

Dr. David “D” Smith – 2014 Distinguished Service Award

David Smith is a noted author, public speaker and historian. He frequently addresses groups and conferences about the Civil War and publishes a blog about current events putting them in historical perspective. However, above all, David is known and honored for his passion for history, teaching and his commitment to the students he teaches. David, known to his students as “D” Smith, is considered the best of the best of teachers at Highland Park High School. He was born and raised in Nacogdoches, Texas. He received his Bachelor’s degree from Baylor in 1971, his M.A. and M. of Education from Stephen F. Austin and his Ph.D. in History from North Texas in 1987. He began teaching in Highland Park in August of 1975 and continued until his retirement in May of 2002. During his time at HPHS he taught A.P. US History, A.P. European History, A.P. Government as well as 8th grade social studies and history.

David made history come alive for his students. Using interesting stories, anecdotes and simulations he helped students to feel as if they were actually a part of historical events, not just reading about them. According to a recollection from Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America “I have never...not in high school or even in college at Princeton – been so completely immersed in history...His smile, warmth, understanding and pushing helped shape so many of us...it is stunning to step back and reflect on how many students he impacted over time”. David cared not only for the education of his students, but also for the students themselves. He pushed them academically while always encouraging and mentoring in the process. Students say they wanted to do their best **for** him because he gave his very best **to** them. For several summers, groups of lucky students accompanied David on a trip to experience firsthand many of the historic sites in Europe.

Upon his retirement, a group of students and their parents paid a special tribute to David Smith by establishing a scholarship honoring him for all that he meant to Highland Park High School and its students.