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

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:

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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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:
Let’s discuss the differences:
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/](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
- Pinterest (of course!)