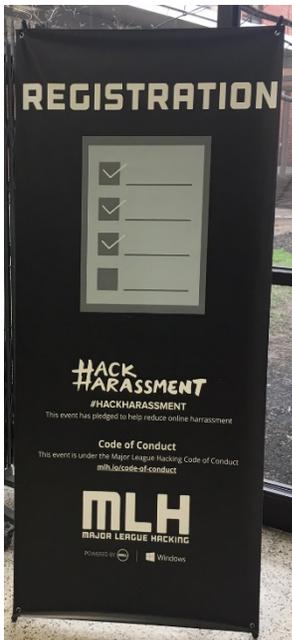# hackBCA IV March 25-26, 2017

By Howell John Núñez ATHS 2019

The ATHS students of the networking class had an incredible opportunity to participate in Bergen Academies' **hackBCA IV** this weekend. What an amazing event and we survived. It was a 24-hour overnight marathon and competition to develop new codes, apps or games. There were 500 kids from all over New Jersey within a 1-hour driving distance that participated free of charge.

Our group got in early so we strategically placed ourselves by all the power outlets. It was remarkable how many people brought in desktop computers and servers for the competition. There were real heavy-duty student programmers participating and many kids that were new to programming too.

The day started at 10 AM on Saturday for all of us to register, following was the opening ceremony. There were some industry leaders talking about programming, independent summer schools that teach coding and the general opportunities that are out there. Mike Swift who is the CEO and cofounder of MLH (Major League Hacking) was inspirational. He talked about his aspirations to become a lawyer until he attended a hacking conference and it changed his life. He discovered that his passion was in coding and programming.

After the opening ceremony, we were treated to an Italian feast of Alfredo pasta. During lunch, our group talked about what we wanted to do for our hack. We decided we wanted to create a game. What is great about this event is even if you know nothing about programming a game, you could take an instantaneous programming course in one of the classrooms. We took a coding course called "Unity" to help us program our game. With that newfound knowledge, we started creating a game about a ball not falling off the map. It was a lot of fun; however, it took a lot of time to program it. It was not something quick to do.

To our surprise, our principal Ms. Sheridan came to visit and support us. We were so thrilled to see her. She spent a few hours with us treating us like VIPs. She gave us a thorough tour of Bergen
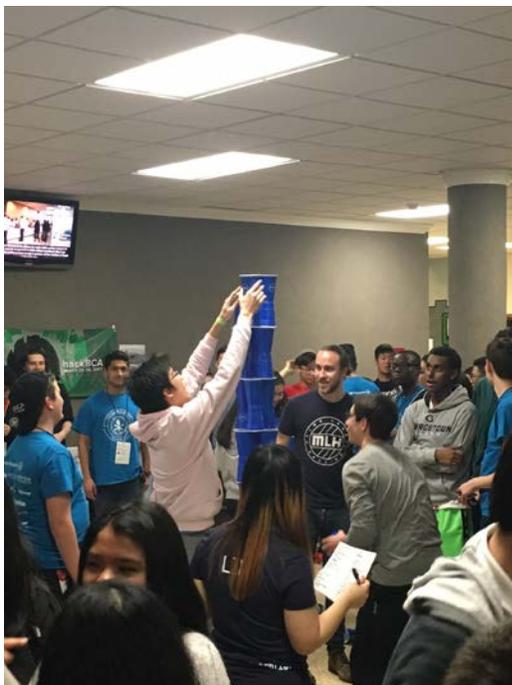
Academies lead by Mr. Hayward. It was remarkable to see all of the resources and equipment the kids at BCA have at their disposal. Some of them were more elaborate than we have at BCC. We saw waterjet cutters, fancy CNC equipment, elaborate microscopes and sophisticated 3-D printers. This again reinforced how lucky we are to be part of this school district because we interact with the whole school system.

When we got back to the programming, we were again treated to a massive dinner. There were burritos galore all over the place and I have to say we took advantage of it. After dinner, we continued programming our game. It was wonderful to see how dedicated all these kids were with their specific hack. People were working diligently and helping each other out. There were many teams and individuals working on their specific project.

At 10 o'clock, we were treated to ice cream as a breather from the programming. Around 11 PM was one of the highlights, we had a Plastic Cup Stacking Competition. We were given plastic drinking cups to stack high. Our group was able to stack them real high. Andrew and Michael stabilized the cups while Devin got onto my shoulders and we were able to stack them super high. We came in third place representing the students of ATHS for the first time. This was a blast to do with our team. Unbelievably, we were fed again around midnight with pizza. If you do not come for the programming, you should just come for all the free food; that was incredible. We continued programming through the night. We took a break to take a nap. The next morning were the final submissions and the winners for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place were selected. Our parents picked us up after 9 AM.

In closing, this was a memorable event that we will cherish for years to come. We learned a lot about programming, teamwork and people's passion for technology. Our teacher said, "you either need to get on the technology bus or you're going to get run over." We would like to thank Mr. Weaver for this invitation and inspiration. We look forward to doing it again next year. We would also like to recommend that next year's **hackBCA V** should be offered to all the kids at ATHS since we are a small group. We think that most students will get a lot out of it.

Again, our group wants to say thank you for this opportunity.