



"Browderized"
By: Chesnea Skeen

It all began the summer before my freshman year at Sullivan South High School. Our schedules for the next two semesters were sent in the mail, and as the typical freshman, I was concerned about my schedule and how my teachers would be. I asked my older sister, who had gone to South before, if she knew any of the teachers on my schedule. "What about Mrs. Browder?" I asked, looking down at the Honors Algebra I and Honors Algebra II blocks. I looked up to find my sister's pitiful expression. "Oh, Browder?" My sibling began. "Good luck. She's probably the toughest teacher in the math department." She said something along those lines, and continued to give examples of her horrors. All I could envision was a cruel, nasty looking teacher, snapping at me, as I gulped and gripped my paper. "Change classes, I'd say." I had no idea what was to come.

Luckily, I was pretty certain of what I wanted, as fearful-freshman version of me walked through the school doors on the first half-day of the year. I knew I wanted the best possible, to be the most prepared for the college classes to come; I'd take geometry, calculus and even trigonometry, so of course I'd need the strong foundation of Honors Algebra. Frantically walking the halls to find my second period class, I saw the 'toughest teacher in the math department' as I cautiously entered her classroom. Repetitive designs covered the walls, and a desk covered with papers sat in the back near the middle, student desks in full attention to it. Taking my seat, my heart raced as I prepared to decide: change classes, or stick to it?

Silence was broken in the August morning, as the infamous Sharon Browder introduced herself, what we'd be doing, her rules and the usual first-day routine. Then, life altering words rang in my ears. "This class will be rigorous. You'll have homework every night." She continued, saying things about two different lessons a day, and how hardly any time is left to do work in class. There would be two projects a semester, judged harshly but fairly. I was terrified. "You have two days to change classes. If not, you're stuck in here until the end of the semester. I've had many students come to me and thank me for preparing them for college, and I assure you, if you stay with me, you will be prepared." That was it. The key words I needed to hear; prepare for college. I was decided then and there. Browder it was. No matter how difficult or challenging, it was just as preparing.

As the two opportune days passed, despite my mother's pleas to drop it, I stayed. I knew I would miss a lot due to health issues, and the work afterwards would only encourage me to stay home. Mrs. Browder stuck to her word; homework every night. An average of two lessons was taught in the span of my second period class. I'd do my algebra homework at lunch and free time between classes. As expected, some things I didn't understand. I was afraid to ask questions, and the legend of Browder struck fear in our hearts those first few months. Many days, I would find myself questioning why I stayed or consider giving up on maintaining an A. Soon enough though, we all as a class grew on her. Statuses of "doing Browder homework" covered Facebook walls. Conversations about understanding new things, or that hard test, or if you had finished your weekly review paper occurred between those that had her. We became the "Browder Kids."

Despite the nights up until midnight doing assignments, arguing over individual as well as group projects, many questions that begged to be asked, and the "oh my gosh, I hate this class" moments Mrs. Browder warned us about, I made it out alive. Despite being absent a good ten days, and missing an accumulated week or two of snow days, we got almost every chapter in by the end of May. I can proudly say I'm a Browder Kid. I can proudly say the 3 nights the entire year that we had no homework I didn't know what to do with myself. I dreamed of equations in my sleep. I enjoyed certain chapters as I found thrill in the puzzle and understanding all of it.

I came out of the toughest teacher in the math department's class every day, sometimes with a grimace, other times with a big smile. I knew where I was going. Most of us did, now. I felt I knew my algebra probably better than anybody in the school, spare of course my fellow Browder companions. The last day of school, I gave a hug to all of my teachers. I told Mrs. Browder I would see her around, and make sure to smile and wave in the halls. Many people had the wrong idea about Mrs. Browder, or if they previously had her, they didn't get out of it what I did. I understand how much curriculum she needed to teach in such a short time, and why she drilled every equation and method into our skulls, and why we had to go over two lessons a day. I found out, it wasn't nearly as bad as my sister had made it seem. We had our laughs as a class, teacher and student, and times we struggled on a few lessons. Through all of it, Mrs. Browder never gave up on her Honors class, always reassuring us and pushing us forward, rewarding us where it was due.

Mrs. Browder, you always had students from way back, even college students, come in during class to ask for recommendations and hugs. You always received thanks, and

always said we would thank you one day for drilling us like you did, for preparing us like no other teacher. I would like to say right now, thank you, and I can look forward to college and life past that feeling able. You have Browderized me for the better, and all my colleges.

Thank you again.



Principal Greg Harvey, Dan Tollett, Chesnea Skeen, Susan Browder