FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE MICROELECTRONICS WORKFORCE

AT A GLANCE

EDUCATOR: Cristina Stratton

ROLE: Second Grade Teacher

SCHOOL: Mary McLeod Bethune Girls Leadership Academy, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

PROGRAM: Girls of Tomorrow

FOCUS AREA: STEM Education, Student Engagement, Early Career Awareness

THE OPPORTUNITY

For Cristina Stratton, science has always been one of her favorite subjects to teach. But creating meaningful science experiences for young students takes time, planning, and resources. When Girls of Tomorrow came to her classroom, she saw an opportunity to give her students something they were excited about while bringing new energy to her teaching.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Stratton remembers the excitement that filled her classroom on program days. When she wrote "Today: Girls of Tomorrow" on the class calendar, her students would erupt in cheers. The activities gave students opportunities to work together, experiment, create, and learn without feeling like they were simply completing another school assignment.

"Sometimes they didn't even realize they were learning; they were just having fun. That's what school really should be all about."

MORE THAN SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

The experience also changed the way Stratton heard her students talk about science. Girls who were already curious began expressing their ideas more confidently, using words like "hypothesis" and "experimenting," and sharing inventions they had designed in their journals.

For Stratton, the value went beyond individual lessons. The program combined hands-on activities, literacy, discussion, and writing in a way that supported how young children learn.

"I had never had a group come in and think about, 'What do kids need?' They need exposure to literacy. They need hands-on. They need discussion. They need journaling. Every aspect of what I plan in a lesson was planned out for me. It was really well done."

WHY EARLY EXPOSURE MATTERS

Stratton believes girls should have opportunities to explore science and engineering before they begin to rule out careers based on stereotypes about who belongs in those fields.

"When they have these rich experiences at a young age, they're like, 'Oh, well, I can do that too.'"

She hopes experiences like Girls of Tomorrow will help students recognize their own potential and consider futures they might not have imagined otherwise.

WHAT'S NEXT

Stratton hopes Mary Bethune students will have another opportunity to participate in Girls of Tomorrow in a future semester. She believes continued exposure to hands-on STEM learning can help girls build confidence, discover interests, and see themselves as future scientists and engineers.

BUILDING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

MMEC supports workforce development by helping connect education with real-world STEM experiences. Through programs like Girls of Tomorrow, students can begin exploring technical concepts and career possibilities early, while educators gain new ways to make science meaningful and engaging.

Girls of Tomorrow | Funded by MMEC | NextGEN STEM Girls | Parallax Advanced Research

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