

LEGO® Education StoryStarter

Real-life case studies
impact in literacy
classrooms.



LEGO® Education
StoryStarter

BUILT ON NATIONAL
CURRICULUM

Find out how LEGO®
Education StoryStarter helps
to unlock every child's potential
in the language arts.



LEGO® Education StoryStarter sets the scene for engaged learning

LEGO® Education StoryStarter is at the forefront of the playful learning revolution, helping every type of student - from reluctant writers to perfectionists - to unlock their creativity and achieve greater success in literacy. It does so through a process that encourages collaborative working and helps to develop a number of essential skills including listening, presenting and comprehension, as you will see from the case studies that follow.

These are provided by teachers from around the world, sharing their personal StoryStarter experiences in their own words.

"In a quite diverse class, there are children who have difficulty coming out with their own story ideas. They need a little help, a little external trigger to get their ideas flowing."

George Ibrahim, Primary Curriculum Coordinator.



Engaging every type of learner in literacy

StoryStarter is designed for every type of learner. To illustrate that fact, we have identified eight key learning types with characteristics that we think you will recognise from your own classroom.

You can meet them all in our separate student profile brochure.



StoryStarter makes a difference to students all over the world

LEGO® Education StoryStarter's playful learning transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, making it valued and successful around the world. We would like to present the experiences of eight teachers who have introduced StoryStarter to very different classes in many different languages, yet have all achieved similarly successful outcomes for their students.



From distracted to focussed learners



Elementary teacher Andrea Fonseca León of Metodista School in Costa Rica uses LEGO® Education StoryStarter to help motivate her students.



The teacher's story

Andrea was keen to improve the literacy and communication skills of her elementary students, with a particular focus on developing collaborative working. Both she and the school are always keen to offer students new ways to learn, so she acquired a LEGO Education StoryStarter classroom pack, which at first enthused her students thanks to the LEGO bricks and figures, then led to greatly increased engagement and achievement once her students started to use the StoryVisualizer software. She told us: "As soon as I get out the StoryStarter sets the students become so enthusiastic and happy. It's the time that they enjoy the most, learning and playing."

The role of StoryStarter

Andrea had found that a number of students struggled to maintain focus and to get their thoughts down on paper in a coherent order. She appreciates the two-stage process used by StoryStarter, in which the students first create and sequence their story using plates, bricks, figures and other elements, before importing images of the scenes they have built into the StoryVisualizer. As Andrea says: "I use it because our school always offers students different ways of learning, and one of the key benefits of having StoryStarter in the classroom is that it helps to develop logic, reasoning and to find creative solutions to construct."

What we have learned

As some students had previously struggled to create structured solutions in literacy lessons, Andrea has noticed very promising results with LEGO Education StoryStarter, in terms of motivation and achievement as well as in cooperative working. She told us: "It has become a solution that adapts to different ways of learning, developing a number of abilities and essential 21st century skills in my students. Just as importantly - to them as much as me - it has helped us to decrease the writing time, because without it students were not able to concrete their ideas in paper and to work well in teams. In fact, one of my students said to me: 'Teacher, this is the first time I can see my thoughts in concrete. This way it's easier to write, and if I forget something the construction reminds me', which I thought summed it up beautifully."

So what would Andrea tell a teaching colleague who was thinking of implementing LEGO Education StoryStarter in another school? She told us: "You should adopt the LEGO Education solutions, not only to provide a new form of teaching, but to enjoy the process with the students and see their improvements day by day."

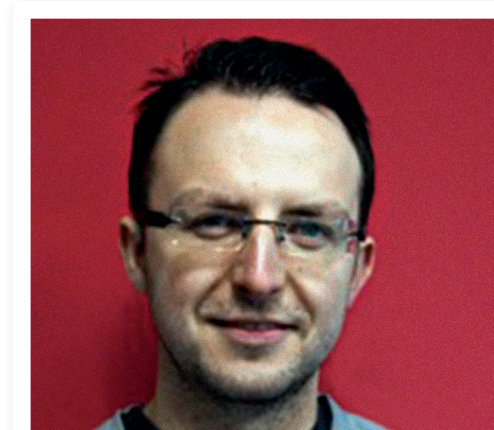
"As soon as I get out the StoryStarter sets the students become so enthusiastic and happy. It's the time that they enjoy the most, learning and playing."

"You should adopt the LEGO Education solutions."



From unwilling writers to motivated storytellers

Sebastian Kirch, class teacher at the primary school in Herdecke, Germany.



"My experience with LEGO® Education StoryStarter began when I ordered some sample packs in order to participate in the StoryStarter competition. Six students began by creating a story on three baseplates. On a hunch, I let the children show their story to the others in their class, which led first to a lot of healthy discussion, and then to the original six students realizing that they needed to rebuild their story."

"Since January 2015 we have been using the various materials to help teach mathematics, science and German. Thanks to the new material and training by LEGO Education, we can now dispense with worksheets, which enables every child to follow their own learning curve, with materials being used on a problem-oriented basis and new media adapted to each child's individual level."

"The German curriculum, and teaching methods, requires students to plan a text, write it, present it, and then revise it. Each of these steps calls for a lot of effort from the students, which in the past caused some of them to view text creation in a negative light."

"StoryStarter has helped to change this, because after they have imagined their stories, the children use LEGO bricks to rearrange or expand them. Not until the story is working well do they actually write down the text on the computer and in their exercise books, which avoids a lot of time-consuming revisions. One child's comment in particular made a great impression on me, and I think clarifies what is so innovative about using StoryStarter to create a text. She said: 'Thank heavens, now I don't have to make so many corrections to my story in my exercise book.'"

"This has a positive effect on learning in the classroom. Whether the children are working alone or in pairs they become engaged in developing and improving their story. This gives them an emotional focus and so enhances their appreciation of written text. In my experience, their motivation is also improved, so that even children for whom German is a second language get a solid grounding in the process of text creation."

"Thank heavens, now I don't have to make so many corrections to my story in my exercise book."



What advantages do you see in using StoryStarter in your classroom?

"I no longer need to find suitable pictures or motivations for the children, because they now do this for themselves. Quite often one student will come up with something that inspires the whole class. Just as importantly, StoryStarter improves children's access to German as a complete subject because it trains a variety of skills, which is perhaps the most important argument for purchasing StoryStarter. The materials address several key educational targets both in the teaching of German and of process-related skills. That's because texts should be created by the children, with the teacher mainly facilitating lessons that encourage sessions of writing and narration and should include working with new media."

"LEGO Education StoryStarter has proven to be of tremendous value for teaching German: its versatility makes life easier for the teacher and also motivates the children to write stories."

How quickly could you integrate the material into your current teaching?

"The first lesson with the material was very straightforward, because the students first built something and then explained it. I expected some hurdles to appear when working with the software, but instead I was pleased to see that second-, third- and fourth-grade students all picked the program up very quickly. It's good to see software that is designed to be so clear and child-friendly. Creating comics using photos of the constructed stories is super simple and positively invites the children to edit the images and insert speech bubbles and effects. It's a great way of teaching both language and new media skills."

Do the results you get from StoryStarter justify the effort of trying something new?

"In my opinion: absolutely yes! I've compared the texts my class have created using StoryStarter with stories they wrote previously and have identified very significant differences. Not only are their narrative skills improved just as much as their writing skills, they have managed to really improve the overall quality of their stories. The students plan, design, revise and write stories with a great deal of motivation, and the finished stories now have a narrative thread that makes them easier to read. So yes, it really does justify the effort, and, to be fair, most of the effort is only at the very beginning, because the students soon learn to work independently with StoryStarter."

Do you have any personal tips for using StoryStarter?

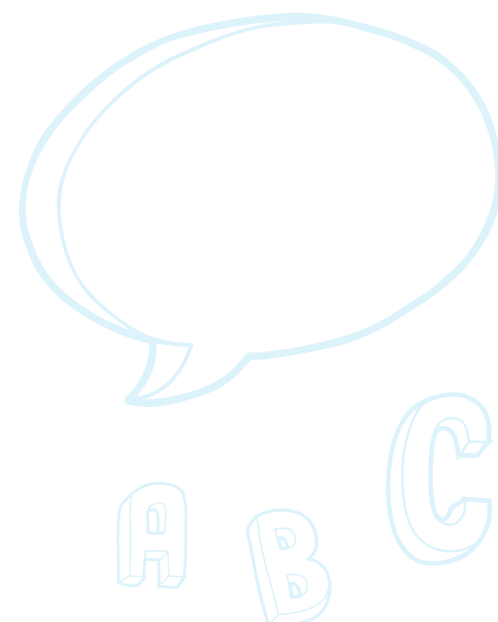
In summary, I have to say that LEGO Education StoryStarter has proven to be of tremendous value for teaching German: its versatility makes life easier for the teacher and also motivates the children to write stories – without losing sight of the required educational standard – while presenting additional learning opportunities that many materials simply can't."



From reluctant writers to keen collaborators



Erin Hardy of East Richland Elementary, USA, uses LEGO® Education StoryStarter to help reluctant writers engage with and enjoy the process.



Lesson description

In this lesson, students were challenged to think about what their lives will be like in 20 years. Initially the class met as a group to discuss the topic, and then students were given StoryStarter kits to build a model that shows their life in 20 years. After building, the students shared with the peers at their table one at a time. After sharing time, we gathered together to discuss the expectations of the writing assignment and to write a model paragraph. The students then returned to their tables and began writing their pieces. When students were finished writing, we had a period for share chair, where everyone could share their writing with the whole class.

High-level learning objectives

Using LEGO Education StoryStarter, students will brainstorm what their lives will be like in 20 years. Students will use their models to share with their teammates and to write their stories. Students will write a complete paragraph using great details and conventions. Students will share their stories with their peers and listen as their peers share.

Why StoryStarter works

Each week we work on a writing piece. We always use StoryStarter as our brainstorming tool and reference. It's like a 3-D graphic organiser for the kids. This is written into my weekly curriculum for the students. They always know that we are going to use StoryStarter when we work on our weekly writing assignment.

Aha moment

When using StoryStarter, students don't ever tell me that they forgot what they were going to write, they don't complain about writing time, and everyone gets right to work. It's like they have already worked out how they are going to write as they are building. Writing time goes much faster and the details my second graders integrate into their writings are amazing! Everyone enjoys to write now, not just the advanced writers in the class.



From limited speakers to confident presenters



Teacher and logopedist Irina Vasilyeva from Udmurt Republic School in Russia uses LEGO® Education StoryStarter to help overcome speech problems.



The teacher's story

As a teacher and logopedist Irina is focused on a number of tasks, including education and development of speech correction via a wide range of activities relevant to her students. At the same time, she has to follow the requirements set by the Federal State Educational Standard for literacy education, which include speech development, sociocommunicative development, cognitive development, artistic and aesthetic development and even physical development including fine motor skills and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Quite naturally, she sometimes struggles to achieve all of this due to time restraints.

The role of StoryStarter

Children with speech disorders require a number of elements to be present in their educational activity, which must meet with curricular needs, but ideally enable learning through play. Irina told us: "It isn't an overestimation to say that the LEGO Education StoryStarter set enables me to arrange the type of activity I have been looking for: one that is integrated, playful, up-to-date and relevant to my students. The activities provide for practically all the components I need, and involve all the sensory systems responsible for critical thinking and analysis in a child."

"The children's motivation has considerably improved in classes where the StoryStarter sets are used, and their interest in written communication has also grown. The children have become much more confident about their speech abilities and are now able to speak in public."

What we have learned

In addition to working with children to overcome learning difficulties and correct speech problems, Irina always strives to build her students' confidence. She also appreciates the interest that LEGO Education StoryStarter generates in every educational situation. She told us: "The children's motivation has considerably improved in classes where the StoryStarter sets are used, and their interest in written communication has also grown. The children have become much more confident about their speech abilities and are now able to speak in public. Small group activities have taught the children to work in teams, to respect each other, and to listen to others. The children also feel a lot more confident when working with a computer."

So what would Irina say to a teacher who hasn't yet used LEGO Education StoryStarter? "Don't be afraid to include these novel, yet so wonderful educational solutions in your activities with elementary students. By all means study the guidelines and complete a training course tailored to your selected product. But, of course, enjoy the creativity, infinite fantasy and enthusiasm when using it with children."



From challenged writers to high achievers



Elementary teacher Bożena Kaczyńska from SKRZYDŁA School in Lublin, Poland uses this hands-on tool to boost motivation, cooperation and personal development for all of her students.



The teacher's story

Bożena is keen to make her lessons as involving as possible for every member of the class, and sees LEGO® Education StoryStarter as the ideal way to make the classroom setting less formal, while still meeting the strict demands of the curriculum. Just as importantly, she is aware of the need to develop 21st century skills by encouraging cooperative working which also makes lessons more inclusive for the less outgoing and confident students. She says: "For a shy kid it is a great way to open up, to touch on things that may be difficult and important. After all, it is easier to play the role of a character in a story than to talk about yourself."



The role of StoryStarter

When it comes to StoryStarter, Bożena welcomes the combination of tactile, hands-on learning and easy-to-use software and knows that her students appreciate the high quality of the illustrations, which make them want to share the stories they have written with others. Yet she also understands that the actual process of story creation plays a key role in the personal development of each child. She told us: "One of the most beneficial things is cooperation. Students learn by discussing the task, dividing roles and sharing bricks. They learn to listen to each other, they learn how to collectively make a decision and how to assign tasks."

What we have learned

Skrzydła school has now been using LEGO Education StoryStarter for over a year. Bożena and her colleagues have all noted that they seem to invent a new use for their StoryStarter sets every month, and that students are still excited to experiment and work with it. She says: "Students love to work with LEGO Education StoryStarter. They cannot wait for the next lesson. In fact, with each lesson they learn to write more and more interesting and complex stories. So far, all of the students I have been working with have been very excited to work with the combination of bricks and software. Teaching by playing is so effective and LEGO bricks are a real motivational tool."

Clearly, LEGO Education StoryStarter is proving to be a useful tool at Bożena's school in Lublin. So we asked her what she would tell colleagues in other schools. She said: "If you don't want to end up with boredom in education, select the StoryStarter solution. Your students will learn to work together, think creatively and out-of-the-box. They will be more involved and motivated and will remember the material better. I would like to see more teachers and students experience this exciting adventure."



"For a shy kid it is a great way to open up, to touch on things that may be difficult and important. After all, it is easier to play the role of a character in a story than to talk about yourself."



From reluctant writers to expressive authors



Hannah Pankhurst, Literacy and Curriculum Co-ordinator and Class Teacher (Year 3) from St. John's Primary School in the UK, experiences increased engagement and confidence within writing, speaking and listening using LEGO® Education StoryStarter in her classes.



Immediate engagement

"Having heard about StoryStarter we decided to trial it with our lower ability and special needs children to see if it could improve their writing standards. We noticed the children's immediate engagement with the product and the story writing process of build-plan-write. This resulted in an improvement in the children's imagination and the flow of their writing. By being able to visualize and remember the setting and characters in their story they improved the content and detail. Having seen this positive result we decided to trial it with children of all abilities."

The children love to use this product to record the scenes of their story prior to writing. As they are building, we discuss the different parts of the story, which encourages the children to improve their language. After they have built their scenes the children enjoy using StoryVisualizer to create their story.

Having encouraged the children to use a wider vocabulary and improved sentence openers as part of the product, this impacts on the quality of their writing, resulting in children writing at a higher level, sometimes including content that is two sub-levels above their target.

Enhancing children's everyday work

The resource has enhanced children's everyday work as they have used it for literacy and cross curricular writing. It has also offered children who do not frequently participate in class discussions the opportunity to talk in role as their LEGO character. This has impacted on the children's speaking and listening progress. The resource has supported me as a teacher in enabling children to access their learning in a hands-on approach. We have also used the product with children of all abilities to improve the writing content. Staff have commented on the useful curriculum pack that accompanies the product which gives guidance on how to effectively use the resource and good activity ideas and curriculum links."

"Since using StoryStarter the majority of children have gained confidence in speaking, listening and writing which can be directly attributed to this way of writing stories."



From mechanical to Free-thinking



Teacher Aparna Ravichandran of Delhi Private School Academy in Dubai likes LEGO® Education StoryStarter for its versatility and engagement of all types of learners.



The teacher's story

Aparna teaches a class that includes students with varied learning challenges. While she understands the requirement to follow the curriculum, she likes to do so by encouraging creativity and imagination through storytelling and song. She also likes to break down cultural barriers between her students, while striving to understand their interests and motivations herself. She says: "I like to know whether a student loves sports, movies, science or whatever. It particularly helps me to handle students with special needs. StoryStarter transports them into another world, and all students feel comfortable using it."

"Students love to create comic strips using the StoryVisualizer and create movies using their computers. Students are totally engaged during the classes when we have StoryStarter because they love becoming a director!"



The role of StoryStarter

Aparna uses LEGO Education StoryStarter to encourage both confidence and better literacy skills across a wide range of subjects. Above all, she is passionate about giving students the chance to talk openly while learning key literacy skills. She told us: "Students have the freedom to express themselves when they use StoryStarter. Sometimes they won't stick to the topic, but will instead create a scene that was either the best day or the worst day of their lives, which otherwise they would not want to discuss. It gives them an important opportunity to express their feelings."

What we have learned

LEGO Education StoryStarter is often embraced by teachers who like to encourage freedom of expression as well as cooperative working and the development of essential literacy skills. As Aparna says: "The thing about StoryStarter is that it is a versatile educational tool. Students love to create comic strips using the StoryVisualizer and create movies using their computers. Students are totally engaged during the classes when we have StoryStarter because they love becoming a director!" Aparna also likes the way that StoryStarter helps students to engage with real world issues. She told us: "When I did the topic 'Junk Food versus Healthy Food', a student came up with such a nice story of a fairy turning the junk food into healthy food, and in the end she said that the fairy was her mother and every mother."

So what would Aparna say to a teacher who hasn't tried LEGO Education StoryStarter for themselves yet? "The students are at their creative best when learning through play. It is also an amazing icebreaker. This is the product I love, and always want to use after the students are back from a long break. I ask them to recreate the best day from their holiday using LEGO StoryStarter."

From slow starters to instant achievers



Curriculum Coordinator George Ibrahim of Victoria International School, United Arab Emirates uses LEGO® Education StoryStarter to help trigger the flow of ideas in a class of students with diverse needs.



The teacher's story

The students in George's class have diverse needs. As the school's Primary Curriculum Coordinator, George is highly conscious of meeting the demands of the curriculum while at the same time finding ways to engage with and stimulate the class, particularly the less confident members. As George told us: "In a quite diverse class, there are children who have difficulty coming out with their own story ideas. They need a little help, a little external trigger to get their ideas flowing. We also had children who would refuse to write a paragraph during the language session and clearly needed additional help."

The role of StoryStarter

Having identified the need to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills across a diverse group of students, George introduced his class to StoryStarter, he believes that: "Any manipulative tool gets the students' attention. The StoryStarter set has a combination of elements that draw the children's attention and get them to use their building skills to imitate settings and characters. Using their ICT equipment together with the StoryVisualizer to capture the scenes and settings makes the experience concrete for them, and the StoryStarter Curriculum gives exciting teaching ideas to help me create engaging and playful lessons."

"The children love to work in teams of three and actively participate in brainstorming sessions. Each of them puts their sincere efforts into making their ideas unique. It kindles their creative thinking capabilities and has a positive impact on their communication skills."

What we have learned

In addition to helping less advanced students to develop their language skills, George was keen to encourage greater confidence in his students. He told us: "There was a boy in Grade 3 who was shy and was always reluctant to face his friends and speak to the class. But once he started using the StoryStarter set, he actually wanted to come forward and talk about his build to his peers. It was a great moment to see the creativity unfold within the child, which gave him the confidence to talk about what he had just created."

George also noted that the hands-on nature of literacy lessons using LEGO Education StoryStarter encouraged cooperative working. He says: "The children love to work in teams of three and actively participate in brainstorming sessions. Each of them puts their sincere efforts into making their ideas unique. It kindles their creative thinking capabilities and has a positive impact on their communication skills." We asked George what he would say to other teachers who might be considering LEGO Education StoryStarter. He said: "You definitely should go for StoryStarter, to help young ones develop their language and literacy skills in a fun and hands-on way."



Introducing StoryStarter to your classroom

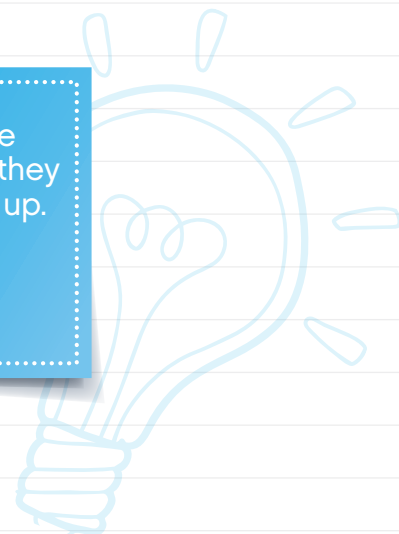
LEGO® Education StoryStarter is a hands-on, minds-on solution, fostering engagement in the classroom as well as focusing on the development of essential 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication and presentation. It also brings out imagination and creativity as students write and visualise stories, describe personalities, communicate them to others and evaluate them together. In short, it enables teachers to engage effectively with every student.

The StoryStarter solution contains the StoryStarter Core Set, a StoryStarter Curriculum Pack and StoryVisualizer software needed to teach your students the mechanics of a well-composed story, helping them to become confident and inspired readers and writers. The core set contains a diversity of LEGO elements, specifically selected to help students construct sequence based stories, with a beginning, a middle part and an ending.



"Children have such pride in their writing and how they write their LEGO stories up. They are so enthused!"

Sudesh Mejer, Literacy Coordinator,
The Meadows Primary School



The story told by recent research

Cambridge University's Centre for Research on Play in Education, Development and Learning (PEDAL) recently undertook research into playful writing through the year-long Play, Narrative and Narrative Skills Project (PLaNS). This research was about how writing in a playful way, using LEGO® bricks, can help in the teaching environment. The research relied on seven key pedagogic principles:

- A multi-modal approach using LEGO bricks to build stories
- Collaborative activities through small, mixed-ability groups
- Guided play: children decided what to build/write with support from teachers
- Writing with a purpose: children wrote about their own LEGO creations
- Dialogic learning to promote 'talk rules' and 'talk for writing'
- Metacognitive discussions about working together
- A playful and relaxed environment



Initial Understandings

Motivation for writing

Children who participated in the project wrote for longer and produced more creative stories. This was seen as a measure of motivation to write, which previous research shows is key to improving writing skills.

Metacognition

Writing is a complex activity that requires good thinking strategies. The research explored children's metacognitive skills - or ability to control thinking processes - and found that their ability to plan and control these processes improved during the year.

Collaborative skills

The results demonstrated that children learned to collaborate in groups, showing more 'good group work' skills towards the end of the year. It was also observed that groups in which children were more playful were also the groups to show better collaborative skills.



Awards

Top 100 Educational Resources
2013 (US)

GESS (Global Educational
Supplies & Solutions) Dubai 2015

Tommi Award – Germany 2014

Worlddidac Awards 2014

Era 2014 – Best primary resource
including ICT

worlddidac
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StoryStarter - 2014

GESS
GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL
SUPPLIES & SOLUTIONS

StoryStarter - 2015

1. PLATZ



TOMMI
Deutscher
Kindersoftwarepreis
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era
2014 **WINNER**
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RESOURCE
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