**Subject area/course**: ELA/ AP English Language & Composition

**Grade level/band**: 12

**Task source**: New Hampshire Task Bank; Author: Aaron Cass

**Transcending Limits**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

In this assignment, students are challenged to push themselves beyond their personal limits in an area of their choosing. As background, students will read Christopher MacDougall’s *Born to Run*, which documents the incredible human feats performed by ultramarathon runners. Students start the assignment by identifying a way in which they’d like to push themselves (run a faster mile, go without sleep, hold their breath, etc.). From there, they establish a baseline, research training methods to help improve their performance and attempt to transcend their limit. When they have completed these steps, they will synthesize their research into a personal (narrative) essay in which they discuss the process they underwent and reflect on the outcome.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

1. **Critical abilities**

**Research** – Conduct sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem, narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate, and demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, use advanced searches effectively, and assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience.

**Analysis of Information** – Integrate and synthesize multiple sources of information (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to address a question, make informed decisions, understand a process, phenomenon, or concept, and solve problems while evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

**Communication in Many Forms** - Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

**Interpersonal Interaction and Collaboration** - Develop a range of interpersonal skills, including the ability to work with others, to participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations

1. **Other standards**

*New Hampshire Competencies*

ELA 2. Reading Informational Texts Competency: Students will demonstrate the ability to comprehend, analyze, and critique a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print informational texts – including texts for science, social studies, and technical subjects.

ELA5. Narrative Writing Competency: Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively apply narrative strategies for variety of purposes and audiences.

ELA6. Research: Students will engage in research /inquiry to investigate topics and to analyze, integrate, and present information.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

This task was designed to take about two weeks, depending on scheduling.

1. **Materials/resources:**

* Have students use online database (via the library, as available), which provides a research database in which students can choose a customized Lexile level of their sources
* Online citation resources
* Journals
* *Born to Run* text

1. **Prior knowledge:**

To prepare them for the task, students should read *Born to Run* in advance, during which they should focus on what people/society’s perceived limits were, what challenges they faced and how they surpassed them.

In terms of literacy skills, this task was designed to take place towards the end of the school year in late spring. The students should already have had lots of practice writing expository, research-based essays. With that as their working base, the teacher should help guide them into writing in a less formal style while making use of the organizational, research and synthesis skills they have gained throughout the year.

1. **Connection to curriculum:**

Not provided.

1. **Teacher instructions:**

*Implementation Procedures:*

1. Read *Born to Run* (done previously in class – reading time will vary)
2. Have students brainstorm ideas in their journals of ways they can push their limits using examples from the past to help them create appropriate and realistic goals (15 minutes)
3. Have students pitch their ideas to the class and get feedback to help them refine and specify their goal and how they will know if they have or have not achieved it (approx. 30 minutes – time will vary based on class size)
4. Give a refresher lesson on the CRAAP Test for evaluating website credibility (20 minutes – include website evaluation activity if not previously completed)
5. Provide time for students to research and create a training/preparation plan. To help make it easier for them to cite sources in their paper, have them save URLs and/or full citations in a Google doc to refer back to later (1-2 class periods)
6. Training/preparation time (approximately one week), during which they write in a daily journal to document their experience. In addition to writing, also have kids use their phones/digital cameras to record “selfie” journal entries in which they talk about their experience (approx. one week – times will vary depending on class schedules)
7. Attempt to transcend their limit/reach their goal 🡪 journal before/during/after to document their experience (homework – one to three days depending on their specific challenge)
8. Share experience with the class (30 minutes)
9. Write reflective/research-based essays. When students pass the essay in, have them self-assess using the rubric (time as needed – in and out of class)
10. Share their products/experiences with the class on the last day of the unit (approx. 30 minutes depending on class size)

*Possible formative assessments/checkpoints throughout:*

* Have students maintain daily journals while they train/prepare for their challenge so they have documentation of their experience to refer back to while writing the final paper, and to help them transition into a less formal writing style.
* Review the CRAAP test to ensure they are able to find reliable online sources
* Review MLA citation, focusing on how to make use of online resources like easybib.com to create detailed and properly-formatted citations
* The essay itself is reflective in nature, so the majority of their self-reflection will be embedded in the assignment.
* Most of the group work in this assignment is the whole-class daily check-in process of having students share their ideas and get feedback/suggestions from their peers.
* During the writing process, they will conference in pairs to get feedback and work in small groups to edit their work in accordance with the guidelines of the rubric.

1. **Student support:**

*Possible supports:*

* Coordinate with paraprofessionals and case managers on a one-by-one basis to choose appropriate lengths for their writing and numbers of sources students are expected to cite
* Full range of choices/levels of challenge embedded into the assignment, but students can also work with the teacher to choose appropriate and realistic goals.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

Not included.

1. **Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the Transcending Limits Expository Writing rubric.