



Leelanau Children's Center Monthly Newsletter - October 2019

“Play is the highest form of research” - Albert Einstein

“Let the child be the scriptwriter, the director, and the actor in his own play” - Madga Gerber

Where are all the toys?



Open-ended materials (also known as loose parts) are materials that can be used in numerous ways.

They can be moved, carried, combined, and redesigned in any way a child or group of children decides.

Providing such materials enables young children to explore and manipulate them in ways that are personally meaningful and suited to their level of development.

It also allows them to creatively represent their ideas, discover the way things work, and gain knowledge about multiple properties and uses of objects they explore, using similar thinking processes to scientific reasoning.



Why is Play so important?

“Play prepares young brains for life.” - Dr. Sergio Pellis

It's true! Research shows that play helps to stir up neuron activity in the foremost facet of the brain called the prefrontal cortex - an area of the brain that plays a vital role in regulating emotions, making plans and solving problems. Play literally wires young brains for *connection*, building “social brains” that know how to interact with others in positive ways.*

LCC uses a child-initiated play-based educational approach with a focus on hands on learning. Our teachers provide open-ended opportunities for children to engage in uninterrupted play - play that the children design and control. At LCC we believe that:

- Being able to fully engage with peers can scaffold children's development more readily than can teacher-directed activities;
- Play helps kids learn how to regulate emotions, solve problems, and make plans;
- Authentic, beneficial children's play is enjoyable, voluntary, and self-initiated;
- Play should be spontaneous and flexible, involving problem-solving that doesn't have one right answer and may include multiple or changing solutions

Competence, autonomy, and personal connection: these are the building blocks of a play-based education where children are allowed to become competent by having the time and space to autonomously ask and answer their own questions within the context of a caring community.

LCC uses an emergent curriculum approach in our classrooms. The themes and topics that children and teachers explore together will emerge from children's questions, interests, and reoccurring play themes. The sources to which children turn for information gathering will eventually translate into academic disciplines such as math, language arts, science and creative arts.

*Hamilton, J. *Scientists Say Child's Play Helps Build a Better Brain*

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Our Favorite Open-Ended Materials

"A lot of my favorites can be found outside. Lately we've been using a lot of beach rocks in the classroom. They are stackable, moveable, and some are heavy! We are investigating the variations with tools and engaging in a symbolic way, as the rocks come to life with animals and people." - **Rachael**

"My favorite open-ended materials are nuts, pine cones, tree bark and twigs, cedar branches, stones, driftwood, and other beautiful things from outside. These are things that are fun for children to pretend with. I played with natural materials from the outdoors as a child and simply having them around makes me feel cozy. Also, **BUTTONS!** Beautiful, sortable, trade-able, fantasy-filled **BUTTONS!**" - **M Brown**



"Water! It is math and science and so much can be added to it for exploration. It is a sensory experience and can be very soothing to play with." - **Sara M.**



"My favorite open-ended material is play dough! It is appropriate for so many ages as well as incorporates all of the developmental domains, especially fine motor skills. It can also be used to scaffold learning experiences and provides a great sensory experience. There was even an article about giving adults in meetings play dough to spur creativity and increase productivity!" - **Cassie**

"One of my favorite open-ended materials is big scarves/pieces of cloth/blankets! There are so many fun role playing opportunities plus the variety of textures, colors, and patterns provides different sensory experiences." - **Nora**



"I love the unit blocks. They have a lovely feel, and a pleasant clinking sound when they knock together. Big, small, simple, or complex, the structures that can be created are endless, and can lead to so many play experiences from the mathematical to the dramatic!" - **Aaron**

"One of my favorite open-ended materials is Magnetic/Magna Tiles! They have been a staple in all of our rooms at various times of the year. They provide a fun building experience where kids get to use their imagination and creativity to build different size structures. The clear colored ones are also really fun to have on top of a light table." - **Sara J.**



"I really enjoy watching kids as they discover the many uses of recycled materials. Literally whatever is in the recycle box! Some tape, glue, scissors, paint or something to draw with encourage their ideas to explode!" - **Rhonda**

Upcoming Dates

Sunday, October 27, 2019 • LCC Fall Festival • Old Art Building • 2 - 4 PM