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AP English

### Narrative Essay

4 years old:

The water was weird and unfamiliar, a foreign body of cold pressing up against my skin trying to make me sink to the bottom. The floaties were awkward and seemed unnecessary; I believed I could learn how to swim instantaneously. But I enjoyed the softness and movement of the water of the water, the way it rippled around me as if I was the center of the aquatic universe. The other kids were floundering and shirking at the slightest wave or gap in the wall. I mind didn't the adventure and great unknown of the deep end; but the other kids antics were obnoxious. Somehow Mrs. Susie was able to tolerate their screaming and still pay attention to me. I decided I liked her. I decided I really liked swimming.

5 years old:

The purple noodle, the ends of the arch right above the surface of the pool, was the supposedly there to help my diving technique. I didn't believe that. The noodle was annoying and disconcerting to hit while in midair. It was distracting, rough and reminded me that I was not play time yet. The only redeeming feature of the noodle was its purple color. Still, I was determined to exhibit my perfected standing pencil dive to my younger sister, who had just started swimming lessons, and my baby brother, who was watching me for the first time. My mom had told me numerous times that I needed to set a good example for my siblings because I was the oldest so I made up my mind to ace my dive. I stepped up to the edge, my small toes millimeters away from the edge, and sprung upwards, my feet pointed and my arms squeezing my ears. The water rushed up at me but there was only a tiny splash. Underwater, I grinned. I knew that the dive had been perfect.

6 years old:

This new pool was huge, overwhelming and glowing. Dark and striking, the domed ceiling covered that this indoor pool seemed to make everything seem larger. The blue and yellow lane lines twirled around in sync with the passing swimmers. The other swimmers were humongous and powerful, their broad shoulders and dark goggles imposing and unfriendly. They swam so fast and effortlessly, I would have believed they were part frog. In the very back corner of the deck a small group of kids around my age clutched their colorful goggles and polyester caps. I walked over and started talking to the girl with the bright pink cap and braces laced with blue rubber bands, Maggie. The coach came over introduced herself and playfully threw us into the pool welcoming us to BEST. I knew I was at the right place.

7 years old:

Zhou, my new swim coach, concentrated on my technique as I raced down the lane, finishing the day's practice. The focus on breaststroke irked me to no end. I hated the finesse and emphasis on technique that breaststroke demand. I would rather power through butterfly and propel through backstroke. The whistle concluded practice and I started to climb out of the pool. Zhou barked at me in half English, half Mandarin commanding me to wait. Indicating that I needed to work on my breaststroke kick, I started to swim a lap. He shook his head and then climbed down into the pool to show me the proper technique. Frustrated, I only half heartedly tried to imitate his motions. He shook his head and patiently told me to try again. I grabbed hold of the wall and started repeating the motions. I kept working and making adjustments but I knew it wasn't right. Zhou just waited patiently for at least an hour. Suddenly it all clicked; I knew what to do. Zhou beamed and I grinned back.

8 years old

Powering through the water, I struggled to avoid the dreaded foot tap of the swimmer behind me. I always wanted to be the first in my lane. My best friend Maggie always wanted to be first too, but I would never let her beat me in a swim set. Never. I executed a flawless flip turn and propelled myself back to the starting blocks. The back of my hand smacked the tile as I raced to finish. Maggie was just a second behind me, peeved that I had beaten her again. I scooted over to let the other swimmers touch the wall and waited for the first set. Zhou motioned for me to come out of the pool and talked to him. I deciphered that he wanted me to move into the older swimmers lane for those who were ten and eleven. I balked and ran upstairs to change and go home. I didn't want to give up my number one spot and not talk to Maggie. The older swimmers also were scary. There was no way I could beat them. My mother came into the locker room and finally convinced me to give it a try. With renewed determination, I walked back down to the pool. I looked at Zhou and jumped into the older lane. He nodded in approval. I took a deep breath and went to the back of the line. I struggled to keep up with the older guys, but I passed one of them. Elated, I knew that I could eventually win the number one spot.

9 years:

I had easily qualified for Regionals, , in four events: 200 IM, 100 freestyle, 200 freestyle, and 100 fly. I was the only one in my age group to go to this prestigious meet. In Boise, Idaho, the Olympic sized pool was daunting, twice the size as the pool I normally swam in. I changed into my BEST swimsuit and wrote my events and heats in sharpie on the inside of my left arm. Patiently, I waited for the announcer to call for my event. I stepped up to the starting blocks, felt the ridged surface and channeled the roar of the thousands of people in the complex. The on-your-marks sound buzzed, the gun fired and I sprang into the water for the 100 meter fly. I flew through the water, fueled by the energy of the crowd. My hand smashed into the timing board and I took my goggles off, panting. The scoreboard showed my time, my

personal best, first in my heat, fourth overall and .01 seconds from qualifying for Nationals in South Carolina. I climbed out of the water and moved on.