



**The Florida State University**  
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*Department of English*

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To Whom It May Concern:

During the Fall of 2017, I had the pleasure of observing Ellen Cecil-Lemkin's tutoring session in the Johnston Ground location. Ellen worked with an English Language Learner (ELL) student with whom she had excellent rapport. Based on my observations, Ellen demonstrates a holistic approach to working with writers, one that supports the ongoing mission of the writing center and that closely aligns with well-established pedagogies.

Ellen had worked with this student in multiple sessions previously, as was evident by Ellen's attention to the student's emotional state. The student expressed several times that she was stressed about both writing demands and other areas of her life, and Ellen responded with compassion and encouragement. Throughout the session, she remained a strong advocate for self-care and supported the student in organizing her tasks. From this attention to the student's well-being, Ellen demonstrated her flexibility about and understanding of issues outside of writing. By responding positively and empathetically, she was able to reassure the student about concerning aspects of their life.

Ellen combined appropriate writing advice and feedback with this attention to the student's emotional well-being. She established a collaborative atmosphere by asking the student to describe some of the frameworks to her and was very polite in offering corrections, showing her close attention to individual student needs. The tutor read aloud during the session, and together, they focused on enhancing overall clarity. When the student paused to ask questions, Ellen provided answers that would both provide guidance and provoke further reflection on writing practices. In addition, Ellen offered helpful suggestions on wording that would enhance clarity, which the student then reworked and added to their writing.

Ellen also praised the student for her ideas and was not reluctant to ask the student further questions to clarify the content. While they have frequently worked together in the past, the student is writing in a content area outside of English. Such questions show that Ellen is devoted to meeting the writer's needs, and the student was willing to supply any additional clarity. Following these points, they would then discuss whether or not it was clear in the paper. Throughout their discussion, Ellen remained supportive of the student as a writer and a person.

In this session, Ellen also demonstrated her rapport with the student, not merely through the aforementioned practices but also through by addressing the student by name when the session started. She responded to all of the student's concerns, both writing and emotional, with an understanding that highlighted their working relationship and Ellen's attention to the whole writer.

I was very impressed with Ellen's holistic approaches to tutoring, which exemplify existing tutoring practices through a combination of empathy, writing support, and dialogue to address the student's needs. Ellen is a joy to work with as a peer and serves the Reading and Writing Center as a knowledgeable, professional tutor.

Sincerely,

Amanda May