

Instructor: Dr. Jessica Cantiello
Writing 150
Education & Intellectual Development
Writing Project #4

Writing Project #4: Moving Forward (Two Parts)

Purpose: This project marks the culmination of the work we've done all semester. This is a chance for you to hone the many writing strategies you've developed over the course of the semester: using various invention and drafting methods to come up with interesting ideas, crafting interesting, original, and arguable thesis statements, supporting thesis statements and sub-claims with evidence, crafting effective topic sentences and paragraphs, addressing counterarguments, creating effective introductions and conclusions, doing academic research, integrating sources appropriately without losing your own voice, and crafting concise and precise sentences. You'll also have an opportunity for formal revision during this cycle. In addition, this project asks you to reflect on the critical thinking skills you've developed and apply those to a problem in the educational realm. In other words, you'll be considering how critical thinking might help us to move forward on issues of real educational importance.

Premise (Part 1): Politicians have become fond of calling education "the civil rights issue of our generation." As such, education reform is an issue people from almost all political positions can support, albeit with different ideas of how to actually achieve reform and what exactly better schools would look like. Unlike other political issues, where there are clear-cut partisan delineations, education sometimes creates strange bedfellows. Think, for example, of charter schools, which are supported by people who align themselves with both liberal and conservative values. As you know, the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001 was bipartisanly sponsored and passed (and later, critiqued vehemently from both sides of the aisle).

While in our current political climate of gridlock and distrust the precedent of bipartisan collaboration in the educational arena may inspire hope, educational problems persist. Indeed, sometimes it's hard to figure out what exactly the problems are, as experts cite different numbers to show that American education is getting worse, better, or remaining the same as it's always been. In sum, for at least the past twenty years education has been a central issue in every election cycle, profound and purposeful educational reform has proven to be complicated and difficult to achieve.

For this last project, you will identify one contemporary educational issue that you feel is both important and needs fixing. You should also feel that the conversation about this issue could benefit from your addition to it. You will then assess potential solutions to determine what is wrong with the thinking about this issue and how it could be better.

Writing Task (Part 1): In a 6-8 page thesis-driven essay, respond to the following prompt:

Given previous attempts to resolve your chosen educational issue and the contemporary discourse around it, what is the best approach to address it moving forward?

Premise (Part 2): This semester you've worked on developing a personal writing process drawing from the strategies we've employed. Although revision has been key to each assignment cycle, in that you've revised from draft stages to a final copy, this assignment gives you the opportunity to more fully invest in revision by starting from what was once a final draft. The description of changes document helps you identify how much revision you've done during the writing process, and forces you to take ownership and justify the writing choices you've made, which ensures you have good reasons for making them.

Writing Task (Part 2): Choose one of your previous assignments (WP 1 or WP 2) and revise it. Along with the final copy of the revision, please include a "description of changes" document that describes and justifies the major changes you made. What did you change and why? Make sure you explain where the revision came from, i.e. whether it was self-motivated or inspired by a comment from a peer or me. When describing style, grammar or sentence-level changes just summarize them briefly. If you decide not to make a significant revision that I suggested in my comments on the original draft, note that and explain why. Keep in mind that revision does not simply entail making surface changes or just implementing the changes that I suggested. Revisions should be dramatic and self-motivated.