

Personal Statements, Part 4: Peer Editing and Revisions

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn McGinn

SUBJECT(S): Career Development

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

This is the fourth lesson in a series about writing personal statements, during which students will think about their plans for the future and begin crafting personal statements that outline their goals and qualifications. In this lesson, students will finish their rough drafts and trade papers for peer editing.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, IV. Career Strategy

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Would You Bypass College for Real-world Learning?”](#)
- [“Student Essay: The Power of Stories to Inspire Strong Leaders”](#)
- [“Providing Guidance to Others Could Boost Your Own Success”](#)
- [“One House, Three Seniors and Lots of College Essays”](#)
- [“How to Reflect on What Matters to You as You Begin the College Search”](#)
- [“Career Insight: Nick Halla on the Culture Inside a Silicon Valley Startup”](#)
- [“Apple Peach Greenleaf Smoothies Can Help You Unlock Your True Potential”](#)

Common Core Standard(s):

- ELA CCR Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- ELA CCR Writing 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- ELA CCR Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task, purpose and audience
- ELA CCR Writing 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- ELA CCR Writing 10: Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes and audiences.
- ELA CCR Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- ELA CCR Reading 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.
- ELA CCR Reading 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- ELA CCR Reading 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
- ELA CCR Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Objectives/Purposes:

- Students will practice writing specific portions of personal statements.
- Students will write and revise their own personal statements.
- Students will edit each other's drafts.

Other Resources/Materials:

- Peer Editing Worksheet ([Handout A](#))

Activities:

1. Have students read the Wharton Global Youth Program article aloud together: [Part I: Hip Hop Artist Kayvon Asemani](#). Alternatively, watch the actual interview online or listen to the podcast, both of which are linked within the article. If students are curious, you can extend the assignment for them to listen to both Part I and [Part II](#). (5-10 mins)
2. Tell students that while the subject of the article, Kayvon Asemani, is accomplished, he is having trouble writing a personal statement, and so the students will have to help Kayvon put his experiences together in a cohesive manner. Divide students into three groups, with each group being responsible for writing one body paragraph of Kayvon's essay:
 - Group 1: Body Paragraph 1: Describe Kayvon's educational and career goals and why they are important to him. What experiences/encounters led him to these goals?
 - Group 2: Body Paragraph 2: Outline Kayvon's plan to achieve his goals. What steps does he plan to take?
 - Group 3: Body Paragraph 3: Describe the skills/talents that Kayvon has that will help him reach his goals, including examples of how he has utilized his talents in the past.

(5 mins)

3. Groups share the body paragraphs they have composed. As students listen, tell them to pay attention to the details that stand out and where more specific information could be added. Discuss what works and what could be improved in each paragraph.

If time allows, you may want to discuss as a class how Kayvon could compose a compelling introduction and conclusion and write these sample paragraphs collaboratively. (5 mins)

4. Have students continue working on their rough drafts. At this point, they should draw on their brainstorming activities, their outlines, and their practice with Kayvon's essay. (15 mins)
5. When students finish their drafts, have each student trade it with a partner. Students should complete a peer editing worksheet (Handout A) when they finish reading, and then share their comments with one another. In particular, students should look for:

- An attention-getting introduction.
- Compelling details.
- Places where the author could add more specific information.
- Any additional questions raised.

(10 mins)

6. If students have any extra time, they should start work on their final drafts, making revisions as necessary.

Tying It All Together:

Save time at the end of class to check in with students. How are they doing with their drafts? What (if anything) is giving them trouble? What questions do they have? (5 mins)

Practice Outside of the Classroom:

Students may choose to take their statements home to continue work on them or to type them up (though this is optional).

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:

The students seemed to find writing portions of a sample essay for Kayvon quite useful. This helped students to practice how to organize and compose an essay. Discussing the sample essay as a class gave students a chance to see more examples of what works (and what doesn't) when writing personal statements.

There was actually no time at all for peer editing. Without setting aside 1-2 days for writing or assigning writing for homework, there is not enough time for students to write their entire essay in class.

Finally, it is worth noting that this personal statement assignment follows a very prescribed format. Students may want more freedom in constructing their essays, and that is fine. The structure is designed to help students who do not know where to start, but the outline should be treated flexibly to adapt to students' experiences and narrative arcs.