



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Bergen County Technical Schools was recently asked to contribute an article for the spring issue of "Discover Bergen County." In the article we highlight the many partnerships the district has forged between postsecondary institutions, businesses, community organizations, and government agencies. These partnerships benefit our students by providing opportunities to connect the academic and technical knowledge they acquire in school with real-world applications.

For BCA, we chose the wonderful project that Mr. Lang has piloted for the past five years. Please see the write-up below, and look on our website in a few weeks for a link to the full article.

Students at the Bergen County Academies partnered with the National Park Service in school year 2012-2013 to begin construction of a Virtual Reality experience for the National Parks Service at Ellis Island. This project spawned an entirely new course called "Interactive Design" created and lead by teacher Scott Lang, which is now in its fifth year. This elective class is open to students from all academy programs.

Using the Registry Room at Ellis Island as the setting, students employed state-of-the-art Virtual Reality equipment and game development software to create a 3D model of this space. The result is an experience that provides users with full 360 degree views of the Registry Room the way it appeared between the years 1918-1924. As technology has evolved so has this project. Now, participants cannot only see Ellis Island the way that it once appeared, but they can also "relive" the immigrant experience and interact with people in this world. The current implementation of this project uses the HTC Vive to take visitors back in time.

The process to develop such an immersive experience required students to collaborate and organize themselves within their team, present in person to National Parks Service staff, adjust the project based on feedback, and of course problem solve. All the while the students were applying their knowledge of History, Physics, Art, Computer Science, and Storytelling. An authentic project such as this is truly rare to come by. Thanks to the support, time, and resources provided by the National Parks Service, the students of the Bergen County Academies were able to create an experience that proudly stands next to products created by commercial design houses.

Sincerely,

Howard Lerner, Ed.D.