

SUN COMES UP ON NEW SCHOOL YEAR ACROSS LONG ISLAND



NEWSDAY / ALEJANDRA VILLA LOARCA

JOHN STREET SCHOOL. Special needs students interact with Milo, a new robot used as a learning tool that works with autistic children.

Franklin Square: *Meet Milo*

The first day was a perfect opportunity for a dance party at John Street elementary school, and the celebration was led by the newest addition to the classroom — Milo, a roughly 2-foot-tall robot.

Milo, with spiky brown, plastic-like hair, is a next-genera-

tion assistive robot that promotes a social-emotional curriculum for students. He made his debut in the Intensive Support Program classroom that serves children with special needs, including those diagnosed with autism.

“Hi, I’m Milo. It’s great to meet you,” the robot greeted the students. He demonstrated how he can walk, close his eyes, wave his hands and even whistle. He asked the third-graders to follow along. He waved and they waved back.

“We tend to always look for those innovative tools that will help move the dial for our students,” said Franklin Square Superintendent Jared Bloom.

Milo comes from Texas-

based company RoboKind. There are several such robots in school systems nationwide and internationally, representatives from the company said. Franklin Square is the first Long Island district to have the robot up and running in the classroom.

Milo comes with his own curriculum and corresponding lessons on video screens. He cost about \$18,000, Bloom said.

Milo can slow his speech, so children — especially those who have challenges with speech — can follow more closely. School officials said he will travel among the three buildings of the prekindergarten-to-sixth-grade district, and social workers have been

trained to use him.

On Tuesday, a small group of students watched as Milo demonstrated a lesson on proper social cues.

“I saw the students really engaged with Milo. They were excited to welcome something different into our classroom,” said special education teacher Alana Smith.