

PLAY YOUR PART

FIND OUT HOW JURONG CHRISTIAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN'S LOOSE PARTS PLAY PROJECT ENHANCES CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION.



Playtime at Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten takes a different tack. Instead of playing with traditional toys and playground equipment, children tinker with "loose parts" — materials that can be manipulated in open-ended ways without pre-determined outcomes. By combining and redesigning odds and ends like cardboard boxes, Styrofoam netting and twigs, the children create anything from a tall building to a tray of fruits to a campfire.

Loose Parts Play was introduced centre-wide in 2017 as part of a four-month Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project. It arose out of a desire to "design indoor and outdoor spaces that are inviting and engage every child in experiential learning," says centre Principal Mrs Betsy Yee. Through observing the children, she found that their play experiences tend to revolve around the use of traditional toys. Having read about the theory behind Loose Parts Play, she then initiated a PI project to explore possible strategies to extend the children's play experiences. "We wanted to study how loose parts can encourage child-led play while

enhancing children's creativity and imagination," she explains.

SO INVENTIVE

Under the project, loose parts were placed in the centre's classrooms and outdoor play area. "Children can choose how they are going to use an item in their play," says Mrs Yee.

Compared to traditional play equipment, loose parts offer more flexibility and diversity, and enhances curiosity and inventiveness. For example, a rubber tube and water bottle were repurposed as a watering can by one child, but transformed into a vacuum cleaner by another.

The teachers also noted that loose parts play helped children to acquire other useful skills and competencies as part of their holistic development. Physically interacting with loose parts promotes sensory awareness, and strengthens fine and gross motor skills.

By thinking of how to use materials to substitute literal objects,

“I like Loose Parts Play because I can use my imagination to make things. I can build anything I want. And it is fun to create things with my friends.”

LUVENA CHAN, 6



TIPS FOR TEACHERS

It may appear spontaneous, but a lot of planning goes into loose parts play:

- **Anything can be a loose part** — buttons, fabrics, wooden blocks, seashells, leaves, pots, containers, you name it! Get parents involved by asking them to contribute items.
- **Make sure the loose parts are clean and safe** for children to use, and for them to access these easily. Ensure that there is adult supervision.
- **Step back and redirect problems back for children to solve by themselves.** Ask them questions like, "How do you think this will work?" or "What have you already tried?"

children learn to problem-solve and become comfortable taking risks. And as they share ideas and collaborate with one another to build a structure, they improve their social skills at the same time.



Thinking about PI?

Visit <http://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/PI-Grant.aspx> or write to ECRF@ecda.gov.sg to find out more about the PI Grant.