

Throughout my life, I've always had the belief that I must be "good enough," as if I must be perfect to fulfill the expectations I put on myself. During elementary school, I would constantly put pressure on myself to never "mess up." Sometimes I would go the whole day without talking because I thought, "if I don't talk, I can't mess up." If I ever got lower than an excellent on my report card, my mind would fill with guilt and disappointment. I now realize how toxic those standards I put on myself were. These thoughts caused me to underestimate myself and limited my success. Throughout my final year of middle school, I've learned that there is much more to being successful than striving for perfection. To be successful, you have to create meaningful relationships, try new things, ask for help, and never give up.

As I reflect on my time during middle school, I've realized how much I've grown as a person this year. Being known as the "shy girl" my whole school career, was not who I wanted to be anymore. At the start of eighth grade, I began talking to new people and made amazing friends, who helped me become the confident person I'd always wanted to be. This winter, my friends joined the speech team. I would have never imagined myself doing Speech, but after lots of convincing, I joined. At the first meet, my voice was feeble. But, by the final meet, my voice filled the room. After the season, I felt so much more confident.

Two years ago, if I lost a tennis match, I would completely give up, not even thinking of asking my coaches, "how can I improve?". But, as my confidence grew, so did my sportsmanship and ability to control my mindset, instead of reacting with anger, I now take a deep breath and keep trying.

Success is measured by how much you are being your best self. For me, this has meant amazing friends, gaining confidence, and never giving up. I believe I found my definition of success.