

# Creating Culturally Sustainable Environments Using Loose Parts

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Transforming Early Learning  
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Early Childhood classrooms are diverse in language, ethnicity, culture, family values, traditions, and history.

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Have a sense of belonging

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Culturally Sustainable Environments

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Are joyful

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Culturally Sustainable Environments

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Offer children opportunities to explore their identity

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Culturally Sustainable Environments

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Invite children to speak their home language

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Are inspired by beauty

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Allow children to be their authentic selves

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Are full of wonder

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Create democracy

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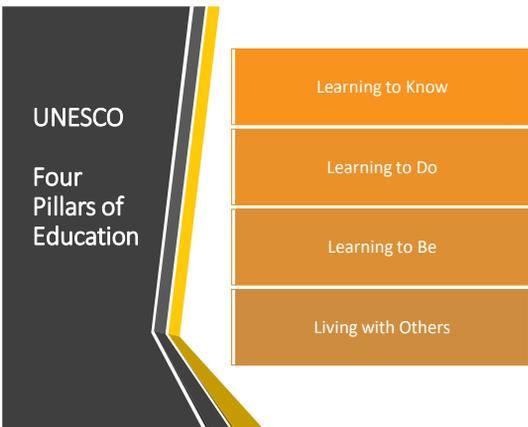
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### Culturally Sustainable Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings

Has a firm grounding in one's culture of learning while acquiring fluency in at least one more culture.

Through validating our culture, history, language, traditions, and environment, we meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

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### Anti-Bias Education

Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards

Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; use accurate language for human differences; and make deep, caring human connections.

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

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### Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Zaretta Hammond

Relationships in the form of learning partnerships are the starting point of becoming culturally responsive as an educator.

Goes beyond decorating with historical artifacts of different groups; it also offers an emotional stable environment.

The space is a powerful container that reflects, communicates and embraces cultural values.

The space is physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially safe.

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# The Theory of Loose Parts

Simon Nicholson

Children love to interact with variables, such as materials and shapes, smells, and other physical phenomena, such as electricity, magnetism and gravity; media such as gases and fluids; sounds, music, motion; chemical interactions, cooking and fire; and other humans, and animals, plants, words, concepts and ideas.

“The degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it.”

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## Making Connections



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Loose parts are materials that represent and embrace the diverse cultures found in early childhood environments.

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The open-ended qualities of loose parts, allow children to recreate and represent their culture and home language in a variety of ways.

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Loose parts increase the thinking possibilities for young children, as they gain power over their own capacities.

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Loose parts are an educational philosophy, that transform early childhood environments, and provoke meaningful play experiences.

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Loose parts support the development of imaginative play.

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Loose parts play helps children learn about each other, and respect differences.

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Loose parts promotes creative and critical thinking.

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Loose parts help children gain an understanding of equality and equity.

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Loose parts help children construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity.

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Loose parts supports children to develop and demonstrate empathy.

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**Child, Family  
and  
Community**

- Child Identity
- Community
- Traditions

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# Child Identity

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Loose parts give children the opportunity to represent who they are, explore their skin color and their diverse characteristics.

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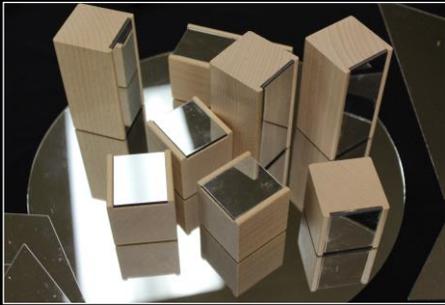
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Add loose parts, such as mirror blocks to invite children to find similarities and differences in their individual characteristics.

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Loose parts create equity.

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# Community



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Culturally sustainable environments infused with loose parts, provide opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other.

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A community garden offers opportunities to work together and provides us with intriguing loose parts.

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Community landmarks can serve as inspiration and help children learn about their local community.

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# Traditions

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Celebrating traditions brings people together to celebrate diversity.

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Gathering favorite loose parts to take home so that we can remember our time together.

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Invite families to share their favorite games.

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### Loose Parts and the Visual Arts

- Art
- Language and Literacy
- Music and Movement

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# ART

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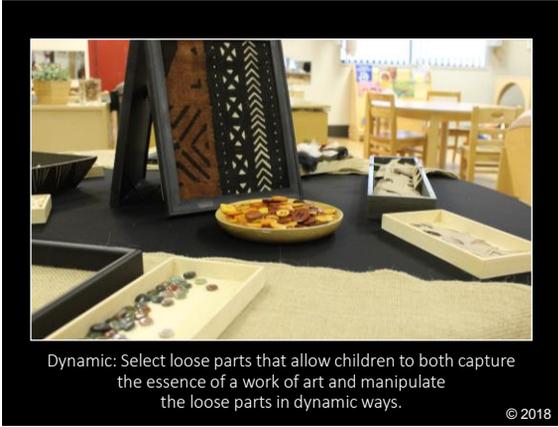
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Dynamic: Select loose parts that allow children to both capture the essence of a work of art and manipulate the loose parts in dynamic ways.

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# Language and Literacy

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To support children's language, combine alphabet blocks in different languages with loose parts.

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# Music and Movement

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Cultural and social reform can happen in early childhood environments through the inclusion of musical instruments from around the world.

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Include loose parts and music that reveal children's home language, culture, and traditions.

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Music is an avenue for bringing children and adults together, as it resonates with our hearts and souls.

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Cooking tools from around the world help children learn about different cultures.

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Loose parts give children the opportunity to represent every day moments they experience with their families.

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# Nurturing

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Children experience their world through their relationships with their family and daily living moments.

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They develop empathy and learn to care and nurture through play.

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Children learn love and compassion as they care for dolls.

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# Imaginative Play

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Authentic fabrics from around the world deepen children's understanding of diversity.

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Small worlds invite children to use their imagination and learn about different habitats that exist in the world.

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Exploring houses from around the world and their own community, helps children deepen their understanding about different living environments.

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### Inquiry

- Engineering
- Science and Math
- Sensory

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# Engineering

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Loose parts provide opportunities to learn engineering concepts, thus creating equity while developing critical thinking.

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Loose parts explorations provide children with the opportunity to explore towers from around the world.

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An environment that is rich in engineering possibilities can foster critical reflection, while giving children the opportunity to see a hopeful future.

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# Math and Science

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Real objects allow children to compare similarities and differences, an important skill to understand different perspectives.

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Intriguing materials beckon children's sense of curiosity, while participating in a sustainable environment.

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Sorting and classifying buttons donated by community members, supports children's mathematical thinking, and helps them value community contributions.

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# Sensory Exploration

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While exploring, children learn about the value of water, preserving it, and actively advocating for communities that may not have easy access to water.

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Providing alternative tactile options supports multiple differences and equity.

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Clay is sustainable and promotes deep sensory opportunities for young children.

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May you be inspired to use loose parts to create culturally sustainable environments.



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Consider how you can infuse loose parts into early learning environments to support children's identity, home language, ethnicity, culture, history, and traditions.

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For presentations and consulting contact:



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**(916) 365-2151**

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