

Black Horse Pike Regional School District
Spotlight on Alumni
May 2021 - TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK!
HHS Alumni

Each May, we begin the month by recognizing our Educational Superheroes. This May is no different. In a world where the words *zoom*, *hybrid*, *synchronous* and *asynchronous* have become the norm, folks throughout the district have reached out to highlight educators near and far with BHP roots. Congratulations to all of our Spotlight winners!

Dave Ritz, HHS 1996



“Dave is a 1996 graduate of Highland High School. While at Highland, Dave was an excellent student/athlete. He was a member of the football and wrestling team for four years. While he was a very good football player it was in wrestling where he excelled. A two-

time New Jersey state place winner finishing 2nd in the state in his senior year. As his coach at the time, I couldn't have been more proud of his accomplishments. In September 2004 Dave joined the teaching staff at Timber Creek High School as a special education aide. Over the past 16 years, I have formed an even greater appreciation for Dave. He is a teacher, coach and most of all, a mentor to so many students at Timber Creek. It is not unusual to see Dave tutoring students in the LMC after school, saying hi to a student who may be a bit shy, or offering guidance to other students. This is a daily occurrence and what makes him the great educator, mentor and role model he has become. A lifelong member of our community, Dave has given more than his share back and continues day in and day out.

~ Rob Milavsky, TC Vice Principal

1. Upon graduation, Dave went to Lock Haven University because he had aspirations of wrestling at a Division 1 level. After a year and a half, I got home sick and went to Gloucester County College. After receiving my associates degree, I went to Rutgers Camden to obtain my bachelor's degree in psychology.

2. When asked about changing anything if he could do it over again, Dave said, "Looking back, I would have definitely put more time into my academics. I regret not holding myself to the same standard in the classroom as I did when I was competing on the wrestling mat."
3. Currently, Dave is an Instructional Aide as well as the Freshman Football Coach, and Head Wrestling Coach at Timber Creek High School.
4. When asked on the impact the HHS/the district has made on him, Dave replied, "BHP had a huge impact on what I do now and really who I am now. I entered Highland as an insecure boy with little to no confidence. Because of the people I was fortunate to have in my life, both coaches and friends, I left a strong, confident man. My coaches inspired me so much I knew by the time I graduated that I wanted to do that same thing for others.
5. My wrestling coaches particularly **Mr. Ross and Mr. Milavsky** had a major impact on me during my time in high school. Both of them were a major part in building my confidence and made me believe I could achieve more than I ever thought. **Mr. Milavsky** was always there to give me great advice and help put things in perspective which he still does today.
6. I played football and wrestled during my 4 years at Highland. I developed great, lifelong friendships on both teams that helped shape me into the person I am today. I am proud to have surrounded myself with people that had such a great influence on me. Also, I was fortunate to be a part of 3 state championship wrestling teams during my time at Highland. That was an awesome experience that taught me hard work and dedication leads to success.
7. Favorite memories Dave? "My favorite memories are walking into opposing gyms with our state championship wrestling jackets on and everyone stopping what they were doing to watch us enter the gym. The entire team and coaching staff had a presence about them that drew the attentions of others. It was really cool to be a part that, and something I'll never forget."
8. What advice would you give our current student body? "There are two pieces of advice I would give our current student body. First is surround yourself with as many great people as possible. You'll have a better chance of success if you are around people that have similar goals and aspirations you do. Also listen to your teachers and coaches that are trying to help you gain success. Know they have your best interest in mind and are guiding you in the right direction. The second piece of advice would be join as many clubs and teams as you can while you're in high school. The window of opportunity is only four years and once the window closes it will not reopen. Memories and friendships that last a lifetime are built when you join these teams/clubs.

Elizabeth (Smith) Aston, HHS 2008



Elizabeth "Liz" Aston was a special education and Therapeutic Support Classroom teacher in North Carolina at Parkview Elementary school, and she now has a role as a Behavior Specialist for the district. She won teacher of the year for Parkview Elementary school in 2018 (she was a Therapeutic Support Classroom Teacher there), and went on to be recognized as Teacher of the year for the Mooresville Graded School district in 2018. Elizabeth is a caring teacher (and now mom) and devotes much of her time and energy to working with her students.

~ Brittany Harris, TC School Counselor

1. Upon graduation, Elizabeth attended LaSalle University, enrolled in a dual certification program (elementary and special education). She wanted to be certified to teach in both areas, so she was looking specifically for a dual certification program. LaSalle's program offered 1 full year of student teaching, and was drawn to the hands-on learning it offered.
2. Would you do anything differently as you look back? "No! Because of scholarships, I've already paid off my student loans even though I attended a private university. I'm going to begin graduate school this summer. While I wish I already completed my Master's degree, everything happens for a reason. If I had gone straight to Graduate school after undergrad, I might not be in the position I am today, so I wouldn't change anything!"
3. Today? "I'm a Behavior and Program Specialist in Mooresville, NC. I support students that exhibit challenging behaviors and support staff that work with students with challenging behaviors. I oversee a PLC (Professional Learning Community) of separate setting EC Teachers. I oversee a Therapeutic Support Classroom, a program for students with mental health diagnoses and behavioral challenges."
4. My house was zoned to attend TC, however it was new at the time I was supposed to begin there and the band program wasn't well established. I began participating in the marching band at Highland in 7th grade, so I was given permission to attend Highland (my parents provided transportation). The teamwork and discipline that marching band, jazz band, and indoor drum line taught me carries through still today! While I don't still play any instruments, the life lessons were far more important.
5. Who were some of the more influential educators during your BHP time? "**Chris Tumminia** (see above) - He is so dedicated to the students and the music programs. People outside of the band programs wouldn't know the countless hours that are spent in addition to the Mon-Fri. He demonstrated how to adapt a program to fit the strengths of the current students. He can spot not only musical talent, but also character traits (leadership, dependability, dedication) and help students develop them within

before the student even knows they exist. **Mrs. Brady** - She exudes compassion and is an expert in building relationships with her students. She is the kind of teacher that makes her students WANT to work hard because of the positive relationship she builds with them. She was ahead of her time in teaching the whole child and focusing on student Social Emotional health, before those were buzz words and before those were expectations of teachers.

6. Fond memories? "So many marching band, jazz band, and indoor drum line memories... It's impossible to pick out specific moments that had the most impact. Shockingly the wins and trophies aren't the first thing that comes to mind. The 6 years that I spent in those programs, the hours of dedication, and the leadership qualities that I learned during those programs are what have stuck with me.
7. Words of wisdom for our study body today...To quote Andy Bernard from *The Office*... "I wish there was a way to know you're in "the good old days", before you've actually left them." Cherish every moment. Don't sweat the small stuff. Spread as much kindness as you can, because that comes back to you."