I once faced a formidable challenge during my participation in the ARML (American Regions Mathematics League) competition. The competition involved grouping six individuals to tackle a series of questions, where each answer played a crucial role in determining the conditions for the subsequent questions. The two series of questions, A and B, presented distinct challenges. Series A comprised traditional mathematical problems, demanding extensive calculations and application of mathematical tricks, while Series B focused on innovative questions, drawing from patterns identified in past years' questions.

Our team, with a solid foundation in conventional mathematics, opted for Series A due to the time constraints and the risk associated with venturing into unfamiliar territory. Initially, the match progressed smoothly. However, the turning point arrived with the third question, a perplexing combination of geometry involving a circle and an inscribed square, quadratic functions, and calculus. With only eight minutes allotted for six questions, panic set in as two minutes had already elapsed, and we remained clueless about the third question.

The pressure intensified as beads of sweat dripped down our foreheads. As the team leader, all eyes turned to me for guidance. Faced with a critical decision — persist with the current challenging question or risk switching to Series B, despite the possibility of running out of time — I felt the weight of the team's fate on my shoulders. Examining the new definition, it appeared relatively straightforward. Remembering the proverb, "船到桥头自然直" (You will cross the bridge when you get to it), which signifies people unlocking their potential when faced with no alternative, I chose to trust in the team's abilities and potential.

"There's no time to waste; we have to try the other question," I declared, striving to maintain composure. "Emma and I will grasp the new definition, while Luna and Hellen will compile the formulas. The rest of you, focus on understanding the questions." With four minutes remaining, we delved into learning the new definition. By the time three and a half minutes elapsed, the formulas were successfully listed down. The team's swift and coordinated efforts reflected our collective determination to overcome challenges and demonstrated the power of collaboration and trust in pushing the boundaries of our mathematical capabilities.

This ARML challenge cultivated resilience, collaborative problem-solving, and quick decision-making. These skills will guide me in future studies, fostering adaptability and a collaborative mindset.