

## **SAMPLE DOCUMENTATION LETTERS FOR FOCUSED PORTFOLIO STUDENTS - ANNOTATED**

### Gemma Burns' Letter for Esther Smith:

Dear Ms. DeBlois,

I am writing this letter for my coworker, Esther Smith, in evidence of learning acquired on the job.

I have been a classroom teacher for 18 years. I have worked with students from pre-school to high school in regular classrooms as well as multi-aged classrooms. For the last five years, I have been working for Snow County Early Childhood Programs. I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Teaching from Hollycook College and a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Brandy University.

*Gemma has very good credentials; she has a college degree herself, and it is a Master's Degree. HOWEVER! She is documenting Esther's administrative skills, and she is not explaining to OEP why she would be qualified to do so. How does she know what Esther does at the office? Do they sometimes work in the office together? Has Esther done administrative work for her?*

Esther is the Office Manager at our busy school. Below are the learning components she has asked me to document:

#### **1. Working in a Professional Environment**

Esther can customize documents to obtain information necessary for office efficiency; illustrate skills in public relations to give information for awareness; prepare purchase orders for supplies in conjunction with budget guidelines; use office equipment to maximize efficiency; and take accurate phone messages.

*Gemma's statements sound like she is just "rattling off" what Esther has shown her as her learning components. The statement does not sound as if it comes from Gemma's own observations, etc.*

#### **2. Business and Professional Writing**

Esther has knowledge of composing/ revising various documents to suit needs; evaluate and edit to produce a quality document; prepare various documents to produce a good quality professional document; prepare documents to communicate information; express and support ideas with appropriate language to accommodate a particular audience; and organize ideas in a logical sequence to prepare comprehensive documents.

*The same problem as above is an issue here too. Sounds like she is just repeating Esther's learning components. And, how does she know about Esther's writing skills?*

Esther has worked in our office for three years. These are the areas of learning she has identified and I would verify them. Basically, she did office management.

*Oh dear! This is a real problem. Esther did not ask for credits in Office Management! Office Management is different from Working in a Professional Environment, and very different from Business & Professional Writing. What Gemma does with this statement is that she takes back everything just she wrote before.*

*For all of the above reasons, this is NOT a good documentation letter. It does not help Esther to get credit. If a documenter has good credentials, that's great. But they have to be in the right area!*

Please do not hesitate to call me at 802-123-4567 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Gemma Burns, M.Ed.

Snow County Early Childhood Programs

Robert Ingham's Letter for Marjorie Dexter

Dear Ms. DeBlois,

I am writing at the request of Marjorie Dexter who is requesting college credit for learning acquired outside the classroom.

I came to know Marjorie several years ago when she and her family moved to Barnport. I am now retired after spending 40 years as a teacher, principal, and librarian at the Barnport Elementary School.

*Robert has good credentials. But: How does Robert know Marjorie? Have they ever worked together? It sounds like they are neighbors, maybe, and have chatted over the fence or have attended neighborhood activities together, etc.*

*What is Robert documenting? We don't know which area of Study he is writing about.*

During the time I have known Marjorie, we have had many opportunities (*When? How?*) to discuss various aspects of education. Marjorie has always been a concerned parent and has provided her three children the ingredients necessary to support formal education. One of the ingredients that she has shown great commitment to is encouraging her children to develop an interest in reading.

*What does being a 'concerned parent entail? What does providing ingredients to support formal education mean – a van to take the children to school? Sandwiches?*

It is obvious to me that Marjorie has knowledge of children's literature. I believe her home library will show this. Marjorie is an active parent (*in which way?*) and I believe she has demonstrated significant knowledge by her interest in how and what her children are learning. She read to her children in their early years and continued to read to them until they became independent readers.

*How does he know this? Also, while it is very good and commendable, reading to your children is not a college level activity.*

Marjorie is aware of good literature from picture books and nursery rhymes, beginning readers, up through intermediate and adolescent literature. She is aware of the better known authors and illustrators such as Seuss. Potter, DePaola, Jeffers, Blume and countless others. Her library will no doubt (*it sounds like Robert has not seen Marjorie's library*) show a good collection of Caldecott and Newberry award winning books.

I would suggest, although I cannot document, (*here is the main problem with the letter. The statement that he cannot document the learning is making the entire letter useless.*) that Marjorie has an understanding of the reading and learning process as well as many classroom teachers. I believe she understands that children have different interests and abilities and recognizes that not everyone agrees on what is good literature.

I recommend that Marjorie receive credit for knowledge and understanding of many aspects of children's literature.

Sincerely,



*As you can see above, there are a lot of problems with this letter. While Robert may have the right background to document learning, (and we can only assume that Marjorie has asked for credit in "Children's Literature", since he does not tell us) he does not tell us why he would be writing such a letter for her. And his statement that he cannot document is taking the letter out of the running immediately. This is not a useful letter for Marjorie and does not help her to get credits.*

Sandra Belden's Letter for Carol Jenkins

Dear Ms. DeBlois,

This letter is written on behalf of Carol Jenkins in evidence of college-level learning acquired on the job.

I currently work at Hastings National Bank as Assistant Vice President, Mortgage Loan Department. In my ten years with the bank I have previously held the following positions: entry-level proof operator, bookkeeper, accounting officer, supervisor, and student loan officer. Prior to working at the bank, I worked for Mallory's real estate where Carol first worked for me as an administrative assistant, and later as an agent under my supervision. I received a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Vermont. I have since taken many business and job related courses through local colleges as well as the American Institute of Banking (AIB).

*Excellent self-introduction – gives us her background, her fields of expertise, her college level, and how she knows Carol. This is exactly what we need.*

Carol joined the Hastings Bank in 1997 as bookkeeper and was later promoted to administrative assistant for the Loan department. I have been her direct supervisor for about six years.

*Here she tells us why she can write knowledgeably about Carol's performance and in what field she supervised her.*

Following are the areas of learning that I will verify and document and for which I believe Carol should receive college credit:

*Excellent – Sandra is telling us which specific areas of study she is documenting.*

Working in a Professional Environment

Both at the real estate office and at the bank, Carol maintained all appropriate paperwork and records in a very organized fashion. She demonstrated competent use of all office equipment such as fax machines, multi-line phones, copiers, and computers. Her organizational skills are outstanding. She shows wonderful customer service, is always well dressed and professional, and basically handles all requests in a timely and skillful manner. She is an exemplary administrative assistant. *Very good. She describes Carol's skills in her own words.*

Computer Essentials

Carol easily uses the computer for a variety of applications. She types fast and accurately, (exceeding 60 wpm), can explain and employ our word processing programs, does data entry easily, and is able to print in a variety of formats. She troubleshoots easily when things don't work properly and often helps others in the department by explaining computer functions and providing assistance with formatting of presentation files. *While this is short, it is also to the point and is telling us what we need to know.*

Office Accounting I

Carol has a solid grasp of office accounting practices which she demonstrated to me during her time in the real estate office, where she was in charge of keeping the books; as a bookkeeper at the bank; and now in her job as our department's administrative secretary. She is responsible for maintaining the department's books including the recording of statements, preparation of special requested statements for the bank, maintaining payroll and appropriate tax information (for the real estate staff). She then, and now, orders and pays for supplies and inventory, deals with outside vendors regarding accounts payable and receivable, and is an essential partner in our budget development. Carol is able to use a variety of accounting software programs. Her accounting knowledge goes beyond an introductory level. *Very good description and documentation of Carol's competence; good details and examples.*

In closing, Carol is an outstanding employee whose quality of work often exceeds that of other staff with administrative college degrees. *(Good to know, helpful statement.)* I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. You can reach me during working hours at 123-4567.

Sincerely,

*Sandra Belden*

*This is a solid and useful letter of documentation and helps Carol get credits. The letter does what we need it to do.*