

Black Horse Pike Regional School District Spotlight on Alumni – June 2021

Lindsay Steele, Timber Creek High School co 2008



Then



Now



"Lindsay graduated from Brown in 2012 where she played college basketball. This summer she completed her PhD at Drexel in Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics. She did this while receiving 2018 Dean's Fellowship for Excellence in Research Project title: "The role of mechanical cues in the functional plasticity of macrophages". She served as an instructor with the Immersion Science Program (ISP) at Fox Chase Cancer Center to train high school students in laboratory techniques. Lindsay also served on the ISP selection committee to review student applications for the research course. Lindsay also attended the ISP Career Development Symposium to support the high school students as they presented the research that they conducted in their high school science class with the ISP In-classroom training program. The symposium took place at the Franklin Institute in May 2019. Lindsay is an MCBG graduate student in the laboratory of Dr. Boris Polyak (Department of Surgery)."

~ Lisa Steele, Business Teacher, Highland Regional HS

1. AA: Upon graduation, what post-secondary path did you take and why?

Lindsay: I graduated from Brown University with bachelor's degree in Biology. After college, I worked at Brown as a research assistant in the department of Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, and Biochemistry. Eventually, I returned to Philadelphia for graduate school. I obtained a Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology and genetics in 2020 from Drexel University College of Medicine. I am currently a post-doctoral research scientist in the department of Biomedical Engineering at Drexel University. I chose a career in science because science was always my favorite subject. Like most young students, I thought if I enjoyed science, it meant I had to pursue a career as a health professional. It wasn't until my junior year of college, when I started working in a lab, that I realized how much I love research and I began to appreciate the breadth of science related careers.

2. Describe your career/profession today?

Lindsay: I am a Research Scientist in the field of tissue engineering. I study the immune response to bioengineered tissue. My work is a small part of a large field that aims to develop new therapeutic options to treat severely damaged tissues. Outside of lab, I volunteer with science outreach programs focused on middle school and high school aged students. In recent years, I volunteered with Philadelphia Area Girls Enjoying Science (PAGES) and the Immersion Science Program (ISP) at Fox Chase Cancer Center.

3. AA: Looking back, would you have done anything differently and why?

Lindsay: I would take more math and computer science classes. Math and coding can be intimidating so I avoided them. Then I was forced to learn more about these topics for my research and I realized that I enjoy them!

4. AA: What impact did your BHP high school have on your career path/profession?

***Lindsay:** Every one of my teachers had a significant impact on my development as a scientist. Every day I perform experiments and I communicate my findings with other scientists and the public. My job includes writing manuscripts and grant applications, using art programs to transform data into understandable figures, staying up to date on new research, and brainstorming interesting ways to mathematically assess data. To achieve these tasks, I rely heavily on the foundations that were established during my high school studies at Timber Creek.*

5. AA: Was/were there specific teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, secretaries, or other professionals that had a major impact on you while in school, and if so, who were those professionals and describe how they helped you along your HS journey.

***Lindsay:** My science teachers (**Mr. Zimmerman, Ms. Guida, Mrs. Lewis, Ms. Zeits, and Mr. Szuchy**) were the first scientists to inspire my career. My math teachers (**Ms. Andrews, Mrs. Vittese, Mrs. Rigney, and Mr. Golembo**) are the reason that my hair has not completely grayed from constantly learning and re-learning (...and re-learning again) mathematical concepts. My history teacher and basketball coach, **Ms. Gail Shelly**, taught me how to face tough competitors on the court and how to summon the courage to speak in public. I was a quiet student, and **Ms. Shelly** went out of her way to comment on one of my assigned presentations, "you have a nice voice, you should use it more." It is silly, but I still think of that comment whenever I get nervous before presenting at conferences. My basketball coach for junior and senior year, **Ms. Donna Clark**, helped me grow into a leadership role and take on more responsibility. The trust and encouragement I received from my coaches, and assistant coaches, was a fundamental part of my basketball journey. Playing basketball helped me learn how to take on challenges, work hard, and identify my role within the context of a team. These skills transfer nicely to the lab environment! Countless faculty and staff members at Timber Creek cheered on my accomplishments as a student-athlete and made those achievements possible. **Ms. Perez, Ms. Alacqua, and Ms. Denise Wolf** always had a compliment to share. Members of the **maintenance staff** never hesitated to let me stay late after basketball practice. Without their support, I do not know if I would have ended up on the path that lead to becoming a scientist. Lastly, even though I made it a point to stay out of the principal's office, I always knew that I had the support of my Vice Principal, **Mr. Garry Saunders**. **Mr. Saunders** is an excellent vice principal and he is beloved by his students.*

6. AA: Which school clubs, sports, activities, etc., if any, did you participate in when you attended your BHP high school? If so, were there any moments or experiences that you can recall that helped you become the person you are today?

Lindsay: I tried a few clubs in high school, but there were two activities that I participated in all four years: history club and basketball. In history club we went on exciting field trips. My freshman year, the trip was to Washington D.C. It rained on the day of our trip. Brittany Ryan and Nancy Helmy, two fellow Timber Creek alumni, and I ran around the National Mall looking at the sites and taking pictures. We were soaking wet, but we had so much fun! Brittany, Nancy, and I became lifelong friends! Brittany and Nancy are strong, intelligent women with amazing careers, and their friendship is an integral part of my life. I would not be the person I am today without them. (Fun Fact: The three of us returned to Washington D.C. the weekend after our ten-year high school reunion to retake some of those pictures!) In basketball, I was lucky to play alongside talented players and win a few conference championships. I do not remember the details of our games, but I remember the camaraderie and the excitement of working together to achieve a common goal. I think my experience in basketball is why I enjoy working as a part of a scientific research team.

7. AA: Please share any other favorite memories of the Black Horse Pike Regional School District, your HS in particular, that would inspire today's youth?

Lindsay: My favorite memories are the simple interactions that I shared with my classmates. These moments highlight the good character of my peers. I was a shy teenager, but my classmates were nice to me. Many students were outgoing and had wonderfully big personalities, yet they still took the time to be kind. In moments when I felt unsure, I found strength in their kindness. During my time at Timber Creek, I had the privilege to play basketball alongside some of the hardest working players in the area, like Erin Floyd and Jasmine Martin, that treated me with respect while providing a perfect example of how to work hard, compete, and develop new skills. Teammates, like Jessica Harrison and Jalaya Joyner, were so funny! They took the time to make me laugh, even when I tried not to laugh! My fellow teammates from the class of 2008, Tasia Farmer, Zakia Matthews, and Tiffany Jones, were a constant source of friendship that I could rely on. Basketball players that were far more talented than me, like Tyler Hines and Montez Blair, would exaggerate my basketball skills in the nicest way possible and, occasionally, greet me in the halls with excitement. These are just a few

examples (I could go on forever and name so many people), but my interactions with every teammate and classmate helped shape my high school experience and provided me with just enough confidence to show up and try my best. I hope the students today realize that it does not take much effort to have a significant impact on each other's lives. A friendly hello or a compliment can mean a lot. These small moments, whether they occur in school, during extracurricular activities, or at work, can be a source of support and encouragement that you lean on as you take the next steps towards your career.

8. What advice would you give to our current student body? What would you have done differently in high school if you could turn back time?

Lindsay:

1.) Be nice to each other. Over-hype each other's accomplishments. It makes high school fun! You may not realize it, but it will have a lasting impact on your classmates.

2.) Do not fear rejection. I have had so many applications rejected that I've lost count! Eventually, you receive enough feedback from those rejections that your applications start getting accepted.

3.) Remember that you belong. You are smart enough to achieve your goals.

4.) If you like science, consider being a scientist!

5.) Lastly, and most importantly, if you're playing basketball, do not settle for simply trying to "draw a foul." Remember to get your eyes on the basket and finish your shot! You are strong. You can get the and-one!



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Achievement is the Result!***

