HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

"A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE"

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OZOBOTS INVADE WILLIAM R. SATZ MIDDLE SCHOOL

The robot invasion has begun in Technology Education classes at Satz! Students in the school's required Technology Education course recently had the chance to interact with a set of Ozobots, tiny robots that students are able to program to respond to basic commands. Ozobots are a fun and fast way to teach students the fundamentals of coding and programming.
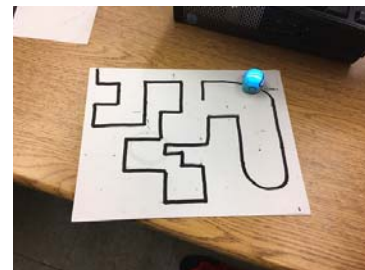
The robots include sensors that allow them to detect lines and colors on a page or a tablet screen; the little electronic figures can interact with those lines using different combinations of actions. A tablet application gives students the opportunity to "freehand" a path for the robots while inserting various color combinations allows them to elicit specific reactions from the robots.

In addition to this rudimentary programming, students can also use a programming interface to construct much more elaborate directions for the robot. This interface provides students with several different levels of complexity, from dragging-and-dropping icon blocks to arranging a variety of actions and tasks on the screen. This interface also allows students to view the Java script behind the directions they have create, giving them some insight into how their selections on the programming interface translate into computer code.

"One student programmed it to look both ways at the intersection before it continued on," said Technology Education teacher Christen McCafferty, who was clearly taken with the cleverness of the program and the cuteness of the robot's reaction.

Soon, ten more of these robots will arrive, thanks to a grant from the Holmdel Foundation for Educational Excellence for which Mrs. McCafferty applied. Supervisor of Technology, Engineering and Media Centers Mrs. Caren MacConnell encouraged Mrs. McCafferty to "try out" the devices, which "live" in a makerspace at Holmdel High School. "This is part of an effort

to develop a system of maker stations in the course," she added. Working with tools like the Ozobots helps all students learn real-world skills and introduce them to applied STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) concepts.

As a K-12 Supervisor, Mrs. MacConnell is currently working on a plan to bring coding instruction to students in grades K-6. "This is exciting work that is an outgrowth of our district goal "To Increase student engagement, challenge and excitement in the learning process and maximize the potential of every student," remarked Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Robert McGarry.