

Loose Parts – What is it and how are we using it at CCNS?

Our children are growing up in a very different world than the one we experienced. As a kid, when I wanted to find out some information, I had to ask somebody or go look it up in a World Book. I spent a lot of time in school memorizing facts. My own kids just ask Alexa or Google anything they want to know – information is abundantly and immediately available.

The world has changed which means our teaching has to change. We are attempting to prepare children for careers that don't even exist yet. Our job is to help children learn how to analyze and use the information they have and how to creatively problem solve. The trick is that we can't simply give step by step instructions on how to do this. That's the teacher doing the thinking, not the children.

For those of you with older children, you've heard of STEM (or now STEAM) and maker spaces. The goal behind these programs is to give children the opportunity to experiment and create solutions for child or teacher defined questions. Often, the children have to try things several times before coming up with a workable solution. The preschool version of this is called Loose Parts.

Loose parts are typically found objects that are combined with other materials that offer multiple outcomes. In other words, there is not one right way to play with or use loose parts; children often find ways to use these materials that don't even occur to adults! We have created a large collection of loose parts for the children to use that include things like rocks, shells, ribbon, odd wooden shapes, yarn, pipe cleaners, plastic caps etc. We are also adding loose parts to the big kids' playground – simple things like paper towel rolls, cups and scoops and boxes. The children find many different creative ways to use all of these materials.

Our goal in using loose parts is to give the children a chance to be creative, to be active learners, to learn from their mistakes and to find their own solutions. The best part? Children love loose parts – it's fun, creative, and allows them control over their learning.