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ENG201 (TR-1:25)

April 27, 2013

Reflections Essay

In the past, my writing experience has been mediocre. I do not really enjoy writing essays but I guess I am pretty good at it because my past papers have all gotten good grades. I think my best paper before this course was one I wrote in my genetics class. It was not a research paper but an experimental paper about zebra fish experiments that we had done in class. I really liked my finished paper because I think the writing was well done and I also made really nice figures, like graphs and pictures.

For this paper I chose to research cerebral palsy and how it relates to premature birth. I had a really hard time deciding on a topic because I had no idea what I wanted to write about. First, I was going to do biological warfare but I could not find many peer reviewed articles that I liked. Then, I was going to write about the problems with the ocean because I really love the ocean and sea animals, but I did not know a specific enough topic to use, so I just moved on to another topic all together. I finally decided to research cerebral palsy because I took an honor’s nursing class last semester that was all about premature birth and it was very interesting. We talked a little about different conditions that could occur from prematurity, and after doing some research, I found a multitude of peer reviewed articles on cerebral palsy so that is what I picked.

For this essay, I did not have a problem finding peer reviewed articles. There were hundreds of articles on the databases about cerebral palsy, partly because it is such a wide spread problem. The only trouble I did have was in comprehending some of the articles. Since my topic is science based, many of the papers were out of my realm of knowledge but I found many that I could understand and utilize for my paper.

One way I created a Model-T paper was by starting with a good outline. I started by looking on Wikipedia just to see what the main points of cerebral palsy and premature birth, and I used that information to make my outline. Having a good outline is important because then I know what kind of information I need to find on the library databases. Another way I created a great paper was by talking about a lot of different aspects within my topic. My topic was cerebral palsy but I talked about types, symptoms, causes, diagnosis, prognosis, research and prevention. I think mentioning all these points make the paper more interesting.

The database that was most helpful to me for this essay was Academic Search Premier. I also really like the PubMed database which is not accessible through the library website but I learned about it in my previous science classes. Both were really helpful and had a lot of good articles. The search terms I used were cerebral palsy and prematurity, cerebral palsy and causes and prematurity and causes.

One improvement I made was in my in-text citations. I normally would just quote the paper and then put the citation at the end, but in this paper I introduced the author before the quotation which seems more professional. I also tried to quote less and paraphrase more so my paper was more of my own words than somebody else’s. A second improvement I made is in the title of my paper. Normally my titles are extremely dull and probably do not grab the readers’ attention, but I tried to think of something noteworthy for this title. I think I am just bad in general at making up titles but “Save the Children” seemed like an eye-catching one. A third improvement I made was in the organization of my paper. When I first started and when I made the outline, I had the paragraphs in a different order but as I continued working, I moved them around so I think they flow better now.

The main aspect of my writing that I would like to improve is my vocabulary. Since high school I have been told to expand my vocabulary and it is not that I do not try, it just does not come natural to me. I excel in school and I appear to be good at writing but for some reason I just cannot remember more scholarly words. I also need to work on my grammar skills because I usually do not focus on little grammatical errors; most of the time I do not even realize I am making them. My paper would be better if I did not commit these silly little mistakes. Another aspect I would like to improve upon is my conclusion paragraphs. I feel that my conclusions are always a bit “blah” but I never really know what to write.

One of my biggest challenges with developing my ePortfolio was deciding what to put on there. I do not know what to say to make myself sound professional. Also, I am not involved with anything clubs or organizations on campus so I do not really have anything to put up besides class papers which does not make for a very interesting ePortfolio. I think my triumph with ePortfolio is that, for the most part, I do know how to use it so when I figure out what else I want to put on there, I can do it was ease. My favorite thing to put up is wordles because I think they are really cute and can describe me in a non-boring way.

My research relates to other courses I have taken because my topic was science based and I am a science major. My topic directly relates to the nursing class that I took last semester because that is where I got the idea from. I also did similar research for the Huntington’s disease paper that I wrote in my genetics class a few semesters ago. I also took a biological research class last semester where I learned about scientific research methodology and how to write a scientific paper. My topic relates to my career goal because I hope to become an occupational or physical therapist and patients with cerebral palsy often need both of these therapists to help them with their day to day lives, which is what I wrote about for my final paper.

My opinions about my topic have not really changed. I learned last semester that premature birth is the primary cause of cerebral palsy and that is what I wrote about. I did learn a few things though such as there are many different types of cerebral palsy each with different symptoms, and I also learned about research that was being done with CP patients, which I thought was very interesting. I enjoy learning about new treatments and drugs that can cure people of diseases which is why I chose to research CP treatments for my final paper.

My next steps to improve my research, writing and thinking will be to try and improve my vocabulary. I will try to read more newspaper articles to open my eyes to new words and I will actively try to remember them and use them in my day to day life. Something I can do to improve my research is to take better notes. Now when I research, I do not actually write down the information I want, I just look at the articles on my computer and then cite them in my paper. But it would probably be easier and more professional if I wrote everything down and kept it nicely organized. For my final paper I actually printed out the articles, highlighted information that I thought was important and then quoted or paraphrased that in my paper. That was a better tactic then just looking on my computer, but if I ever have to write a larger paper with more articles it will be hard to print everything.

Overall, I think my writing skills have gotten better since the beginning of the semester. I think my final paper was way better than my first one and I am proud of my accomplishments.

Word count: 1,374