Celebrating Northland’s Tamariki

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Reconnecting with your infant’s environment

Aims of this workshop:
1. The value of loose parts play for infants and toddlers
2. Empowering infants and toddlers through partnership and trust
3. Critiquing what we offer infants and toddlers in our environments

❖ There is notes provided for you, as I would rather you spent as much time as possible with the resources.
Who am I?

- RIE influenced teacher - requires me to build a trusting relationship with the environment
- I believe children learn 100% of the time
- Infants and toddlers are often disempowered, I like to find ways to work in a partnership so we can empower each other.
Before we listen, first we need to ‘do’
Share your thoughts/feelings with someone around you...

Hold on to this (in your hands) resource as we go.
What do you know about Loose Parts?
Did you know?

Loose parts was coined by British architect Simon Nicholson to describe open-ended materials that can be used and manipulated in different ways.

Loose parts focus on:

❖ Everyday objects,
❖ provided en masse
❖ offer imagination
❖ creativity
❖ exploration
❖ no pre-destined destinations…

there is no right or wrong - but decisions need to be made!
Why?

Why would offering infants and toddlers loose parts in your centre be a good idea?
What do we know about how infants and toddlers learn?
Working in partnership with infants and toddlers:

- Providing them open opportunities to engage their creativity and thinking!
  - In their own time, in their own way.
- We work together, we both have a role, we take turns leading - we empower each other
- Loose parts offer infants and toddlers opportunities to lead their own play and learning
Why loose parts?

I wanted to merge:

❖ Open ended opportunities for infants and toddlers
❖ My trust in infants and toddlers and their abilities
❖ My trust in our environment
❖ My trust in not needing to entertain, and an environment which supported this
❖ My trust in the full centre teaching team to work together
❖ My personal philosophy on how infants and toddlers learn, explore and discover from both people and the environment.
Trust in your team

One of the most common conversations I have with infant and toddler teachers critiquing their resources is the need to offer EVERYTHING…

Consider… if you trust the teachers in the other rooms (most commonly ‘over 2’s’) then why do you need to have all the same things?

- Work as a team.
- Trust them to offer opportunities you can’t
- Why does every room need a full make believe kitchen?
- Why does every room need a set of plastic animals?
- Why does every room need painting easels?… work together and trust each other to offer age and child appropriate experiences.
Loose Parts

Examples..

In your groups create a list of all the items you use (or would like to use) in your work with infants and toddlers which you would consider may be called ‘loose parts’
Loose parts:

Remember: Similar items ‘en masse’ as - lots of them!

- Sheets/towels/blankets - large/small/doll size
- Balls - all sizes/colours
- Large buttons
- Bottle tops
- Tree slices
- boxes/bags/wallets
- pinecones/large strengthened shells/sticks/large stones
- Hair rollers
- Bracelets
- Plates (metal/crockery/wooden)
- Pompoms (large)
- Coasters
- Curtain rings
- Ribbons
- scarves
Health and Safety

Consider the aims of these resources..

1. To provide an interesting, stimulating, open-ended empowering environment
2. Appropriate for when teachers are engaged in one on one caregiving as well as when engaged with teachers

Safety Top tips:

- Make an ‘okay’ sign. If the resource can fit easily through the hole it maybe too small. Use these only when teachers are 100% engaged as well.
- Roll it around in the palms of your hands quite hard… check for bits falling off, sharp corners etc.
- Drop it from about 20 cm off the floor (standard length of a ruler) and make sure it doesn't break - if it seems like it could, this should be used with teachers only.
- Check items are clean (if unsure clean them yourself before using them) and that they can be regularly cleaned.
- Check wooden items for any paints/stains are child safe, if unsure sand them down and revanish with a safe resin (like beeswax)
How can resources empower?
Concerns… how do we know what we offer infants and toddlers is ‘good for them’?

Consider - How do you think the child would feel:

- What am I able to do with it?
- Does it make me feel good?
- Does it make me curious?
- I am in control or is the toy in control?
- Can it push me to ask questions?
- Am I active when I use it, or passive, watching it
- Is there enough to share with others or to work comfortably alongside others without running out/needin to share?
Take a look.. How do you ‘feel’ when looking at these spaces/resources
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Photo from Busy Bees Childcare website.
http://mainepreschool.com/enrollment.html
Take away notes…

What is something that stood out for you?

What was new information??

What could you take away with you for your work with infants and toddlers?
Thoughts? Questions?

Further recommended reading:

❖ *The Sacred Urge to Play* by Pennie Brownlee and Kimberley Crisp
❖ *A Moving Child is a Learning Child - How the body teaches the brain to think* by Gill Connell and Cheryl McCarthy
❖ *Loose Parts 2. Inspiring play with infants and toddlers* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky
Thanks!
Lisa Helmling