

Loose Parts Play

Explore ways to incorporate play based learning and loose parts into your storytime experiences

History of Loose Parts Play

- Theory presented by architect Simon Nicholson in 1971:
 - “As long as materials can be moved, redesigned, put together, and taken apart in a variety of ways, they are classified as loose parts.”



Loose Parts in the Classroom

- Montessori
- Reggio Emilia
- Waldorf
- Nature-based or outdoor classrooms
- ...or really any learning environment!

Developmental Domains

Critical thinking; numbers, classification, spatial relationships, solving problems

Gross motor, fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination



Organization of materials

Belonging; inclusiveness; passion; risk-taking; productive; decision-making

Vocabulary, discussion, sound words

Seven types of loose parts materials

Collected in *Loose Parts: a Start Up Guide*

by Sally Haughey and Nicole Hill

Nature Based

Sticks

Rocks

Dried Flowers

Leaves

Seeds

Sand

Dirt

Pinecones

Wood cookies

Wood chips

Moss

Shells

Acorns

Pods

Logs

Sticks

Peach Pits

Feathers

Squash

Sweet Gum Balls

Anise Stars

Cinnamon Sticks

Nutmeg

Wood Reuse

- Corks
- Clothespins
- Pegs
- Wooden Beads
- Golf Tees
- Chair Legs
- Dowels
- Wooden Blocks
- Hardwood floor scraps
- Candlesticks
- Napkin rings
- Wood scraps
- Wood pegs
- Scrabble pieces
- Spools
- Wood frames
- Rings
- Puzzle pieces
- Wood people
- Thread spools

Plastic

- Milk Caps
- Bottles
- Gerber food containers
- PVC pipes
- Reels
- Empty spice containers
- Film canisters
- Curtain rings
- Hair rollers
- Straws
- CD cases
- Game pieces
- Beads
- Bubble Wrap
- Cones
- Lollipop sticks
- Buttons
- Funnels
- Maker Caps
- Plastic bead necklaces
- Golf balls
- Cups
- Hula hoops
- Bag clips

Metal

Nuts and bolts

Washers

Tin foil

Old gadgets

Bangles

Curtain rings

Muffin tins

Potato mashers

Gutters

Magnets

Keys

Bottle tabs

License Plates

Forks and spoons

Links

Metal lids

Thimbles

Silver beads

Soda can tabs

Thread spools

Door knobs

Discs

Hair clips

Candle sticks

Tubing

Cans

Spoons

Ceramic and Glass

Ceramic tiles

Glass Beads

Gems

Marbles

Prisms

Slate

Tiles

Flower pots

Granite scraps

Cabinet door knobs

Small mirror discs

Sea glass

Glass vase beads

Drawer knobs

Balls

Tiny bottles

Fabric, Yarn, Ribbon

Chiffon

Twine

Ribbon

Silk

Wool

Scarves

Flags

Burlap

Yarn

Embroidery thread

Felt pieces

Doilies

Lace

String

Rope

Rubber bands

Packaging

Packing Peanuts

Bubble Wrap

Boxes

Cardboard scraps

Paper rolls

Wrapping paper

Painters tape

Egg cartons

Ribbon wheel

Cereal boxes

Paper scraps

Loose Parts Play in Action

- <https://vimeo.com/185688967>



Block Play

- Problem solving
- Imagination
- Self-expression
- Mathematics
- Continuity and permanence
- Creativity
- Science
- Self-esteem
- Social and emotional growth



Source: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2015/ten-things-children-learn-block-play>

Developmental Stages of Block Play

- Stage 1: Tote & Carry (2-3 year olds)
- Stage 2: Building (3 year olds)
- Stage 3: Bridging (3-4 year olds)
- Stage 4: Enclosures (4 year olds)
- Stage 5: Representational building (4-5 year olds)
- Stage 6: Complex building (5 and up)



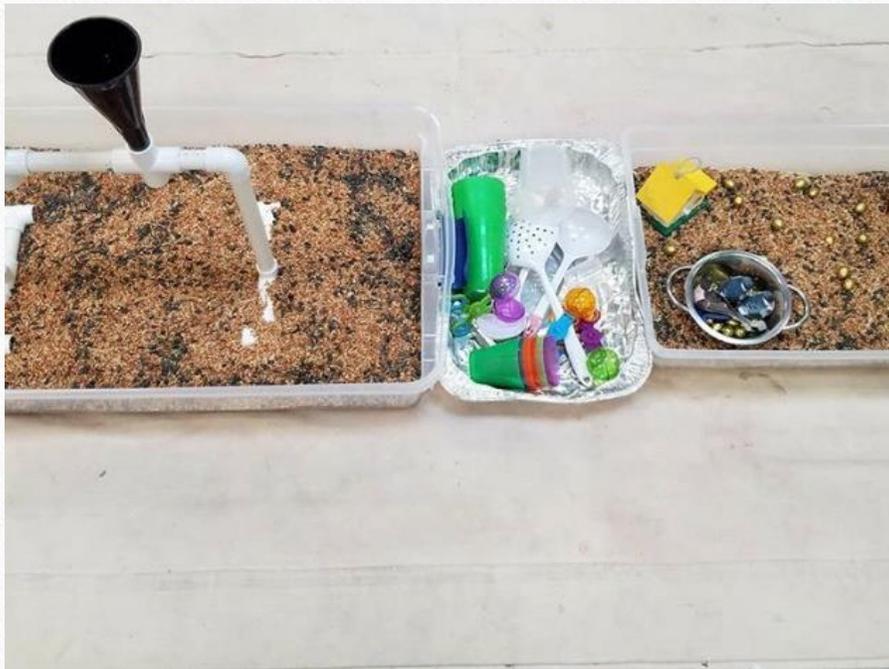
Source: <https://fairydustteaching.com/2011/03/developmental-stages-of-block-play/>

Examples in action...

Loose Parts play at LFPL!



Loose Parts at LFPL!



Loose Parts at LFPL!

The Three Pigs by David Wiesner



Shredded paper, pipe cleaners, red Legos



Loose Parts at LFPL!

Experiencing loose parts play after
book sharing



Building the brick houses!



Loose Parts at LFPL!











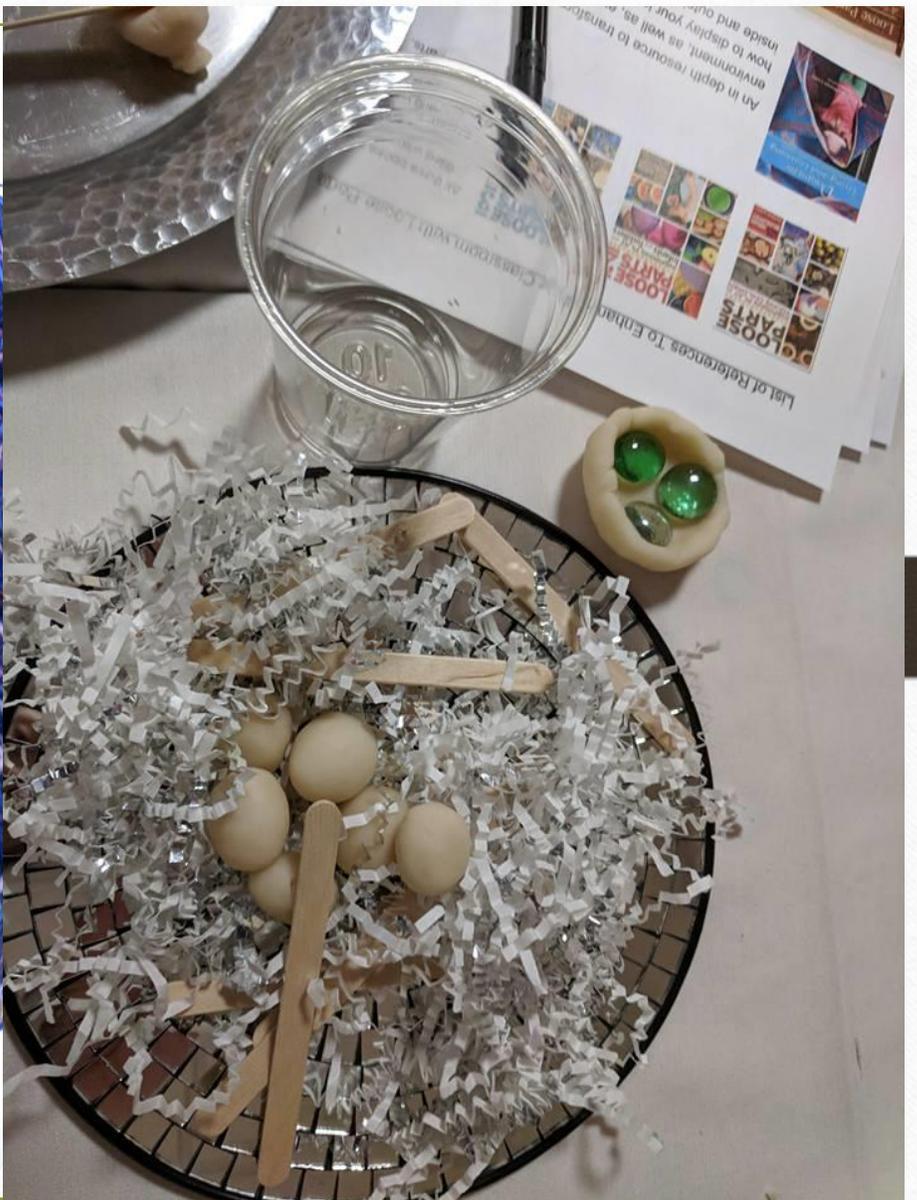
























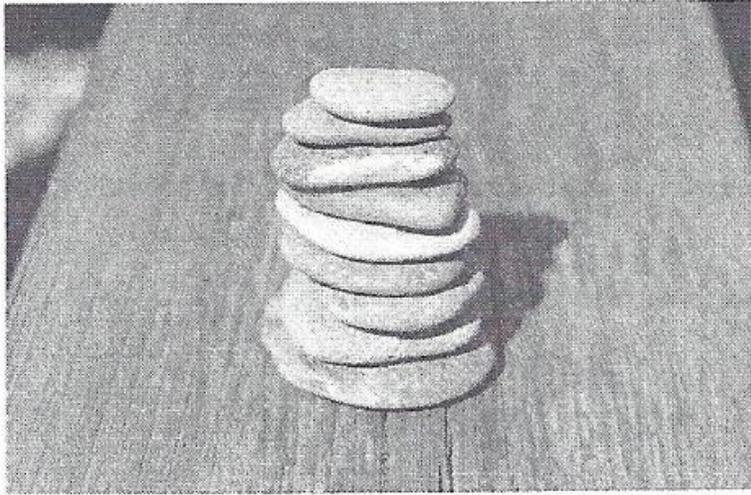






How do I organize all that STUFF??





PLANNING FOR LOOSE PARTS PLAY

1. (optional) identify a cross-curricular or thematic connection (i.e. children's interests, children's literature connection) to inspire your loose parts station:

2. Identify 3-5 loose parts you will pull together for this station:

Item	Quantity

3. What are some of the reasons you chose these loose parts?

- Reason 1:

- Reason 2:

4. What will you be looking for as you watch the children play with these loose parts & how will you record observations?

5. How will your observations influence future planning/
classroom experiments?

Depending on what we observe, we might experiment with...

By (doing what?)....

Things to consider...

- Pay attention to choking hazards
- Be ready to prep parents for something “new”
- Nature-based elements may have a shelf life
- Be aware of your space and storage
- Building cultural competencies and connections

Let's discuss the differences:



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Thrive Forest School @ Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve in Goshen, Kentucky

- This school is the first all outdoors, all weather preschool in the Louisville area.
- Take a look at what a typical day looks like at Thrive Forest School:
<https://www.creaseymahannaturepreserve.org/thrive-forest-school/>
- Loose Parts Play in Storytimes and other programs offered at the public library can also lend themselves to nature based play
- Use ideas from this school and others like it to create nature based play in your library!

Additional examples of nature based learning environments

Pre-school Forest Adventures @
**Jefferson Memorial Forest in Fairdale,
Kentucky**

<https://louisvilleky.gov/government/jefferson-memorial-forest/pre-school-forest-adventures>

<https://certified.natureexplore.org/jefferson-memorial-forest-2/>

**Preschool @Redwood Cooperative School in
Lexington, Kentucky**

<https://www.redwoodcoop.com/preschool/>

The Nature Explore Classroom @
**Keystone Learning Academy in Louisville,
Kentucky**

<https://certified.natureexplore.org/keystone-learning-academy/>

The Nature Explore Classroom @ **Lost
River Cave in Bowling Green, Kentucky**

<https://certified.natureexplore.org/lost-river-cave/>

Resources:

- <https://fairydustteaching.com/blog/> download free eBook **Loose Parts: A Start Up Guide**
- *Loose Parts: Inspiring play in young children* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky
- *Loose Parts 2: Inspiring play with infants and toddlers* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky
- *Loose Parts 3: Inspiring culturally sustainable environments* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky
- *Designs for Living and Learning, 2nd Edition: Transforming Early Childhood Environments* by [Deb Curtis](#) & [Margie Carter](#)
- Pinterest (of course!)