



P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School Uses Renzulli Learning to Help Enrich Curriculum and Get Students Excited About Learning

Summary:

P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School has used the Renzulli Learning online system since 2006 for differentiated learning and project-based curriculum. When Louis Pavone joined the school as principal in 2006, he saw an opportunity to expand the school's use of the system to every teacher and student with the goals of facilitating differentiated learning, extending the school's curriculum, getting parents more involved, and engaging students so that they would have more fun while applying and deepening their learning. Today, students present their Renzulli-based projects to the community at an annual school-hosted fair. The school has a waiting list for students wanting to get in, and the school plans to become part of a new, larger school so it can continue to expand its enrichment program.

"The Renzulli product is part of the many programs we have to educate the children while making them happy to come to school and getting them excited about learning. We have continuously done well on testing, and I believe it's because of our focus on educating the whole child."

— Louis Pavone, Principal,
P.S. 78Q The Robert F.
Wagner, Jr. School

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In 2011, P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School started an annual fair to allow students to present the work from their Renzulli-based projects to the community.

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Louis Pavone
Principal
P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School

SCHOOL NAME:

P.S. 78Q
The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School

LOCATION:

Long Island City, NY

SETTING:

Urban

GRADES:

Pre K-5

ENROLLMENT:

Approx. 270

Renzulli Learning[®]
Proven Differentiation™

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When Louis Pavone became principal of P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School (P.S. 78Q) in 2006, he found that some teachers and students had been using Renzulli Learning. He quickly recognized that Renzulli Learning could be used more fully, and decided that it was time to expand its use by teachers, students, and parents. His goals: to facilitate differentiated learning, extend the school’s curriculum, get parents more involved, and engage students so that they’d have more fun while applying and deepening their learning.

“I looked at Renzulli very carefully when I came here and I was impressed that it looked at the needs of the children as individuals,” says Pavone. “The differentiation tools show the interests and learning styles of the individual student. I thought that was very important because it helps the teachers in their instruction and in engaging the children. It also helps parents to see their children’s interests.”

Pavone adds that he wanted to move beyond students simply learning for tests. He wanted students to be excited about learning and to apply and extend what they learn to the real world.

“I’ve always wanted this to be the kind of school where students develop a love for learning, become critical thinkers, become engaged, and have fun,” says Pavone. “The Renzulli product supports that, and that’s why I continue to use and expand it.”

While Pavone says he wants test scores to continue to be strong and improve, he views using Renzulli Learning as another way to help students progress. He believes that giving students the ability to learn through a variety of programs and getting them excited about school ultimately helps in learning and testing.

“We have a lot of programs; the children have a lot of learning experiences — in the community and on educational field trips,” says Pavone. “Real life experiences are learning, too, and they actually help you on tests. I’ve always felt that kind of learning is important, and didn’t want to restrict learning to a classroom setting. One of the things Renzulli allows us to do is extend the walls of the classroom. You reach out to the world. You’re visiting museums. You’re visiting people.”

Group Projects from P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School have included:

- ▶ Nutritional choices and leading a healthy life
- ▶ Multi-media storytelling (creating e-books)
- ▶ Song writing
- ▶ “Scrap Jazz” (creating scrapbooks and journals about their lives)
- ▶ 3D design
- ▶ Designing buildings
- ▶ Newsroom (creating school roadcasts)
- ▶ Young reviewers (reviewing local restaurants)
- ▶ Poetry
- ▶ Young inventors (the invention process)
- ▶ Sculpture
- ▶ Studying fish and the New York waters
- ▶ Photography

How it Works

Today, all teachers at P.S. 78Q have received training on how to use Renzulli Learning. Throughout the year, they use the system's assessment and differentiation tools to evaluate students' learning styles and interests, and then group students into "clusters" based on the results of the assessment. Students then work within Renzulli Learning on group projects across all subject areas in the last two periods of the day on Fridays, spending a total of about 100 minutes each week in the online system, with additional time outside of the system spent developing their projects. The school alternates lower grades and upper grades in the program, allowing first and second grades a 12-week period in the program, and then allowing third through fifth grades a 12-week period in the system, and so on.

Showing Off Their Work

In 2011, P.S. 78Q started an annual fair to allow students to present the work from their Renzulli-based projects to the community. Pavone saw this as an important approach to showing parents and the community all of the things that students have been learning and working on throughout the year, and to give students a chance to demonstrate what they are learning.

"The children are doing all these great things throughout the day," says Pavone. "As a parent, you don't always get to see everything your children are doing in school. I thought it was important that we celebrate all of their work."

Throughout the day of the fair, students present their Renzulli projects to an audience of parents, teachers, superintendents, and other members of the community. Pavone says that this format helps students not only with their confidence, but also in their ability to retain and demonstrate what they've learned.

"The best way to know if someone has learned something is to have them explain it to you," says Pavone. "That's not on a state test, but we see that they've learned something. There are smiles on the children's faces and they're enthusiastic. Their parents are here. Members of the community are here. It's a positive event. We all feel there should be more of that kind of celebration of the children's work during the school year."

At the fair, students present project work from the entire school year. Projects include musical performances, models, paintings, photography, arts and crafts, videos, PowerPoint™ presentations, multi-media storytelling using technology to create e-books, and news broadcasts.

"The children have presentations, photos and other documentation of the progress of all of the work that they did throughout the year," says Pavone. "The parents can actually see them building a model of the community, painting, writing their stories, practicing their songs. It was important to me that the parents and the community saw the process and not just the product because the academic part of this is really what's critical."



Students at P.S. 78Q The Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School present their Renzulli-based projects throughout the day at the school's annual fair, during which the school invites the community to view the students' work.

Educating the Whole Child

Pavone says P.S. 78Q believes in offering a variety of learning opportunities, including arts, social studies, science, physical education, and recess as well as being involved in partnerships around the community. The school is involved with local groups including the Seaport Museum, the New York Botanical Garden, New York State Parks, and the Department of Environmental Protection.

“It sounds like a lot for a small school, but we do a lot,” says Pavone. “Children are on waiting lists to get into our school because it’s a nice place to learn.”

Because the school is so popular, P.S. 78Q plans to become part of a new, larger school that also includes grades K–8. Pavone says this move will help to extend their enrichment programs.

“It’s always a challenge at schools: How do you engage children, enrich them, and challenge them regardless of their level?” says Pavone. “The Renzulli product is part of the many programs we have to educate the children while making them happy to come to school and getting them excited about learning. We have continuously done well on testing, and I believe it’s because of our focus on educating the whole child.”

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