

New York City Department of Education

Voice-enabled telephony applications help parents stay informed.

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Richard Langford
Deputy Chief Information Officer
New York City Department of Education

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) boasts the largest school system in the country, with nearly 1.2 million kids, more than 1,200 schools, and 80,000 teachers. The school system is organized into 10 regions across the city, with each region containing two, three, or four community school districts, as well as the high schools located within its geographic boundaries.

Microsoft and Intervoice are working with NYC DOE to develop voice-enabled telephony application for parents to check such things as their child's attendance record, course grades, and lunch menu for the day.

Situation

It is widely understood that when parents are involved in their child's education, the children do better at school. As a result, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein have been encouraging more parent participation, and this year the NYC DOE hired parent coordinators who are working on-site in New York schools to address parent concerns and encourage parent involvement.

Solution

In addition to human resources, the NYC DOE is exploring ways that technology can make schools more efficient and parent-friendly. It made several commitments to exploring how technology can be used to provide parents with better access to information and get them more engaged in their child's education. One of these methods involves working with Microsoft Corp. and Intervoice Inc. to develop a voice-enabled telephony application for parents to check such things as their

child's attendance record, course grades, and lunch menu for the day. Much of this information is already available to the parents via the NYC DOE website, but the NYC DOE is using speech technologies to enable accessibility to this information for parents who don't have consistent access to a computer.

Microsoft and Intervoice entered into a relationship with the NYC DOE to help deliver on the speech technology promise. A primary goal of the relationship is knowledge transfer and skills development. Intervoice and Microsoft have provided design and development support, while working hands-on with NYC DOE staff to deliver the first phase.

Benefits

"The mayor, the chancellor, and others are very concerned about parents who do not have access to computers, or who are not computer literate," said Richard Langford, deputy chief information officer for the NYC DOE. "We've all heard about the Digital

Divide, and it's particularly evident in urban areas. We have a large number of parents who are not comfortable with a computer. But telephones are accessible and easy to use, and everyone is quite comfortable with them."

"It's not just the Digital Divide that can present a barrier to information. Working parents often find it difficult to juggle their schedules to attend school functions in person. Using Microsoft speech technologies, they will have access to information 24/7," Langford said.

"Our relationship with Microsoft has really been excellent," Langford said. "And the opportunities for speech technology in the school system are enormous."

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With more than 5,000 customers in 75 countries and an extensive channel partner ecosystem, we have a proven track record of helping organizations meet or exceed their business and customer service goals. How can Intervoice help you? Visit www.intervoice.com for information.

