

INCLUSION  
STRATEGIES  
& TOOLS

# LOOSE PARTS

*“Loose parts are materials that are moved, carried, redesigned, lined up, taken apart, and put back together in multiple ways. Loose parts are used alone or combined with other materials.”*

– Simon Nicholson

The Theory of Loose Parts (1971)



Leaves



Shells



Stones



Pinecones



Sticks

## Natural



Cardboard Tubes



Fabric Scraps



Bottle Caps



Tires

## Recycled



Baskets



Lids



Utensils

## Household



Blocks



Beads



Stackers



Rings

## Commercial

## WHAT ARE LOOSE PARTS?

Loose parts are open-ended materials children can move, combine, redesign, take apart, and put back together.

## WHY LOOSE PARTS MATTERS

- Stimulates creativity and imagination
- Encourages problem-solving and innovation
- Builds independence, confidence, and decision-making
- Fosters collaboration and communication
- Supports holistic development:
  - Language (descriptive and expressive)
  - Emotional (confidence, resilience)
  - Cognitive (sorting, matching, counting)
  - Physical (fine and gross motor skills)

**Loose parts can be used by all children because they can be adapted in many ways.**

**For example, giving extra space for a wheelchair or offering larger pieces to make building easier helps every child take part and enjoy the play.**

## HOW TO INTRODUCE LOOSE PARTS

- Start Simple
  - Begin with a few types of materials. For example, natural or familiar ones like stones, sticks, or fabric scraps.
- Model Exploration
  - Demonstrate curiosity and open-ended thinking. Say things like, "I wonder what else we can do with this?"
- Offer Choices
  - Let children choose what to use and how to use it; no set outcomes or rules for "how to play."

**Loose parts are everywhere: in your home, in your classroom, in your community, and in nature!**

**Start with what you have and go from there. There is no limit to where you can find loose parts.**

## WHERE TO USE LOOSE PARTS:

- Indoor: Art areas, dramatic play areas, block corners, sensory bins
- Outdoor: Nature-based areas, sand and water play, mud kitchens
- At Home: Backyard, kitchen drawers, closets, DIY craft corners
- Community: Parks, trails, libraries, nature-based programs

**Loose parts come to life when children move them — shifting, stacking, scattering, and combining them in endless ways.**