

On March 28 students from all over the country converged upon the Bergen County Academy's High School in Hackensack New Jersey to compete in a 24-hour(3pm-3pm) hackathon. Amongst the attendees were 10 students from Cranford High School; Austin Brogan, Olivia Davis, Connor Martini, Mark Koellmann, Amelia Templeton, Ezra Lee, Nick Sweeney, Jake Zhou, John Ross, and Charlie Harder. A hackathon is an event in which teams spend a large amount of time creating "hacks" which they then show off in a judged competition. This years event, known as hackBCA is now in its second year. It provides students interested in the areas of computer science and technology a place to create what they called a "hack" or a project of some kind. The students attending HackBCA work in teams to create a "hack" within the 24-hour time limit in the hopes of being awarded one of several prizes. At this year's hackathon hacks consisted mostly of computer programs, applications or website development however some attendees created games for the Oculus rift or used Intel's Edison kit.HackBCA is open to all high school students regardless of technical experience and offers many workshops to assist students in developing their programing and technological skills. The CHS team of students attending this year split up into two smaller groups to work on different projects. Amelia and Mark's team developed an online Eco footprint calculator while Charlie and John's team created a website to match online gamers with other players of the same skill level. Following their intense 24-hour experience CHS students had this to say:



*"This was my second time going to a hackBCA. This meant that I had expectations going in. Nothing really changed except for some different sponsors and food plans. Overall, it was another beneficial experience filled with learning, networking and teamwork."*

*-Mark Koellmann*

*"My expectations were of 24 hours of pure work and the team dividing one large tasks into smaller components to create something grand. Instead, the teams divided into two major sections each with their own project and different people doing what they can to help out. I feel that this approach was much better because instead of just a normal academic project, the experience was more of a team building exercise that would also teach me about JavaScript and other cool things. It was more of a learning project than something that would be assigned for a class. I feel like I got to explore more of what*

*Computer Science is used for in the world, it's not just 2D code on a screen but actually programs that affect the lives of people in the world. I also spent the time working on learning some of JavaScript and further worked on Web Design. When I go again, I would visit more workshops and try to work in smaller groups with a more thorough plan before going.”*

-Jake Zhou

*“I thought I would stay up late writing code and I did. I learned JavaScript then wrote some code with it for our project that did not get used, but hey I learned JavaScript. I would totes go again but this time with an idea ahead of time.”*

-Olivia Davis

*“I was expecting to sitting in front of my computer for 24 straight hours doing nothing but pumping out code. It was better than what I expected. There were plenty of informative little seminars to attend of different topics. There was a Super Smash Bros tournament and all sorts of other things to do if you needed a break from what you were doing. I worked with my friends to program an Intel Edison to use bluetooth to do all sorts of stuff. I learned a lot about working as a team and as an individual because there were certain things I needed to do in order to help the group project. I would absolutely go again, but next time I would go to more of the informational sessions/seminars. Many of them seemed very interesting, but I initially felt I hardly had any time to work on my project.”*

-John Ross

*Overall both projects came out very well and although we did not win any awards this year we were all happy with how the hacks turned out. All of us learned a lot from the experience and are better at project management as a result. I was one of the few people in our group who knew PHP so I ended up doing tons of coding for Charlie and John's project. Although it was interesting and a very good learning experience, it was also very challenging. My only regret is that we expended too much time trying to get Intel's Edison board to work. Although it was fascinating exploring this device, our end result didn't turn out as expected. I attended the first HackBCA last year hence I had a very good idea of what to expect. In comparison this year's event was run much better because the staff were better prepared and more efficiently managed the time frames. Last year we were stuck watching groups present until almost 5:00. This year the flow was much improved and although they ran out of Chipotle I was very glad I went.*

-Austin Brogan