



Vertical Paper Analysis

Vertical paper analysis is a twist on Collins' Three-Step Editing Process. It is based on the work of author and professor of math education, Peter Liljedahl, outlined in his recent book, [Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics, Grades K-12: 14 Teaching Practices for Enhancing Learning](#). One of the strategies he introduces for promoting "thinking classrooms" is the use of vertical, non-permanent surfaces. While Liljedahl's ideas focus on math, we saw a strong connection to one of our key Collins strategies and discovered how we might make our technique even better by embracing Liljedahl's technique. Here's how:

1. Tape student writing samples to a vertical whiteboard and send randomly selected groups of three to each taped sample.
2. Prompt students to analyze the given sample and use dry-erase markers to make notes on the board surrounding their sample. Liljedahl emphasizes collaboration by limiting each group to one shared marker.
3. As students work, move among the groups, watching, listening, and encouraging.
4. Once students have worked through their sample, bring the class together for what Liljedahl calls a "consolidation activity"; Highlight key elements on each work surface, encourage students to make notes for themselves, or engage students in a short formative assessment to check understanding.

If students need some help starting, you might try posing one or more of the following prompts to get them going:

- Score this student's writing according to the Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) posted. Be sure to provide evidence for your score.
- What are some things this student did really well? Make notes that show evidence and explain the strategies the student used.
- What problems do you see in this student's writing? How would you fix each problem?
- What tips would you give this student to improve their response?
- The paper in front of you has a strong closing paragraph (or well-organized structure, etc.). Highlight and annotate pieces of evidence that support this.
- This paper has many repetitive sentence beginnings. Make at least three changes that add variety to this student's sentence beginnings. Explain the strategies you use in the margin. (This prompt can be used for a variety of writing skills.)
- Find at least two places where you could add figurative language (or a direct quote, etc.) to this response. Record several possible additions.
- Take turns reading this paper aloud. Mark with a ✓ any spots that don't look or sound right. Work together to fix those spots, and use the surrounding space to explain the changes you've made.
- Work together to rewrite this student's claim (or opening paragraph, closing paragraph, quote analysis, etc.).