



### Day of Service Project in a Box: College Essay Session

Summary: Adapted from College Summit's essay writing workshop, this Day of Service site will give Yale alumni the opportunity to brainstorm and draft personal essays with potential college applicants, particularly those who might not receive such attention and guidance from their schools.

Volunteer Qualifications: All Yale alumni, having themselves written a successful college essay and studied at Yale, can have helpful input.

Finding Students: We recommend that the Yale Club first contact the guidance counselors at a few local high schools to ask whether they have students who could benefit from a program like this. If you post fliers or advertise on social media, be thoughtful of reaching students who most need, and lack, this service. Given the necessarily small ratio (1 volunteer to 2-4 students), you may also find yourself needing a way to limit the number who can sign up.

Location and Setup: As noted, we recommend not Any quiet space with room for enough round tables to fit all your volunteers and students. Keeping all students in one space will save time and allow for fewer presentations, but volunteers are free to use their discretion in deciding whether separate rooms will prevent distraction.

Recommended Schedule: (adjustable to needs of students and constraints of volunteers)

9:00-9:10	Meet your writing group, introduce everyone, set up ground rules
9:10-9:20	Explain activities of the day – freewriting, goldmining, drafting
9:20-9:40	Freewrite
9:40-10:20	Goldmine
10:20-10:30	Break for snack

10:30-10:40	Show, Don't Tell Presentation
10:40-12:00	Draft
12:00-1:00	Lunch (volunteers read drafts and write questions)
1:00-1:15	Students read over comments and questions, ask for explanation
1:15-1:45	Try to rewrite one paragraph
1:45-2:00	Group discussion – how was the experience? Questions about the questions?

See below for description of these steps.

Materials:

- Notebooks, or loose leaf with folders, and writing utensils for students. This could also be requested as something for the students to bring themselves.
- Snacks for a break (be allergy conscious)
- Lunch. Students and volunteers might also bring these packed from home.
- Chart paper (and easel, if desired) for goldmining notes

Activities: These materials are taken from the “College Summit 2012 Volunter Workshop Training Guide.”

1. Freewriting: This is a brainstorming exercise, intended to produce the raw material from which a personal statement might arise.

### How to Facilitate Freewriting

- In order to support students as they freewrite, let students know that the writing process begins with a “game” or warm-up exercise.
- Explain the exercise. When the timer starts, students begin writing. They may write about anything—the room, how they feel at the moment, why writing is hard, etc.—but they may not lift their pens from the paper or stop writing until you say, “Time.”
- Students freewrite for a set amount of time. You should model appropriate behavior by freewriting as well.
- If students struggle during freewriting, encourage them to keep going (e.g., “Don’t think, just write,” “Don’t worry about how it comes out,” “The only mistake you can make is to stop writing,” etc.).
- The beauty of the exercise is that it does not matter what students write. Something of value, or at least a clue about what they want to write about, almost always emerges.
- If students ask if they will have to read their responses later (which rarely happens), let them know honestly that they will. Encourage them, however, to allow their imaginations to take hold. Stress to them that the freewrite is a preliminary exercise to “get their minds moving.”

#### **IF A STUDENT IS BLOCKED, ASK HIM/HER TO:**

1. Describe an incident that changed his/her mind about something.
2. Tell you about something that angered him/her.
3. Tell you about a person who helped him/her change.
4. Describe their family or community.
5. Write about an important event.
6. Write about a skill or talent they are proud of.
7. Write about their hopes or dreams.

2. Goldmining: Each member of your group will read aloud their freewrites, and the rest of the group will listen for interesting words, phrases, and ideas. Begin by asking for a volunteer.

### How to Facilitate Goldmining

After students freewrite, they engage in the goldmining process. During this process, the group identifies “gold nuggets”—the most compelling phrases, words, stories, and images in each student’s freewrite.

1. Before the student begins to read, instruct the class members to take notes on exact words that interest or intrigue them.
2. You should take notes as well.
3. After the student has read, thank him/her. Write the student’s name on the top of a piece of chart paper.
4. Ask the class:
  - a. What do you remember?
  - b. What do you want to hear more about?
5. Write each response/comment on the student’s chart. If a comment is mentioned more than once, mark it with a check or a star.
6. Strive to fill the entire chart paper with “gold nuggets.”
7. Each student should contribute his/her observations/comments.
8. Don’t forget that you may goldmine the group’s comments as well as what the author originally wrote. So you can take notes on new words, synonyms, questions, comments on the chart paper.
9. If a comment is too vague, ask the commenter to remember the exact words that the author used. Ask the author to reread the portion that is being referenced.
10. Show the author and the class how much you value the freewrite. When an image seems particularly striking, say so. When a story or anecdote draws the listener in, say so.

**If a freewrite is “thin,” strive to identify:**

- Stories
- Images
- Patterns/repetitions
- Tensions/contradictions (resolved or unresolved)
- Messages
- Questions
- Ask the author to clarify or explain anything the group doesn’t understand and write their responses on the chart, too.

## Sample Freewrite and Goldmining Session

**Freewrite excerpt:** "...I can't wait until College Summit is over because next week I get to go to King's Dominion. The summer's almost over and I haven't even been yet. I haven't been in so long. Last time I went I didn't even get to go with my friends. I was bringing a group of kids there. Trying to impress her with my community work. Getting here was a heroic effort. Up at 4:30 this morning in the cool dark, alarm clock blaring fuzz from the radio—just how I felt. Headache of awakening and stomach hungry but not ready to eat..."

**WC asks:** What do you remember from the freewrite? What was cool?

**Team member:** She can't wait to go to King's Dominion. She hasn't been yet this summer.

**WC writes:** *can't wait to go to King's Dominion/hasn't been yet this summer*

**WC:** Okay, great. What else did she mention about King's Dominion?

**Another team member:** Last time she went, she didn't get to go with her friends.

**WC writes:** *last time at King's Dominion, didn't get to go with her friends*

**WC:** Who did she go with?

**Team member:** She took kids to King's Dominion to impress someone with her community work.

**WC writes:** *took kids from community to impress someone*

**WC (to the author):** Who were you trying to impress?

**Author:** I wanted to impress my mom. She keeps saying I don't do enough for the church.

**WC writes:** *wanted to impress mom/don't do enough for church*

**WC:** Do you agree with what your mom said?

**Author:** I didn't then, but I do now.

**WC:** What's different now? What did you learn from your King's Dominion trip?

**Author:** I really enjoyed myself. I started volunteering to help kids more after that.

**WC:** What have you done with kids since then?

**Author:** I mentor a group of students every week now at church.

**WC writes:** *enjoyed King's Dominion with kids/volunteers to mentor kids at church*

**WC:** What else did you find interesting in her free write?

**Another team member:** She's tired.

**WC writes:** *tired*

**WC:** Good. And what else? What imagery did she use? How do we *know* she was tired?

**Another team member:** She had a headache and was tired.

**WC (to the author):** Would you mind reading exactly what you said?

**WC writes:** *alarm clock blaring fuzz from radio/Headache of awakening and stomach. Hungry but not ready to eat*

## Issues You May Encounter During Freewriting and Goldmining

Helping students identify a topic that they really want to explore and write about is an art. While there is no single guaranteed formula to help the most stifled writers, the curriculum and writing process eventually lead every student to developing a personal statement. Proceed with the knowledge that something almost always “breaks through” in the writing process.

### Encountering a “topic-less” free write:

At one workshop, a student’s body language showed resistance and his free write consisted entirely of the following repetitions: “Why am I doing this?” “Why am I here?” During the goldmining, the coach made a simple observation: “You ask a lot of questions.” This triggered a realization for the student, who went on to write an extremely probing personal statement, swirling around a set of questions he had about being a white student growing up in a low-income, black neighborhood:

- Why am I not really accepted by my black neighborhood or the white suburbs?
- Why are the schools in my neighborhood so much worse than the suburban schools?

At another workshop, a student wrote his first free write (very eloquently) about how much he hated writing. Earlier, when the students were introducing themselves to each other, the student had mentioned he was most proud of helping get an abusive parent out of his home. The coach asked the student to focus his second freewrite on that topic instead, since it was something the student clearly wanted to get off his chest. If a student doesn’t give you much to “work with” in the first freewrite, get the student talking during his/her goldmining. As a team, you should be able to come up with something for the student to explore in the second freewrite.

### Topic Anxiety:

Some students will be concerned about sticking to admissions essay topics. If they raise this concern, assure them that if they write a personal statement about something that is important to them, the colleges will not mind if it doesn’t seem to match the topics provided in the applications. Stress to students that colleges are interested in candidates who can show *who* they are, in addition to their academic accomplishments.

Goldmining <i>Dos</i>	Goldmining <i>Don'ts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on your creativity. Listen for metaphors and parallels, stories, images, patterns/repetitions, tensions/contradictions, messages, and questions.</li> <li>• Emphasize the concrete details; avoid vague, general statements.</li> <li>• Write down gold nuggets that come from students’ mouths, as well as their pens.</li> <li>• Write as legibly as possible.</li> <li>• Ask probing questions if there “isn’t enough” in the freewrite.</li> <li>• Explore every avenue fully, asking probing questions. Questioning is key.</li> <li>• View each freewrite as a work of literature.</li> <li>• Be comfortable with silence as some students won’t speak up immediately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take notes directly on the flip chart paper as the student reads his/her freewrite (use a separate sheet of paper).</li> <li>• Rephrase students’ responses/comments.</li> <li>• “Over-mine.” Your goal is to probe for gold nuggets while also maintaining the flow of the session.</li> <li>• Psychoanalyze the students. Focus instead on the writing and rich details within their freewrites.</li> <li>• Project your adult perspective onto the students’ work. Although you will need to rely on your creativity when encountering a “thin” freewrite, don’t let your ideas overpower or shape the students’ original ideas, intentions, or perspectives.</li> <li>• Fill momentary silences with chatter or irrelevant questions.</li> <li>• Spend more than ten minutes goldmining any given freewrite.</li> </ul>

### How to Identify the Guiding Idea

After a series of freewrites and goldmining sessions, explain to students that the freewriting and goldmining processes help students uncover personal stories that they can tell. As a group, review one of your student's flip chart sheets. Have the team members examine the gold nuggets and identify possible stories that the student can tell. Prompt them by asking the following questions:

- Are there any stories that are starting to stand out?
- Do you see connections between any stories or gold nuggets?
- What are some of the stories that Sandra has alluded to or mentioned so far?
- In what situation does this [a specific gold nugget] take place? What is Sandra doing or what is happening at this time?
- Which gold nugget would you like to have more background information on? [Have "Sandra" place the gold nugget into context, if possible, by describing the moment or scenario surrounding it.]
- What are some other stories that you'd like to hear more about?
- Which of these stories do you think is most interesting?

Write the group's responses on a sheet of flip chart paper, and highlight any repeat responses. Ask the student to choose one or two stories from the list, or from his/her own inspiration, to write about. Inform him/her that he/she is not expected to tell the story to the rest of the team; he/she simply needs to select one (or two) that he/she would like to write about. Much of the rich details will come later when students begin writing.

Note that students' stories do not have to be tragic or heartbreaking to be compelling. Any story that shows a student's "heartbeat" will engage the reader.

3. Show, Don't Tell: A basic principle of good writing, the difference between showing and telling will help students write more evocative and engaging essays.

### The Show, Don't Tell Concept

When students "tell" in their writing, they simply state facts or make blanket assertions without describing or otherwise proving ("showing") what they mean. "Showing" highlights a story and makes it convincing and compelling to the reader.

Stories are best told with the sensory details (taste, touch, sound, smell, and sight) that allow the reader to experience the story as if he/she were there himself/herself. When students "show" in their writing, they include rich details and descriptive language, instead of vague, general words or phrases.

Oftentimes, as students transition from freewriting to drafting, they freeze up and revert to English class essay-writing mode, which can lead to stiff, unimaginative writing. Also, sometimes when students are asked to add details to their writing, they add chronological, rather than sensory, detail.

**Original statement:** I went to the store.

**Chronological detail:** I opened the door, walked down the stairs, crossed the street, and went to the store.

**Sensory detail:** Even though it was summer, the pouring rain matched my mood as I slumped to the corner store in my already-soaked blue tennis shoes.

**OR**

I dragged the door open and trudged down the creaky stairs. Although it was just across the street, the dingy corner store felt miles away.

If there is enough time, choose one of the following two exercises to help students grasp the concept more concretely.

### Show, Don't Tell Exercise #1: Learning by Example

#### Procedure:

Draw a chart on the board as follows:

Sights/Things you can almost see	Touch/Things you can almost feel	Scents/Things you can almost smell	Tastes/Things you can almost taste	Sounds/Things you can almost hear	Overall Tone/ How does Dale want you to feel?

- Let students know that you're going to read aloud a personal statement excerpt. As you read, students should listen for examples of details that appeal to each of the senses.
- Read aloud the first excerpts following from Dale Scott's personal statement.
- Ask students to help you fill in the sensory details chart.
- Discuss: What if Dale just said, "I was hanging out with my friends one night"? What if Marcia just said, "Fireworks make me feel energized"? How would the feeling you get from reading their words be different?
- Stress to students this big idea: Sensory details help us connect with writing by making the words come alive and awakening our senses. Add power to your personal statement by choosing the right sensory details. In this way, you can show, not tell, what you mean!

#### From "I Am" by Dale Scott

*"It feels good out here!" I couldn't help but say it twice to my friends Chris, Mike, and Jay. We had been in the house since early evening playing John Madden football on Sega entertainment game system. We decided to make ham sandwiches and go sit out on the front porch. We went outside at around 10 o'clock with our food and some Pepsi to enjoy the nice, cool night. The time passed so quickly that what seemed an hour turned into three. Around 1:15 am we noticed a decline in the warm temperature so we decided to head inside for the night. ...*

#### Possible Answers for "I Am" by Dale Scott

**Sights:** three boys enjoying a snack on a front porch

**Touch:** warm, summer night air turning cooler

**Scents:** summer breezes

**Tastes:** ham sandwiches, Pepsi

**Sounds:** "It feels good out here!"

**Overall Tone:** relaxed, chilled-out, summertime fun



### From "Firecracker" by Marcia Rodriguez

*For as long as I can remember, fireworks have been an important part of my life. On nights of celebration, such as the Fourth of July and Cinco de Mayo, I would cross the long street from my neatly kept apartment building to the lush green park next door. The warm air carried the familiar smells of late night barbecues and sounds of upbeat Spanish music. I loved to watch the clear dark sky burst into colorful flowers of light, dancing fearlessly as the music from the crowds below cheered them on. Even though the nights would end too soon, the fireworks would stay with me.*

### Possible Answers for "Firecracker" by Marcia Rodriguez

**Sights:** a block with a neat apartment building, a lush green park, sky bursting with colorful flowers of light

**Touch:** warm, summer night air

**Scents:** late night barbecue

**Tastes:** barbecue

**Sounds:** upbeat Spanish music, crowds cheering

**Overall Tone:** excited, energized, positive, upbeat

### Show, Don't Tell Exercise #2: I am happy when...

#### Procedure:

- Write the words "I am happy when..." on the top of a blank piece of chart paper and hang it on the board.
- Ask a student to complete the sentence. For example, she may say, "I am happy when school gets out for the day." Write her response on the chart paper and explain to students that this sentence is a **"telling"** statement. The student is "telling" us when she is happy.
- Ask students: *How do you know you're happy when school gets out for the day? How do you feel? What do you see that makes you feel happy? Smell? Hear? Taste?* Challenge the class to write three sentences that **show** they're happy when school gets out without using the word "happy" or any of its synonyms. The way to do it is to describe what you sense around you, the sights and smells and feelings, using "happy" language or a "happy" tone. If students need an example, give them one, using the ideas below.
- Give a few minutes for students to work and then share their responses. Write some of the more descriptive examples on the chart. Encourage cheesiness, over-the-top silliness, and even extravagance.
- If students like this activity, continue it with such sentence starters as "I am angry when..." or "I am nervous when..." Otherwise, conclude this activity by explaining that showing is always more interesting than telling because we can really connect with writing through sensory details. These details add **heartbeat** to writing.

5. Drafting: Since this workshop is an abbreviated version of the model it is adapted from, keep in mind that students may not be able to finish an entire draft. Your goal is get them started on a promising path, and increase their confidence in their own writing.

### How to Facilitate Drafting

1. Make sure that each student understands the concept of "Show, Don't Tell" and has identified a story or stories about which to write.
2. It is now time for the students to put their ideas on paper by beginning a first draft of their story. Ask them to "jump right into the process," exploring what they can create. Assure students that you are available to assist them if they become stuck.
3. Circulate among students throughout the remainder of the session to check in with them, read through their drafts, provide assistance, as needed, and acknowledge their hard work.
4. If a student is struggling, work with him/her one-on-one. Help him/her see all that he/she has unknowingly already expressed in his/her freewrites. Ask questions to draw out his/her thoughts.
5. If a student is stuck, try the following tactics:
  - Engage the student in a one-on-one storytelling session, during which you are the scribe. (It is sometimes easier for people to say, rather than write, what is on their minds.)
  - If it's difficult to describe how something felt, ask the student what it reminds him/her of his/her answer will most likely include rich and interesting descriptions.
  - Ask a student to "freeze-frame" a moment, as if the story he/she is telling is on film and the film stops or shifts into slow motion. What do we see, smell, hear, touch, taste?
6. If a student is having trouble selecting a story from his/her list, or if his/her story is too broad, have him/her briefly describe a *specific* moment for each story he/she identified. Below are some prompting phrases to facilitate the process:
  - "Tell the story of the moment when..."
  - "Describe the moment when..."
  - "Once upon a time..."
  - "The incident or event that sticks in my mind is..."
7. Students are oftentimes inclined to tell their stories in chronological order and sometimes start their stories at the very beginning, which can be too far back in time. Let him/her know that elaborating on that moment with details is a much more interesting way than if the student had simply told the story using general, flat statements.

**Instead of:** "Tell the story of your team's winning season."

**Try:** "Tell the story of when the bases were loaded and you were up to bat."

**Or try:** "Describe the moment when you stepped up to the plate and realized that the game was riding on you."
8. Remind the students that their personal statements should:
  - Be autobiographical and focused on themselves.
  - Show personal growth.
  - Focus on a more recent story.

(If, for example, a student's story is centered around an incident that he/she experienced in the fourth grade, acknowledge the student's ability to *show* the story and encourage him/her to approach the more recent story that he/she selects with the same knack for imagery as the first one.)
9. Students should not focus their personal statements on their workshop experiences. Although it is great that the workshop has already affected them, they have not had enough time to fully process their entire experiences. Encourage students who begin writing about College Summit to choose another topic.
10. After you finish with the last student, check in with the first student again. Continue to circulate the room throughout the rest of the session, giving students time to work.
11. Encourage students to keep working even if they become tired or discouraged.

6. Making comments over lunch: Over lunch, your goal is to read through what each student has written, identify the major problems of their writing as well as some positive attributes, and provide some discussion questions to lead them forward.

What makes for a strong personal statement?

College Summit follows these five essential guidelines:

1. **IT IS NOT AN ANALYTICAL ESSAY.** In an analytical essay, the writer dissects an issue or argues a point, and “tells” their point in a thesis statement. In an effective personal statement, the writer narrates a personal, autobiographical story – the story’s focus is on the writer.
2. **IT SHOWS PERSONAL GROWTH OR A JOURNEY.** The autobiographical story and message in an effective personal statement illustrate a point significant to the writer and show his/her personal growth. It doesn’t need to be a student’s life story. Focusing on one moment/event/story allows for the writer to capture the details of the moment; it is these “showing” details that add “heartbeat” to a personal statement and make it truly engaging.
3. **IT IS WRITTEN IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST AND FREE OF JUDGMENT.** A successful “heartbeat” personal statement must be written in an atmosphere of trust. In such a setting, students feel more confident taking risks, such as writing with confidence, reading work aloud, and revealing what is inside of them depending on each individual student’s learning style and past experiences, writing and speaking about oneself may be exciting and fun, painful and embarrassing, or somewhere in between. For a personal statement to be effective, it must be written in a space that allows all student experience to be respected and shared without restrictions.
4. **IT “SHOWS” RATHER THAN “TELLS.”** The average personal statement that an admissions officer reads “tells” about the writer, usually with either a resume-like description of past accomplishments or a pie-in-the-sky account of future goals. The writing Curriculum that follows helps you coach students to show, not tell, what they mean. This makes their piece powerful, engaging, and guarantees that it will catch the eye of anyone who reads it.
5. **IT HAS AUTHENTICITY.** A personal statement has the most impact on the reader when it is authentic. Remember that the primary goal is to help students write personal statements that shed light on their strengths and express their true selves.

## How to Write Discussion Questions

As you read through each student's draft, consider these questions:

- Is there a clear story or stories?
- Are there any gaps in the story?
- Is there enough detail and evidence?
- Does the student "show," not "tell"?
- If the student has changed, are you convinced?
- Has the student articulated the point of the story or the message he/she wants to convey?
- Do the structure and organization flow?
- Do the transitions between paragraphs work?

Next, write three to five questions for each student, following these guidelines:

- Tailor your questions to the learning style of each student.
- Choose your questions carefully and creatively, and be specific. Refer to the examples of effective and ineffective Discussion Questions on the following pages.
- Refer to specific passages as much as possible.
- If the student is mostly "telling," ask him/her to provide more detail in certain passages.
- If there are gaps in the story, ask the student to fill in the details.
- Some students may find it helpful to respond to your questions in a prescribed length. For example, suggest they write two sentences or one paragraph to answer specific questions.
- Create the questions according to each student's stage in the writing process. (For example, do not ask a student to clarify the point of his story if there are gaps in his story. Do not ask a student to consider the transitions between her second and third paragraphs if her personal statement does not yet include a story, a message, and supporting evidence.)
- Be conscious of your tone. Be supportive, not bossy or demanding. Avoid using, "I need you to...," "You should....," or any other authoritative phrases or language that might intimidate or discourage the students.

### Sample Draft Excerpts and Discussion Questions: Jonathan

I have always been close to my family even though we sometimes have issues like all families do. They are really supportive of me and I'm very lucky and thankful for them. My brother is especially close to me. We have so much fun together. He is older and I've always looked up to him in fact he's my inspiration. I admire him for who he is and what he's done. He inspires me to do what's right. I think I take after my dad a lot but I also know that I'm a lot like my mom. It's really cool to be a product of everyone. Although my family is very supportive, I sometimes feel like I have to take care of them in a weird way. Although my brother is the quiet leader, I sometimes feel like the glow of the house when he's not there. When he's not there I still feel like there are big shoes to fill though. He's very responsible and I admire that. I'm responsible too but I also like to take risks a lot. That's why I'm like my dad. I think that taking risks keeps me on my toes and keeps things real. You just never know what's going to happen next. I don't do crazy things or anything like that, but just like to joke around and take risks. I stay out of trouble though because it's not worth it. I know my family would be supportive of me but I know that I would be letting myself down. And my brother.

### EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jonathan,

Thank you for sharing your personal statement. I appreciate your effort so far, and it really shows.

You have some great ideas in here and I want to learn more about you.

I can see that you talk about your family a great deal, but you haven't picked out one story. Below are some questions that might help you find that story that shows exactly who you are.

1. Can you think of one moment when your brother inspired you? Try to write five sentences showing one time when your brother influenced you. Then, in one sentence, can you state the most important thing you learned from your brother?
2. You mentioned that you are the "glow of the house." What a beautiful phrase. In one paragraph, can you describe one scene that shows you being the "glow"?
3. You tell us a lot about taking risks. Is there a particular time when you took a risk that you can describe like a scene from a movie?
4. You mention your family being supportive quite a bit. Can you tell me one story that will really show your reader what you mean when you say "supportive"?
5. I really like how you say, "It's really cool to be a product of everyone." It's really insightful and I would love to hear more. Can you show *how* you are a product of everyone in one paragraph?

Keep up the great work!

Writing Coach Jason

### INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jonathan,

You're off to a good start. And thank you for your focus during yesterday's sessions. Hopefully, my questions below will help you shape your writing today.

1. You haven't really solidified a story yet, although you mention family support quite a bit. Can you think of a story that shows how your family is supportive?
2. I thought it was interesting how you described yourself as the "glow of the house" when your brother is not there, but then you went on to say that you still have big shoes to fill. I'd love to hear you elaborate on this unresolved tension. In five sentences, can you describe how this tension *feels*?  
Remember, sensory details!
3. You mention responsibility quite a bit and it seems like it has different meanings for people in your family. Does this sometimes contribute to the "issues" that you refer to? In one paragraph, can you describe a time when issues arose because of responsibility (or lack thereof, if that's the case)?
4. I'm curious about you taking care of your family in a "weird" way. Can you elaborate on "weird"? In three sentences, try to express "weird" in a different way, without ever using it in the sentences. Showing is key here.
5. You've got a number of great ideas down, but they're a bit scattered. Bringing order to them might help you as you continue to draft. Is there a family member that you would consider writing about first? Try writing five sentences about one family member and then moving on to the next (in five sentences as well). I'm available to assist you with this process as well.

Good work, Jonathan.

Writing Coach Keanu

7. Rewriting: After returning from lunch, students can take a look at your initial comments and try to digest them. A helpful exercise for their writing might be to take a paragraph, particularly one that is especially important, in need of improvement, or both, and revise it. Beyond the issues listed below, you might also find the student has difficulties with grammar, mechanics, spelling or usage. As significant as these are, usually they can be fixed easily. As you look at the drafts, try to identify an issue such as those below, and suggest some corresponding exercise directed towards it.

### How to Differentiate Instruction

Because all students come to Workshop with different experiences, learning styles, and abilities, it's important to tailor your support during the Writing Sessions to individual student's needs. Educators do this in a traditional classroom through a process called "Differentiated Instruction." Here's how it's done:

1. Assess where your students are to figure out what each needs.
2. Group students based on what they need.
3. Teach and support each group differently, according to their needs.

At this point in the College Summit Workshop, students in Writing Teams tend to fall into one or more of the following needs groups:

**Needs to identify a story to write about**—For these students, the goldmining exercise was ineffective, and they have not nailed down a story to tell. Or, perhaps, students are telling more than one story and need to focus.

**Needs to identify a guiding idea or message**—For these students, their drafts tell a story, but the point of their story is not clear. Why are they sharing this story? What does it demonstrate about their personal strengths?

**Needs to show, not tell**—For these students, it's still a struggle to use sensory details and images to "show" their story instead of just "telling." Perhaps the Show, Don't Tell exercise that you used at the beginning of Writing Session II did not resonate with them, or they're struggling to apply the concept to their own writing. Or perhaps these students need help creating tone or setting in their story. Or, maybe, there's just not enough "heartbeat" in the piece.

**Needs to add structure**—For these students, the story is shaping up and they're managing to show, not tell what they mean, but they still need help crafting their story into a beginning, middle, and an end.

8. End with a group discussion about the experience, so that students can reflect on their progress and you can receive feedback. If the volunteers wish to stay in contact as a mentor and essay advisor, they should feel free to do so.