stands for the author and the **T** stands for the title. The second essential assignment is to create vocabulary cards. Students are asked to write the definition and a sentence for a vocabulary word on one side of the card and write the word and draw a picture to go with it on the other side. Comparison and contrast is the third essential writing assignment. This is used to let teachers know if students can tell the difference between concepts or ideas. They give the example of asking the students to distinguish between professional football and college football or plant cells and animal cells. Persuasive essays are the fourth type of essential writing assignments. They require the ability to create an argument under a time limit. This type of assignment is important because it appears on the SAT and ACT tests. Focus sheets are used to help students organize their ideas for writing a persuasive essay. The focus sheet lists the acronym HELPS in two columns and the students are to write their reasons for and against the topic. The **H** stands for historical, the **E** stands for economic, the **L** is for literacy, the **P** for personal and **S** for scientific.

2. "Summary writers must also suspend their own views on a subject to articulate fairly what is often an unfamiliar or even unsettling view in the article being summarized." (pg 62) I agree with this quote because it is something I tend to do too. Often times while writing a summary we want to add our own opinion or reaction to the article. Summaries are to be written just to summarize the article or text in fewer words.

3. I learned in this chapter that we as teachers should have our students doing many summaries, not just one. The more they practice writing summaries the better they will be at it. As I continue writing RDE's, they become easier to write and I am able to do them quickly with practice.

4. I liked the idea of making vocabulary cards. I have never seen this used in a classroom this way. This is an essential assignment if it is used for all vocabulary throughout the year. Writing a definition with a sentence and illustration attached is a great study guide to have. The book states that it is a good idea to include general words

to the academic vocabulary lists that are important for students to know.

5. I also liked the idea of using the HELPS focus sheet to write a persuasive essay. This can be an important tool for students to organize their ideas before starting to write an essay. Students should practice with these focus sheets so they can do them quickly and easily when it comes time to take a state test or the SAT. Using these sheets can help in writing a fully developed thesis which I think can be the most time consuming part of writing if one does not know how to organize it.

## Comments

1. Your summary is quite masterful. I like how you bold-faced the type for the essential letters that bring focus to the writing. There is a wealth of useful information here to use to develop meaningful writing lessons.

2. Yes, teach your students and try to keep yourself from placing opinions into what should be a factual retelling of a larger body of writing - a summary. One of the PDE standards is to have students know the difference between fact and opinion. Here we could use the summary as a student demonstration of this understanding.

3. I am so pleased to see that you realize that I have embedded this all-important skill into your work. You are indeed developing your summarization skills as you take the courses that I teach. You will note that I do not just expect this essential skill to be developed in the language arts class, but in all of my classes. Provide your students with a lot of practice writing summaries and they will not only comprehend the material you are trying to teach but they will also develop better writing skills.

4. Many of my former students liked to use vocabulary cards to assist them in learning and using their more advanced vocabulary words. They enjoyed the portability of the cards and could review them throughout the week on the bus ride or car ride to and from school.

5. Focus sheets are so important to learning and are not used nearly enough by educators. You have plenty of useful examples in the two Collins' texts.

Tuesday, 05/27/2008 10:11 AM by [DAVID](#)

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### [julie \(permalink\)](#)

Created on Friday, 05/23/2008 6:48 PM by [Julie](#)

Updated on Friday, 05/23/2008 6:51 PM by [Julie](#)

1. Chapter 4 in Improving Student Performance is called Highly Recommended assignments and is chockful of beneficial ideas. Seven assignments of high impact were given including an autobiographical "Who am I?", a class log, creating a test, making a study guide, an end of unit reflection, recommendations, and a letter to next years teacher. Information is given about how to do each. For example, the students writing drafts that analyze thier own writing in the letter to next years teacher. It gives examples of worksheets like questions for interviewing peers and each of the other assignments.

2. "Some of the most significant changes I have made in my own teaching have come as a result of reading students' responses to these assignments." I agree with this and think that t would be good to get feedback on what works and doesn't work in the classroom.

3. I really like the idea of the class log where a different student each day writes a description of what went on in the class that day for a student who was absent. I think this is a wonderful idea for everyone.

4. Something that stood out to me in class was to do choral responses to make sure children really heard what was said. I like the low instrumental music in class in the background.

5. I like how you had us move around and discuss our answers with each other the other day. Children are especially antsy, so let them move!

### Comments

1. All of these examples may be used in your classroom to have a foundational assignment that has worth and is proven to be enjoyed by students.

2. Yes, we are all learners improving on our writing skills. Be sure the students realize that you, the teacher, know that you too are still learning. It encourages them to know that you all our passengers on the ship of learning.

3. I have used the class log ever since attending a summer institute conducted by the National Writing Project. I hope to bring this offering to BU someday.

4. The choral response is a fun motivational device that also assures that what has been said by the teacher or student has been heard and understood. The instrumental music sets the stage for learning. Just don't overuse it and be selective when you turn the volume down or turn the music off all together.

5. Yes, let the children move, dance, rap, sing, play, and every activity that allows them to be children.

Tuesday, 05/27/2008 10:01 AM by [DAVID](#)

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1. Great summary. These are great examples that can be used in all of our classrooms.

2. I agree with t his quote. It is important that the students' are able to express their own opinion which also gives a different respect for the teacher.

3. The classroom journal is really important for the classroom of any age students. It's nice to know if someone is absent they can look to the journal for what was missed or dicussed.

4. The music is something I have never had in a classroom before. Dr. Walker uses it at the right times and it is important to make sure of that in your classroom. It is also really relaxing!

5. It's essential that children are able to move around in the classroom. Some teachers make it like the students are glued to the chairs which is terrible! Everyone needs to move around especially children!

Tuesday, 06/10/2008 10:58 PM by [Tammy](#)

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Tuesday, 06/10/2008 10:58 PM by [Tammy](#)

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#### Ashley Post on May 22 2008 ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 11:16 PM by [Ashley](#)

1. Chapter 4 in the FCA text is an excellent chapter. From primary to high school, there are specific guidelines, give or take, on what the students and the teacher go by to produce an ideal paper or works. A great point was made on pg. 25 stating that the FCAs need to be specific. If they are vague, too general or too difficult, or not appropriate, things are less likely to become effective in the child's writing. For primary and elementary, there are eight guidelines that should be followed, everything from the topic having an appropriate amount of details to the handwriting being the best the children can produce. As you get into the high school format, the guidelines are different. Just about everything is covered and the product should be very crisp and clean. At this level, sentence structure, verb tenses, and detailed paragraphs are very important. The chapter did include that although charts are provided, the rules aren't really set in stone because as always said, not all of the students will work on the same level or the same cognitive level; there needs to be room for adjustment. "Modify and Adjust"

2. "If focus correction areas are vague, too general or difficult, or inappropriate for the writing task, they are unlikely to be effective in improving student writing" (pg. 25). Teachers need to be specific when providing corrections. Whatever level we are instructing on, we as teachers need to make sure we are very clear when we are informing our students. The whole point in correcting or assisting our students in their works is to do just that. If they haven't the slightest idea of what we're talking about, how in the world are they supposed to grow? We need to make sure that we are very clear. Don't add a bunch of extras. **Simply state** what it is they need to work on.

3. I just wanted to say that of all the years, yes years, that I've been in college, the textbooks we have been reading for this class are amazing. I love easy to read yet very informational things. Facts and ideas don't need to be sophisticated or complicated. Like the above quote, just give the facts without beefing them up. Textbooks are written to produce well studied information about a topic. They shouldn't be designed to overwhelm us.

4. Going back to the first class. The game Dr. Walker had us do was a great idea. The game really broke the ice when getting to know new classmates. Who said college had to be all work and no play?

5. Chapter 11 of Farris "Writing is, for most, laborious and slow. The mind travels faster than the pen". No I haven't read this far but I enjoy the quotes at the beginning of the chapters. The quote, for me, applies. I can never sit and write down my thoughts. Typing is another story but when not available, all I can do is think and not write. If my

hand could operate as fast as my mind, I would have many books.

### Comments

1. I enjoyed reading your summary, especially the ending with the concepts of adjusting and modifying. Effective teachers realize that the "one-size-fits-all" mentality does not work. FCAs quite often are individualized to meet specific needs of each writer.

2. The FCAs are always were clear and concise. No one is confused as to what the expectation is and how a grade will be determined.

3. Thank you for your fine compliment related to the choice of the texts. I agree these are exceptionally good and not high-brow at all. I like the let's get to the point mentality and try to use this philosophy whenever I can.

4. I don't know, who ever said, "...college had to be all work and no play?" I never said this and never will! Learning needs to be a blend of productivity and fun.

5. Take your time in your writing and just as in your travels enjoy the journey. I love this quote, too. You may want to put it into a PowerPoint slide and print it out as a classroom poster that inspires your student writers.  
Friday, 05/23/2008 3:12 PM by [DAVID](#)

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1. I think your summary was very good and to the point. It is true FCA's should be specific. I agree with Dr. Walker about one-size fits all.

2. I agree and like the point about not adding extras. They should not be vague and should be clear.

3. I to, think that the reading for this class is informational yet not overwhelming. It's not usually like that.

4. That is a wonderful statement that college should be a blend of work and play. The icebreaker was great.

5. I am the same way! It is hard to write down thoughts most of the time.

Friday, 05/23/2008 5:29 PM by [Julie](#)

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**Melissa** ([permalink](#))Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 6:01 PM by [Melissa](#)

1. Chapter 3 of Collins' *Improving Student Learning* is about four essential writing tasks: summaries, vocabulary cards, comparing and contrasting and finally persuasive essays. Summarization is described as "explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts." Collins then goes on to say that based on research, being good at summarizing not just improves ones writing skills but ones overall academic achievement as well. Vocabulary cards are used for the direct instruction of new vocabulary words and the book lists a 5-step process on how to effectively introduce new vocabulary words. Also, in order to make the cards an effective tool, a teacher must assign a substantial amount of cards, not just 3 or 4. Collins then goes on to discuss comparing and contrasting assignments and how they allow a teacher to determine if a student can distinguish between different concepts or ideas. Finally is the importance of the persuasive essay because of its use on tests such as the SAT and the ACT. The chapter ends with examples of each one of these writing tasks and how you can apply them to use in your classroom. They give detailed step by step instructions using the clearly stated seven elements: project summary, purpose, role, audience, form, FCA's, and procedure.

2. "Summaries do not include the opinion of the person who wrote them" (p. 71). I know this is a simple quote and may seem like something everyone should know, I sometimes find myself doing just that, writing a summary of something and somewhere throughout including my opinion in there. I think that once you get writing a summary you may come across a point that you feel strongly about and you include your feelings or opinion in there without even realizing you are doing so. I know that this is an area that I need to focus on a little more closely and now I will after reading and writing this quote down.

3. I really think that being able to practice the different types of writing makes them come to life and makes them easier to understand by putting them into use. I learn by doing and seeing and these activities done in class have been especially meaningful to me. I am not the biggest fan of writing but I think that may have to do with the different experiences I have had with writing and maybe if I had used a technique like this when I was younger, I would have more of an appreciation for it.

4. From today's class I learned the importance of modifying and adjusting lesson plans based on the needs of the class. In today's class Dr. Walker could have simply dismissed our questions and moved right on to his lesson for the day, but he didn't. He took the time out and answered all of our questions and thoroughly explained out writing assignment that is coming up in the next few classes. But in order to continue with our work, since we have such a limited amount of time, he had to make the decision to assign the classwork as homework. This is something that we are all going to have to do as teachers. Realize that our lessons aren't always going to go as planned and we need to be flexible and adjust them as needed. Also, if our students are confused about something and have valid questions, you need to make the call as the teacher about how much time you will take out and spend to make sure your students do understand. This will be based on your own personal beliefs.

5. I really liked the different ideas and examples presented on pages 70-83 of the *Improving Student Performance* book because they gave specific examples of each of the four types of essential writing tasks outlined in the chapter. I especially liked the sample vocabulary cards on pages 75-76 because they are definately something that I would copy and use in my classroom when I am a teacher. I think that moving away from the book is essential and allowing children to draw a picture and come up with an original sentence for a new vocabulary word gives students a much better understanding of that word and makes learning much more meaningful.

**Comments**

1. A fine summary. I like how you focus on the importance of teaching the various styles of writing and cite the importance of persuasive writing skills. That's why I have asked that you incorporate each in the first assignment relative to the prompts.

2. Once the summary is complete, you may wish to provide your opinion in a reflection 3, 4, or 5 in my format for the blog. Teach your students to try to separate their opinion from their factual summaries.

3. I am glad that you realize the significance of practicing and working towards developing the skills necessary to be great writers or at the very least, better writers. I promise, **we** all will be better writers after this course.

4. Thank you for your kind words and well-thought-out realizations as to my teaching practices from Thursday's class. Yes, effective teachers know when to stick with the lesson plan and when improvisation is best. I felt that my students' needs were more important than the plan of the day. Yes, we will accomplish the plan, but no one will suffer because of the plan. We will write and we will all know what is expected in the first and subsequent assignments. We all will feel safe and encouraged to ask questions and develop as thinkers and future teachers.

5. Vocabulary development is one of the five pillars of literacy development; it is the second highest level. We must do everything in our power to encourage the development of advanced vocabulary through the collaboration between reading and writing and integrated with all content areas. I like Collins' approach with the cards and many of my former elementary students did, too.

Friday, 05/23/2008 3:03 PM by [DAVID](#)

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1. You really covered the chapter well.

2. I also chose this quote. I always find myself trying to include my opinion into a summary.

3. I too learn by doing.

4. This was a good way to show us that we will have to modify and adjust.

5. I wrote about the vocabulary cards too. I think this is a great idea that I would like to use in my class.

Monday, 06/09/2008 7:19 PM by [Christine](#)

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### **Samantha** ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 5:56 PM by [Samantha](#)

1. Chapter 4 is about everything you need to know about Focus Correction Areas. At first Collins was skeptic about introducing FCA's to schools. His views since then have obviously changed. Four posters were created to help each education level with starting points for FCA's. The four posters are primary, elementary, middle and high school. The rest of the chapter contains the four posters along with detailed information on each separate FCA.

2. "For twenty years I have avoided suggesting specific focus correction areas to schools" (p.23). The first sentence of this chapter astonished me. I was surprised to find that at first Collins did not share his idea of FCA's. He eventually changed his views and now look at the impact they are having on writers of all ages. It just goes to show that if an idea of yours does not succeed at first perhaps trying to modify it or your views can help your idea work. Always keep an open mind as well and don't just throw out an idea if it does not work the first time.

3. During class today we did not follow Dr. Walker's plan for the day. I thought it was very beneficial for us to see that if our unit plan is not met or we do not cover what we want to during class as teachers, that class still can be educational. I know from experience that there are teachers out there that can get off task very easily. Even though you get off track, you can still talk about something that will benefit and educate the class.

4. I was surprised to find that the 5 types of writings are not necessarily a process. I thought after Type I you move on to Type II and so on. I now know that they are all different types of papers you can write. At first I thought it was more of a writing process. I am glad I got that confusion out of the way.

5. While reading Chapter 4, I was surprised to find that FCA's are separated between ages by four posters. It obviously makes sense after finding out about them, but before I read this chapter I would not have expected four posters to be available. I like the idea that rather than listing all of the possible FCA's, there are four separate posters. Not only are there four posters but they are also distinguished between age groups. This I believe helps teachers a lot!

## Comments

1. Your summary was very clear and to the point. You included facts as well as how Collins felt about the FACs.

2. I agree and was also surprised. What surprised me the most was that he waited for so long. Twenty years is a long time to feel that something is being successful.

3. I personally learned a lot today about what is expected from me for the next few assignments. I feel more comfortable writing them now. I also think that this is an important skill to have as a teacher. Your day is not always going to go right along with the lesson plan and you may need to modify and adjust.

4. Before today's class I thought the same way. I am glad that we cleared this up the first week of class. It was nice to hear that you can give the students a chance to keep some of their papers personal and not have to share it with others in the class.

5. This is important because as children get older they master different skills. They will need new challenges and ideas to improve their writing.

Thursday, 05/22/2008 7:21 PM by [Lisa](#)

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1. A good summary of a fairly simplistic chapter. Use the posters as guidelines and you may even choose to copy them and have your students keep them in their writing portfolios.

2. I love your commentary related to metacognition. Yes, even Collins rethinks his own method and changes hopefully for the better. We all can learn from his example.

3. Thank you for your compliment. Yes, we did not follow the lesson plan. However, I felt that the class had needs that were more pressing. I improvised and reflecting on my actions, I am pleased with what transpired. Many students like you have stated that they better understand the expectations of the first assignment. Effective teachers know when to stray from plans and go with plan b or some other focus.

4. I am glad that you are freed to use it as a process if you feel this is best for your pupils and if you wish, use the types as separate entities if you feel this is best.

5. Use these pages as handouts that students keep as references in their writing portfolios. Oh course, you can order them from Collins and post them as I have done.

Friday, 05/23/2008 2:52 PM by [DAVID](#)

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1. I loved to idea with the posters. Yes, it did say that the posters weren't set in stone, but these posters give us a great idea on what the students should be looking for.

2. What would classroom writing or any writing for that matter be like if the FCAs had never been introduced? I'd hate to write for one thing because it's very hard on someone when they receive a paper back with nothing but negative feedback. Everything won't be perfect so just pick a few things that need more work than the others. Our students will thank us!

3. Again with the "modify and adjust". This is so important. As teachers, we will be planning our lessons for every class, however, while planning we must keep in mind that something is bound to happen and our day will go in another direction. On another note, this doesn't mean that whatever happens can still pertain to the lesson. Improvise!

4. Hmm. Now I'm confused. Thank you for letting us know what you thought the Type 1-5 was and letting us know that it is something slightly different. I'll have to ask Dr. Walker.

5. Yes the posters are an outstanding idea. Teachers can change them to their own liking but this is a great idea to have these displayed in the classroom so students know what it is exactly their papers need to reflect.

Friday, 05/23/2008 3:55 PM by [Ashley](#)

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1. You wrote a good summary, it was to the point and had all the major topics in the chapter covered.

2. I like this quote because it gives us an inside look at the emotions and thoughts of Collins. I agree that you should always keep an open mind.

3. I agree that learning can still take place when you do not cover some of the material that you wished to cover on the lesson plan, but keep in mind that there is still material that needs to be taught.

4. At first this also was a little confusing, but I feel that Dr. Walker covered this very well in class. I am anxious to make the prompts for the different types.

5. I also agree, it makes the teachers job much easier, but also keep in mind that you can not just rely on those posters.

Friday, 05/23/2008 4:47 PM by [Stephanie](#)

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#### Post on May 22 2008 ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 4:56 PM by [Kylie](#)

Updated on Thursday, 05/22/2008 4:57 PM by [Kylie](#)

1. In chapter three of Collins' *Selecting and Teaching Focus Correction Areas* text focuses more in depth about classroom diagnosis. The chapter is dedicated to moving forward, if ready, into the process and helps diagnose a class's strengths and weaknesses. Before a teacher is able to diagnose writing samples are needed as well as a quality prompt that motivates a student to write. There are four questions to review when diagnosing samples of work. First, does the writing make sense? Next, did the writing respond to the question or prompt? This question makes sure a student is on task and follows a topic. Then, did the student write an adequate amount, too much, or too little given the time constraints? This concept is diagnosing the fluency of the writer. Lastly, are there specific problems that get in the way of the meaning? This concept focuses on major issues such as distracters but not if they misspell one or two words. Next, Collins discusses how to diagnosis a class which is not just diagnosing individually but as a whole. Here you are trying to find major problems that occur at least

50% of the time and it is a recurring theme throughout the entire class. Collins then talks about the diagnostic process by introducing four specific categories: content, organization, conventions, and style. To end the chapter, Collins finishes with many sample focus correction areas related to all four categories as well as including three guidelines that help guide a teacher in the diagnosing process.

2. "Voice, after meaning, is the most important element in effective writing" (p. 15). I choose this quote because Collins' methods really focus on teaching students to read their work out loud and how critical it is to develop effective writing strategies. I think the method of the one-foot tube will really promote this in a classroom and solve a lot of problems for a teacher with 30 students in his or her classroom talking to themselves out loud.

3. I really liked the example prompt that Collins gave on page 13. The prompt reads "Choose one teacher who has had a really positive influence on you and describe that teacher" (p. 13). This prompt gives a teacher deep- meaningful insight about a student and how he or she feels. Collins says that it is appropriate for any grade level and it pertains to everyone in your class because they all have past experience with a teacher.

4. Today in class I felt a bit confused about the five types of writing. I think that although we didn't get through the writing, talking about it brought the problem to Dr. Walker's attention and we were able to resolve the complication. I think that although sometimes when you talk you think you are making sense, there are circumstances when students will not understand what you are trying to say or be confused so it's important to do the double check and constantly check for comprehension.

5. I like how Collins defines what major problems are on page 14. I know we talked about how it makes a student feel when his or her paper is marked up. Major problems are not two or three spelling errors on a page but it is a problem when there are more than fifteen on a page which probably leads to other problems like losing sight of their paper. I think it is important to correct major errors but I don't feel the need to criticize a student for only one or two mistakes because I would fear that they would then be too critical on themselves.

#### Comments

1. I agree with your summary that we can begin with using FCAs that are somewhat alike in the beginning. Of course many students make the same mistake or have not learned a skill or concept. Here we align the FCAs. However, as we get into the learning, students' needs change and we must tailor the FCAs to those specific needs.

2. Yes, the tube does assist many into understanding the one-foot voice concept. Please don't confuse the literal voice that is mentioned in my first sentence and the writer's voice that is how one expresses feelings and emotions within writing. These are two very different kinds of **voice**.

3. Always make your prompts pertinent to all students. The writing will be better and there will be less frustration. Remember this when writing your prompts.

4. Yes, you are right on target. This is the reason why I selected to deviate from my lesson plan and clarify. I kept trying to clear up confusion so when we left class, everyone had a better understanding of what would be expected in the first assignment. Sometimes best practice in instruction means going with a different plan than the one that's written.

5. I agree. we need to mark the conventions that are mentioned in the FCA. If other mistakes are there, well, we will focus on these in other writings in other FCAs. Too many aspects to think about in writing only leads to confusion and giving up. We need to encourage students to feel growth pains and work through them as a natural process of growing.

Friday, 05/23/2008 2:43 PM by [DAVID](#)

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#### **Jen** ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 4:35 PM by [Jennifer](#)

1.) Chapter five addresses how to teach focus correction areas. Collins stresses the point that there are no rules when it comes to the application of writing skills, only guidelines. Therefore Collins developed an eight-step plan to teaching writing. First, assign a type three writing that is due at the beginning of a specified class or that should be done within class. The second step involves selecting three student volunteers to hand in their drafts early so they can be turned into transparencies. This allows for the class to see samples of what is expected and become positive models for the rest of the class to follow. The third step checks to see if all students have first drafts. Those who do not have first drafts should be penalized. This prevents plagiarization of the modeled papers shown to the class and allows for more original works. During step five, the teacher should lead the class through the evaluation of the first paper. This should be done by going over the strengths of the transparency papers and evaluating them based on the focus correction areas. After students have all edited and revised their first papers, teachers will make transparencies of the second paper as well. Students will get into pairs and co-author a paragraph evaluating the second paper based on the focus correction areas and then share their evaluations with the class. The sixth step has the students individually evaluate the third paper on the overhead and share their evaluations as a class. All of the papers are read aloud to the class before they are evaluated. During the seventh step, students get into pairs, read aloud their partner's paper, and review the paper based on the focus correction areas. The last and final step has the students handing in their finished papers that have been peer reviewed to the teacher.

This approach can be taught over the course of four weeks if the teacher feels it is too time consuming. During week one, teachers define and teach FCAs. During week two, teachers assign the composition. Week three has the teacher reteaching the FCAs and assigning new compositions. Finally, during week four, is left open to go over what the teacher feel they need to go over. If they have not retaught the FCAs or assigned a new composition, then this week is used to complete that.

2.) "A frequent teacher response to the eight-step model is that it is very time consuming" (pg 48). I can see how teachers would feel this way. Collins expects steps one through six to be completed in one class period. I think that it depends on the students in the class and their ability and speed to evaluate these papers over and over again.

3.) I feel as though this would get repetitive. Having students reevaluate the same paper three times in one class period might get mundane. I know that as a student, after the first evaluation, I would get bored. I can see how this could be helpful for some students but not all.

4.) I really appreciate the fact that Dr. Walker took the time to go over the Type 3, 4, and 5 writing assignment. Not

y do I feel like I have a better understanding of what I am expected to do for that assignment, but also I feel like I have a better understanding of the Collins' writing approach as well.

5.) I liked the poem Dr. Walker read at the beginning of class. I do see how poetry is a dying art. At the same time I do believe that lyrics in music help keep poetry alive. Lyrics are nothing but poetry set to music. I feel like teachers should teach students that poetry can be found in more than just books. Poetry is really all around us.

## Comments

1. yes, good summary and I think that it includes great detail and focuses on the main points that I picked up from the chapter. This will really help you and our other classmates to study for our midterm. Also, I like how you included the steps and not just say that there were such a number of steps.

2. I liked this quote. Good feedback and reasoning.

3. I agree- I know it can get boring by doing the same thing over and over again. By you realizing this it will help you to better connect with your students.

4. I wrote about the same thing- I think we all needed that time today to thoughtfully understand what Collins' method is about and the exact process.

5. I think that was a great way to bring the class in as almost an anticipatory set. I think that poetry is still a large part of our society but its just not recognized as the most popular anymore.

Thursday, 05/22/2008 5:24 PM by [Kylie](#)

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1. Like Kylie, I like how you go into details about each step that Collins recommends. A fine summary with supporting details cited throughout.

2. Collins wants to have the process to go quickly as to assist the students to move the writing along purposefully. All too often, writing does not get read and sits in desks and never goes anywhere. We want the students to revise and edit and learn from their FCAs. Next, write anew or select an older composition and revise/edit and possibly publish.

3. Make the method work for you and your students. If some are getting fatigued, have them move onward to some aspect of writing that is meaningful. This meaningful act could be student-generated and pre-approved by the teacher or it could be teacher-generated and selected by the student from a set of choices.

4. Thank you for your supportive comments. I felt good about veering from my lesson plan and meeting the needs of the class. I chose plan b and will get back on track next week. Effective teachers leave the lesson plan when he/she feel that learning is better served by a change or modification.

5. I will continue to promote and encourage poetry, not only in this class, but in reading, fine arts, and diagnostic and inclusionary practices for literacy. It is a form of writing that is all too often not understood due to its abstract nature. Intelligent people need to be challenged and poetry can be a part of that challenge.

Friday, 05/23/2008 2:32 PM by [DAVID](#)

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**Stephanie** ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 3:43 PM by [Stephanie](#)

1. Chapter three of Collins *Focus Correction Areas* textbook, begins the chapter by explaining step two, which is a closer look at the classroom, and the classroom diagnosis. Step two helps diagnose a class's strengths and weaknesses. You can do this by taking a writing sample from the entire class and evaluate it. A common writing prompt is to ask students to write about a favorite teacher. When evaluating a prompt, there are four questions that should be answered; does the writing make sense, does the writing respond to the question or prompt, did the student write an adequate amount, too much, or too little given the time constraints, and lastly are there specific problems that get in the way of the meaning. When diagnosing a class, not an individual, look for big problems that 50 and close to 80 percent of your students' have made similar mistakes. The text then goes into each of the four questions and tells you what to look for and how to go about fixing the problem in your classroom. To help organize the diagnostic process, the writing skills are grouped into four categories; content, organization, conventions, and style. For each of the categories, there are examples of FCAs for each category. Lastly, the chapter gives three guidelines when writing FCAs; the less mature the writer, the more specific the FCAs should be, FCAs should encourage better writing rather than simply require the student to avoid errors, and FCAs are best when mixed for content, organization, conventions, and style.

2. "Teaching students to read their work out loud is critical" (Pg. 15). I agree with this statement fully. When students read out loud, they are more in tune, and are able to fix mistakes that they have made or that their peers have made. Going along with this quote, I feel the one foot voice is a great and exciting way to get the children involved with the process of reading out loud.

3. During class yesterday, Dr. Walker had us walk around the room with different partners to share our ideas with. I liked this approach because I know I was getting tired of sitting in class, and just imagine a first grader trying to sit in class. It changes the approach to learning and it gets the children up and moving around, as well as becoming more in tune with the learning process.

4. I would have to say, I like the three guidelines for writing FCAs because it guides you along and the FCAs soon become easier to write. When doing assignments if I do not have guidelines or perimeters for that assignment, I tend to freak out over what it is that I have to do. So by being able to follow a model or even some suggestions, the process goes much smoother for me.

5. The last paragraph of the chapter points you to the Appendix, where there is a list of focus correction areas developed from school systems around the country. Personally, I love this portion of the book because being a visual person, I need to see the examples first hand. However, I do not feel that these examples should be used the same each time, as some of those lazy teachers do. As teachers we must remember that each child is an individual, and we must teach them in that way.

**Comments**

1.) You covered the chapter very clearly and percisely.

2.) Reading aloud is so important for children to do. They not only get the practice of reading but can hear themselves reading and hopefully catch mistakes they wouldn't have caught otherwise.

3.) I wrote the same thing in my RDE #2 after yesterday's class.

4.) I tend to freak out as well. I need something to focus on while writing otherwise my thoughts tend to be random and dont always make senes.

5.) I agree that the Appendix is perfect for those of use who are visual learners.

Thursday, 05/22/2008 4:43 PM by [Jennifer](#)

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1. I like your summary, especially how you focus on the areas that the FCAs need to be centered around. Remember to use content as your first FCA and then select from the other areas. This keeps consistency and focuses on an important aspect of writing.

2. Next week, I hope to share and have you try the phone device that helps students to learn to develop their one-foot voices. A superb technique for all writers to use.

3. Yes, mix up what you do in class and keep your students guessing as to what will occur next! This helps with classroom management and keeps students motivated.

4. I agree, Collins prepares his method in a finely tuned manner. Just follow his model as you generate your prompts for the first assignment.

5. Tab this appendix so you will be able to refer to it in the future. A wonderful way to use your texts beyond the course here at BU.

Friday, 05/23/2008 2:21 PM by [DAVID](#)

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**Lisa** ([permalink](#))

Created on Thursday, 05/22/2008 3:33 PM by [Lisa](#)

1. Chapter three from Selecting and Teaching Focus Correction Areas is about classroom diagnosis. The chapter tells us that when teachers are trying to learn about our students, have them write about a favorite teacher. Collins then goes on to give us some questions to think about when evaluating a student's writing. They include: Does the writing make sense? Are they writing about the prompt? Are they writing the correct amount? Are there any problems that get in the way of the meaning? Collins also gives us some more ideas to remember when diagnosing. Teachers need to remember that they are evaluating the work as a class and not individual students. We need to remind students to read all of their work aloud. Collins also tells us that to the diagnostic process can be put into four

categories: content, organization, conventions, and style.

2. "Look for the big problems first, problems that occur repeatedly in at least 50 and close to 80 percent of your students' papers" (15). I liked this quote because I think that it is very important to make corrections on the big problems so that you can eventually focus on the smaller ones. Also, if it is occurring to majority of the class, then it is something that they were not taught or just did not understand it the first time around.
3. I like Collins' idea about having the students write about a favorite teacher. This is a topic that will be familiar to all students and they can easily write about. This is also a great chance for the teacher to learn what the students liked about the others teaching styles and can adjust theirs to accommodate the students.
4. I think it was very useful that he gave us some questions to look for when evaluating a student's work. I think that this is a good place to start when reading a students work.
5. I also like that there are some FACs examples. This is great because it gives me a better idea of what I should be telling the students to correct on their papers. It also reinforces what I read in the chapter.

## Comments

1. A fine summary, and yes, we must teach our students the almost fail-proof way of revising and editing which is to read their work aloud.
2. Yes, select the BIG problems first and then work towards the more sophisticated skills and advanced concepts of writing.
3. I agree, let's make the prompts that students can relate to in their own lives.
4. When reading students' work, we should have questions that have us seek specific answers. These queries should be tied to the FCAs, too.
5. I like how the texts work together to provide everyone with a clearer picture of what COLLINS intends his approach to be.

Friday, 05/23/2008 2:12 PM by [DAVID](#)

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## **larissa** ([permalink](#))

Created on Wednesday, 05/21/2008 4:50 PM by [Larissa](#)

1. Chapter four of Collins' *Focus Correction Areas* text discussed FCA's further and the specific teacher guides and posters that are now provided for classroom teachers. From the start Collins admitted that he used to believe a list of sample FCA's would be misleading, as he strongly feels that developing focus correction areas is a very important and individually tailored process. FCA's should always be individualized and tailored to the needs of the students and guided by the passions of the classroom teacher; however, Collins has finally published a series of four posters compiling a list of essential FCA's for the primary, elementary, middle and high school levels. Each of the posters comes equipped with a teachers guide which the text goes into that

explains in depth each of the FCA's on the posters- explaining both why the FCA is considered relevant and important and also variations of the FCA itself to create a more tailored correction area. The text also discusses the headings that are used on papers in the Collins format which follows a uniform pattern with the FCA's and point values aligned on the upper left corner and the name and date on the upper right. Collins explains the multiple benefits of using a heading system; first by listing the FCA's it is a reminder for the student of the goals for that particular assignment, the heading also makes it easier to individualize FCA's for each student, and finally it allows for a place to write feedback to the students for each criterion. Overall this chapter gave a very in depth look at the posters that Dr. Walker also has in our classroom and how teachers can use these essential focus correction areas for their benefit.

2. "Using focus correction areas with young writers is intended to bring clarity to their writing goals. FCA's also enhance your focus for correction and assessment" (p. 25). I chose this quote because it really highlights why using FCA's is such an innovative and beneficial way to hone a student's writing skills. Oftentimes it is overwhelming for a child to be assigned a paper to write where they need it to be "perfect" or worry about every aspect of their writing simultaneously. By focusing a student's writing on just three areas it will ultimately make your students better writers, take away anxiety, and also give the teacher a more systematic and fair way of grading.

3. I am very relieved that we are practicing the different types of writing in class rather than just taking notes on them. It makes it easier to understand the differences between them I think and also provides a concrete example that we have created ourselves rather than being handed one which is so much more meaningful. The daily exposure to writing towards specific prompts helps with comprehension of the varying levels of questioning according to Bloom's taxonomy as well.

4. I really liked the review game we did today in class with the brain, I thought it was much more interesting and less boring than reviewing by summarizing like some professors (or like some professors, simply not reviewing from the day before at all!). The toss around of the brain really refreshed my memory and helped cement the first two types of writing into my mind. By hearing other student's comments and ideas about class yesterday also made me think of things I didn't have in my notes so I was glad everyone contributed because I learned even more!

5. I was surprised to learn in the reading (p. 23) that Collins only recently felt the need to publish a list of essential FCA's. I understand his desire for FCA's to be individualized and for classroom teachers to develop their own based on student's needs and their own tastes, but for a new teacher entering the field like myself a list of essential FCA's in my opinion is essential in and of itself. It gives me something to at least go off of, I'm glad Collins changed his mind and after 20 years published his posters.

## Comments

1. Your summary is quote masterful. I like how you are beginning to make connections between Collins' texts and the classroom activities. Yes, the FCAs should be tailored to each individual student's need and that is precisely why Collins' does not provide teachers with a listing. Many lazy teachers would simply assign a needless FCA for convenience rather than for purpose. Great instruction focuses on specific areas of need and assists learners to grow through practice.

2. Yes, the FCAs are beneficial for both students and teachers. I love this duality. The reason for the FCAs is quite clear - let's develop better writers, and indeed this is what Collins' approach does.

3. Daily exposures, discussions, questions, and reflections are the keys to great learning experiences. How well would anyone learn if I were just to ramble on and on relaying only my insights? Learners must be actively engaged and practice their thinking. We all learn from listening to others, too. Lastly, we reflect upon the learning and solidify concepts and grow.

4. Games with a purpose, such as popcorn reviewing, are terrific elements that add fun and productivity to lessons. Remember and use!

5. Yes, reluctantly he did publish a few FCAs. He hopes teachers won't bastardize the process and just routinely assign the FCAs to each and every student. They are meant to be individualized to meet the needs of each student. All too often, lazy instructors will misuse an approach to the detriment of their students. Be cautious to follow his method precisely as he intends it to be utilized. He has tweaked it over the years to be better tailored and it is research-based, too.

Thursday, 05/22/2008 11:45 AM by [DAVID](#)

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1. Your summary is written extremely well and has much detailed information. After reading yours I feel I should write more on mine!

2. There is really not much I can say here because I think you said everything there really is to say. FCA's definitely help children focus where they need to and help them not to get too overwhelmed.

3. I also agree with you here as well. Personally I am a visual learner so I like how we write our own rather than listening about the Types or simply taking notes. I know I get the most out of actually writing the Types.

4. I wrote about this 'brain game' in my former blog. I enjoyed it too. It made me think of a game I used to play in elementary school called 'popcorn'.

5. I couldn't agree more. I was skeptical about the Collin's Approach at first but now a few days into it I am really thinking about utilizing it in my classroom. I found it odd that Collin's himself was a skeptic about sharing his idea with schools as well!

Thursday, 05/22/2008 6:15 PM by [Samantha](#)

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## Zoe ([permalink](#))

Created on Wednesday, 05/21/2008 4:15 PM by [Zoe](#)

1. Chapter 2 of "Improving Student Performance" is about creating types three and four writing assignments, and transitioning from type two into types three and four. This chapter focuses on seven key elements that will help produce a clear assignment for students, while allowing them to learn to create several different kinds of works. These seven elements will help students produce pieces that meet the criteria that is in most state curriculum guides. The seven elements include a general **summary** of the assignment, a statement of the writer's **purpose**, a description of the writer's **role**, **audience**, and writing **form**, a listing of the **focus correction areas**, and the **procedure**, or a list of steps the writer should follow. The chapter then goes into detail describing each of the seven elements, and why they are important to the writing process. Chapter two ends with an example of an assignment, including the directions to the assignment, an example of a student's work, and an example of how to create a seven element writing assignment worksheet.

2. "When it comes to learning vocabulary, one of the easiest and most effective ways is with vocabulary cards" (pg.50). I chose this quote because I have used vocabulary cards since I was in second grade, and this is the only way I can successfully study vocabulary. I have tried several other methods, but none works as well for me as the use of notecards. One of the good things about using notecards is that you can quiz yourself, or study with another person.

3. Two parts of the elements that I really liked were the rationale and the purpose. I can remember being in class and wondering, either to myself or with my classmates, when I was ever going to use the information I was

learning. Giving children a reason why they are doing the assignment, as well as what the overall purpose is, will help students to succeed with their writings, because they know why they are doing the work. It is easy to not put any effort into an assignment that you find useless or unnecessary.

4. I think that the final element, procedure, will help the children not to feel overwhelmed, or to experience anxiety. When given a writing assignment, kids often think, "where do I start?" Including a procedure in the assignment will enable students to better organize their thoughts, which will lead to better writing.

5. I liked the idea Dr. Walker mentioned in class today about making paper chains, and incorporating some kind of lesson into it. There are several ways to make learning more fun, and any student will appreciate a break from traditional school work.

## Comments

1. Very clear summary that isn't overly long and tedious (mine tend to be). I LOVED how you bolded the elements because that really helps me visually when i can see something that is highlighted like that.

2. I totally agree with you, actually the only way I can study is using notecards. Not just for vocabulary, but this past semester I began actually transferring notes for exams onto notecards because for some reason that format just works!

3. Yes, it is always easier atleast for me (and I think for students as well) to write something or do an assigment if they know there is a purpose behind it. Motivation is key to keeping students working towards the goal you want.

4. Breaking down assignments and expecially writing assignments into prcedures will greatly benefit and take away anxiety for students. I always break down everything in my day into a procedure via a list, it still helps me from becoming overwhelmed!

5. I also really liekd this activity with the colors corosponding to different words liek verbs nad adjectives. I also thought a neat extension activity for this would be to make groups of students, one of each color in a group, and the students could use the verbs and adjevtices they created to make a fun sentence.

Wednesday, 05/21/2008 5:07 PM by [Larissa](#)

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1. Very good summary of the chapter. You were able to cover each of the main points without going into too much detail. It was precise and to the point.

2. I agree and LOVE to use notecards to study as well. Whether it is new vocabulary or for an important test or even a final. I never used notecards before until I entered college and it was one of the best methods that I could have ever started to use. I also like how you make the point of using notecards as an individual study method or one you could do with other people.

3. This is comepletely true and I can agree with what you are saying here. Students know when they are being given "busy work" and they do not put all their efort into it. If students know and understand the purpose for their work, whether it be for a grade or for someone else to view, I feel they will put maximum effort into it.

4. When things are broken down, especially student assignments, they are definately easier to understand and make it less stressful on the children.

5. I just recently finished student teaching and in my first placement, my co-op used a paper chain to count to the 100th day of school. Each day we would add a different link to the chain, each set of 10 links being a

different color, and the class would count by 1's, 2's, 5's, and when the ten links of one color were completed, then they counted by 10's. I thought this was an excellent way to incorporate math and counting into the day and it was fun for the children as well because they would celebrate the 100th day of school with a party. When they reached the 100th day, she left the chain in the room to assist the children with counting if they ever needed it.

Wednesday, 05/21/2008 7:30 PM by [Melissa](#)

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1. I agree with Larissa, I like the bolded main ideas. This is a point that could be significant to students' expression of the "main idea" when you are instructing about locating it within paragraphs and later within texts, articles, or other written forms.

2. I am pleased to see you bringing in your prior knowledge once again. Yes, my students frequently used notecards to quiz themselves on advanced vocabulary words that had to be studied in order to be mastered. I am glad Collins, Melissa, and Larissa all support this type of learning!

3. Never have an assignment that can not be justified. All worthy work has a reason for being. If work does not have a purpose, it is busy-work and not supported by research or reality!

4. Procedures in the classroom keep the classroom environment safe and secure. When students know the expectations they are better able to follow them. Also, when they understand the procedures and know the reasons behind them, they are more willing to adhere to them. Writing is the same way.

5. I love the comment Melissa makes in her sharing of her student teaching experience, the hundredth day is a super connection to the chain. I think color-coding specific numbers shows patterns and is worthy learning. The chain just prior to Winter break for decorative purposes is just busy-work. However, connect it to worthy learning and it can be transformed into a learning experience that is both fun and productive. Integration of the arts is a good thing for everyone. Cultural Literacy is an important aspect of our society.

Thursday, 05/22/2008 11:32 AM by [DAVID](#)

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