



PARTS PROJECT

Loose Parts as Classroom Materials

Overview/Purpose:

As evidenced in the work of Diane Landry, everyday materials have the ability to express new ideas. The schools of Reggio Emilia share this philosophy and consider the diverse language of materials as essential to the expression of the “hundred languages” of children*. “Loose parts” are materials that have open-ended properties—meaning they have no predetermined use. Recycled (ie. boxes and plastic lids) and natural (ie. sticks and rocks) loose parts elicit creativity and self-expression across all age domains.

*About the “hundred languages”

Educators in Reggio believe that children have the right and the ability to express their thinking, theories, ideas, learning and emotions in many ways. Therefore, Reggio educators provide children with a wide range of materials and media, and welcome a diversity of experiences, so that children encounter many avenues for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing and symbolically expressing their thoughts and feelings. In this way, teachers, parents and children can better understand each other. These languages can include drawing, paint, clay, wire, natural and recycled materials, light and shadow, dramatic play, music and dance. They can also include expression with words through metaphors, stories or poems of the children’s interpretations and reflections about their experiences or through special design, such as maps and three-dimensional constructions. In fact, there is not a separation between what it is considered traditionally artistic expression and academic education in the schools of Reggio Emilia. All are considered part of the one hundred and more languages of learning. Teachers in Reggio often encourage children to represent their ideas on a particular topic in multiple languages, and find that the process of moving between languages supports children in their understanding and learning. Taken from <http://www.reggioalliance.org>

The use of loose parts in the classroom is representative of a mind-set or philosophy more so than a specific activity. By providing access to a diverse range of recycled/repurposed materials, students have the opportunity to try out their individual ideas while developing skills such as creativity, problem solving and self-expression. The availability of these materials is key. It is not important to know how these materials will be used—the role of the teacher is to trust and support the creative potential of the students. These materials then become a resource in the classroom.

Bringing Loose Parts Into the Classroom:

Loose parts (recycled or natural) can be incorporated into the classroom in many ways—from a few neatly displayed baskets to an entire dedicated area. Tips for bringing loose parts into the classroom include:

- Materials should be in good condition (not cracked or dirty) and inviting to use
- Materials should be neatly stored in an aesthetically pleasing way (clear containers or natural baskets are preferable)
- Materials should be accessible throughout the day- for use across learning domains and classroom areas
- Students are responsible for returning materials to their home base and should participate in sorting/organizing materials
- Engage parents in the collection of materials from work/home

Materials may include:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Cardboard | • Plastic Containers | • Wood Scraps |
| • Tubes | • Sample Swatches | • Metal Pieces |
| • Old CDs | • PVC Pipe | • Rope/String/Wire |
| • Plastic Lids | • Netting | • Natural Materials |
| • Fabric | • Packaging Materials | • Magazines/Old Books |

Photo Inspiration:



Top Left
<http://media-cache-ec0.pinimg.com/originals/70/06/fd/7006fde26ed3c6c84042da523967334b.jpg>

Top Right
<http://bloccs.xtec.cat/mbardera/page/4/>

Bottom Left <http://mommyme-thewonderyears.blogspot.com/2013/03/a-place-to-create.html>

Bottom Right
<http://bloccs.xtec.cat/mbardera/2012/10/04/remida-la-casa-dels-objectes/>

For more inspiration visit Loose Parts Project on Pinterest and Facebook.