

Heroes in the Classroom:

A VizZle Value Report from New York City

Featured District:



New York City Department of Education District 75

School: P.233Q

Deputy Superintendent:

Barbara Joseph

Principal: Debbie Edmonds

Assistant Principals:

Elizabeth DeFrancisco, Kathy Sanchez, Terri Nogol, Bruce Elfant

VizZle: in 120 classrooms

Students served: 409

Needs:

- Supplemental resource to support curriculum
- Visual learning lessons to support best practices for autism
- Student progress data to support data-driven decision making
- Tools and lessons to support student communication

Solution:

- VizZle visual lessons personalized to meet specific student needs
- VizZle data collection for IEP goals
- VizZle game format activities to engage multiple students



New York City/La Ciudad de Nueva York

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New York City DOE District 75 is the largest urban public school district for students with severe disabilities in the world. District 75 educates over 22,000 low incidence students ages 3-21. These special students attend school at one of 320 sites across 58 school locations in the five boroughs of NYC, with a staff of over 13,000. Of these 22,000 students, 6,500 are on the autism spectrum.

Deputy Superintendent Barbara Joseph has a straightforward philosophy when it comes to educating students in District 75. She says, "It's about breaking the barriers between special education and general education."

Programs for D75 students are designed with a cohesive, standards-based curriculum that supports both literacy and math skills across all content areas using thematic, multisensory, and project based activities. Instruction promotes active participation for all learners and, whenever possible, students gain functional and vocational life skills through job-site experiences. Educators in the district employ TEACCH and ABA methodologies, utilize augmentative communication/assistive technology devices, and incorporate a variety of education technologies in the classroom to engage their students.

As Monarch Teaching Technologies began to work with District 75, a strong partnership evolved. Professional development for teachers, aides and parent volunteers created a cadre of passionate VizZle users. Lessons these users created and shared in the VizZle library –including beautiful bilingual lessons, standards-based math lessons and moving visual stories about students' career aspirations—have inspired and been borrowed by educators across the country using VizZle with their students. A search of the VizZle library shows the depth and breadth of the contributions made by these exemplary NYC educators.

Meet P.233Q - Metro

With just over 400 students, P.233Q is a 'school' housed in seven different physical locations. When the administrators and teachers discuss their classrooms, they use shorthand descriptions like 12:1:4 or 6:1:1 to describe the classes (translated, 6:1:1 refers to a class with 6 students, 1 credentialed classroom teacher and 1 aid).

P.233Q Principal Debbie Edmonds says the story of VizZle and P.233Q began with her former superintendent suggesting that Ms. Edmonds check out VizZle. She did, and immediately understood the impact it could have on her school. Ms. Edmonds secured the necessary support to implement VizZle in P.233Q classrooms, and she and her 4 assistant principals began the process of introducing their teachers to VizZle.

While VizZle was initially introduced specifically for students with autism, P.233Q teams quickly recognized VizZle's wider value, especially to students of low cognitive ability, many with multiple disabilities including vision, hearing and physical issues. They expanded VizZle's use to include



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Engaging All Stakeholders

With encouragement and support from both P.233Q's administrators and from the VizZle professional development team, more and more teachers committed to trying VizZle in their classrooms. As they did, each found student reaction was immediate; students became more engaged, behavior improved and motivation increased.

P.233Q is always seeking ways to strengthen their home-school connection. As more teachers used VizZle features to share lessons with home, parents also noticed the heightened engagement. Classroom teacher Amanda Alves, who teaches a 12:1:1 class with students reading on a 2nd grade level, commented on how VizZle facilitated outreach to families. She noted that VizZle's Student Folders' sharing features and the use of VizZleGrams made it easy for teachers to provide families with appropriate lessons that students and parents could work on together at home. Students also talked to their parents about how much they liked working in VizZle, which had a positive impact on parents' perception of the school.

Ms. Edmonds makes site visits to all seven locations on a regular basis, during which she sees how the students react to VizZle. Students previously unable to attend to instruction for any length of time are engaging for as long as 5 minutes, and exceeding expectations. More critically, she sees basic skills and IEP goals being met, social engagement improving, the ability to make requests blossoming, and social skills like taking turns becoming routine. And, best of all, Ms Edmonds says that she sees students reacting with enthusiasm. "From room to room, I see students' faces light up-- that is my celebration!"

Celebrating Success

Recurring themes from the P.233Q team are **celebration** and **sharing**. Throughout the adoption phase and as a general practice, Ms. Edmonds engages her staff and teachers through weekly



cabinet and monthly staff meetings. The teams also use email to share ideas and celebrate successes, including everyone in the conversations. The principal, assistant principals and teachers are a cohesive and supportive group, despite their physically dispersed locations. Assistant Principal Elizabeth

DeFrancisco's significant contributions to the P.233Q VizZle community and as a cheerleader of the VizZle cadre exemplify the collaborative nature of this strong team. Her frequent email messages are a collection of tips, suggestions and ideas culled from the team members to be shared, which she signs as "Vizzy."

Every teacher has a story that can be celebrated. Kalliopi Xanthopoulos tells of the time her students, none of whom particularly enjoyed group activities previously, took the initiative to search the VizZle library to find more lessons so their group time wouldn't be over. Brooke Wacha tells of a student who noticed and communicated with his peers for the first time during a VizZle game, appropriately telling them, "Your turn!" Rachael Goeler tells the story of a student who demonstrated unusual independence and completely unexpected cognitive capabilities when, without any prior instruction, she searched the VizZle library, found, opened and launched a VizZle lesson so she could continue learning beyond her assigned lessons. Anyone who works with children with autism understands just how significant wins like these are.

Tracking the Progress

VizZle not only enables progress- it helps teachers with the important task of tracking that progress as well. VizZle collects data on student performance, recording correct and incorrect responses. It can report on all lessons, or be set to report specifically on lessons that address the student's IEP goals.

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Denise Eilbott, a teacher at P.233Q, took this reporting a step further. She used the real-time data collection and visual report information with her students, opening the reporting area and showing them how they did on any given lesson to reinforce positive behavior and motivate her students.

This unexpected application of the reporting features exemplifies how teachers at P.233Q are supported and encouraged to explore what motivates each student. They work with every student 'where they are,' finding whatever the student responds to and adapting curriculum to meet the needs of that specific individual. These tactics build success upon success, adding up to wonderful outcomes. But they would be impossible to implement without the capabilities VizZle brings to the equation. Ms. Edmonds says, "We made a great investment. We are real advocates for VizZle." With VizZle supporting their team, powerful learning happens almost every day in P.233Q.

About Monarch Teaching Technologies (MTT)

MTT produces VizZle - an award winning web-based tool for teachers that enables educators to create fun, interactive visually supported curriculum customized for children with autism and special learning needs. For more information on VizZle or MTT visit www.monarchtt.com or call 1-800-593-1934.

