

Changing a “No” to a “Yes”

Leia Wilson

8th Grade

Central Middle School

Perseverance... “steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.” Dot Braden from the book *Code Girls* by Liza Mundy at first did not have the fairest life. Dot lived in Virginia where money was hard to come by during World War II. She worked as a teacher and barely got paid at “\$900 a year, or about \$5 a day” (Mundy 36). Dot considered herself a very smart young lady but clearly, her job did not allow her to reach her full potential, making her not like the job she had. Taking those reasons into account, once another job opened up in Washington, Dot blindly took it. Now she worked in a more challenging field trying to crack codes that foretold the whereabouts of the Japanese army troops. Even though this new job required a genius, Dot was still able to enjoy it far more than her old teaching position. My math experience between fifth and sixth grade reminds me of Dot’s transition and perseverance.

Even though I was always a strong math student, coming out of fifth grade I was placed into regular math. It was all decided on one test that the entire grade took at the end of my last year of Cos Cob Elementary School. Based on how well you performed in the test, you were put into a middle school math class. The test was long and ended up getting very challenging towards the end. To pass this test, I had to remember pretty much every math skill I had ever learned. After I was done with the test, I was pretty confident that I had done well. However, weeks later when we actually got the test scores back, I was surprised to see that I was placed in the regular math class. All of my friends had been placed into the advanced class. To me, this made the advanced class seem grade level and my class seem like extra help and below grade level. Thinking about

being in the on-grade level class upset me. I felt like I would not be able to challenge myself and that the town was holding me back. It reminded me of how Dot was “persistent and tenacious by nature, she was resolved to do her job come hell or high water” and would not let anything hold her back (Mundy 37).

The day that I received my math placement results back, I went home to talk it over with my parents. We were able to come up with a solution. My parents found out about a town summer math camp which would run every weekday for a couple of hours. The math course was called “Math 6A Bridge”. I would be learning math and taking a test at the end of every week to see how I was doing. Then at the end of the summer, I would take one final placement test that would override my school test scores and allow me to get into the advanced math class in middle school. The one downfall about this plan was that while my friends were going on vacations and to fun summer camps, I was stuck inside doing math. However, I had the perseverance like Dot to stick with it and challenge myself, so I knew that I could last until the end of the summer.

The summer camp took place in Central Middle School which is where I just so happened to be starting school that September. In the camp, the majority of the kids in the camp were going to Eastern Middle School. In fact, I was the only girl there that was going to go to Central. Being the only Central girl gave me a big motivation to try really hard in the camp. Sometimes people think that those from Eastern are harder working and/or smarter so I wanted to represent Central girls well. The new material that we were learning at the camp was not too difficult and I was able to catch on pretty quickly. The weekly tests occurred and I was able to ace them all. The confidence I got from those good scores helped push me through the camp until the final test.

When the study guide for the final test was handed out, I studied a lot - even after camp hours at home. I went over old assignments and homework to help me prepare for the big test. However, I was still nervous on the day of the test. Even though I was pretty confident that I would do well on the test because I studied so hard, I still had occasional butterflies walking into camp that day. Fortunately for me, the test seemed to go well and I knew my extra studying had paid off. But now I had to go into camp again the next day with my parents to find out what grade I received on the test. We walked into the quiet classroom and sat down at the table with my teacher. At this point, I was so nervous I could pass out. *If I don't pass this test, then that means the school test was right about me not being smart enough to go into the advanced class*, I thought as my teacher began to talk.

When I found out that I received an "A" and had now been placed in advanced math, it made me feel so confident. All of my hard work throughout the summer was worth it. I had known that I would be missing out on going on summer vacations and fun camps with my friends, but I still persevered like Dot Braden from *Code Girls*. Dot thought "it was the most exciting job in the place" which was how I felt when I got into the advanced class (Mundy 220). Even though the majority of people back in World War II thought men were better than women, Dot was able to use her brains to show them and prove to them how smart she really was. And when I passed the math test at the end of the summer, I felt like I had beaten the town.