

# In Philadelphia, Every Type of Learner Has an Opportunity to Shine through LEGO® Education

In the 30 years that Paula Don has worked in the School District of Philadelphia she has held many titles: elementary classroom teacher, computer teacher, director of educational technology, and now director of gifted and talented education. It's an impressive resume to be sure, but to many she is known simply as the "LEGO Lady". Whether it's the kindergarteners and first graders in her district that are **using LEGO® Education solutions to lead their early literacy initiative or middle school students exploring math, science and engineering through LEGO® MINDSTORMS® Education EV3**, Don is confident that LEGO Education solutions are offering her students an opportunity to shine.

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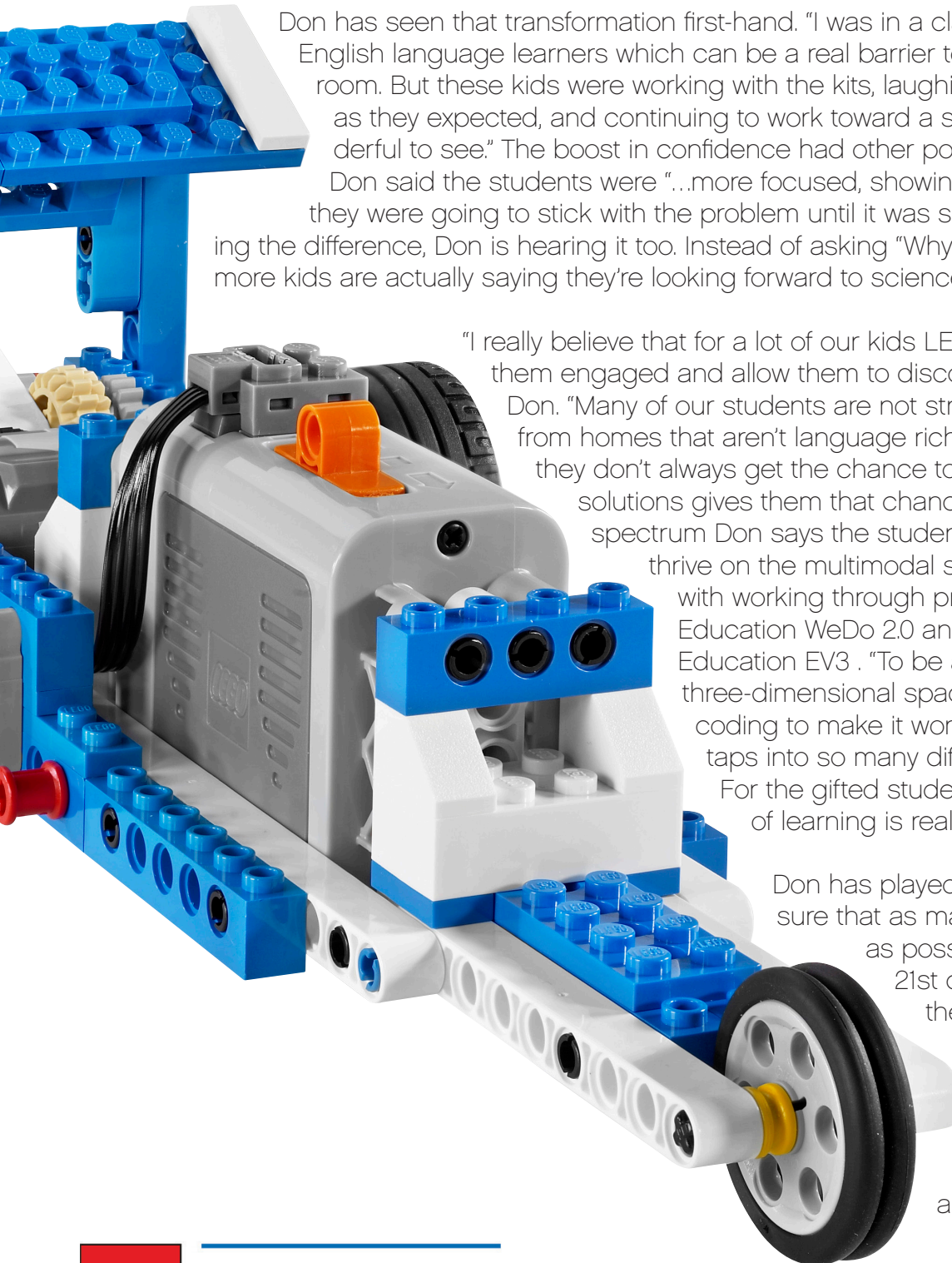
As one of the largest districts in the U.S., Philadelphia is culturally, socioeconomically, and developmentally diverse. Despite those differences Don found a common thread: "Kids love LEGO; it is familiar and inclusive for all and thus makes for easy introduction to the classroom." Don was able to look at grade levels, specifically fourth, fifth, and seventh, that had simple machines in their curriculum **and then pair LEGO Education Simple Machines directly with the content to give students the hands-on experience of learning with the content in a way that's familiar and engaging.** "They're really working with it instead of just memorizing a concept," she says. "This allows them to really see and understand the implication of the content. They internalize it and integrate it into their consciousness so they can recall it later in real life situations."

93



**The # of schools using LEGO Education Solutions in Philadelphia**

This kind of experience is bridging the gap between the variety of learning styles in 93 Philadelphia schools. For example, a fourth grader with selective mutism was able to work together with a peer and engage on a higher level because the Simple Machines kit gave him an alternative way to demonstrate that learning isn't always reliant on speaking or writing. "LEGO Education tools allow kids to shed their labels and find the way that they can express themselves and interact with the world," says Don. These students are perfect examples of how **LEGO Education solutions aren't just about engaging with content, but also transforming their confidence in the ability to learn concepts, demonstrate them beyond the curriculum, and build the 21st century skills critical to succeed today.**



Don has seen that transformation first-hand. "I was in a classroom with a lot of English language learners which can be a real barrier to confidence in the classroom. But these kids were working with the kits, laughing when things didn't go as they expected, and continuing to work toward a solution. It was really wonderful to see." The boost in confidence had other positive side effects as well. Don said the students were "...more focused, showing perseverance and grit, they were going to stick with the problem until it was solved." She's not just seeing the difference, Don is hearing it too. Instead of asking "Why do we have to learn this?" more kids are actually saying they're looking forward to science class.

"I really believe that for a lot of our kids LEGO is the way to keep them engaged and allow them to discover their own gifts," says Don. "Many of our students are not strong readers, or come from homes that aren't language rich, and because of that they don't always get the chance to shine. LEGO Education solutions gives them that chance." On the other end of the spectrum Don says the students in the gifted program thrive on the multimodal style of thinking that comes with working through problems using LEGO® Education WeDo 2.0 and LEGO MINDSTORMS Education EV3. "To be able to do that in this three-dimensional space, and then do the coding to make it work in the way they want, taps into so many different ways of thinking. For the gifted students that sort of expanse of learning is really wonderful."

Don has played a key role in making sure that as many Philadelphia students as possible are developing a 21st century skillset through the hands-on playful learning that comes with LEGO Education. But don't worry she won't be handing off the title of LEGO Lady any time soon.

