

Igniting Tenacity, Curiosity, and Imagination

Breigh Rhodes, second-grade teacher and LEGO Education advocate, explains how and why adaptability is so important.



About the Teacher:

Name: Breigh Rainey Rhodes

- **Role:** Second-grade teacher
- **Years of service:** 8 years
- **School:** Rollins Place Elementary, Zachary, LA
- **Number of students in school:** 800
- **Title I School**
- **LEGO® Education solutions currently being used:** StoryStarter Core Set with three expansion packs, Simple Machines, WeDo, LEGO MINDSTORMS® NXT and EV3, Machines and Mechanisms
- **How long has your school been using LEGO Education materials:** 8 years

What are the top concerns elementary teachers face when it comes to implementing standards?

Challenge 1: Finding high-quality resources that bring the standards to life

In my experience, the concerns can be many, even among teachers who are excited to embrace rigorous standards that will better prepare our learners. In a time when the national standards for many content areas are still relatively new, teachers are tasked with seeking out high-quality curricula, tools, and other resources for teaching and learning that will bring the standards to life.

Challenge 2: Determining if previously used resources are still relevant

Certain resources that have been around since before the standards were brought in may no longer be relevant or may need some reworking, while others may be aligned perfectly to the content and skills called upon by CCSS and NGSS.

Challenge 3: Ensuring resources are truly aligned to standards and also meet other key criteria

As far as products are concerned, there isn't the largest pool of standards-aligned material to draw from simply because developing a multitude of high-quality resources takes time, and just because a textbook company slaps a label "CCSS aligned" on the cover doesn't mean that it is. Resources have to be evaluated against certain criteria to see if they really do support the standards, and then of course they have to also meet whatever other criteria the teacher deems critical. For me, that would mean they must also be student centered, inquiry based, and hands on, for example.

How do LEGO Education solutions address those concerns?

The great thing about LEGO® Education's solutions is that the tools themselves (the WeDo kits, StoryStarter sets, etc.) can be used to support a diverse array of standards across content areas, and they are just as relevant (if not more) in my instructional decision making now as they were with the implementation of previous content standards. The LEGO Education solutions are designed in a way that allows true flexibility and adaptability in their use for a variety of teaching and learning purposes in a variety of settings, so I've been able to think about using them in different ways and with other content that I had before. What's exciting is that I'm always coming up with another idea for how to best use the tools in a way I hadn't considered the year before. It allows me to reinvent myself as an educator and ensure I'm always making the best choices for my students.



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How are LEGO Education solutions an appropriate resource for implementing standards in core subjects – math, literacy, science?

In all core areas, we use LEGO Education solutions in a variety of ways. Sometimes I implement a LEGO Education StoryStarter or WeDo activity as an engagement piece to kick off the excitement for a unit of study. Students are naturally engaged in using LEGO tools! Other times I choose a LEGO Education activity to help reinforce content that has been taught, such as allowing students to apply measurement skills with a robotics lesson. LEGO Education solutions are appropriate because they are flexible, high-quality tools that I can adapt to meet the needs of my diverse learners and because they lend themselves to such a wide array of content explorations and extensions without limit.

What are the unique aspects of LEGO Education solutions?

Perhaps the most unique aspect is the automatic interest students have in using the solutions. Students know me as “that LEGO teacher” even before they enter my class. Because the LEGO brick is such a classic and beloved toy that so many children use at home to build, create, and explore, it’s very natural for them to learn to use the tools in a school setting, and it’s very easy to get them excited because they are already interested in the tools themselves!

What pain points have LEGO Education solutions helped you overcome?

I could go on and on about this. LEGO Education solutions have helped me to address lots of needs. I absolutely love what StoryStarter can do to encourage blossoming writers no matter where they are developmentally or what their needs are in regards to reading and writing skills. I’ve seen the power in letting students brainstorm and create stories using this hands-on approach that StoryStarter allows, and this has been especially valuable with learners who have lots of great ideas in their heads but sometimes aren’t able to capture them all on paper because of the discrepancy in their ability to create a story and their ability to capture it with traditional paper/pencil or word processing software alone. It’s a beautiful thing. An area in which I always seek to cultivate student growth is in their critical and creative thinking skills. Sure, I’m responsible for content that I teach and the standards and curriculum, but I also want my students to leave me with the knowledge and skills to think for themselves, to gather evidence, and to be able to stand up to a problem and solve it.

“ I want to cultivate tenacity, skepticism, curiosity, and imagination in my students, and LEGO Education solutions are a tool I use to help do that.”



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