

Friday December 12, 2008

Professor Hueners
Dakota State University
Beadle Hall #220
Madison, SD 57042

Dear Professor Hueners:

I believe that Item B, my persuasive research essay, in the end was fairly good. After I made some corrections, I believe it displays my abilities as a writer very well. I did a lot of research before beginning this essay, because I had known about the general idea of No Child Left Behind [NCLB], but did not know anything in detail, so I wanted to make sure and learn about the specifics. Finding good information and reliable sources about the NCLB was not very difficult, but I also needed to find information about the two presidential candidates and their views on the NCLB Act, which proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated. When looking at their websites and other informative sites about the presidential candidates, I could not find their exact plans for the NCLB and it was unclear if they even had one. The sites only included generalizations and it is difficult to make a decision of whose idea is better when that is all you have to look at. In the end, however, I did find some information about what Barack Obama and John McCain were planning to do with the Act, so I was able to use that. I struggled fitting the presidential views into the paper and included a little too much information about the NCLB Act itself, but after reading, fixing and rereading, I think I have finally fixed that problem, so now the readers may have a better idea of what the paper is concerning.

When working with Item C, I had a little more of a challenge. I chose my sister, Brittany, as my subject for the profile essay. I wanted whoever read the paper to experience how loving and what a hard worker my sister is, but when turning in my first paper for a grade it turned out that it did not come across that way. I received a C- and was disappointed. I wanted to improve that, so I worked at revising it for a better grade. The research I did for this paper was interviewing my sister and asking her questions about when she was pregnant. I also asked my mom a few questions about what Brittany had to go through. I think one of my main problems was that I decided to use Brittany's pregnancy as an example of all her great aspects, and perhaps that was the wrong angle to take. You had mentioned that my paper listed a chronological list of events and that is not what you wanted, so for my revision I attempted fixing that, but do not know if I actually accomplished it, because it proved to be very difficult for me. The paper, I personally thought was good, but my grade proved otherwise. I hope after working very hard on the revision

by changing many things and attempting to take out the chronological list of events, that my grade will be an improvement and will prove that I am a good writer.

I chose the in-class assignment of defining adulthood, for Item D. I thought that this was a very good example of my writing skills. I received a good grade on this assignment as well, and I believe that helped me choose to use it. This assignment made me think a lot and I actually enjoyed writing it, because I felt like it was a way to get my opinion across to other people. The prompt for this assignment was to write what each person thought the true definition of adult was. I believe I achieved that goal, although in my explanation I determined that the definition is more complicated than some people may think.

Of the four pieces included in my portfolio, I would have to say that my in-class assignment best portrays my abilities as a writer. Although, it is brief, I still think I did a very nice job at including good information, along with some descriptive words and phrases. I also did a fulfilling job at correctly addressing the prompt. When writing, I tried using examples and specific words to describe what I personally thought were the definition of adulthood. I also thought about the qualities it takes to be an adult and what some people may think is an adult. Overall, I think I did a nice job at writing this to the best of my ability.

The writing skills that I believe I have acquired and plan to take with me to use in the future would be to think more critically and to look closely at the audience that I will be writing for, because they play an important role on what you write. Previously, I have not thought very much about whom I am writing for, but now, after taking this class I consider that before I begin writing. I used to write about what I wanted to and wouldn't take into consideration who would be reading my paper and if that topic would be interesting to them. By taking this class, I also learned how to find appropriate information for my papers. Finding information that focuses on good authority, currency, and objectivity can give your paper the credibility it needs for people to take it seriously.

Another major point I have learned by taking this course is to try and not write in passive voice. Previously, I would never really worry about it and if I would get the green squiggly lines under certain phrases, I wouldn't try fixing them, but would hit ignore. I noticed after taking this class, I read my papers and pick out the areas I wrote in passive voice and try changing that, instead of hitting 'ignore'. That is one way I have become a better writer.

Some writing skills that I learned I still need to work on is including descriptive details in my papers. I have tried previously, but believe that I have not accomplished this task. I am unsure where exactly to put the descriptive details, but now that I realize I am missing them, I will continually work on completing this. Another thing that I have to work on is addressing the subject or prompts correctly. When I write, I look more at what the subject of the paper is rather than what you, or other instructors, are actually looking for us to include. As for my future writing classes, I am going to try to read the rubric and make a checklist of everything I have

included or failed to include. I have learned a lot about my writing since being in this class and hopefully will be able to bring all of this with me to use in the future.

Writing can be very beneficial in about any career you choose because an applications letter, résumé, and a few other things are all required to get the job. As for me, however, writing is a necessity in my career because I am majoring in Elementary and Special Education. Teachers have to use writing a lot in everything they do. It is especially important to be a good writer when you are going to have to teach others how to write as well. It will be important to have creative writing skills, because not only do I have to teach the children how to write and use critical thinking, but I also have to research different ways on how to teach or to find information on certain subjects.

Overall, I believe that in this class, I have obtained a lot of information not only dealing with writing, but I also learned about critical thinking and how to research properly. All the things we learned in this course, although some were difficult for me to learn and exactly figure out, will be very helpful for me in future uses. Now that the course is over, I feel very proud of myself and feel like I have become a very good writer. This class has taught me many things that I will bring forward with me, even if I have not completely fulfilled them, I will continue to work on that. During the class, there were times that I felt I was never going to be able and finish the course, because I couldn't understand, but in the end, I am very glad that I did and I feel like it was a worthwhile course. Thank you for teaching me all of these great abilities to help me improve my writing skills.

Sincerely,

Nicole Beckett