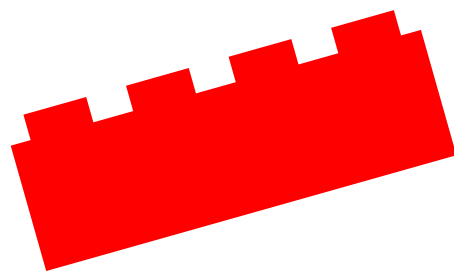


PLAY
INCLUDED



Building the foundations for a Brick Club: launching the Brick-by-Brick[®] programme in Mexico

Ana is an experienced special education Psychologist who has worked extensively with autistic children. Ana collaborated with Kinedu as a consultant to support the pilot of the first Brick Club in Mexico.

Building the foundation

In 2022, Play Included[®], the creator of the Brick-by-Brick[®] programme, partnered with Kinedu, an Early Years child development platform, to pilot its Brick-by-Brick programme for the first time in Mexico. The pilot scheme took place in Monterrey, Mexico, home to one of the LEGO[®] Group's largest LEGO brick manufacturing factories.

Play Included[®]'s Brick-by-Brick[®] programme offers children positive, meaningful experiences in a playful and accepting environment.

Through collaborative LEGO play, children have fun, make friends, and develop their communication skills, confidence, and social and emotional wellbeing. Children know the Brick-by-Brick programme as 'Brick Club' and sessions are delivered on a weekly basis, often lasting around an hour.

As an experienced psychologist in special education who understands the different ways that autistic children play, communicate and socialise, Ana was chosen by Kinedu to lead the Brick Club sessions. Ana explains: "With the Brick-by-Brick[®] methodology, I was hoping to see improvements in the children's attempts to socialise and collaborate with one another."

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Brick-by-Brick: setting up a Brick Club

Ana completed her Certified Facilitator Brick-by-Brick® training to develop her facilitation skills to deliver Brick Club sessions. Following her training, Ana decided to run two weekly Brick Clubs: one for children age five to six years old and another for children age six to eight years old. Both clubs took place at midday on a weekday over a period of six weeks. The sessions were held in a local public children's library.

Ana identified children who might benefit from attending a Brick Club through online Facebook groups and recommendations from her professional colleagues. All of the children who were invited to take part in the pilot scheme shared a passion for playing with LEGO bricks; an interest in building LEGO models is fundamental to children being able to make friends and have fun at Brick Club.

Improved confidence and communication

During just six weeks, Ana noted the children growing in confidence throughout the sessions. Ana says: "It was amazing to see the individual changes in each of the children and the group dynamic. Some children were anxious at first, as they didn't know the other children and were unfamiliar with the concept of Brick Club. However, over time, those who were more anxious drew closer to the rest of the group and began to engage with the other children."

Each Brick Club session saw improvements in children's communication skills:

"Over time, some children actively tried to communicate and play with the others, which was the most important thing. It surprised me how much they enjoyed coming to the sessions and playing with the others towards the end of the programme. At Brick Club, we have been thrilled to see how autistic children have connected with each other with confidence. The children really enjoy coming to the sessions."

The child-led approach of Brick Clubs means the sessions are extremely flexible and can be tailored to the group's strengths, interests and needs. For the younger children taking part in Brick Club, Ana adapted some of the activities, leveraging the children's mutual love of LEGO model building as an opportunity to develop their communication skills, imitation skills, and vocabulary during the collaborative building process.



Ana's recommendations

If you are considering the Brick-by-Brick® programme approach to support the autistic children you work with, Ana advises: "Play Included®'s training succeeds in conveying the importance of 'learning through play', which makes the programme very dynamic and interesting, while giving you all the tools you need to set up your own Brick Club."

Ana adds: "It is also important to consider when and where you are going to run your Brick Club, taking into consideration the context of the specific children and the availability of their families to make sure that it is accessible to everyone."

Following the successful pilot of the Brick-by-Brick® programme in Mexico, Ana is looking forward to setting up her own Brick Club for autistic children: "I am now looking for another opportunity to run Brick Club in a public setting, this time on my own, and hopefully I will be able to reach even more children than before."

The Brick-by-Brick® programme is now available in Mexico and the online training is available in Spanish. For more information email hello@playincluded.com.