555 Gonger Avenue;

Nowhere, USA, 12345

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Professor Leston

300 Jay Street

Brooklyn, NY, 11201

The New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Dear Professor Leston:

I hope you are doing well. I am writing this reflection to describe the growth I’ve experienced as a writer, a reader, a student, and a citizen this fall semester. Starting this semester, I was incredibly nervous about what was going to be expected of me. I haven’t been in college in awhile and this would be my first time being in school as a mother. I was unsure of my capabilities and just overwhelmed with fear that I wouldn’t be able to pass my classes. However, this semester must be one of the most successful semesters I’ve ever had, I say this because as a writer I feel I grew tremendously. Though I love writing I always felt I could be better at it and just didn’t know where to start. Being in school this year, especially in your class, I was able to face the challenges I have with my writing and work through them in an effective way.

The assignment that helped me the most with my writing were the blog posts. In the beginning of writing the blog posts, I struggled with articulating my thoughts properly and felt that made my writing unclear. I honestly believed I didn’t make sense and often called my cousin to vent on how stressed out I was about it. I had a hard time with organizing my thoughts during the process and felt that my vocabulary was lacking, therefore, I wouldn’t be able to sound like a college student either. However, by having to write the blog posts every week I saw this as practice to improve my writing.

I started to feel more confident around week 3 of writing the blog posts. After reading “The Medium is the Message,” by Marshall McLuhan and the “Arts of the Contact Zone,” by Mary Louise Pratt, I considered how difficult they were to read and understand. Using that to my advantage, I broke down the passages to draw out the message from both readings. I tried rereading, note taking, reading aloud, and reading slowly to get a better understanding. I felt this showed me that sometimes I can go over something too quickly missing the important parts, therefore, I tried my best to get something out of every sentence to get the bigger message. This helped improve my writing and reading overall.

I feel this made me a better writer, specifically, because I now started to strategize what I needed from the passage and how I will draw from it to articulate it clearly in my writing. I started to work on focusing on what the passage was about instead of just trying to get through it. By doing so, I got the full context of most of the passages, and this helped me write out my thoughts more clearly. As I progressed throughout the semester, I felt the tech lit helped the most with writing because I was able to explore my past memory of how I learned to read, write, and use technology. This was a reminder to myself that “I got this!” After the tech lit, I felt more confident in my writing and was able to complete the blog posts without feeling the need for outside validation.

As a reader, I felt that I improved mostly because of how I went about reading every passage. I made time every weekend, where I would put my daughter down for a nap and with my highlighter go through the readings. I would highlight the parts of the reading that was most interesting and clear to me, and with a pen I would write small notes on what I thought of the paragraph or sentence. This time around I wanted to really assess how I process information, and what I noticed is that I would go through the readings fast bypassing whether it made sense to me or not and that effects how I receive the information. I learned then that I have to slow down while I am reading and that reading over a paragraph is fine if it is needed to understand the message better.

As a student I felt I did well this semester but that is not without its challenges. I’ve always been a good student, however, this time going back to school I had to juggle my schoolwork, home life, and motherhood, all things that affected me this year. I sometimes felt overwhelmed and wanted to give up, but my goals are much more important to me now. To stay on top of my schoolwork I purchased a large whiteboard that I hung up in my living room. I got some different colored dry-erase markers, organizing the days along with the assignments that were due for those days. This helped me a great deal because it became a reminder of what needed to get done. I also wrote affirmations to keep me moving forward when I felt overwhelmed with work. This strategy was new to me, I normally didn’t emphasize on my schoolwork and due dates this way. Before, I would just wait until the time was almost near and stayed up all night to complete my work, however, his time I needed to make time for myself and my daughter and so sorting my assignments made this possible.

When completing the exploratory paper, I started at least a week before it was due, I made sure to utilize each day to find a source that was relatable to my topic, as well as reliable. I was more disciplined in completing this project because I knew it required more time and information than in the tech lit. This project made me realize my strengths and weaknesses as a student, my strengths being that I can get the work organized, I can do the research, and I can have clear ideas. My weaknesses being that I don’t proofread consistently, not adding signal phrases to my quotes, and the lack of expressing my ideas smoothly. Knowing this about myself now, I can practice a workflow that includes proofreading my work often before submission, making sure that each quote has a signal phrase before it, and creating an outline before I start writing.

I felt the exploratory paper showed me that I can get the work done, I just have to put in the effort in making things easier in the beginning instead of waiting at the end to rush. I used this workflow for getting ahead and organizing my work this semester for all my classes. I also would say the zoom meeting with Ulmer was also very important to me this semester, as it inspired me to want to dedicate time to creating something that it innovative and helpful to others. Electracy, to me, is such an interesting concept and how it can be used to possibly better the conditions of the world, I find fascinating. My take away from that experience is that everyone has something that motivates and pushes them to creating something new, I hope to one day experience that as I begin my career.

As a citizen I feel I haven’t changed much. I have always been a kind, considerate and respectful person. I will say that after reading “It’s Official: A Global Mass Extinction is under Way,” by James MacDonald, I feel I must do much more in my daily life to reduce my carbon footprint. This article was an eye-opener for me, I realize that I don’t think about how I treat my environment as often. I would like to do what I can in hopes of possibly securing a future for my family. The article also makes me feel like contributing to the efforts of bettering the planet some way. That’s either by getting active, donating and/or possibly joining an environmental organization that is focused on making changes for the betterment of our community, environment, and the Earth.

Overall, I feel this was one of my best semesters. I truly enjoyed being in your class and you made every class interesting with the class discussions, the activities, and the assignments we had. I found everything we did really thought provoking, different, and fun. This was the first class this semester where I made a detournement and I got a chance to be artistically creative. I would like to show my gratitude and thank you for making my first semester back in school a mixture of challenging and fun. I now feel fully prepared to take on the Spring semester with the gems/knowledge that I will take away from your class. Thank you again!

Best,



Sandy