Charlotte Hawkins Brown was born on June 11, 1883 in Henderson, North Carolina. She was the granddaughter of a slave. She moved to Massachusetts to receive an education. While there she met Alice Freeman Palmer- who was the second president of Wellesley College, while babysitting. After meeting Mrs. Palmer, she became a mentor to Mrs. Brown to help her advance her education. She attended a junior college known as Salem Normal School. After she finished school she went back to the South to help in her local communities. While in the south the American Missionary Association offered her a teaching position at their school. In 1901 she taught the community and helped with writing letters. After awhile the school was in a struggle, so the American Missionary Association decided to shut it down. Once her school was shut down she began to raise funds for her dream school.

Charlotte Hawkins Brown started with a small church school with only two teachers. After pursuing her dream, she was able to transform the church school into a finishing school for sons and daughters of the black upper middle class. Mrs. Brown and her committee reached out to the American Missionary Association after the kitchen caught on fire in 1924, but they politely declined. Even though they declined she and her staff was able to find help to help rebuild the school. Today the building now has 14 model buildings and three hundred and fifty acres. After her success of her school she had been placed in charge to train black youth in the skills of artisan- which is a skill trade, she was also responsible to help the students contribute to the best citizenship of their communities. In the 1920’s she spoke out about the Jim Crow Laws- which treated African Americans as less than Caucasians and denied them of their rights. In the
1940’s she became a popular lecturer and speaker. After working with the school for 50 years she retired in 1952. After retiring she died nine years later on January 11, 1961.

I found Charlotte Hawkins Brown the most interesting because her small church school reminded me of my elementary church school and reminded me of how these schools can have great impact to children’s pursuit of education. In Fort Wayne, Indiana I attended Timothy L. Johnson for elementary school and for church on Sundays. This little school was home to me because it brought me closer to God and helped me receive my education I was grateful to the faculty. The school shaped my childhood growing up. When I was reading the article “We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: Black Women School Founders and Their Mission” written by Audrey T. McCluskey, I came across Mrs. Brown. I learned that she started a church school and I thought about how she impacted children’s lives just like I was impacted after attending Timothy L. Johnson. I think church school faculty members have a deeper connection for their students which I think also improves the children’s ability to learn which is why I chose Charlotte Hawkins Brown.

I think Charlotte Hawkins Brown’s school would have only lasted for a short period of time today unless she decided to expand to a wider diverse audience of student’s outside of black communities. For example, my elementary school was close to being shut down because they had lack of funding from the community, so they also had to expand to a more diverse audience. While reading I learned that during her time it was harder for black communities because the government wouldn’t provide for their community, so they had to help their own community. Even though she helped her own community during this time I think going outside the black community would create more funding for the school which would keep the school running for a longer time. If she would do this during this time period she could expand her buildings so that
she could create and provide other schools and create a better reputation for her school and she could potentially receive government funding.