



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. V, No. 2

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ **Foster curiosity and development through play**
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

“Loose Parts” Play

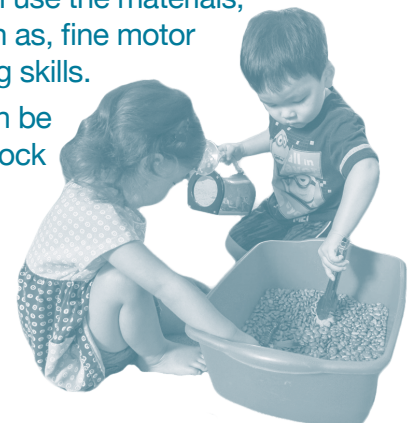
Have you ever noticed that young children can spend lots of time playing with simple materials like boxes, rocks, shells, sand, or water? What is it about these items that capture little one's attention? According to Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky, authors and teachers of early childhood education, “children usually prefer play that stimulates their curiosity and gives free rein to their imaginations and creativity.” They believe that one of the best ways to enhance children's natural curiosity and play is to introduce a wide variety of materials called “loose parts” into their environment.

Originally coined by architect Simon Nicholson, loose parts refers to “natural or synthetic found, bought, or upcycled materials that children can move, manipulate, control, and change within their play.” These items are a combination of natural, store bought, and recycled items that can be easily moved throughout the play space and can be used in unlimited ways.

Loose parts offer many possibilities for open-ended learning. Some of the many benefits of loose parts are that they:

- Deepen Critical Thinking – Children are encouraged to arrange and rearrange the materials to investigate, analyze, and question in order to try out their ideas to see what happens.
- Promote Creative Thinking – Materials are open-ended so it encourages creativity, e.g., a cardboard box can be imagined to become a car, boat, or house.
- Support Developmental Domains – As children use the materials, it encourages development of many skills such as, fine motor skills, working with others, and problem solving skills.
- Promote a wide range of play – loose parts can be used in dramatic play, science experiments, block centers, and even outdoors!

This newsletter will discuss how to facilitate loose parts play with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Examples that you can include in your child care environment are provided with tips for using these materials effectively.



Facilitating Loose Parts Play

Introducing loose parts play into your child care environment involves much more than acquiring the materials. It requires you to be intentional about what you'd like the children to use and ensuring that the materials are age and developmentally appropriate for the children in your care.

In addition, facilitating loose parts play involves:

- Encouraging children to play with the materials in a way that allows them to follow their own ideas and interests. Sometimes you'll have to resist suggesting activities to encourage children to think and experiment with the materials themselves.
- Talking with the children about how they are using the materials, encouraging them to explain their ideas about how things work.
- Observing what the children are interested in and using those insights to provide additional materials for future play.



Loose Parts for Infants

Loose parts are captivating, open-ended, and mobile objects that are intriguing and fascinating to infants. Infants are innately curious and attracted to objects, such as cardboard tubes, spoons, scarves, or large stones, seashells, and balls. These objects allow them to explore with their senses by displaying distinctive sounds, movements, textures, and colors.

Here are some ideas to introduce loose parts to infants:

- Colorful plastic cups for stacking and nesting.
- Clear plastic containers with caps (e.g., a clean empty mayonnaise jar with the label taken off), filled with colored water, and placed on a window sill to see how the light passes through.
- Wooden spoons and plastic containers to bang and pound on.
- Balls with finger holes with a cardboard tube to see how a ball moves down the ramp.

Because infants are quick to put things in their mouths, introducing loose parts to infants requires special safety considerations. Take into account the material's size (nothing smaller than what can fit in a toilet paper roll), durability (make sure there's no small removable pieces or any peeling paint), and cleanliness (choose items that can be effectively cleaned and sanitized without breaking down).



Loose Parts for Toddlers

Toddlers are interested in play that includes large motor activities. They want a chance to practice their newly learned skills, such as jumping, climbing, rolling, throwing, and constructing. Introducing loose parts in various areas of your home allows toddlers to practice their skills as well as stimulate growth in all areas of their development.

Here are some ideas to introduce loose parts to toddlers:

- Large tubes and various balls in the block area for ramp building and constructing.
- Safe handheld items, such as pom poms, bean bags, bath loofahs, or yarn balls next to containers or laundry baskets for throwing or sorting.
- Large boxes and pillows for obstacle courses or pretend play.
- Muffin tin and bottle caps for sorting and arranging.
- Measuring cups, bowls, funnels, shovels, and spoons with colorful aquarium gravel or sand for filling and dumping.



Loose Parts for Preschoolers

Preschoolers' curiosity moves them to explore and ask many questions that lead to in-depth explorations. Loose parts in the environment can support their curiosity by allowing children to question, hypothesize, explore, and investigate how to use the materials. Encourage the children to construct structures; investigate their ideas about colors, weight, and patterns; and explore the relationship that objects have to one another.

Here are some ideas to introduce loose parts to preschoolers:

- Glass stones or rocks on a placemat to make designs
- Large and small containers filled with pebbles, gravel, leaves, silk flowers, and twigs. These are good for creative play and exploring concepts of empty and full, and discovering how to transport items.
- Clothespins, craft sticks, Velcro rollers, scarves, hangers for children to explore how to connect and disconnect objects to build structures and imaginary play spaces.
- Pen or marker caps, hair rollers, paper clips, and rubber bands can be used as measurement tools to discover length or height of an object.



Citations:

Casey, T., Robertson, J. (2016). *Loose parts play: A toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf>

Daly, L., Beloglovsky, M. (2015). *Loose parts: Inspiring play in young children*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press

Daly, L., Beloglovsky, M. (2016). *Loose parts 2: Inspiring play in with infants and toddlers*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press

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Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



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