

# Engineers develop gift guide for parents

November 21 2014, by Judith Barra Austin

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Monica Cardella, director of Purdue's INSPIRE Institute for Pre-College Engineering, watches as children play with a Goldie Blox toy, one of the items included in INSPIRE's "Engineering Gift Guide." Credit: Purdue University photo/James Schenke

Faculty and staff in Purdue University's College of Engineering have come up with a holiday gift guide that can help engage children in engineering concepts.

The "Engineering Gift Guide" was developed through the INSPIRE Institute for Pre-College Engineering, a part of the School of Engineering Education.

It features toys, games, books, movies and apps for [mobile devices](#) for a variety of ages. In addition to the selected items, the guide includes suggestions on finding other engineering-themed gifts.

"It's important to introduce engineering to children at a very young age – even before they reach kindergarten," says Monica Cardella, associate professor of [engineering education](#) and INSPIRE director. "One way to achieve this is simply putting a puzzle together or playing with building blocks and talking with the child about what they want to design, what ways they can accomplish that, and who or what could use their creation.

"It's also important to recognize that girls can enjoy creating circuits, conducting science experiments and designing structures as much as boys. However, studies show us that these kinds of toys are purchased more than twice as frequently for boys as they are for girls."

Along with the gift guide, INSPIRE offers "A Parent's Guide to Introducing Engineering at Home." It explains the importance of helping children learn about engineering and gives examples of how engineers help their own [children](#) learn the concepts of the engineering design process, which promotes learning in general.

"You don't have to be an engineer or a whiz at science and math to expose your child to engineering," Cardella says. "I think many parents and grandparents don't realize that. Part of our goal is to help parents of all gender, race, ethnicity, class and educational backgrounds provide access to engineering for their kids. We don't think that all kids need to end up loving engineering, but we do think all kids deserve a chance to consider if engineering is something they are interested in."

**More information:** The "Engineering Gift Guide" and "Parent's Guide" are available online at [inspire-purdue.org/parent-materials](https://inspire-purdue.org/parent-materials) .

Provided by Purdue University

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