

Transforming First-Year Learning Experiences to Enhance Success for At-Risk Undergraduates

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Abstract

The Millersville Scholars Program at Millersville University of Pennsylvania, located in the Southeastern Pennsylvania metropolitan area, provides a compelling best practice for transition programs that address the specific needs of underprepared students so their success mirrors success rates of well-prepared students.

Learn how one public institution transformed a traditional summer bridge program (including admissions, pedagogy, and the living environment) to serve educationally and economically disadvantaged students, primarily Latino/a, African American, and multiracial students. The result, despite a more rigorous course and credit load, is that 83 percent of the first cohort returned for their second year in comparison to the previous three-year average of 62 percent.

Millersville University is one of the fourteen public institutions that comprise the state system of higher education in Pennsylvania. The university has a total enrollment of about 8,500 students, 7,500 of whom are undergraduates. Of the 1,300 new students who enroll each fall, 100 enter through an opportunity program. The university is located in a predominantly rural and white county near the city of Lancaster, while the students in the opportunity program are prominently urban students of color. Started as a normal school in the 1850s, the university has evolved into a regional comprehensive institution.

After nearly thirty years of running a traditional five-week summer bridge program, Millersville University developed a dramatically different approach for bringing poor underprepared students into its campus community. The familiar academic remediation model of a five- to six-week summer program to build up reading, writing, and math skills was becoming prohibitively expensive given its marginal effect on student success and retention. Fiscal pressures presented an exigency for reform that gave way to an innovation, which has rebranded the program.

Retaining students at Millersville who entered through the former summer bridge program was an ongoing challenge. The challenge was predictable, given that the program was targeting low-income first-generation students who were overwhelmingly students of color. Approximately one hundred students entered through this program each summer and only about a third graduated in six years. Studies continue to show that students with these characteristics are the least likely to attend college and the

least likely to succeed if they do enroll (Collins, Damm, and Roop 2011). While the success rate for Millersville's opportunity program admits was low, it was on par with similar programs across the nation.

Since their appearance in the late 1970s as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement, opportunity programs have worked well as vehicles to provide access to higher education. Since 1970, there has been a 60 percent increase in college attendance among low-income students. The graduation-rate gap among African American and Latino students, who disproportionately represent families living in poverty, has not improved, however (Collins, Damm, and Roop 2011). With the norm being significantly inferior student preparation attending impoverished and intensely segregated school districts, the lack of success in higher education has some obvious causes. Most opportunity programs, including the one at Millersville University, have traditionally focused on a summer program of remediation in an attempt to address gaps in basic skill areas such as writing and mathematics. Although decades of results have not been promising, the bridge program model has changed little in the last thirty years (Barnett et al. 2012).

For Millersville University, the format and infrastructure for the opportunity program was heavily influenced by state mandates that were imposed in exchange for funding to support outreach to underserved students. When that funding declined precipitously about five years ago, the university reviewed alternative options. Three things were clear: Funding from the state was an ongoing uncertainty; the program was not serving its intended purpose; and the fastest-growing segment of the regional college pipeline, low-income students of color, needed an effective alternative. The university turned to research and best practices in order to construct a replacement.

Theoretical Review and Conceptual Framework

During the last few decades, related theories have developed to address student success in higher education. Many of the theories identify student integration and engagement, socially and academically, as the critical determinant of success. At the same time, early studies regarding demography as predictors of success continue to be valid (Astin 2003). Providing support for low-income students of color at a predominantly rural white campus like Millersville University is especially challenging. Being a person of color at a predominantly white institution adds additional challenges for social engagement; while being underprepared academically will likely affect academic engagement. Demographic predictors strongly favor students from wealthier families who have strong academic preparation and are not typically students of color. A review of the literature includes many theoretical- and research-based challenges for students of color who enroll at predominantly white campuses (Rozema and Weldy 1993, Obiakor and Harris-Obiakor 1997, Holmes et al. 2001).

Two of the leaders in the reengineering of Millersville University's opportunity program (previously called Aim for Success) had recently completed dissertation research focused on success strategies for students served in whole or in part by

opportunity programs. The results of their research were influential in the redesigned opportunity program at Millersville University, now known as the Pre-Scholars Summer Institute. The two threads of their research woven into the new program focus on resilience and values clarification—with particular characteristics of resilience and values that relate to and are consonant with scholarship.

In 2007 and 2008, Zander conducted a qualitative study in order to identify and analyze successful persistence strategies for African American students from urban public high schools who subsequently attended predominantly rural white universities (Zander 2008). Although Zander hoped to discover replicable effective institutional interventions at the core of student success, he instead found that it was resilient characteristics that successful students had in common. These characteristics include problem solving, facing challenges, believing in one's ability to overcome adversity, seeing oneself as the master of his or her own destiny, and being goal oriented (Griffin and Allen 2007). Resilience seems to be innate in some people, but resilience also can be fostered (American Psychological Association 2010). Resilience was applied in multiple ways when the new opportunity program was developed. First, resilience was a key factor in a series of non-cognitive characteristics (realistic self-appraisal, experience with adversity, positive self-concept, and preference for long term goals) that were the basis for student selection and measured through responses to essay prompts and individual interviews. Second, program content emphasized activities that were likely to increase resilience. This content is described in the section on program design in more detail.

Values clarification was the focus of an action research dissertation undertaken by Dr. Jose Aviles, at the time a practitioner in an opportunity program. Aviles successfully applied a conceptual business framework to students in his program as a mechanism to reframe and reorder the values that students held as most important to their lives. Recognizing values as key to behavior and, therefore, a strong determinant in student success, Aviles applied the Argyris and Hebane's (2005) single-loop/double-loop organizational change model from business to the framework for scholar-centered values clarification. Aviles was able to demonstrate improved success for students who went through a reflective process. The reflective process called upon students to examine their actions and the relationship of those actions to an espoused value of education. This research strand became the conceptual framework for the summer bridge program that was developed at Millersville University.

In general, fostering resilience and creating a process for values clarification were used as key methods to move students to adopt the skills and characteristics needed for academic success. Though notoriously difficult for practitioners to imbue, these attributes are well-documented by researchers as demonstrable in students who complete their degrees: appreciating the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake (Welch and Hodges 1997), forming an identity that is consistent with scholarship and academic success (Chickering and Reisser 1993), and developing a commitment to educational goals and to an institution (Tinto 1993). The daily schedule for the

summer program (see Table 1) required students to undertake a rigorous series of activities consistent with academic success. Just getting through those activities required resilience, but time was spent in group and individual session explaining the relationship of each required activity to success as a scholar.

A fundamental consideration in the development of a new program was the degree to which the campus community might embrace the program's new philosophy. At question was whether faculty, staff, and students would believe that a new approach could make a significant difference in outcomes for students traditionally served by the opportunity program. Former AIM for Success persistence and graduation rates were included as key performance indicators to understand progress towards achieving university strategic directions. Significantly weaker success rates were broadly viewed as a logical outcome for students who, by definition, were underprepared in relation to the general student body. It would require a shift in the campus culture to create an environment where opportunity-program students were expected to excel, and where nurturing that excellence generated excitement rather than skepticism. Some of that shift would depend on outcomes, but generating the support necessary to begin the new model would have to come first. It was critical to show a research-based design that was likely to produce results. A committee composed of academic deans, faculty who had traditionally served underprepared students, representatives from student affairs, assessment personnel, and practitioners from the old program met to provide input into the program redesign and create a campus-wide support network for the program's future participants.

Program Design

Design for the summer bridge portion of the program borrowed some structural elements from other successful programs; however, the theoretical constructs are grounded in student development and student success research. The Pre Scholar Summer Institute (PSSI) bridge program is relatively short; it is less than three weeks, although every day is heavily loaded with content. For approximately 100 students, successful completion of the redesigned summer bridge is a prerequisite for fall admission. There are three major components to the summer program: academic, interpersonal, and residential.

In the academic component of the summer program, there are three content areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. Unlike traditional summer bridge programs, the academic component does not focus on remediation as the key outcome. While the content is important in building critical skills, there is a strong focus on the behavioral aspects of scholarship: being prepared and attentive, building confidence and self-efficacy (Kowal and Shaw 1998), working collaboratively on group-oriented study (Tinto and Prusser 2006), and embracing a Scholar's Ethos (Welch and Hodges 1997). Essentially, students model for themselves what it feels like to be well-prepared and participating in a demanding academic environment. While the preparation aspect is reinforced in a manner described later in this paper, experiencing the classroom environment as a scholar (that is, being well prepared

for class and engaging with the professor and fellow students), becomes an authentic and personal experience for participants.

The interpersonal component of the summer program is focused on helping students develop the social capital needed to work through systems on campus, understand services and support mechanisms, and gain access to university administration and staff (Walpole 2003; Arbona and Nora 2007). Importantly, students learn how college classrooms are different from the academic settings they have experienced to date. Students are taught through group discussion, modeling, and prompt feedback to exhibit these behaviors that are likely to increase faculty expectations of their abilities: arriving for class early and being well-prepared, sitting in the front row, appearing attentive, and meeting after class with faculty. Finally, through a reflective process, students learn to construct a practical lens through which they can view themselves as scholars.

The third component in the summer is the residential component. It is likely that the key life skills critical for success in college may not resemble key survival skills, which students have developed in response to their local environments prior to arriving at the university. Students need to learn about adhering to policies and accepting rules and disciplinary consequences from staff. These new authority figures include student staff, such as peer mentors, who prepare them for residence hall living, meeting expectations for quiet hours and other unfamiliar rules, and being accountable to a Resident Assistant. These students need to learn what it means to live in a community and to follow unfamiliar rules. The overarching goal of this component is to reduce the anxiety associated with living in an unfamiliar environment, which is an important aspect of student development (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie 2009).

Presented with the proposal for the new program and the research upon which it was founded, the university's cabinet gave approval for the newly designed program. The committee of stakeholders met in a series of meetings throughout the following spring semester. The infrastructure for the redesigned summer and fall opportunity program was fully developed by the end of that spring semester.

In a parallel process, students were selected to join the very first pre-scholars institute. These students were screened for strengths in a number of non-cognitive areas using responses to essay prompts and personal interviews. William Sedlacek's (2004) research on non-cognitive variables that correlate with student success served as the research base for the selection process. A similar screening process was instituted to hire the peer staff needed to support the program.

Program needs were discussed with the school deans who recommended faculty to teach the summer workshops for the PSSI students. These faculty members, along with those who would be teaching program students in the fall, attended a day-long educational workshop focused on alternative pedagogies to enhance student learning. Once peer staff members were selected for the program, they attended a week-long series of workshops focused on the research and theory that served as the basis of the

program, as well as practical and role-playing activities specific to delivery of the summer model.

Pre-Scholar Summer Program Schedule

Table 1 provides a sample of the weekday schedule. All activities, including meals, are group activities where students and staff come together as a family. Developing a sense of family is critical; students are far more willing to accept the program's demands when those who express the demands have an authentic and positive caring relationship. Breaking bread together sets the stage for that familial relationship. The academic workshops take place in the morning. Following lunch, students come together for a program called "Exposure Activities" where they hear from various service offices on campus in order to help them increase their social capital within the university environment. The next activity, Small Group, includes a subset of twenty-five students along with a staff and student facilitator, where students examine their own values and align them with the values of scholars through a reflective process. In the Leadership Forum, students learn about leadership theory along with opportunities for leadership at the university. A clear expectation is set that they are training to be campus leaders. Following dinner, students attend structured study, which is a monitored activity where a significant amount of homework that was assigned in the morning gets completed. Next is the residence hall meeting where feedback on positive or negative behavior is provided, followed by the Constructive Opportunities session that is a student led series of socializing activities in which students are required to participate. From 11:00 p.m. until midnight, students return to their floors and may socialize or do homework until midnight when lights out is enforced. Participants are awakened the following morning at 6:00 a.m. to repeat the schedule.

The intense nature of the summer schedule was shared with students when they were interviewed for the program and then again during placement testing with their parents present. Still, the complete absence of free time was shocking to most students. From the program perspective, the lack of free time limited the opportunity for students to engage in counter-productive activities, and it enabled the students to demonstrate to themselves that they are capable of being completely immersed in scholarship. Exceptional effort is the key to success for underprepared students, so it is critical that they understand what exceptional effort looks and feels like. During every part of the day, peer staff provided instant feedback on behaviors that needed to be corrected such as cell phone use, slouching, sleeping, being inattentive, being unprepared, and addressing faculty or staff in an inappropriate manner. The peer staff created incident reports for each incident that was corrected, and the reports became the agenda for the residence hall meetings that took place every evening. While the peer staff interventions were frequently met with surprise and resentment especially in the early days of the program, students quickly begin to model for themselves what it looks and feels like to live the role of a scholar. The residence hall meeting was an opportunity to reflect on everything that had happened that day, both good and bad, with the goal of being better the next day.

Table 1. Sample Weekday Schedule for the Pre-Scholars Summer Institute**Monday**

Time	Activity
7:00–7:45 a.m.	Communal Breakfast
8:00–8:50 a.m.	Group 1: Reading Class
	Group 2: Writing Class
	Group 3: Math Class
	Group 4: Math Class
9:00–9:50 a.m.	Group 1: Writing Class
	Group 2: Reading Class
	Group 3: Math Class
	Group 4: Math Class
10:00–10:50 a.m.	Group 1: Math Class
	Group 2: Math Class
	Group 3: Reading Class
	Group 4: Writing Class
11:00–11:50 a.m.	Group 1: Math Class
	Group 2: Math Class
	Group 3: Writing Class
	Group 4: Reading Class
12:00–12:45 p.m.	Communal Lunch
1:00–2:00 p.m.	Exposure Activity
2:15–3:30 p.m.	Small Group Sessions
3:45–5:15 p.m.	Leadership Forum
5:30–6:15 p.m.	Communal Dinner
6:30–8:15 p.m.	Structured Study
8:30–9:00 p.m.	Residence Hall Meeting
9:00–11:00 p.m.	Constructive Opportunities

Following the first week of the program, students and staff attended an off-campus team building experience that included a ropes course. The next and last weekend of the course was a leadership conference that was modeled after a typical professional conference complete with keynote speakers, workshops, and formal meals. Students

were required to dress in business attire. The purpose of the event was to have students model for themselves what it means to be part of the professional world, and the students rose to the occasion. Keynote presenters included the Chancellor of the State System, the University President, and James McBride who is the author of *The Color of Water*.

If students were consistently demonstrating behaviors that were of concern to the staff, they met with program staff for a review of their status. These meetings could result in immediate termination from the program.

Academic Elements of the Program— Reading and Writing

The program's academic elements were designed to draw upon the strengths of this student population. In particular, the academic workshops in the pre-scholars institute steered students into a rigorous disciplined curriculum that was built upon familiar material. English composition or mathematics faculty and faculty with reading education expertise led the academic program elements during the Pre-Summer Institute.

Confidence–Building Pedagogy for Writing as an Academic Element. Students are likely to perceive academic literacies as difficult to acquire when they come from backgrounds where community literacies are commonly spoken. The social markings associated with slang versus proper usages amplify the stakes for fitting into an academic environment, especially college writing courses. Composition scholars have long recognized this struggle, as Mike Rose (1985) explains, “Freshmen are often puzzled by the talk they hear in their classrooms” because it is filled with terms and concepts specific to academia. As a result, students often freeze up when they see academic language they are “supposed to know.”

The approach developed for the Millersville Scholars Program is designed to give students a sense of command over sentence and paragraph structure by bridging the distance between familiar home literacies with the perceived more distant academic standards. Students continue to develop current literacy practices while attempting the patterns accepted by academic audiences. The result is a more confident writer ready for new rhetorical situations.

This confidence-building approach calls for developing structured and expressive writing simultaneously. The two literacy practices, home and school, influence each other, combining the students' familiar writing voices with the voices they are studying. Using a set of prescriptive sentence and paragraph patterns to imitate, students learn how to “sound” academic and build confidence in their ability to write “correctly.” Proponents of imitation, such as Graff and Birkenstein (2009), claim that following templates of elemental rhetorical moves “demystifies” academic writing.

In conjunction with imitating set patterns, students explore their writing in free-writes and journal exercises. Gradually, they are encouraged to try out the patterns they master in their expressive writings. Once acquiring the confidence to follow language patterns respected by academic audiences, students are then able to join their voices with those from published sources as they learn to synthesize, argue, and analyze. The first step in this process is to direct students to replicate a variety of sentence structures, combining elements through conjunction and subordination. Doing sentence imitations enables students to develop their ideas within established patterns accepted in academic settings. See Appendix A for examples of sentence imitation exercises.

Using such structures, students become confident they can access the language of the educated group they aspire to be among. These lessons can apply to various writing situations, reinforcing the value of their own expression and its adaptability to academic audiences.

Bridging Reading Skills as an Academic Element. Bridging the reading gap between high school and college is not an easy task for even the most proficient of readers. The volume of reading combined with the high-level content of most college textbooks contributes to the academic struggles of many freshmen in their first college semester. For underprepared students, this sudden increased expectation for reading load is overwhelming. In preparing them for the increased expectations in reading, the reading component of the summer Pre-Scholars Program builds from the skills students have already acquired. Also, the reading pedagogy, like the instruction in writing, puts students into focused habits designed to give payoff with increased effort. The intent of the Critical Reading Skills class within the summer bridge program at Millersville University is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Students will increase awareness of their personal strengths and needs in the area of critical reading and set goals for collegiate success.
- Students will gain awareness of college-level expectations for reading.
- Students will learn and practice strategies for actively reading and responding to narrative text.
- Students will learn and practice strategies for actively reading and responding to expository text.

The first objective is to have students become more metacognitively aware of the strategies they are using while reading. This is accomplished by having students reflect on “The 7 Habits of Highly Successful Readers” throughout the twelve-day bridge program. Students keep a reflective journal and actively reflect on each strategy through a variety of in-class lessons connected to their outside-of-class reading requirements.

The remaining three content objectives are accomplished through rigorous reading assignments that require students to increase their quantity of reading while maintaining active reading strategies, such as annotating the text in meaningful and thoughtful ways. Reading is assigned and completed outside of class time. Students are expected to come to class with thoughts, reflections, and questions in preparation for small and whole group discussions. The reading selections vary each year and are built around the University's "One Book, One Campus" reading selection—usually a book written in a narrative style. In addition to the text, students also read a variety of expository articles related to the theme. These increase in difficulty from newspaper and popular magazine articles (for example, *Time* or *Newsweek*) to journal articles selected from scholarly sources.

The final component of the Critical Reading Skills class is to have students construct a realistic and reasonable game plan for managing their reading load in the fall semester. Their reading rate is assessed and students compute how many pages they can reasonably expect to read and comprehend in one hour. This rate is compared with the total number of pages that may be required in one class cycle in one course. Students are frequently surprised by how much time they need to budget for completing course readings and adjust their plan accordingly. Students are urged repeatedly to stay *ahead* of the reading load because once they fall behind it becomes increasingly difficult to catch up.

In conclusion, the Critical Reading Skills class provides students with a sneak peek into college level reading expectations. Because no remedial course in reading is offered during the regular semester, this brief summer bridge program offers them an opportunity to try out reading strategies that have been used with successful college readers.

Evidence of Student Success

When Millersville administration decided to invest in the redesign of the traditional summer bridge program, the provost and cabinet mandated accountability. Program leaders designed an extensive assessment plan based upon the program's conceptual framework elements. Major elements of the assessment plan addressed three primary components of the program: interpersonal, residential, and academic outcomes along with traditional success factors of persistence, grade point average, and credit completion of college-level courses. In the program's first year, students were assessed at three points during their first year: the second Day of the Pre-Scholar Summer Institute (PSSI), during New Student Orientation after the PSSI was completed, and three weeks into their second semester. Students were assessed on several learning outcomes, which provided opportunities to compare to former summer bridge program participants and regularly admitted students.

Comparisons of PSSSI to non-PSSSI first-year student's non-cognitive factors on outcomes (such as the need for cognition, personal and educational goals; realistic self-appraisal; leadership; clarifying values; academic motivation; and positive attitudes towards literacy) revealed interesting findings regarding the transformed admissions process for the at-risk students when compared to that of the well-prepared students. In many instances, the at-risk students' scores on these assessment measures were higher at the start of their summer institute program when compared to those of well-prepared students just prior to their first college semester. As the PSSSI students began their second semester, their scores on these self-perceptions either were maintained or dropped slightly—indicating areas needing additional focus.

For the first cohort of the redesigned summer bridge program, student performance improved on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency critical thinking scores. Students' perceptions decreased with regards to academic motivation, leadership, psychological well-being, and diversity. Weak positive correlations were identified between fall 2010 grades and environmental mastery and self-acceptance, indicating that summer bridge program students were making more sense of their surroundings, making choices related to personal needs and values, and feeling more positive about past life experiences. A weak negative correlation existed between fall 2010 grades and a sense of autonomy. Students in the program appeared to be influenced by peers and were concerned about expectations and judgments of others.

In fall 2011, 83 percent of the students in the Pre-Summer Scholar Institute returned for their second year—a retention rate stronger than the university as a whole and unprecedented in Millersville's history. The inaugural PSSSI cohort's first-year performance was dramatically better than students in the former summer bridge program, despite a more rigorous course and credit load of students entering with similar academic profiles. The average number of credits students in the 2010 cohort enrolled for their fifth semester was 13.7 credits, slightly more than credits enrolled for students in former bridge program (13.3 credits in 2008, and 13.0 credits in 2009). The third-year persistence for the first cohort of the redesigned program is 57.4 percent. The university needs to continue to enhance these persistence rates as underrepresented and underprepared students are still at risk for graduating in four to six years when one compares them to the success rates of regularly admitted students.

Table 2 provides a comparison of the success factors of the first four semesters for the former bridge program and the redesigned summer bridge program students. The successful performance of the fall 2011 cohort is an achievement when considering that the composite SAT score for those students is lower than the 2010 cohort and the two prior bridge program cohorts by thirty to fifty points.

**Table 2. At-Risk Student Performance at Millersville University:
A Comparison of End-of-Term Performance.**

		Former Program			Redesigned Program	
Fall Cohort:		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Cohort N:		(N = 98)	(N = 95)	(N =100)	(N = 94)	(N =102)
Composite SAT:		799	812	829	828	782
Semester	Success Factors					
First	Credits	13.2	13.8	13.8	15.0	15.0
	Average Term GPA	2.13	2.08	2.31	2.66	2.47
	N > = 2.00	69	61	70	77	80
	% > = 2.00	70%	64%	70%	82%	78%
	Average Cum GPA	2.23	2.20	2.46	2.59	2.36
Second	Returning - N	88	91	95	92	101
	Returning - %	90%	96%	95%	98%	99%
	Credits	13.7	13.3	13.6	15.6	14.6
	Average Term GPA	1.77	1.99	1.97	2.36	1.95
	N > = 2.00	45	54	50	65	49
	% > = 2.00	46%	57%	50%	69%	48%
Third	Average Cum GPA	2.03	2.12	2.26	2.46	2.23
	Returning - N	62	54	65	78	81
	Returning - %	63%	57%	65%	83.0%	79.4%
	Credits	12.9	13.7	13.8	14.0	13.6
	Average Term GPA	1.83	2.29	2.13	2.09	...
	N > = 2.00	29	38	36	43	...
Fourth	% > = 2.00	30%	40%	36%	46%	...
	Average Cum GPA	2.13	2.41	2.41	2.46	...
	Returning - N	51	52	60	71	...
	Returning - %	52%	55%	60%	76%	...
	Credits	13.2	13.8	13.8	13.9	...
	Average Term GPA	1.98	2.37	2.21	2.18	...
Fourth	N > = 2.00	29	38	39	46	...
	% > = 2.00	30%	40%	39%	49%	...
	Average Cum GPA	2.19	2.42	2.38	2.45	...

Conclusion

Within the context of this program, it does appear that a focus on building resiliency and clarifying personal values can result in enhanced success for students who are lacking traditional preparation for college success. The first two program cohorts demonstrated

second-year persistence rates that were equivalent to the university population at large. Students continue to academically struggle, but they appear to be more likely to persist, which creates an opportunity to put in the effort required for success.

Ultimately, it is characteristics that students bring with them, resiliency and openness to being worked with, that may be most responsible for their success. Due to the program's intensity and the major challenges the students present, resiliency is a critical element in the staff and faculty members that support the program, as well.

Importantly, operationalizing a value for education and developing resiliency support a more basic requirement for success in a higher education setting. While all university students must devote great effort in order to be successful, students who are underprepared will need to devote an exceptional amount of time and effort in order to succeed. The Scholars Program enables students to model that effort, to understand what it feels like, and to recognize that they are capable of making that great effort. Sustaining that effort requires support, and we have yet to determine the degree to which that effort can be sustained in the long run.

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Appendix A

Example Imitative Writing Exercises

To direct student development of sentence structure, ask students to practice several combination techniques:

- As a dutiful father and faithful American, I took my family this summer to Disney World, a plastic and concrete heap of trash I hope never to see again.
- Nobody understands our car, a 1990 Toyota Camry, the way I do, since I have been driving it for the past 10 years.

Here are example imitations of the above sentences:

- As a hardworking student and committed athlete, I took my English homework with me on the bus to our game, an hour trip over bumpy roads.
- Nobody understands our angry dog Max, a German Sheppard, the way my dad does, since he raised him from a puppy.

To direct student development of paragraph structure, students could read Doris Kearns Goodwin's "The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" and list the ideas presented. They could also do a free-write or some other writing that brings out meaning from the passage in their own words. Next, they could take their ideas and fit them into the passage below:

As a _____, Lincoln _____.

While others _____, Lincoln _____.

Though Lincoln _____, his rivals _____.

Lincoln was _____, so _____.

People typically see Lincoln as

_____, but actually he _____.

Doris Goodwin, author of "The Genius of Abraham Lincoln," conveys the idea that

our sixteenth president was _____.