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Runner-up Reflective Essay: 2019 LHULRA Finalist Michala Bieker

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Reflective Essay

     I completed my action research project last fall in Dr. Feldstein's curriculum and assessment class. While in this class, Dr. Feldstein invited all members of the class to the library to learn about the various resources we had available to complete this project. When we visited the computer lab, Robyn Hartman showed us how to create a plan to find scholarly resources within the educational databases. This visit was very helpful for me because even though I had been to the library before, I had forgotten some of the ways to look for scholarly resources. The library visit was also helpful because Robyn talked about how the researching process rarely follows the order of thinking of a topic, researching, and finally writing the paper. When I worked on my project, this was definitely true, because I had to go back and revise my research question quite a few times as I found new information.

     The first step I took in creating my research project was to define the research question that would help shape my paper. I used the worksheets that Robyn gave us to brainstorm search phrases and ideas that I wanted my paper to focus on. After a lot of deliberation and revising, I finally had my research question that I wanted to base my paper around. To start looking for resources, I used the research guide that Robyn had created for our class. I learned about boolean operators, such as AND or NOT, quotation marks, truncation, and other search tricks to utilize while looking for articles in the Education Source Database. I chose this database because my project focused on English Language Learners in the general education classroom, and this database seemed like the best fit. I also perused the ERIC database and Ethnic NewsWatch database. I looked at various articles from these databases to help me create a research plan for my future classroom.

     I used a variety of techniques to ensure that the articles I used for my research project were scholarly and peer-reviewed. I searched the database using keywords like "english language learners" and "general education classroom". These keywords yielded quite a few results, so I had to narrow down my search by using the sidebar. I chose to look at full-text articles that were peer-reviewed and written in the last eight years. This helped to narrow down my search and I found quite a few articles that I referenced in my action research project. Some of the requirements of this project were to include references to scholarly articles within the paper and create a bibliography of all of the sources I compiled while researching. To make sure I cited everything correctly in APA, I used the APA guides located in the research guide. After completing this project and visiting the library, I have learned a lot of new skills to improve my researching abilities. I now know about keywords, boolean operators, APA guides, and much more. I also know how to find trustworthy sources and I will continue to look for articles that are scholarly and peer-reviewed.