



# North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District

*“Providing Success for All Students”*

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## **VOORHEES STUDENT TREATED TO SURPRISE WEBCAM INTERVIEW WITH FORD MUSTANG CHIEF ENGINEER DURING CLASS**

As part of an assignment in his Advanced Academic Literacies (AAL) class at Voorhees High School with teacher Sarah Hall, freshman Avery Van Hassel of High Bridge was asked to choose a career field, research the steps and skills necessary for the career, and then write a letter to a professional in that field. Avery chose Automotive Engineer and chose to write his letter to Mr. Dave Pericak, the Chief Engineer of the Ford Mustang, after reading that his dream was to own a Mustang and now he is in charge of designing the iconic muscle car. To Avery's disappointment, Mr. Pericak did not write back right away. Instead Mr. Pericak took a different route. He contacted Principal Dave Steffan and set up a surprise Skype session with Avery during his AAL class on November 2. Avery was in shock at the surprise and his response to meeting Mr. Pericak through the web was "Oh my god, this is great!"

Mr. Pericak said Avery's letter "really resonated with him" as Avery shows the same passion as he has for cars and he felt a letter in return was not enough. Avery, coincidentally wearing a Ford Mustang T-Shirt, sat down and asked Mr. Pericak the questions he posed in his letter, such as how did you get to where you are today, what's it like to have the job you do, whether he had been designing cars since he was young, and how do you deal with conflicting opinions about the design of the car. Mr. Pericak told Avery and the entire class that to succeed and do what you love you need to gain the "necessary education, have tenacity, do not let go of what you want, and follow your dream." Pericak said he loves his job and the chance to interact with "the thousands of engineers it takes to create one car." He also reminded students that "conflict of opinions can lead to great creative ideas" so learn how to break down the variety of opinions and concentrate on a couple. He also added that he has been drawing cars and working on them with his father since he was very young.

In closing, Mr. Pericak told Avery to stay in touch as the Ford company offers summer internship programs in the engineering field. Avery should also expect a Ford Mustang care package to arrive soon. More about Dave Pericak can be found at this website:

[https://media.ford.com/article\\_display.cfm?article\\_id=31641](https://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=31641).

Other students in Avery's class have had success receiving responses from the professionals they wrote to, though none have had the same opportunity of speaking with the person face to face. So far, students have heard back from employees at the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, United States Army, NJ State Department of Children and Families, Walters Art Museum, an archeologist working at the University of West Virginia, and a screenplay writer who worked on scripts for *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* TV series.