

***aeioTU at the Park***  
**an experience that enhances the development of children  
through play and the connection with their senses,  
thoughts and nature.**

Play, as a vehicle for the construction of knowledge and learning, is a fundamental process for aeioTU\* because it significantly impacts the development of children. Play allows children to express their thoughts and beliefs about the world around them, and project them; creating hypothesis and corroborating them, thus building their knowledge. When being mediated by play, this construction takes place in an imaginative, exploratory and pleasurable way, which enhances children's development in the different stages and experiences of their life.

In aeioTU's Educational Experience, play is recognized as a fundamental learning strategy. It allows children to create playful experiences along with their peers and adults. These experiences enrich relationships and interactions, listening, collective agreement building and the recognition of the ideas and actions of others.

Play is more enriching when it takes place in a suitable and provocative environment that invites delight, joy, pleasure, enjoyment and movement. An environment that promotes children's confidence and security to explore, ask and inquire.

To this end, in 2013, educators from the aeioTU Nogal Center created *aeioTU at the Park*, a strategy to promote play amongst children and their families. Through an outdoor play experience it promotes links and connections with the open spaces of the community. Children and their families have the opportunity to explore a diversity of materials, selected with a defined pedagogical intention. Everyone participates in creative explorations and enjoy time together. The first experience in the aeioTU Nogal Center was so successful that it was scaled to other centers and territories, in such a way that it has impacted approximately 1,500 children and their families.

The organization of an *aeioTU at the Park* involves teachers and artists passionate about early childhood. They propose play and exploration stations with large-scale arrangements of materials that can be easily worked and transformed. Using materials such as cardboard, paper, cloth, paint, plastic, seedlings, branches, magnifying glasses, earth, water, pumps and soap, among others, children and their families are invited to develop creative processes, and open compositions. This refers to compositions based on the free choice of materials children wish to explore; that allow them to carry out creative processes without preconceived ideas. The environments created there and materials used, make way to experiences for the exploration and the development of the imagination, starting from free play with pedagogically intentional proposals.

To ensure this free creation, educators have stations that invite children and adults to communicate beyond words, to organize their thinking, their behaviors, and to use different languages while playing with materials. Consequently, educators find an innovative excuse to help children build learning spontaneously and joyfully.

*aeioTU at the Park*'s main objective is to contribute to the development of the full potential of children through play. This is done taking into account the five development dimensions: cognitive, emotional, creative, physical and social. Thus, through the participation of children in *aeioTU at the Park*, fundamental processes for development are made visible. For example, decision-making is made visible in the role children exercise when choosing stations and the materials with which they wish to interact. Also, character building is made visible when children strengthen it by relating with their peers and adults to share certain materials. Likewise, families improve their parenting practices by enabling other types of relationships between children and adults, where play is the mediator.

One of the last scenarios for *aeioTU at the Park* was in Mexico City, within the framework of the "aeioTU Lab 2018 Mexico - Colombia", with the support of the LEGO Foundation and the National DIF. This professional development event generated an impact on 9,180 children and 459 educators, and 80 children participated in the *aeioTU at the Park*. There, children and families discovered the power of play as a way to learn and enrich relationships, through joy, exploration, creativity, the search for solutions, use of resources and creation of suitable tools that enable the materialization of their ideas and imaginary. This generated in adults a greater sense of the meaning of play and a commitment to recognize its importance in the development processes of children.

Aligned with the mission of the LEGO Foundation, *aeioTU at the Park* is a tool that allows children, educators and families to re-define the meaning of the game and re-imagine learning. This is done through rich spaces and experiences which are meaningful and intentional, that offer fun, that allow children to try as many times as necessary, while promoting interaction with others.

This is how *aeioTU at the Park* becomes a playful experience that brings with it active, attractive and meaningful learning for children, families and educators. It implicitly enriches relationships and interactions between children and adults, with the environment and the materials. Likewise, it is an experience that allows adults to rediscover the infinite capacities that children have, recognizing the role of play as a fundamental right for learning and for children's integral development.

#### **\*About aeioTU**

aeioTU works in partnership with public and private actors to provide high quality attention (education, nutrition and care) to children under five years of age; and accompany other educational centers to improve their practices. [www.aeiotu.org](http://www.aeiotu.org)