


50 LEARNING-INSPIRED THINGS TO DO WITH LOOSE PARTS FOR PRIMARY YEARS

"As long as materials can be moved, redesigned, put together, and taken apart in a variety of ways, they are classified as loose parts." Simon Nicholson, 1971

The fantastic thing about loose parts is that they do not come with a set of instructions nor have any predetermined rules. There is no set way to use them and when children engage in loose parts play, they are making, creating, problem solving and hypothesizing. They can reimagine items in many different ways.

Sustained and focused learning is often observed as children engage in loose parts play and the agency of the child is clear. Although the learning is often self-directed, educators play a vital role in facilitating these experiences and in often knowing when to; watch, wait, support, give more time or offer encouragement to a learner.

There are many curriculum links that can be made when interacting with loose parts. The list below is not a prescriptive list of what to do, but more of a spotlight on the many possibilities of where you could begin. A place to start more so than an end in itself. Loose parts open enormous possibilities for children to truly become the critical thinkers they're destined to be.

TIPS

- Consider the storage and management of loose parts as you establish your collections
- Consider planting plants that can provide you with a close and reliable source of loose parts (ie seed pods, leaves and flowers)
- Establish collections of loose parts in collaboration with the learning community (consider what constitutes a 'useful' or interesting loose part. In the eyes of one child it may be very different to another child or adults perspective)

ENGLISH

1. Experiment with small world play to develop creative stories
2. Read *Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis to inspire writing of narratives
3. Write 'What am I?' clues on a paper bag with a hidden loose part inside to reveal
4. Use loose parts for tracing, threading and fine motor activities
5. Write a procedural text on how to construct something with loose parts (have a photo of the intended outcome to share once someone has followed the instructions)
6. Write poetry based on the attributes of a particular natural element (ie rough like bark, smooth like paper)
7. Read Fraidyzoo by Thyra Heder and use it as inspiration for dramatic play or storytelling in the outdoors
8. Read *Not a Stick* – by Antoinette Portis
9. Read *Rosie Revere Engineer*; *Iggy Peck Architect*; and *Ada Twist Scientist* by Andrea Beaty
10. Read *Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert
11. Read *This Little Pebble* by Anna Claybourne

MATHS

12. Count a collection of loose parts or arrange them in various groups according to number
13. Sort by various attributes; size, shape, colour, texture, smell, properties, surface

14 Pattern with loose parts; how many patterns can you create?

15 Establish your own currency with various loose parts and give them different monetary values by the class bank. Make up trading games to go with it

16 Create symmetrical images

17 Connect a 100 days of school challenge with children collecting 100 small loose parts as a class resource

18 Create a daily challenge for each child to collect one natural small part every day. Store these in individual calico or upcycled bags with each child's name on it and use these collections throughout the year for free play, counting, sorting, ordering and classifying learning activities

STEM

19 Develop sensory tubs where loose parts are hidden and via touch, smell or sound try to work out what these are

20 Put loose parts on a tinkering table to pull apart and put back together

21 Design and create something and reflect on the engineering design process in a written review (1 Define the Problem. 2 Do Background Research. 3 Specify Requirements. 4 Brainstorm Solutions. 5 Choose the Best Solution. 6 Development Work. 7 Build a Prototype. 8 Test and Redesign.

22 Create an outdoor, loose parts inspired makerspace and encourage weekly challenges (think marble runs, raft building, designing towers bridges and catapults)

23 Challenge: how many ways can loose parts be used to reflect the concept of balance?

24 Challenge: Use loose parts to design a display or model to teach another group about Newtons 3 Laws of Motion

HASS

25 Use loose parts to represent a journey or create a journey map on the ground with loose parts showing the stages of the journey

26 Undertake some mapping or geography research to locate where particular loose parts come from

27 Go on a walk outside the school gate to collect loose parts

28 Build a den or a hut from loose parts. Form a community of dens and consider the way this community could function and what will help to create a harmonious space for living. Write this up as a research project, connecting with Nationhood or Governance

29 Use the following line of inquiry to undertake an outdoor learning research project: Technology from the past and present demonstrates how loose parts are engineered to meet everyday living needs. What might this look like in the future?

THE ARTS

30 Use clay or naturally scented playdough to present loose parts on a platform or base

31 Create a picture frame and work out a way to join this together

32 Make a mobile or dream catcher

33 Create faces and display in an outdoor gallery

34 Work in groups to create a range of musical instruments and use these to perform in an outdoor orchestra.

35 Use Wild Ideas: let nature inspire your thinking to create an Outdoor Art Gallery exhibition

HEALTH AND P.E.

36 Forage and collect items to establish a loose parts collection

37 Create a gross motor circuit that includes elements of balance, challenge and problem solving

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

38 Set up different sized loose parts 'play trays' to engage learners in a range of settings and play motifs

39 Ask students to create an example of; reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation with loose parts

40 Consider how tools and equipment (past and present) impact on our lives, and how these elements might be better designed and managed

41 Ask students to write a '50 Things To Do With Loose Parts' list of their own

42 Set up a display table with a sign saying; 'This is not a …, it's a …' How many ways can that item be 'reimagined'? Change this weekly and share ideas in different ways (record, drawing, small group discussion, poetry)

PROBLEM SOLVING

43 How many loose parts can be stacked in one pile?

44 Challenge: develop a system to transport an item from one fixed point to another without touching it

45 Use large loose parts to move from one spot to another without touching the ground.

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

46 Research properties of loose parts and where they have come from. Where was 'that' loose part 100 years ago and where will it be in 100 years' time

47 Develop an outdoor classroom display to model how cultures world-wide solved everyday problems using loose parts in the past and present day

48 Develop a presentation to share with your community about the importance of reusing and recycling loose part materials

49 Investigate local native plants that can be planted to provide your site with an ongoing source of loose parts and incorporate the notion of sustainability.

50 Create a site-based competition or challenge to motivate your community to develop a loose parts collection. Perhaps each class/group could collect a different type of loose part or a central area to collect loose parts could be established.