LOOSE PARTS

Loose parts are materials that learners can move, combine, arrange, transform and use in many different ways. Their value lies not in the objects themselves, but in the possibilities learners create with them.

WHAT MAKES LOOSE PARTS VALUABLE?

OPEN-ENDED	Materials can become many things rather than having one correct use.
COMBINABLE	Objects can be connected, sorted, balanced, stacked or rearranged.
ADAPTABLE	Learners can change their ideas, plans and purposes as play develops.
ACCESSIBLE	Different materials and entry points support varied ways of participating.
REVISITABLE	Resources remain available for ideas to grow and change over time.

THE MATERIALS DO NOT DETERMINE THE LEARNING

A basket of stones might invite counting, pattern-making, storytelling, construction or scientific investigation. What matters is how learners use the materials, the questions that emerge and how teachers respond.

Notice: Who is deciding what the materials are for? Can learners change their minds, invent uses and return to unfinished ideas?

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LOOSE PARTS

REFLECTING ON LOOSE PARTS IN PRACTICE

Use this guide to review not only what materials are available, but also the opportunities they create for agency, exploration and participation.

A LOOSE PARTS AUDIT

LOOK FOR...		WHAT DO WE NOTICE?
VARIETY	Natural, recycled, found and manufactured materials	
AGENCY	Learners choose, move, combine and repurpose materials	
ACCESS	Different sizes, textures and levels of challenge	
TIME	Opportunities to revisit and extend constructions	
SAFETY	Risks considered in relation to learners and context	

OBSERVE BEFORE INTERVENING

What are learners doing with the materials?

What patterns, relationships or questions are emerging?

When might an additional material, question or demonstration extend their thinking?

ONE CHANGE WE COULD MAKE

A material to introduce, remove, relocate or make more accessible:

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