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Final Portfolio

I have never revised papers as much as I have in this class. Peer editing used to be my default way of getting feedback, but it just led to small grammar corrections and a myriad of my classmates writing “good job” as their only comment. That meant that I never would genuinely go back and look at my work a second time. WRT 104, however, has made me see that it is never enough to only write a first draft. As a result, five of the learning outcomes that I have demonstrated during this course are 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3c.

Learning outcome 1b states that, “Students practice different types of writing appropriate to different rhetorical situations (audience, purposes, contexts).” To be specific, in my investigative essay, my target audience was parents of small children. The paper itself was intended to be an informative piece for parents to get the idea that language was important for the eventual success of their child. To do that, I tried to seem unbiased while simultaneously leading the reader to believe that learning a second language earlier in life is more beneficial to a person. I put more emphasis on the advantages of second language acquisition at a younger age than I did on acquisition at an older age. It allowed the reader to believe they were forming their own opinions, when really I was leading them into the train of thought I wanted:

Overall, when it comes to second language acquisition, children begin to have more anxiety as they get older (Gursoy). Younger children are able to learn more quickly and more effectively. It

may not seem fair, but the earlier a language is learned, the better it is practiced, and therefore the better it will be spoken. As children who know a second language grow, they start above the rest of the crowd. Knowing just one language does not cut it anymore. Stacie Berdan of the New York Times said that, “Companies want globally competent employees, including multilanguage competency,” because “English dominance isn’t guaranteed,” (Berdan).

I showed the reader that lifelong achievement starts when people are children. I would think that parents want the best for their children, and by showing them this small ray of hope, I encouraged parents to get their child to learn a second language, even if the parents themselves cannot speak a second language.

Using all of my papers as evidence, I demonstrate learning outcome 1b because I chose an audience and setting that were appropriate for each one. For the story slam, my audience was my classmates and teacher, and I was trying to get them to understand and enjoy my embarrassing story. An excerpt from the height of the story:

I did not want to rain on their parade any more than I already had so I joined in on the fun and I examined a condom with everyone else. We stretched them and smelled them and threw them at each other. It was extraordinarily weird for me. All I ever did before that was get good grades. The worst thing I ever did was leave crumbs on the couch.

This piece was supposed to be amusing and fun, while the Stop & Frisk essay was aimed at the mayor of BACSVille. My partner and I had to convince her that Stop & Frisk was the best choice for her city. An excerpt from the very beginning of the letter:

TO: Tasche Bryant, Mayor of BACSVille
FROM: Calvin Hung and Savannah Gomes, Advisors to the Mayor
DATE: January 15, 2014
SUBJECT: Implementing Stop & Frisk in BACSVille

As mayor of BACSVille, you have a large responsibility placed upon your shoulders. You have the duty to protect the 500,000 inhabitants of BACSVille and to serve in their best interests. This duty becomes increasingly difficult to accomplish, however, as the city's crime rate skyrockets and gun violence becomes more prevalent. With the re-elections coming soon, the ideal course of action, one that will benefit both you and your citizens, would be to initiate a BACSVille form of Stop & Frisk.

Our format was a formal letter to the mayor, and that was different than the other essays because we were trying to change a policy. Finally, for the text analysis, I had to prove my thesis using only the original speech, and it was aimed at Tasche, a knowledgeable person on the topic. An excerpt from the analysis:

With all of the short anecdotes Obama included in his speech, he pushed a sense of hope onto the people of the United States. He let them see how discrimination can affect a real human who has feelings, hardships, and a family. Both he and Ashley stood up

and he brought about sympathy not only for himself, but for anyone who might have been going through what he did.

Each paper had a different and appropriate rhetorical situation that I met, which is why I demonstrate learning outcome 1b.

Learning outcome 1c states that, “Students reflect upon and explain the appropriateness of their choices for the rhetorical situation.” To use my investigative report as the example again, I chose an audience of parents because they would be the first ones to engage their children in second language classes or dual language schools. The children themselves could not take the initiative to learn a second language, and I recognized that the best place to begin was with the parents. Using another group, such as teachers, as a target audience would have been effective to a much lesser extent. The teachers of young children cannot force parents into allowing their children to enroll in second language classes. The parents, on the other hand, after reading my investigative report, would realize that second language acquisition is practically a prerequisite for their children, and they would be able to immediately act upon that realization, whereas no other group of people could.

Both ways of learning a second language have their advantages and disadvantages. The main reason of learning the language, though, is the same. It is to get ahead in whatever you are trying to pursue. No matter where you are in the world, you will meet people from different places. They will speak different languages and have different religions and cultures. Travelling abroad and trying to learn from the people who represent a new life style can

be hard if you do not know their language. Even if it is not in person, the internet has provided us with the opportunity to interact with someone halfway around the globe. It is an unavoidable part of life that groups of people will be unique in their ways and someone will want to figure out the factors affecting their culture. Knowing that other language, children will be more prepared than someone else for travel, work, and life in general.

This showed how important the education of children is. I attempted to tap into the human nature of parents. The choice of parents was appropriate because they are the only ones that can make direct changes to their young child's life.

Learning outcome 2a states that, "Students recognize differences between revision and editing." While editing is merely changes in grammar or spelling, revision is changing the content or organization of a paper. Before I could edit any of my papers, I had to revise them. I believe I did the most revising on my analysis of Obama's speech on race. At first, my flow was wrong. The paper skipped around and there was no real progression of ideas, as shown in this passage:

The first thing Obama brought up how he has faced a form of discrimination. During his run for president, he said, "at various stages in the campaign, some commentators have deemed [him] either 'too black' or 'not black enough,'" (Obama 10). This may have happened because the people wanted him to fit into a clean cut category of race, one that they are familiar with. Some have

even argued that he used his race only when it was convenient for him to do so. However, his race is a part of who he is. The problem Obama hinted at was that his race should not have been a factor at all. As humans, we are often afraid of things that are different or unusual. He does not have to remind the world of it at all times just because it is true.

When I finally finished revising, however, the section looked like this:

To start off, Obama brought up how he has faced a form of discrimination. During his run for president, he said, “At various stages in the campaign, some commentators have deemed [him] either ‘too black’ or ‘not black enough,’” (Obama 10). This may have happened because the people wanted him to fit into a clean cut category of race, one that they are familiar with. Some have even argued that he used his race only when it was convenient for him to do so. However, his race is a part of who he is. He does not have to remind the world of it at all times just because it is true. As humans, we are often afraid of things that are different or unusual, but as time goes on, things inevitably change, so we need to, too. The problem Obama hinted at was that his race should not have been a factor at all. He used his own races and the discrimination he has faced to lead into proving that the United States should work together and get everyone on board with his

movement. For it to work, it is either the country in its entirety or nothing.

In the first draft, I didn't really have a paragraph. It was just ideas jotted down onto a piece of paper in the order they came to my head. There was no real connection between ideas, and there was no explanation of what I wanted to say. In the final draft, I added an explanation of the problem Obama hinted at, for example. I made it clear that he hinted that his race should not have been a factor at all, and I explained that if racism was ever going to be squashed, it would have to start somewhere, and Obama indirectly had named himself that place. Then, instead of just fixing the grammar, I moved sentences around and altered my ideas so they were more comprehensible. I talked about Obama's subtle jabs at people who attacked him for his race, and how he meant that it is either all or nothing when it comes to such a big movement as race equality. Once all the changing of big ideas was done, I could move on to word order and grammar. By doing this, I demonstrated that I can recognize the difference between revising and editing for learning outcome 2a.

Learning outcome 2b states that, "Students practice various methods of invention, collaboration, research, ethical incorporation of sources, peer review, and revision." I worked with a partner on the Stop & Frisk paper. Our research spread over a wide range of topics at first because we each were doing all the research we would normally do on our own. Combined, it was double. We whittled the research down to only what could be relevant to our thesis, and then began working on developing a coherent letter to the mayor of BACStville. Once our first solid draft was done, we swapped papers with another group and asked as many questions as we could to help them create a better paper, and they did the same for us. Our revision process went

on for a while because we had different styles of writing, but eventually we came up with something we both agreed was respectable. An example from our first text:

Stop & Frisk has the ability to stop crime before it even happens. While in an interview on NPR, Scott Burns of the National District Attorneys Association mentions that New York now has a crime rate of, “over 1,200 homicides in 1996, 400 last year.” Lowering the crime rate by any degree possible is important for the youth of our city to have a safe neighborhood now, and safe neighborhood in the future.

And one from our final text:

Stop & Frisk has the ability to stop crime before it even happens. With the crime rate in BACStville having increased by 15% since 2008, this could be a revolutionary preventative measure. In an interview on NPR, Scott Burns of the National District Attorneys Association mentions that New York now has a crime rate of, “over 1,200 homicides in 1996, 400 last year,” (12). This shows that New York’s crime rates have decreased and are a prime example of how this policy could impact BACStville. Lowering the crime rate by any degree possible is important to give the youth of our city a safe neighborhood now, and to keep a safe neighborhood for the future.

One of my difficulties in working with a partner, though, was that we had different writing styles. We wanted to use different words to describe the same thing, for example. Instead of ‘polite,’ one of us would want ‘civil’ and that change in word choice could change the meaning of sentence, and even the meaning of a paragraph. Nonetheless, the ordeal of writing with a partner did have its advantages. The main perk was that someone was always there to peer review your paper with you. It made revising a little easier on both of us.

This paper shows everything mentioned in learning outcome 2b. We worked together on the entire paper. Our research was collaborative, and although we forgot to cite the paragraph number in the first draft, we added it for the final, which shows ethical incorporation of sources. Then, we went through the process of peer review which helped us figure out where to add detail. Finally, we revised again and again until we came up with the final product.

Learning outcome 3c states that, “Students revise and edit their work to produce polished texts that meet the demands of the rhetorical situation.” This occurred most visibly in my text analysis. I started out not having any idea where I was going with the paper, but I used the peer review process to my advantage. I asked my partner to ask as many clarifying questions as possible so I could be more precise and explanatory in my writing. It was an analysis, yet, at first, I was not analyzing. I would simply write an observation and move on. In my first draft I wrote:

What has to be realized is that discrimination is still real and is being perpetuated. The white community has to work with its African American counterpart.

But my final draft read:

What has to be realized is that discrimination is still real and is being perpetuated. Although some try to deny it, there is a ridge between these two communities that underlies the tension between them. The white community has to work with its African American counterpart to begin to heal the United States. A bond of trust has to be formed so they can work toward the same goal and achieve what people have been trying to do for years. Unless this happens, we are in the same place as where the problem started, and United States cannot begin to heal itself of its wounds and work toward a better future.

From my first to my final draft, I added the analysis I needed to make my paper into a genuine text analysis. For example, I expanded on the idea that there needs to be a sort of trust between everyone in the United States before any real change can happen, that we have to work together.

Throughout this class, I demonstrated the learning outcomes 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3c. Along the way, I did not realize how much I was learning to be a better writer. Putting my all work together in one place has also helped me realize that these outcomes have been ingrained in me. My habits have completely changed for the better. Now, I can recognize the appropriate rhetorical situation, and I can collaborate and research at least a little more easily. I can also tell the difference between revision and editing. I have developed as a writer and am now able to see my progression as I have never seen it before.

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