

Reflective essay – Wanding Zhang

Last year, as I was about to begin picking topics for my research paper, Tyler Clementi – a university freshman suddenly jumped to his death; soon after the tragedy, two other students from other schools sequently copied the same action out of the same reason – peer-victimization, which struck and shocked me significantly. As a transfer student who just arrived in US with hopes and determination to set off a bright journey to learn on this unfamiliar foreign land, such horrified self-destruction incidences stuck me like a huge bomb bursts right over my head. Shock and grief quickly took me. Besides, the pressure to find out what American universities really like urged me to concern on not only Tyler’s suicide but also other similar cases. Till then, however, I hadn’t yet thought about setting up a research paper for it though I gathered much information about the victim and read through plenty of coverage relative to school bullying in US. It is not until a post-case campaign calling for nation-wide supports and consolations to those who suffered as students (which actually gained thousands of supports) that I begun to realize the huge overlapped pressures that current students have to confront; I also started thinking about ways to help victimized students. Thus, I turned to parents and school counselors - the two parties that both are closely related to students’ lives.

Among all information sources, Academic Premier really helped me substantially. Given the limited time, it seems impossible for me to read through a host of books to find single tiny useful point that is hidid in thousands of pages. Rather, I can type keywords in the search bar and easily find relevant materials which are even arranged by relevance. In addition, what is also amazing about the Academic Premier is that three and even more keywords can be typed simultaneously to narrow down my search. By using this technic, I was able to derive specific arguments from millions of partially related articles; for example, I can typed “school counselor”, “inefficient” and “societal problems” as I wanted to rebut that school counselors are inefficient to instruct students with societal problems; otherwise, it would be like looking for a tiny needle in the ocean of a whole lot of successful school counseling stories. Moreover, the majority articles and statistics in the Academic Premier came from credible academic journals and magazines. It can make my research more persuasive by indicating that “my conclusion is backed up by a nation-wide survey” instead of “it was allegedly believing that parents can help students with academic uplift.” Last but not the least, I initially considered only two major problems for the current students, specifically, societal and academic problem. I couldn’t think of more until the Academic Premier pumped up an article discussing the widespread drug abuse problems among the youth. The article was very inspiring that it echoed me with news that I had read before, writing about youngsters’ heavy drink and depressive symptomatology. Thus, I began take those psychological or mental disorders into account, which helped me improve the range of both my research and my audience.

The assistance that I received from my professor is enormous. As I just began my topic, I wanted to specify my subjects for only college students. That’s when I encountered difficulties to find sufficient arguments since this field seemed to be rather obscurely studied before. Professor Hijazi reminded me that my concerns about parental involvement is relatively low associated with many university or college students; and my research would help more problematic students if I indiscriminated with their ages since the general problems that I discussed in my paper are not remarkably different for students crossing ages. I took her advice and therefore, my research got a lot of useful arguments and statistics.

When I looked separately on the benefits that parental instructions and school counseling can bring about to students, I found that many of the advantages are intercepted. To the extent of the different kinds of consolations that either party was capable of giving, studies showed that both family love and professional instruction are necessary. That is, a merely single help from either parents or counselors party is not efficient enough to lead victimized students back to the right life track. This finding surprised me greatly at first because my original plan was to compare strengthens and shortcomings of the two parties and gradually reach a conclusion that one of them is more effective to solve the problem than the other. At this respect, instead of starting all over again, I re-organized my arguments and refined my research into a collaborative direction.

Taking about sources selection, I was rather heedless about it at first. However, as my research went constantly into a relatively more professional and academic pattern, I became increasingly careful to choose them. More specifically, I preferred arguments that had statistics or surveys standing behind rather than those without back-up information. Furthermore, I personally believed that recent data was more credible than a very old one while surveys with larger subjects spoke more general problems than the smaller one.

Also, I felt that relatively less absolute and less arbitrary arguments could bring in more supporters for there is no absolute power for either parents or school counselors to resolve students' problems.

During the research process, I learnt the technics to quickly find useful sources that I need.

Additionally, I profit from my research topic since I am one of the audience (students) of my research paper. Also, the basic instruction guidebook that UMD library set up is so useful that I basically made no mistakes on MLA format and bibliography after referring to them. What's more, the skills and mechanisms to begin and complete a research that I learnt not only in class from my professor but also through using library resources will, I believe, definitely help further my future academic and professional career.