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**Lego-mania! Lego robots duke it out Downtown**

By Eli Rosenberg

*Brooklyn Daily*

Forget playing with pirate ships, kids these days prefer making robots out of Legos — and are forgoing weekend soccer for building-block battles.

More than 400 elementary and middle school students built working robots with the popular toy that some teachers use as learning tools, then watched as their creations duked it out during the Lego challenge on Jan. 12 at New York University's Poly campus.

"I keep Legos in the classroom," said Ryan Cain, a science teacher at PS 3 in Bedford-Stuyvesant. "Whenever they have a chance to use Legos, they jump at it, and start screaming and yelling."

Cain teaches a group of about a dozen fourth and fifth graders the ins and outs of robotics with the help of a nifty Lego kit in an after-school program, in which the kids train the bots to compete in a series of contests throughout the year.

But these are no battle bots.

Using special Lego sets designed to accommodate robotics — Lego Mindstorms and Lego WeDo for younger kids — the kids train for the competition, where their teams get scored for completing various missions with their robots, like the completion of an obstacle course, and of course, their team spirit.

At the Brooklyn qualifier this weekend on Jay Street, Cain's squad made it to the next round



Photo by Elizabeth Graham

*Lego legends: PS 3 students (from left) Musa Sakho, Shadhed Hanif, and Di Marcus Johnson show off their Lego robots before competing in the Brooklyn qualifying round of the First Lego League on Jan. 12 at NYU-Poly.*

after winning an award for “gracious professionalism.”

“We’re hoping to accomplish more missions for the city-wide competition,” said Cain. “We definitely have our work cut out for us.”

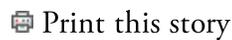
Cain’s after-school program is really all about giving kid a fun way to dive into science, math, and engineering.

“This stuff is the Sesame Street of robots,” Cain said. “This is the first step. If a kid wanted to get into engineering they would use a bit more advanced system.”

The competition was held by the National Science Institute and an organization founded by Dean Kamen, the inventor of the Segway, to get kids excited about science.

*Reach reporter Eli Rosenberg at [erosenberg@cnglocal.com](mailto:erosenberg@cnglocal.com) or by calling (718) 260-2531. And follow him at [twitter.com/emrosenberg](https://twitter.com/emrosenberg).*

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