

Burlington County Special Services School District gets assistance from Milo the robot

By [Lisa Ryan](#)

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For teachers and students in the Burlington County Special Services School District, a robot named Milo is providing a new and so far effective supplement to classwork for students with autism.

WESTAMPTON — Milo the Robot talks and moves like a childrens' toy would, but he is more than just a gadget.

For teachers and students in the Burlington County Special Services School District, Milo provides a new and so far effective supplement to classwork.

The robot, developed by Robokind's [Robots4Autism](#) initiative and distributed by [TechXTend](#), first came to Superintendent Christopher Nagy at an education conference. After seeing the robot's potential to help students with autism learn, Nagy proposed that his district — which has over 300 students with autism — would be able to provide feedback on how Milo worked in a classroom.

TechXTend agreed, donating one Milo robot to the district last month. Each of the robots can work with 12 students total.

"We're quite excited about it ..." Nagy said. "It just offers a whole different way of communication to (students with autism) and can help them meet their goals, be it socially, academically, or emotionally."

Milo is equipped with moving facial features and limbs, can speak to students, and displays content on a screen built into his chest. Although Milo is artificially intelligent, data is collected by linked iPad programs. The programs allow students to answer questions, and allow teachers to decide based on a student's work with Milo whether the robot should repeat a request or lesson, among other things.

After lessons, teachers can analyze the data to determine how well students are applying concepts they learned in class, such as emotional expression or social interaction, said the district's Supervisor of Education Adell Valasek.

Milo is a supplement for in-class lessons, rather than a replacement, Valasek said. Milo's demonstrations and follow-the-leader style games are just one tool educators can use to emphasize and analyze lessons.

Nagy believes Milo will make a positive impact.

"First and foremost, its novelty is going to be attractive for students," he said. "Second, it is a true artificial intelligence opportunity for us to engage in. Third, based on the latest technology and (company software), it's an opportunity to expand our communication with students."

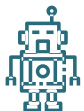
WORKING WITH MILO

Milo the Robot is an interactive educational tool for students with autism. At the Burlington County Special Services School District this summer, a handful of students will kick off the district's work with the teaching tool.



2

The number of classes that will work with Milo this summer.



12

The number of students one "Milo" educational robot can accommodate.



90

The number of minutes each student will work with Milo each week this summer.

Source: The Burlington County Special Services School District

Eighth-grader William Suto, who worked with Milo last week, normally has trouble making eye contact, according to Valasek. She said she saw a major achievement in his work with Milo by making more eye contact than usual as he worked on identifying emotions and corresponding facial expressions.

Milo is still new to the district, and was just introduced to students July 2. As of right now, one first- to third-grade class and one middle school class will work with him during the district's summer program, with each student playing with Milo for 30 minutes, three times each week.

Valasek hopes that having an interest in Milo will help students learn class concepts more quickly, allowing them to progress to new topics. So far, the kids' responses to the robot have been positive.

"What we've seen is students — their faces light up," said Valasek.