

ATHS: Our First Year in Review

Applied Technology High School's (ATHS) mission is to be a full-time, four-year high school located on the Bergen County College with a focus on advanced manufacturing and engineering technology education. As founding students, we can tell you, yes, this is the mission, but our school is a whole lot more. We have experienced more than technology. We've been given state-of-the-art computers and robots to work with, but at the same time we are immersed in the literature, history and the studies of US policies in the Middle East. We were also introduced to Mandarin and the Chinese culture through the eyes of a real Chinese college professor.

On May 18th, 2015, we were formally inducted into the Applied Technology High School among our families and new teachers. It was a beautiful ceremony and reception at Bergen Community College. Our unofficial start of school was the Applied Technology Summer Program where we built our 3-D printers from scratch. We had an opportunity to meet some of the students who are going to attend the new school. On August 20th, we had our orientation and met all the students and talked about a lot of ideas and requirements.

As we started the school year, we kicked it off with a FUNtastic team building trip to Camp Getaway. On September 8, we boarded a bus for an overnight trip to Kent, Connecticut, with all the students and teachers and our brave principal. It was described as a team-building trip but it was way more than that. It was a real opportunity to really make friends with kids from other towns and get to know them better. I made a few best friends there and continue to have them. We were exposed to some of our new technology products and we were videoed by a high-tech flying drone. Our principal is the best principal on the planet. She did every activity multiple times, including the adventurous zip line. She earned and continues to have our trust. Sometimes we feel more comfortable talking to her than anyone else. We are really fortunate to have her.

When we started school, we were given a powerful i-7 Dell laptop with tons of designing software including AutoCad. We were formally introduced to all of our teachers at the same time our summer assignments were collected. We are fortunate to have an impressive group of teachers. We share some of them from the other Bergen Tech campuses. Others are university professors and longtime industry engineers and scientists. We also have a teacher who is the president of the US Drone User Group who goes to Washington DC to consult with the government. Everything in our school is brand new. We have new desks, chairs, lockers, large screens with Apple TV, and all of computers are connected. Our favorite place is the atrium where a genius bar was built for us with charging stations. It is relaxing place to hang out and talk to you friends.

We are only 31 kids in our school this year, and we get a lot individualized attention from all of our teachers. They are our educators but have become our mentors and friends as well. We really enjoy them! Some people say that we are just a tiny school, but our principal works hard to give us big school experiences. We are able to participate in all the sports where we interact with all of the other kids from the other schools. Many of us joined track, basketball, baseball, football, bowling, girls' softball and girls' basketball. We made a lot of friends from the other

campuses, and we visit each other after school and on the weekends. We are so welcomed on the other campuses that we even get our own lockers for our sports equipment.

On October 23, we had a marvelous Homecoming dance at BCA. It included all the kids from each of the schools, and it was blast. The kids from ATHS met all of their friends from BCA, BT and Paramus. It was remarkable how the school had many food truck vendors stationed throughout. There was every kind of food you wanted. There was a live DJ playing great music, and we danced all night. That evening we felt that we were part of a bigger family when we were all together.

We are a special program that our school has industry partners that sponsor us. On October 27, we had a kick-off trip up to Stryker Orthopedics to talk about an engineering project dubbed "Rover Design Project, where we met with Director of Engineering and his project managers about our project and toured the facility seeing all the high tech robotics.

We also get involved with the community. Right before the winter break, we visited a day care at the college. We went to entertain the little kids by playing and reading to them. We also helped them decorate ginger bread cookies with different themed color icings. We also found modeling clay and started making Frisbees and little bouncy balls with them. It was a lot of fun just playing around with them because it reminded us of when we were little.

Our principal makes us feel included and involved within our school. She trusted and invited us to participate in three Open Houses to the prospective students coming to school next year. We were also given the opportunity to MC the event which some of us did. Many others were involved in touring the interested students and parents around. On all three days we had three groups of our students touring all the visitors. We all did a great job and made her proud of us.

Again, on February 1st, there was a follow-up visit from the engineers of our industry partner Stryker to observe the first completed semester engineering workshop projects. We were tasked to build a 6-wheeled, skid steer rover as well as designing and producing a mounting fixture for a board camera and 5.8 GHz analog video transmitter that would allow remote operation of the rover. We presented our project work and demonstrated the rover.

On February 24, our principal celebrated 18 students with a special breakfast for the ones who made the Honor Roll. It made us feel so special and recognized.

On Sunday, March 6, we were invited to participate in a big event at the Liberty Science Center called "The Day of the Drones." As mentioned earlier, we are lucky to have the president of the Drone Users Group Network as our teacher. It was packed with thousands of kids and parents throughout the building. There were many demonstrations of drones both purchased and homebuilt. There were incredible races going on, and we had the opportunity to put the goggles on to see the actual race through the camera of the drones as we do with our Rover but much faster. Also, the event had the New York Film Drone Festival showing how drones have been used in videos from all over the world.

On March 24th, ATHS was invited to participate at Bergen Academies Freshman and Sophomore Dance at Powerhouse in Paramus. We felt special because we were the only school invited to their event. It made us feel included in the big family of schools. The party was fantastic and a lot of fun. The Powerhouse Studios is interactive catering hall that has different Hollywood-themed environments. There was something for everyone. There were a lot of video games, game shows and many props to see throughout the place. We again met many of our friends whom we play sports with, and they introduced us to their friends too. We felt that we made a lot of new friends there too. This party had a lot of energy. All the kids were really nice and welcoming. The best part was all the dancing that we did. We never got off the dance floor. On behalf our ATHS, we would like to say thank-you to our BCA brothers and sisters.

At the end of May, we had art festival at the college. There were many schools that participated from all over Bergen County. There were schools from as far up as Northern Valley and schools as far south as Rutherford. We all came together at the college to look at other people's artwork. There were many different art forms from drawing to singing. There were many different sections throughout the campus including dancing, singing, and visual art. It was a lot of fun having the freedom to walk around the college. This was a highlight of the year too.

On June 7, 2016, we had field study trip and our teachers took us to the Mahwah Environmental Organization to participate in a service project where we learn a little bit about farming and beekeeping. It was a raining and very muddy day and there were a lot of bugs all around. Although our instincts came into play, the volunteer told us not to kill the bugs. Boy, we learned a lot and had fun too.

To wrap up, I have to say that we have done so much throughout the year. Like every other school, we had the core curriculum subjects, but we also had an opportunity to build rovers, fly a professional flight simulator, work with industry engineers, get involved in the arts and take classes with college professors every day. We were also given the opportunity to play sports with Bergen Academies, Bergen Tech and Paramus. There is nothing more to ask for, but to say thank-you for the opportunity to be part of this special program.