

Inquiring into the Roles and Responsibilities of Facilitating Loose Parts Play:
A Practitioner's Perspective

By

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Abstract

Play, and more specifically unstructured outdoor play, is well-documented as being beneficial, and arguably essential to healthy cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. However, factors such as risk, liability and self-regulation often complicate and deter unstructured outdoor play from thriving in a school setting. Literature specific to loose parts play is burgeoning and predominantly focuses on its potential, the benefits and its impact on children's play experiences and whole-child development (Gibson, Cornell & Gill, 2017; Houser, Roach, Stone, Turner & Kirk, 2016; Hyndman & Lester, 2015). Loose parts play and the associated research is limited on practitioner-as-researcher's perspective of implementation. Therefore, the following self-study of practice is an inquiry into a practitioner's experience facilitating and implementing loose parts play. The qualitative approach of self-study of practice has been chosen to frame and guide the research. Self-study supports the investigation into the intertwined nature of self and practice by closely considering the self-in-practice (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014), with a strong focus on the role of one's personal and professional identities (Casey, Fletcher, Schaefer & Gleddie, 2018). Data has been collected via artifacts, journal entries, reflective diaries, field notes, and discussions with critical friends. The data was analyzed twice. First, performing a thematic analysis guided by Braun & Clarke's (2012) framework, five themes from the data describe the roles and responsibilities of a loose parts play facilitator: 1. experiential learning; 2. explicit communication; 3. contextual considerations; 4. relationships and 5. reflective practice. Afterwards, two theories were used to deductively analyze the five themes: 1. the Collaborative for Social, Academic and Emotional Learning's framework of social and emotional learning (SEL) and 2. the Joint Consortium for School Health's 2008 framework of Comprehensive School Health (CSH). As a result, this study can benefit those who facilitate unstructured outdoor play for elementary school-aged children as the inquiry focuses on the complexities of self-in-practice encountered during a facilitator's experiences.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Carl Adrian Xavier. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Dedication

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.”

-George Bernard Shaw

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In some ways, it was a difficult decision to leave my roots and branch out to Amiskwacîwâskahikan. My heart is full and my mind is at ease thanks to the encouragement and support of my family in Tkaronto, Ontario.

Thanks to the land and all those who care for and protect her. Because of the land we have reasons to wonder and wander. It is the land that provides us a place and space to teach, learn and play.

Peace, love and blessings to all.

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Introduction

I am an educator and since 2007 I have worked as a generalist classroom teacher and a health and physical education specialist serving students between kindergarten and grade eight. For the past two years I have been on a leave of absence from teaching, spending this time working within the education sector as a health and wellness consultant and facilitator for a provincial organization in Alberta called Ever Active Schools (EAS) (2020). EAS works with school communities to address health and education goals and improve social outcomes of children and youth. I am responsible for ‘training-the-trainer’ in which I facilitate the implementation of programs, activities, lessons, and initiatives to support and sustain healthy school communities. I work alongside teachers and staff as they build their knowledge, confidence and competence through the use of the Comprehensive School Health framework which prioritizes educational outcomes and school health in a planned, integrated and holistic way (JCSH, 2008). When I started with EAS in October 2018, I was immediately immersed in the world of loose parts play¹, being tasked with helping four public elementary schools implement a loose parts play recess experience. Interestingly, during the latter years of my physical education teaching I began incorporating aspects of loose parts play theory without knowing it was loose parts play. I was introducing non-traditional pieces of equipment for students to explore, engage and create using their fundamental movement skills and knowledge of game play. I believe I am drawn to this particular form of play because it is the complete opposite of my play experiences as a child. I often say to others I had a ‘Helicopter Mom’ before the term was in-fashion. And so, I am willing to concede that this was a cathartic experience for

¹ The theory of loose parts play (Nicholson, 1972) suggests, “in any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery is directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it.”

me. Many times during loose parts play I felt as though I could be a kid again. In a way I was living vicariously through the students as they played, while managing my own thresholds of risk.

Now that I am in a facilitation role working with practitioners, I want to support them through professional development *and* research-informed practice. I chose to conduct this research study to be of service to practitioners in the education community. This is one reason why I took a break from teaching children and youth and sought an opportunity to teach teachers. I benefited from the knowledge, experience and vulnerability of colleagues; it was the professional learning I received that enriched and inspired some of my greatest teaching memories and moments. Now, this is my opportunity to offer professional learning. To share my tale of tension within, and inquiry into pedagogy and practice with the hope that it is relevant to those who experience it.

Research Question & Purpose

I began this research study guided by the question, ‘what is my role in the space, implementation and facilitation of loose parts play?’ I was immersed in facilitation, bridging theory and practice. I worked alongside teachers and students to implement loose parts play, and I hosted and observed many unique play sessions. The impact of these experiences caused me to rethink and revise the research question, asking instead, ‘what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play?’ The following excerpt is from a loose parts play session, and provides a glimpse into the tension, vulnerability and uncertainty that can be experienced during facilitation:

I’m outside with a classroom teacher and three support staff observing a group of kindergarten students. There’s “Amy,” lost in play with a plastic shovel (with a wooden shaft). During her play, two students persistently ask Amy to share the shovel and every time Amy says “no.” Then comes a moment when Amy puts down the shovel and walks

away to play with other parts. Immediately, “Benji” sprints toward the shovel. Amy notices and tries to get to the shovel before Benji. No-go. Benji got the shovel and Amy was not happy. Amy relentlessly followed Benji trying to re-acquire the shovel. Amy and Benji eventually tug of war over the shovel, and two students intervened trying to help resolve the conflict. Amy didn’t seem to want their help and managed to pry the shovel away from Benji. When Benji tried to reclaim the shovel Amy would raise the shovel in the air as if to keep it away from Benji, but also gestured as if she would strike Benji. Amy chased and pretended to try and hit Benji. At first Benji seemed concerned, but then he began to smile. At one point he and Amy were smiling and laughing as they ran around. Then Benji stopped running, tried to take the shovel from Amy and Amy struck Benji. Two students again intervened and spoke to Amy. They talked about not hitting others and sharing the shovel. Amy hit one of the students with the shovel, at which point I intervened and took the shovel from Amy.

As these events unfolded, the tension in me arose. You see, there isn’t literature on the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator when facilitating loose parts play to teachers and staff at a school. What we had to work with, and work from, was the theory of loose parts, models of intervention and what we thought it meant to be a good facilitator. I tried to manage my feelings by discussing with the other adults when, and how, to intervene. When my nerves subsided slightly, we seemed to be aligned in our thinking to allow as much leeway as necessary for the students to work through the interaction. At one point when the interaction escalated, I was asked “what should we do?” or “what would you do?” I froze and fought within my mind. I wrestled with the limits of my own ability to actively and openly observe without direct intervention. I wanted to challenge myself to wait and not act upon my perceptions of what might happen. It was important to me to achieve a student-directed outcome, rather than a teacher-directed one.

This situation was difficult for me for multiple reasons. It was hard because I felt like I should always have the answers, and at times I didn’t. It was hard because I didn’t know these students and what, if any, factors are contributing to this interaction (e.g., past relationships/interactions, patterns of behaviours, individual learning plans, mood for the day, etc.). It was hard because I understood the rationale of loose parts play is for students to mitigate

their own risk - physical, social and emotional, and may require negotiation, making mistakes and failing. It was hard because at one point, we as adults, were trying to assess the perceived risk versus the actual risk of one child potentially or actually hitting another child with the shovel (i.e., how severe could it be with a plastic scoop and the force generated by a four/five-year-old?). It was hard because my intention is to provide an authentic experience and support adults as they confront their own uncertainties and insecurities with the realities of loose parts play, yet there I was conflicted within my own uncertainties and insecurities. It was hard because I wanted this to be a success and I was worried the experience might result in people choosing to no longer pursue implementing loose parts play.

Asking, 'what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play?' shifts the conversation and research about loose parts play from the 'what' to the 'how'. The intention of this self-study is to contribute to the literature on loose parts play by adding the perspective of the facilitator. As we learn about the benefits and characteristics of loose parts play, we can also begin to share the roles and responsibilities that can help facilitators implement loose parts play thoughtfully and holistically.

Literature Review

The rationale for this work is to contribute evidence-based literature to the growing body of research on loose parts play. The intention is to also bridge the knowledge and experience of loose parts play as it is experienced in the province of Alberta with the extant literature on professional development and facilitation. The following section will review the literature on the importance of play and loose parts play; a summary of literature on loose part play, and; an overview of effective strategies for teacher professional development to provide insight into facilitator's role of loose parts play.

Why Play?

In article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) it states every child has a right to rest and leisure, and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age. The International Play Association (2020) also advocates for play as a basic need that is instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous, helping children to develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Children are living increasingly structured lives (e.g., schools follow a structured bell system), requiring immense directed attention (Kaplan, 2015) which can be fatiguing and counter-productive to their development. Therefore, play offers a relief from such fatigue as it is unstructured, child-centered and intrinsically motivating.

Research by Hughes in 2012 proposed as many as 16 categories of play (e.g., rough and tumble, symbolic, communication, and role play). Arguably, each of these categories supports one or more of the physical, cognitive, social and emotional (affective) needs of individuals. For example, I have observed how physical development can be nurtured through rough and tumble play, cognitive development may be supported by symbolic play, and social development through communication play. Meanwhile, role play can be a support for emotional development. As play is self-directed, it is not guaranteed you will engage in or experience all types of play,

but it is likely your play experience will contribute to your physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. In schools, children may have a variety of play experiences, all of which contribute positively to their growth and development. It is essential that children are afforded these opportunities in structured and unstructured ways, one way being through the practice of loose parts play.

Loose Parts Play: What is it and Why is it Important?

The term ‘loose parts play’ is credited to architect Simon Nicholson in 1972. The concept, however, dates back to the 1930s with Danish architect Carl Theodore Sorensen using the term ‘waste material playgrounds’ (Besse-Patin, 2018), and post-war 1940s as ‘adventure playgrounds’ courtesy of architect Lady Marjory Allen of Hurtwood in London (Rosin, 2014). Other alternative names include moveable playgrounds (Hyndman & Lester, 2015) or junk playgrounds (Hayward, Rothenberg, & Beasley, 1974); however, for this particular play experience with loose parts play, it involves **any collection of fully movable elements that inspire a person to pick them up, to re-arrange or create new configurations, even realities, one piece or multiple pieces at a time** (Sutton, 2011). The common thread through all of these terms and ideas is the creation of a play space that supports a fun, innovative, flexible, child-driven play experience in the outdoors. While some may be familiar with loose parts play in an indoor setting, including water tables, sand tables and small objects (e.g., buttons, beads, pebbles, etc.), the loose parts play referred to in this research emphasizes gross motor play with larger objects (e.g., tires, tarps, cardboard boxes, crates, ropes, etc.) in an outdoor setting, allowing for the natural environment to become an aforementioned variable of the play experience, as well as, provide the potential for generous physical boundaries.

Whether as a recess initiative or classroom activity, loose parts play in a school environment becomes a space where children can explore, practice and apply their learning in a way that helps develop critical life skills and learning competencies (Alberta Education, 2016). Loose parts play isn't THE solution, but it is one of many solutions when providing recreational opportunities to children in schools in addition to: academic clubs, athletic pursuits or performance arts. Loose parts play is an alternative environment for children to become increasingly self-aware and develop positive relationships at a pace and readiness that likely differs from other structured aspects of their life. Loose parts play is also recognized, inherently, as a form of risky outdoor play (Brussoni et al., 2015). Play is freely-chosen, personally-directed, intrinsically motivating and can manifest in as many as sixteen different play types including locomotor, mastery, symbolic, imaginative and creative/object play (Hughes, 2012). According to Nicholson (1972), the quantity and variety of items available in the play space can spark greater curiosity and engagement; anything is possible. In a school setting, loose parts play promotes the achievement of curricular outcomes because it can engage students in physical activity, and develop both social and emotional learning competencies as well as student learning competencies (Alberta Education 2016). The argument could be made that loose parts play presents a complimentary approach to direct instruction (i.e., targeting physical activity by doing physical activity tasks) because it meets the aforementioned needs through play. It is critical for children to explore in a safe manner while upholding the core elements of the loose parts play philosophy: fun, innovation, child-driven. Therefore, teachers and facilitators of loose parts play must be aware of many factors – and have clear roles and responsibilities outlined – to implement these experiences in meaningful and safe ways.

Overview of Loose Parts Play Literature

The literature on loose parts play is described as broad, limited, encouraging and emerging as a field at an exciting and crucial stage of development, with outcomes that are not certain or established (Houser et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2017). Studies have investigated loose parts play using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The literature that was reviewed and will be described in this section specified outdoor play experiences and targeted environments and activities aimed at children and youth within an age range of 2 to 12 years, with a few articles also accounting for adult responses (Engelen et al., 2013; Sutton, 2011; Dillon, 2018). The studies explored in this review are specific to the use of loose parts play and its influence on physical activity (Engelen et al., 2013; Hyndman & Lester, 2015; Houser et al., 2016), social, emotional and cognitive outcomes (Ginsburg, 2007; Lester et al., 2010; Maxwell et al., 2008; Sutton, 2011; James, 2012; Hyndman et al., 2014) and play in the outdoor environment (Flannigan & Dietze, 2018; Little & Sweller, 2015; Tremblay et al., 2015; Sutton, 2011).

Physical Activity in Loose Parts Play

There would appear to be an inseparable relationship between physical activity and loose parts play, arguably because of the many types of play observed when individuals interact with loose parts materials. The research of Engelen et al. (2013), Sutton (2011) and Hyndman and Lester (2015) found a general increase in physical activity matched with a decrease in sedentary behaviour as a result of a loose parts play intervention for students during recess time. Engelen et al. (2013) and Hyndman and Lester (2015) both completed intervention studies that used accelerometers to measure physical activity levels and to determine the impact of loose parts play on the physical activity levels of students. Bundy et al. (2017 & 2019) also used accelerometers to measure the impact of loose parts play as an intervention to increase children's

physical activity levels. Their findings indicated children's physical activity levels to be significantly higher following the intervention of outdoor loose parts play. In addition, the findings from Bundy et al. (2017) suggested loose parts play can be a low-cost intervention to increase physical activity indirectly, by focusing on play rather than physical activity. For schools, especially publicly-funded schools, the evidence of success with increasing physical activity levels while also being low-cost makes loose parts play appealing as an affordable approach to diversifying physical activity programming.

However, in 2016, Houser et al. conducted a scope and review of literature on the use of loose parts play to promote physical activity participation and found limited evidence of the impact of loose parts play on physical activity and physical literacy as well as limited comparability between the extant literature. These findings were attributed to an ambiguity with defining the term loose parts play and the ambiguity with implementation. This is relevant to investigating the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator of loose parts play because it identifies a need to analyze how loose parts play is defined and communicated, as well as analyze how the implementation process is structured and its subsequent influence on engagement and physical activity.

Within Houser et al.'s (2016) scope and review of loose parts play literature, there was evidence from two studies that playing with loose parts fosters children's creativity and exploration of their environment and of their movements. Although not directly correlating to physical activity levels increasing / decreasing, this is relevant because loose parts play can instill that creative exploration in diverse environments where children navigate (and move through) the play space, the forest, their school community. The unstructured nature of loose parts play could facilitate *new* and *different* movement experiences that spark desire in children

to engage with physical activity in various ways in their everyday lives. Lastly, Dowda et al.'s (2009) research examined the extent to which policies and characteristics of preschools influenced physical activity. Their findings indicated children with access to less fixed equipment and more portable equipment (e.g., loose parts materials) were more active. School is a place where children spend a significant amount of their time, and providing them the opportunity to experience outdoor loose parts play could be a critical factor to increasing their physical activity levels, especially when using a coordinated implementation approach. Therefore, it would be relevant to better understand *how* facilitators implement loose parts play and the impact of facilitation on children's experiences and the experiences of practitioners learning to facilitate loose parts play.

Loose Parts Play in the Outdoors

Loose parts play is often studied in outdoor environments. The outdoors provides children and youth the opportunity to connect with nature, connect in nature and restore and recover physiologically and psychologically from their tasks and demands throughout the day (Kaplan, 2015; Berto, 2014; Capaldi et al., 2015).

Little & Sweller (2015) issued an online survey to 245 early childhood education centres to examine resources, spaces and affordances for physical activity and risk-taking in outdoor play. One of their reported findings was the characteristics of the outdoor environment playing an important role in supporting children's engagement in physically active and risky play (Little & Sweller, 2015). The findings also suggest that for children it is a blend of the environment and their individual characteristics that will determine how they use different elements and behave within the environment (Little & Sweller, 2015). This research did not specifically address loose parts play, but its findings support the notion of an activity such as loose parts play being hosted

in the outdoors where the natural environment can contribute to physical activity and risk-taking provided an emphasis is placed on the outdoor space and teacher support. Through the work of this research the experiences of the facilitator are being investigated and analyzed to determine what specific roles and responsibilities could help emphasize the importance of the outdoor space and how best to support teachers. Flannigan and Dietze (2018) examined the behaviours exhibited by children as they used loose parts in a rural, outdoor, natural environment. The results of the study suggest using loose parts in an outdoor environment will support children's development in positive ways, specifically: (a) social interaction, (b) language use, (c) risk taking, and (d) inclusivity of gender and age. Also noteworthy is the aforementioned study conducted by Sutton (2011) which examined children's play in two different outdoor environments in combination with the use of loose parts. Sutton's findings highlighted the increased environmental interactions in settings with loose parts materials as children moved and incorporated the loose parts through the areas as part of their play and learning. Based on observable play behaviours and participant responses, Sutton emphasizes the combination of loose parts with the built or natural outdoor environment to be significant factors in early science learning. In 2015, Tremblay et al. developed a position statement on active outdoor play that impacts how loose parts play is used and implemented. Their statement was informed by a process including two systematic reviews, a critical appraisal of the current literature and existing position statements, engagement with research experts and cross-sectorial individuals/organizations and stakeholder consultation. One recommendation from the position statement is for a shift in play spaces to a more natural play environment with loose materials as a means to fulfill children's interest, enjoyment and participation. This statement highlights the importance of embedding loose parts and outdoor play experiences in physical education and

school-based experiences. Outdoor environments have an abundance of opportunity to support the physical, cognitive, social and emotional developmental characteristics of children (Flannigan & Dietze, 2018; Olsen & Smith, 2017). For a practitioner, this research highlights the need to understand where/how to set-up loose parts, why it's important, and how maximizing the outdoor environment might impact the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator when implementing loose parts play in schools.

Social and Emotional Learning in Loose Parts Play

The development of social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies is expected to provide a foundation for better adjustment and academic performance, as evidenced by positive social behaviours, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and improved test scores and grades (Durlak, 2011). Loose parts play has been found to influence children's SEL by attending to the five SEL competencies of: (i) self-awareness, (ii) self-management, (iii) social awareness, (iv) relationship skills, and (v) responsible decision-making.

A study conducted by Lester et al. (2010) evaluated an outdoor play and learning program implemented in schools for the purpose of enhancing children's opportunities to play in schools. Findings indicated that loose parts materials can help children appropriate aspects of their daily lives into their play. This is beneficial because the child gains some control and develops flexibility in their responses and resilience in areas such as emotional regulation, stress response, and attachment. This is relevant to this research study because by aiming to identify and distinguish the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator, there is also an opportunity to ensure and protect the involvement and control of the child as well. SEL can be supported through targeted school-based programs, and play with loose parts materials is one. Dramatic play, which means experiencing events by playing them out (Hughes, 2012), is one type of play

observed with loose parts. In Maxwell et al.'s (2008) research, loose parts were added to existing playground infrastructure to investigate how it might contribute to children's dramatic and constructive play behaviours. The findings from the study suggest dramatic play is especially important in the development of social, emotional and cognitive development because children and youth use objects to represent something else, which is the basis of abstract thought. By providing loose parts materials to children, they are afforded a place and space to develop SEL competencies through their self-directed play in the school setting.

Loose parts play can offer a rich, authentic environment for children and youth to independently express their self-awareness and self-management. Both James (2012) and Hyndman et al. (2014) used loose parts materials as a lunchtime school playground intervention. Based on student's interactions with loose parts materials both studies reported teachers and adults describing noticeable improvements in student's social modelling, teamwork, negotiating, social inclusion and cooperative play. Each study also found loose parts play helped students who were identified as less socially confident (e.g., shy, nervous) mitigate their own participation levels. For example, children would first observe their peers play and eventually enter the play space in their own way, on their own terms, and begin to play independently or with others. This is of interest, as sometimes during structured physical activities, such as team sports, a child's ability and comfort to participate and engage with their peers can be limited due to factors such as being chosen last to join a team or not being involved in the play (e.g., not passed the object). Sutton (2011) also looked at how outdoor exhibits with loose parts materials work with the environment to stimulate inquiry and imaginative social play. The study found loose parts play helped teachers and families gain new understanding of the role of play in children's learning, specifically observing a child's areas of interest and their thinking used to

solve problems. Compared to other playground types and structures, loose parts play might be more engaging for students to develop their identity. Hayward, Rothenberg and Beasley (1974) investigated outdoor play and child engagement by comparing children's play in three different urban playground environments: (a) traditional, (b) contemporary and (c) adventure. They found the adventure playground, which provided a selection of loose parts, offered an unstructured and open-ended invitation to play. This meant the play space was created by the users (the children) and was a potential setting in which to define self (e.g., their identity) as well as space.

Ultimately, loose parts play provides an environment that invites children to interact with their peers and develop their social and emotional skills. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator, and how they can influence and advocate for the development of social and emotional skills is an impetus for this study and exploring the role of the facilitator in loose parts play.

Loose Parts Play in Alberta

Many communities in Canada are rethinking the importance of outdoor play to child development and exploring how to increase time and levels of activity in the outdoors (Flannigan & Dietze, 2018). Since joining EAS I have observed a heightened level of awareness and interest by school communities to receive professional learning in order to provide loose parts play as a “universal support for mental health”.² In the past two years, the number of resources supporting loose parts play implementation, specifically in Alberta, have been growing. Ever Active Schools has created its own loose parts play toolkit³ as well as a professional learning video⁴

² Stacey Hannay, personal communication, November, 2020

³ Ever Active Schools. (2020, November 9). *Better Recess: A Guide to Supporting Loose Parts Play in Schools*. <https://everactive.org/product/loose-parts-play-guide/>

⁴ Ever Active Schools. (2019, Oct. 1). *Loose Parts Play* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq25yqa_20Q

featuring a local public elementary school in Edmonton. And as part of EAS's partnership with the Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) an additional video⁵ about loose parts play was created by the school division. The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) also featured the impact of loose parts play at an ECSD school in the association's publication series titled, 'ATA News'.⁶ Loose parts play is also of interest to schools who identify as having needs in their physical environment. I have observed a disparity in my work across the province in terms of the features of a school's natural landscape (e.g., flat open field, rolling hills, forested/wooded area), the availability and accessibility to playground infrastructure and limitations with the diversity of materials offered to engage students in play (e.g., a soccer ball or football works for some; it doesn't work for all). The consequence tends to be a population of students who are seeking ways to be active and engaged during recess (and in the outdoors) yet lack the space and materials to do so. The conversation and research about loose parts play needs to shift from the 'what' to the 'how', and the perspective of the facilitator needs to be explored and critiqued. It is the aim of this research study to advance beyond understanding the benefits and characteristics of loose parts play and move towards sharing the roles and responsibilities that can help facilitators implement loose parts play thoughtfully and holistically.

Professional Development / Facilitation

What seems to be missing from the body of work on loose parts play is the perspective of the practitioner who is tasked with facilitation and implementation. Therefore, I have further drawn on literature in this section from education and physical education professional

⁵ Edmonton Catholic School Division. (2019, Aug. 9). *Loose Parts Play* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCTSkI__8uE&feature=youtu.be

⁶ Alberta Teachers' Association. (2019, March 20). *No risk, no reward? Are our playgrounds too restrictive: Canadian schools loosen up*. <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/ata%20news/Vol53/Number-10/Pages/No-risk-no-reward.aspx>

development to gain insights into effective facilitation strategies. Within this section and throughout this study you will notice the interchangeable use of the terms ‘professional development’ and ‘professional learning’. Based on my work experience and review of literature (Scherff, 2018; Easton, 2008) I have found these terms to be presented as different and distinct from one another, as well as used interchangeably. Despite their differences, both terms describe a similar experience and desired outcome – to stimulate thinking and professional knowledge and to ensure practice is critically informed and current⁷. Facilitating loose parts play in schools involves providing professional development for those involved. Examining my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator requires knowledge and familiarity with the research on professional development and facilitation in education settings. My experiences with facilitating professional development are consistent with the process identified by Parker et al. (2010),

“that teachers need opportunities for active hands-on learning which is intensive and sustained over time, built into the school day, connected to comprehensive change, organized around collaborative problem solving, and facilitated with care” (p. 338)

Literature on professional development and facilitation recognize and advocate for the continuous and ongoing nature of professional development (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Armour et al., 2015). To ensure professional development is effective, themes and characteristics of adult learning and facilitation are consistent across the research (Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012). *Learning by doing or experiential learning* refers to the creation of knowledge based on hands-on experiences and ideas of the learners (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Armour et al., 2015; Hunuk, 2017; Kreber, 2010; Parker et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011; Westberg, 2011). *Communication* recognizes the value in explicitly outlining expectations, redirecting attention to processes and essential information and sharing learning

⁷ The General Teaching Council for Scotland (2021)

with others outside of the learning group (Kreber, 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Westberg, 2011). The *social process* of learning cannot be overlooked (Armour et al., 2004; Hunuk, 2017; Parker et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012). Findings within the review of the literature draw attention to the relationship between the learner and their environment, the dialogue and engagement throughout the community, and sharing ideas, practices and tensions with fellow professionals. Learning is considered energizing, relevant and effective when it is *situational* and *context-specific* because it draws upon the authentic day-to-day experiences of the learners (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Armour et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011). Lastly, the literature emphasizes a strong relationship between *reflection* and experience in that experiences must be of a quality worthy of reflection, and reflection serves as an effective means to connect theory and practice (Hunuk, 2017; Issitt, 2003; Kreber, 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011; Westberg, 2011). Understanding the facilitator's role and responsibilities and what constitutes professional development is important to note because it influences this research in the following ways: (a) practices and approaches when teaching the teacher, as I do when facilitating; (b) enhances professional knowledge; and (c) provides current and critically informed practices that contribute to quality student experiences and outcomes.

Significance of the Study

Based on the absence of professional development and facilitation approaches in loose parts play research it is critical and advantageous for me to explore the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator in the context of loose parts play. This is an opportunity to examine how my experiences align with the characteristics and standards established in the professional development and facilitation literature. Additionally, across my review, of particular note was

consistent recognition of loose parts play being an emerging field in need of further research in many areas including: (a) linking its greater contribution to outdoor play, (b) how context impacts kids' choice of activities vis-a-vis the constraints of the physical environment and measuring its impact in different communities (i.e., rural, urban, remote), cultures and climates, and (c) to critically examine the realities of practitioners (e.g., questions, conflicts and learnings) with loose parts play. The themes constructed through this research will address some of the recommendations noted above. Specifically, this study is significant as it critically analyzes a practitioner's experiences within various school communities, which can yield insights from a practitioner on how to incorporate and examine the choices of parts, activities and environments by children. Westberg (2011) writes it is the role of the facilitator to ensure learners have worthy experiences on which to reflect. Ultimately a self-study in practice from the perspective of the practitioner is a response to the recommendations for future research because it aims to guide facilitators and practitioners towards ensuring others have worthy experiences upon which to participate, reflect and research. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to shift the conversation and research about loose parts play from the 'what' to the 'how' by investigating and learning from the perspective of the facilitator. The research question is, what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play? Sharing the roles and responsibilities of facilitators will ultimately support the implementation of loose parts play using a thoughtful and holistic approach.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the following study I use two theoretical frameworks. Comprehensive School Health (CSH) is used as a guiding framework throughout the study as my experiences facilitating loose parts play are grounded in this theory. Deductively I used the theoretical constructs of CSH and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) “to render visible issues that participants did not explicitly articulate” (Braun & Clarke, 2012) and to investigate the themes from the inductive analysis to determine their relationship to CSH and SEL. In the following sections I will describe each of these frameworks and outline how each of these frameworks are used.

Comprehensive School Health (CSH): A Theoretical Framework and Guiding Principle

CSH is an internationally recognized framework used to build healthy school communities alongside student educational outcomes (Bassett-Gunter, Yessis, Manske & Stockton, 2012; Berg, Bradford & Robinson, 2018; Storey, et al., 2016). This framework is widely accepted because it supports student learning while at the same time addresses health and well-being in school settings in a strategic and holistic manner (Berg, Bradford & Robinson, 2018). Implementation of CSH is characterized using four pillars: (i) policy; (ii) teaching and learning; (iii) social and physical environment; and (iv) partnerships and services (Bassett-Gunter, Yessis, Manske & Stockton, 2012; Berg, Bradford & Robinson, 2018; JCSH, 2016; Storey, et al., 2016). Loose parts play is intended to be and recognized as a space in which participants can invent, create and discover in a way that benefits their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. It is a form of play centered on the child that compliments their personal and academic development. The CSH framework is also centered on the student and targets their academic outcomes by fostering an environment that prioritizes the establishment and sustainability of a healthy school community. Loose parts play and CSH are

similarly holistic approaches. CSH is also foundational in my project work as a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools. The framework was used to plan, coordinate and evaluate the distribution of responsibilities, actions and achievements (see Table 1 for a specific example). This resulted in the framework being used as an implementation tool during the data collection portion of this research. For example, some of the data sources used were planned and delivered based on one or more pillars from the CSH framework. Within the specific context of facilitating loose parts play and using a CSH framework, I have used my experience to construct the following exemplars:

Table 1. How CSH Frames and Guides Loose Parts Play Implementation

CSH Four Pillars (JCSH, 2016)	My Interpretation of Loose Parts Play Within Each Pillar
<p>Policy Policies, guidelines and practices that promote and support student well-being.</p>	<p>The healthy school policy must address and communicate the parameters of permissible play, including its inherent risks and intervention approach(es).</p>
<p>Social Environment The quality of relationships among and between staff and students in the school; influenced by relationships with families and the wider community.</p> <p>Physical Environment The buildings, grounds, play space, and equipment in and surrounding the school; spaces designed to promote student safety and connectedness and minimize injury.</p>	<p>The physical environment may detail acceptable loose parts items for play as well as the physical space(s), and their boundaries, on the school grounds where loose parts play can be hosted. Consideration is also given to the social environment; identifying and monitoring the social and emotional well-being of all members of the school community (e.g., students, staff, families).</p>
<p>Teaching and Learning Knowledge, understanding, and skills for students to improve their health and well-being and enhance their learning outcomes; professional development opportunities for staff related to health and well-being.</p>	<p>In the form of professional learning for staff, explicit instruction for students, and regular and varied communication with school families, is necessary prior to, during and after implementation to best ensure the readiness</p>

	and understanding of all school community members.
<p>Partnerships The connections between the school and the students' families; supportive working relationships among schools, and among schools and other community organizations and representative groups.</p> <p>Services Community and school-based services that support and promote student and staff health and well-being.</p>	Partnerships and services include extended relationships of staff and families with the broader community to assist with loose parts donations, accessing community partners with specialized experiences in play, engaging students to take ownership of logistics, and participating in a network or community of practice ⁸ with other schools and facilitators of loose parts play.

There were three reasons for choosing the CSH framework. First is the aforementioned similarities (i.e., student-centered, health and wellbeing outcomes and academic outcomes) between loose parts play and CSH. The second reason is because CSH factored into the data collection I wanted to apply the theory to the findings as a means of further analysis and critique of how CSH is a holistic support for the facilitation and implementation of loose parts play. The third reason is to analyze the findings of this research specific to the topic of interconnectedness that exists within the pillars of CSH. The concept of interconnectedness will be applied to the themes from the inductive analysis, similar to the interconnected relationship between the four pillars of the CSH framework. The themes do not work in isolation, and it is critical to identify the relationship and impact between each of the themes as it pertains to the efficacy of facilitation and implementation of loose parts play. CSH is also used to analyze how each of the five roles and responsibilities fits within the four pillars of the framework. Analyzing the roles and responsibilities within the four pillars are important to this research because it demonstrates

⁸ As defined on p. 338 in Parker et al. (2010), a community of practice is any collectivity or group who together contribute to shared or public practice in a particular sphere of life.

the comprehensive approach taken by facilitators to ensure loose parts play supports student learning and addresses health and well-being in school settings.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Theory

The theoretical framework of SEL “promotes asset development by enhancing five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies considered to be important in school and life” (Taylor, 2017). The five competencies are: (i) self-awareness, (ii) self-management, (iii) social awareness, (iv) relationship skills and (v) responsible decision-making (see Table 2 for an abbreviated description of each competency). As identified earlier, loose parts play is seen as a universal support to supporting student mental health. Similarly, developmental research indicates effective mastery of social and emotional learning competencies, as a universal school-based approach, is associated with greater well-being and better school performance (Elias et al., 1997). Durlak et al. (2011) elaborates by sharing how mastering SEL competencies over time results in a,

developmental progression that leads to a shift from being predominantly controlled by external factors to acting increasingly in accord with internalized beliefs and values, caring and concern for others, making good decisions, and taking responsibility for one’s choices and behaviours (p. 2)

The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) describes a “Theory to Action” framework with four key elements that will help organize, implement and improve SEL efforts (CASEL, 2020): (a) create a plan, (b) strengthen adult SEL, (c) promote SEL for students and (d) practice continuous improvement. SEL theory provides a lens to examine the many aspects of facilitating loose parts play, including the planning, teaching and learning of both adults and students, and its suitability and sustainability.

Table 2. *Social Emotional Learning Competencies and a Brief Description*

Competency	The acquisition and use of knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to:
Self-Awareness	accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behaviour
Self-Management	set and achieve positive goals
Social Awareness	take the perspective of and empathize with others
Relationship Skills	establish and maintain positive relationships
Responsible Decision-Making	make constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions

The SEL framework was selected for an additional deductive analysis for two reasons.

First, loose parts play literature, as well as my personal observations, recognizes SEL competencies as an inherent aspect of loose parts play. Therefore, as a facilitator implementing loose parts play it is important to explicitly highlight and align facilitation sessions to the SEL competencies, which will help ensure students are developing socially and emotionally. Second, the SEL framework is an integral part of education and human development (CASEL, 2020), as is CSH and loose parts play. The themes from the inductive analysis were analyzed and interpreted against each of the five SEL competencies to demonstrate how they align and support one another.

Research Design

Self-Study (Methodology)

Self-study supports investigations into the intertwined nature of self and practice by closely considering the self-in-practice (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014), with a strong focus on the role of one's personal and professional identities (Casey, Fletcher, Schaefer & Gleddie, 2018). The intent for using self-study is to articulate, understand and learn from instances in practice that may call into question, contradict, make uncertain or potentially reaffirm pedagogical practices which may have previously gone unchallenged or been assumed. Misleading as the name of this methodology might seem, focusing on the 'self' involves interactions with others, most notably critical friends, who help mediate, provoke and support new understandings (Samaras, 2010). The community aspect of self-study is realized as the researcher examines and interrogates their new learning, recognizing it might be shaped by, and impact on, those with whom they work (Loughran 2004).

I consider myself a reflective practitioner, likely a result of my disposition as an 'over-thinker!' Throughout my MEd course work, I found myself gravitating towards research methodologies that challenge the depth and scope of my reflections-in and reflections-of practice (Schon, 1983). Considering my tension, perhaps it comes as no surprise then, my choice to pursue a thesis through a lens of self-study. Additionally, I chose this methodology based on research of loose parts play literature and my observations that there was limited work on the practitioner-as-researcher perspective of implementation and facilitation. As the fairy tale story goes, this shoe fit. I was, and continue to be, seduced by the challenge of, and potential for transformation by making myself vulnerable through exposing my doubts, confusions, failures

and uncertainties (Loughran, 2004). And I predict these same feelings and thoughts are not unique or exclusive to me and are likely shared by many other practitioners in the field.

Data Sources & Collection

Sources of data in a self-study of practice might include lesson or session plans, reflective diaries or journal entries, recorded discussions with a critical friend, work samples, or forms of feedback of teaching (Casey et al., 2018). For my research I included five different sources of data: (i) facilitation sessions; (ii) journal entries (one from each facilitation session); (iii) guided reflections (one from each facilitation session); (iv) recorded discussions with critical friends and (v) supplementary materials used or referenced during the facilitation sessions. According to Griffin and Fletcher (in Casey et al., 2018, p. 114) in self-study research data can be collected in the form of teacher-generated artefacts and student-generated artefacts. For the purpose of this study the term ‘practitioner-generated’ is akin to teacher-generated, and supplementary artefacts serve the same purpose as student-generated artefacts because “the data source supports the teacher-generated data” (p. 114).

Data collection occurred in a chronological order. First, I facilitated an LPP session. On the same day, after facilitating I wrote in a journal about the experience and transferred my writing into a shareable and editable Google doc. Immediately after journaling about the experience, in the same Google doc, I completed a reflection by answering specific questions agreed upon by my supervisor and me (see appendix 1.1). Upon completion of the journal entry and reflection I shared the Google doc with my supervisor who responded as the critical friend, in the Google doc. Responses to the journal entries and reflections were guided by three prompts/sentence starters, and included a mixture of commentary, observations and further questions from the critical friend. After reading the responses from my critical friend I wrote a

final reflection in the same Google doc, and in some instances a phone conversation or further communication within the Google doc would continue between me and the critical friend. I will now provide further detail about each data source, beginning with the seven different LPP experiences.

Loose Parts Play Sessions

To begin answering the research question, *what are my roles and responsibilities while facilitating loose parts play?* I needed to draw upon the different experiences in which I facilitated loose parts play. Data collection for the seven facilitation sessions were bound to a time period between October 1 and December 20, 2019. The timeframe coincided with my readiness to begin data collection, the closure of schools for their winter (holiday) break, and dates secured through my work with EAS. Each session varied in terms of audience (e.g., school health champions, students, school staff), geographical location (e.g., urban/suburban/rural, city/hamlet), context (e.g., school-based, off-site, indoors, outdoors, after-school hours) and purpose (e.g., school mentorship, by-request professional learning, student health champion training). In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of each of the seven facilitation sessions. This overview is followed by a table to help summarize the sessions.

Sessions #1 & #2. The first two sessions were identical in format and structure. The school for each session was part of a physical literacy mentorship program. The PL mentorship program is based on a grant received from Canadian Tire Jumpstart charities and targets physical literacy education for students in rural, remote and economically marginalized communities. My role within this program was to work with the school, and alongside a designated health/wellness champion, to implement and initiative (e.g., loose parts play) as part of an overall strategy and approach to re-define the recess experience for students and further develop their physical

literacy. My facilitation for these two instances began with a teaser or mini-session of loose parts play with a group of approximately 20 students. Later that same day, I facilitated professional learning for the school staff on loose parts play.

Sessions #3 & #4. The third of the seven sessions was a professional learning session I co-facilitated with an Ever Active Schools colleague. The full-day learning session was attended by the health/wellness champions from all the mentorship schools each of us were working with during the 2019/2020 school year. The fourth session was a loose parts play “open house” experience I hosted during a teacher interview night. The school involved was another mentorship program school. The goal of the open house was for families to drop-off their children in the gym to have some time to experience loose parts play, and gather some information about the initiative, scheduled to begin at the school Spring 2020. The adults could either leave the child and sit-in on the interview with the teacher or the adults could choose to stay and observe their children play before and/or after their scheduled interview time.

Sessions #5, #6 & #7. Two of the remaining three sessions involved another mentorship program school. During one of the two sessions I facilitated professional learning for the staff only about loose parts play. When I returned to the school for a second session it was to interact with a student wellness team for the purpose of educating and discussing how to implement and facilitate the loose parts play experience with the entire school. The remaining session was a two-hour, requested professional learning opportunity for a school staff. The school was not part of the mentorship program and wanted the professional learning session to introduce loose parts play, including its theory, logistics and benefits to the entire staff as a beginning step to their self-directed implementation of loose parts play at recess.

Table 3. Seven Loose Parts Play Facilitation Sessions (Data Collection)

Facilitation Session #1	<p>Date: Oct. 10, 2019</p> <p>Audience: school staff and select students</p> <p>Location: urban school</p> <p>Context: indoors, on-site at school, during school day and after school hours</p>	<p>Facilitate a teaser session for 20 students while school health champion observes</p> <p>Facilitate a 2 hr professional learning session for school staff</p>
Facilitation Session #2	<p>Date: Oct. 17, 2019</p> <p>Audience: school staff and select students</p> <p>Location: urban school</p> <p>Context: indoors, on-site at school, during school day and after school hours</p>	<p>Facilitate a teaser session for 20 students while school health champion observes</p> <p>Facilitate a 2 hr professional learning session for school staff</p>
Facilitation Session #3	<p>Date: Nov. 1, 2019</p> <p>Audience: school health champions</p> <p>Location: representing urban/suburban schools</p> <p>Context: off-site, neutral, during school day (excused absence)</p>	Facilitate a full-day professional learning session for school health champions from 20 different schools
Facilitation Session #4	<p>Date: Nov. 6, 2019</p> <p>Audience: school staff, students, parents/guardians</p> <p>Location: rural school</p> <p>Context: indoors, on-site at school, during school day and after school hours</p>	<p>Facilitate a 2 hr professional learning session for school staff</p> <p>Facilitate an ‘open house’ / ‘drop-in’ style play session for students during teacher interview night (families able to observe)</p>
Facilitation Session #5	<p>Date: Nov. 29. 2019 (am)</p> <p>Audience: school staff</p> <p>Location: suburban school</p> <p>Context: indoors, outdoors, on-site at school, during school day</p>	Facilitate a 2 hr professional learning session for school staff, including outdoor play time

	on a designated professional development day	
Facilitation Session #6	<p>Date: Nov. 29, 2019 (pm)</p> <p>Audience: school staff</p> <p>Location: suburban school</p> <p>Context: indoors, on-site at school, during school day on a designated professional development day</p>	Facilitate a 2 hr professional learning session for school staff, including indoor play time
Facilitation Session #7	<p>Date: Dec. 10, 2019</p> <p>Audience: student wellness team, school health champions</p> <p>Location: suburban school (same as entry #5)</p> <p>Context: indoors, outdoors, on-site at school, during school day</p>	<p>Facilitate a 2 hr learning session with a student wellness team, including outdoor play time</p> <p>Meet with school health champions for 1 hr to debrief student wellness team learning session and action plan next steps for school implementation</p>

Journal Entries

Journal entries as an artefact might reveal some of the researcher's assumptions about their role as a practitioner, their views of learners and facilitation or their interpretations of how and what content could be taught (Casey et al., 2018). After each session I wrote a journal entry about my experience. The journal entries included my thoughts, feelings, observations and curiosities during the facilitation experience as well as conversations shared with participants during the session. Journal entries ranged between seven and ten pages in length. A total of seven journal entries were completed.

Reflection Entries

A reflection template was used, guided by the research question: *what is my role in the space, facilitation, and implementation of loose parts play?* The reflection template (see appendix 1.1) would be completed after each journal entry was written. Similar to the journal entries, the

reflections as an artefact might reveal assumptions, views and interpretations of practice. The reflection template included four questions:

1. What worked well with the facilitation/implementation?
2. What didn't work so well? What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them?
3. What are your impressions of the facilitation/implementation based on these experiences?
4. What about your facilitation/implementation did you find helpful for your practice or your understanding of practice?

The reflection template also included a section to write about a critical incident - a narrative based on actual events taken from the journal entry (Casey et al., 2018, p. 99). The critical incident is a particular moment of existential crisis that forced me to attend to and analyze the lived experience (Casey et al., 2018, p. 99). The critical incident reflection was guided by three prompts:

1. What happened?
2. Why did you choose to write about this incident?
3. The implications for my facilitation/implementation practices are...

I wrote a final reflection in response to comments shared by my critical friend, who was responding to my reflection and the detailed account of the critical incident reflection (see the next section for further details).

Critical Friendship

A critical friend is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). Interactivity is one of several core features of quality self-study research (Fletcher et al., 2016) and critical friendship is relied upon by many self-study researchers as the main source of interaction (Fletcher et al., 2016). In my research, there were four critical friends. My main critical friend was my thesis supervisor, Dr. Hayley Morrison. Three peers from the Health and Physical Education MEd program, Nadeen Halls, Nicki Keenlside, and Sharlene

McNairn also served as critical friends. All four critical friends inquired into my pedagogical decisions and outcomes with their interpretations, questions, probes and prompts. Hayley, Nadeen, Nicki and Sharlene read and responded to early draft writings and several iterations of the data analysis, while Hayley also responded to my journal entries and reflections.

Once each reflection was completed, it was shared with Hayley. Responses to the reflection and the critical incident were in the form of questions, comments and observations and structured based on three prompts:

1. What resonated with my thinking about the facilitation/implementation was...
2. The questions that it raised for me about your facilitation/implementation are...
3. Thinking about facilitation/implementation of loose parts play, and from the outside looking in, I wonder if...

During the stages of data analysis and reporting peers from my M.Ed. Master cohort also served as critical friends. Conversations occurred by telephone, email and by exchanging comments within a Google doc. The dialogical process of articulating and elaborating on our comments helped to open new ways of thinking about practice (Schuck & Russell, 2005), especially the self-in-practice.

Supplementary Artefacts

Supplementary data was used to provide further context to the reflections and experiences in my role. Using Griffin and Fletcher's (in Casey et al., 2018, p. 114) distinction of data types in the context of this research, supplementary artefacts are an important data source that supports the practitioner-generated data. Within my research, I utilized five sources of supplementary materials: (a) a loose parts play implementation guide; (b) the Alberta Centre for Injury Control's Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools; (c) Alberta Education's eight student competencies; (d) Outdoor Play Canada's Risk Benefit Assessment Tool (Gill et al., 2019) and (e) Types of Play, a resource shared by Edmonton Public Schools (2019). These supplementary

sources contributed to my research question because they influence and inform my roles and responsibilities when facilitating loose parts play. These are sources often used and referred to during the implementation process.

Loose Parts Play Implementation Guide. The loose parts play implementation guide is an informal step-by-step process that I used within my work with Ever Active Schools (see appendix 1.2). The implementation guide serves as a checklist of actionable items to address as part of loose parts play implementation process with a school. Although most of the steps in the implementation guide are completed, the process and application might look different given the differences in context between schools. The implementation guide was a significant communication piece in my role as facilitator with the various school leaders and offered opportunities for experiential learning. The implementation guide is a starting point when attempting to answer the research question, *what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator?* It was chosen as a source of data because it explicitly informs a facilitator of the steps necessary to complete loose parts play implementation, yet is not a definitive document, allowing for change in the facilitator's beliefs and practice.

Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools. The second supplementary source was the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research's 2013 Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools. This document was consulted and provided perspective when creating the template of guidelines and expectations for the loose parts play space (see appendix 1.3). When presenting the CSH framework to schools, this document was also referenced as a policy support to assist schools with contextualizing the guidelines and expectations of loose parts play with the needs of their school community.

Albert Education Eight Student Competencies. During my facilitation and mentoring of teachers and staff, provincial curriculum connections were often made between the five SEL competencies identified by CASEL and the eight student competencies identified by the province of Alberta's ministry of education (2016): (i) collaboration, (ii) problem solving, (iii) communication, (iv) culture and global citizenship, (v) critical thinking, (vi) managing information, (vii) creativity and innovation, and (viii) personal growth and well-being.

Risk-Benefit Assessment Tool. When addressing staff concerns about how and when to intervene during loose parts play, this tool was used to describe different approaches to intervention guided by observable characteristics of the child's play. This piece of supplementary material was a communication tool and in a few instances was put into practice during live play experiences.

Types of Play. A resource developed by the Early Learning Consultant Team with Edmonton Public Schools identifies and describes twelve types of play. This document was used in a teaching and learning capacity to help adults and students recognize the diversity of play experiences, as well as to classify their own play experiences and the play experiences of others.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one way researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Fletcher (in Casey et al., 2018, p. 59), trustworthiness in self-study research is bolstered by: (a) being clear about the issue of practice being explored (e.g. roles and responsibilities as a facilitator); (b) providing rich descriptive details of the context in which the work is taking place; (c) the researcher making themselves vulnerable by presenting a balanced account and (d) creating an audit trail of the data analyzed. For readers to be able to understand and appreciate this study and

feel it is trustworthy two qualitative research techniques have been used to ensure trustworthiness: (a) triangulation and (b) thick descriptions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Since this study uses multiple data collection methods and multiple data sources to produce understanding, triangulation is an appropriate technique because it “promotes confidence that phenomena have been accurately recorded under scrutiny” (Shenton, 2004, p. 2). First is the use of different data collection methods to check out the consistency of findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Data is examined from multiple perspectives: (a) the observations and reflections in-action during the facilitation session; (b) the recording of events in the journal entry; (c) reflections on-action; (d) insights and reflections from critical friends and (e) the guidance of the supplementary materials.

A second means of triangulation comes from examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Each facilitation session (data collection method) took place at a different point in time (e.g., month, time of day), in different settings (e.g., two school divisions, during the school day, after school hours, on-site at school, off-site), and with different people who provided different points of view (e.g., students, educators, families). The depth and breadth of these experiences helped facilitate a deeper understanding of loose parts play, facilitation and professional development.

The use of multiple data collection methods and data sources provide detailed accounts of each facilitation session. These thick descriptions, according to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), describe phenomenon in sufficient detail allowing the reader to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn in the study are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. The use of journal entries and reflections are a source of practitioner-generated artefacts that provide rich detail and expose successes, learnings, uncertainties, contradictions and

shortcomings in my practice (Casey et al., 2018, p. 59). A detailed account of data collection has already been presented and outlined in the next section, and accompanied by visual references in the appendix, is an equally detailed audit trail of the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Inductive Analysis

The data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step protocol for conducting an inductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method that allows researchers to systematically identify, organize, and offer insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The analysis was used to determine patterns in the data to answer the research question, 'what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play?' Thematic analysis will help to identify what is common to the perspective and experience of a facilitator of loose parts play, and make sense of those commonalities. Braun & Clarke (2012) describe thematic analysis as a six-step process: (i) familiarizing yourself with the data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing potential themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (vi) producing the report.

Familiarizing Yourself with the Data

This first step involves immersing yourself in the data by reading and rereading textual data and making notes along the way (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 60). I revisited each journal entry and its corresponding reflection and critical friend conversation, and began to identify details that might be relevant to the research question.

Generating Initial Codes

In the second step I started to use codes to identify and provide labels for a feature of the data that might be potentially relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61). Codes were generated from each piece of textual data collected (e.g, journal entries, reflections and critical friend conversations). Braun and Clarke (2012) note that codes describe any action, activity, behaviour, observation, practice or reflection (as shown in appendix 1.4). In some

instances one piece of data could have multiple codes (as seen in appendix 1.5), and this is supported by Braun & Clarke (2012) who state "you can code a portion of data with more than one code" (p. 62).

Searching for Themes

During this step I was reviewing the coded data for patterns. This involved collapsing or clustering codes that seemed to share some unifying feature together (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63). As I collated the codes from each entry into a theme, I also reviewed the data for codes that described the self-in-practice and impacts on my practice (examples of code-clustering can be viewed in appendix 1.6). After coding all seven entries I colour-coded each individual code with an initial theme I felt best-described the code. Upon completion of this step I had generated 25 initial themes, including one theme titled, "unsure" because I was uncertain about the particular data's relevancy. Braun & Clarke (2012) use the term 'miscellaneous' rather than 'unsure' to describe codes that "do not clearly fit anywhere and may end up as part of new themes or being discarded" (p. 65).

Reviewing Potential Themes

In step four, as means of quality checking I reviewed the themes in relation to the coded data and the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65). I began to look for patterns, similarities and differences among the 25 themes in relation to the research question "what is my role in the space, facilitation and implementation of loose parts play?" As noted by Braun & Clarke (2012) I ended up redrawing the boundaries of the themes, sorting and consolidating them into the broader themes named in the research question: (a) teacher (facilitation); (b) space, and (c) co-implementor (implementation). Through this process seven themes were listed under each of the three broad themes (see appendix 1.7). I considered these seven themes to be "distinctive

and coherent” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65). At this point Braun & Clarke (2012) call for the second stage in this review process which involves reviewing the themes in relation to the entire data set. A reread of the all the data is completed to determine if the themes “meaningfully capture the entire data set or an aspect thereof.” (p. 65). In so doing, two final changes were made: (i) the seven main themes were consolidated into five themes and renamed (see appendix 1.8), and (ii) the research question was changed slightly to read - “what are my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play?” because it became apparent through the analysis that this specific question was being answered (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57).

Defining and Naming Themes

The names given to each of the themes were reviewed and critiqued based on (a) their singular focus; (b) how they relate to each other without overlapping and (c) directly addressing the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 66). The strength of each theme was further scrutinized by sourcing extracts of data such as quotes and excerpts to clearly describe and convincingly support the analytic points being made. As illustrated in appendix 1.8, each of the five main themes include themes from earlier in the analysis process. Organizing the themes in this manner helped me to trace the data when locating extracts for each theme.

Producing the Report

In this final stage careful attention was given to the order of the themes, ensuring there was a logical connection from theme one to theme five, building upon each other successively to “tell a convincing and compelling story about the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 69).

Deductive Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis is described as a bottom-up or data-driven approach meaning the content itself guides the developing analysis (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). Deductive

analysis is a theory-driven data coding and analysis process; a top-down approach where the researcher brings to the data a series of concepts, ideas, or topics that they use to code and interpret the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 58). As stated by Merriam & Tisdell (2016), when you get towards the end of your study you operate from a more deductive stance, looking for more evidence in support of your final set of themes. At this point in my study I completed a deductive analysis of the five themes using the theoretical frameworks of SEL and CSH.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

During stage two of the thematic analysis – generating initial codes, I began coding specific data examples as either SEL or using one of the five SEL competencies. While engaged in stage three - searching for themes, SEL was considered substantive enough based on data extracts to be one of the 25 candidate themes. While reviewing the potential themes in stage four a different interpretation was arising. As the themes were consolidated from 25 to seven, and finally 5, SEL seemed to be present within each of the five themes and I began to consider using the theoretical framework to deductively analyze each theme. This consideration became a commitment during stage 5 of the thematic analysis - naming and defining themes. As I reread the entire data set for quotes and excerpts, I realized I was beginning to connect the SEL competencies to each of the five themes. Deductively analyzing the five themes using the SEL competencies offered a unique interpretation of how the five themes impact the process of facilitation while also having an influence on the facilitator.

Comprehensive School Health (CSH)

The deductive analysis with CSH was different. During stages four and five of the thematic analysis, as themes were being reviewed, named and defined I was noticing some connections between the five themes. As I reread the data and worked on defining the themes,

relationships between the five themes became clearer. These observations suggested a potential parallel between the five themes and the four pillars of CSH. I committed to using the CSH framework and the interconnected relationship between its four pillars to deductively analyze a similar interconnected relationship between the five themes. The analysis helped to answer the research question and provided more evidence in support of the final themes.

Results/Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator while implementing loose parts play in a school setting, guided by the self-study research methodology. The research question was: what are the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator when implementing loose parts play? Multiple sources of data were utilized to answer the research question, these included: (a) seven different facilitation experiences; (b) seven journal entries (one from each of the seven facilitation sessions); (c) seven guided reflections (one from each of the seven facilitation sessions); (d) recorded discussions with critical friends and (e) supplementary materials used or referenced during the seven facilitation sessions. An inductive thematic analysis of the data was performed and resulted in five crucial and interrelated roles and responsibilities of the facilitator: (i) experiential learning, (ii) explicit communication, (iii) contextual considerations, (iv) relationships and (v) reflective practice. Afterwards, a deductive analysis was performed on the five roles and responsibilities using the theoretical frameworks of Social and Emotional Learning and Comprehensive School Health. The first section will present and discuss the results from the thematic analysis.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning means providing the audience an experience that is ‘hands-on’ and involves them practically in the activity (Armour & Yelling, 2004, p. 80). Experiential learning also means having experiences that can be transformed into knowledge (Kreber, 2010, p. 218). I found that it is the facilitator’s responsibility to provide experiential learning opportunities that help participants draw upon and think more critically about their own experiences with play and their values of play. Using the loose parts play implementation guide during the facilitation sessions, the audience is situated in play experiences when they: (a) share memorable play experiences (past or present); (b) are invited to play with loose parts; or (c) observe others

playing with loose parts. These lived experiences provide opportunities for adult and student audiences to consider how loose parts play can be experienced in their school, in terms of choosing materials to play with, what space to use to host loose parts play, consideration for students who might need differentiated support or preparation before playing, or ways to introduce loose parts play to the entire school community.

During any of the three play experiences, both I and the participants experience discomfort as we grapple with learning, un-learning or re-learning. As documented in journal entry 2, when observing students during an indoor loose parts play teaser session, a group of students were in a corner of the gym playing make believe, creating different rooms in a home. These students were getting frustrated about having to repeatedly speak to another group of students who were running through the play space and damaging their home. The frustrated students approached the teachers to express their feelings and seek help to resolve the problem. Rather than address the students themselves the staff addressed me with questions such as, “what should I say?”, “how should we deal with this?” or “I’d like to see how you handle this” (journal entry #2, p. 4) instead of intervening themselves and debriefing the experience with me afterwards.

For adults, responding in such circumstances might be uncomfortable. What I’ve observed is an opportunity to unlearn past practices such as being an immediate or primary problem solver for students. Supported in the work of Patton et al. (2012) and Thoonen et al. (2011) learning should take place in authentic contexts where teachers can engage actively and collaboratively in relevant tasks. Situating teachers in the play space provides moments to practice patience by guiding and encouraging student-owned approaches. As much as possible the expectation is for the student(s) to navigate these moments for themselves, through

experiential learning that is student-centered. And although I am the facilitator, I don't have the 'right' answer(s). My aim, like other facilitators and observers, is to make the best decision(s) I can, guided by the expectations of the play space, which are informed by evidence-based practices. The value of experiential learning is the opportunity to act and reflect, to err and learn. We will learn by living, so long as the experience is one of quality and worthy of reflection (Westberg, 2011). Furthermore, learning becomes experiential when knowledge is constructed through personal experience and ideas (Hunuk, 2017), and when events have been transformed either by reflection or action (Kreber, 2010).

Ensuring that participants have experiential learning opportunities opens the doors to new questions and assists them in taking on the responsibility of facilitator when I am no longer present. During an outdoor winter play session for staff only, a group of four teachers were playing with an empty 50-gallon recycling bin on wheels. One staff member went inside the bin, closed the lid and had the other staff members push and wheel them around. On a few occasions the bin would tip and fall over (with the teacher inside). The bin became cracked and damaged and the teacher was apologizing. Parts getting damaged through play is a natural occurrence, especially because the players are deeply engaged in their play, yet we are accustomed to saying or hearing messages such as, "be careful not to break that" or "if you can't treat something respectfully it will be taken away" (journal entry #5, p. 1). We need to consider the impact such messaging has on the play experience for participants.

The experiential learning gained from playing with the loose parts provides a space for participants to address such issues and questions proactively instead of reactively. There is a similar, web-based approach courtesy of outsideplay.ca (2020) where parents/caregivers are given three scenarios involving outdoor activities with children. The parents/caregivers then

choose to either intervene or let the child follow their interest. After selecting their choice, the parent/caregiver learns more about how their decision impacts the child's experience. The research that informs this activity highlights how intervening often undermines the capability, interest and joy of the child. Through this experiential learning we can empathize how students are likely to feel when they play and begin to anticipate or be ready to respond in an empathetic and supportive way, preserving the child's play experience, when similar instances like the 50-gallon recycling bin occur under our supervision.

Explicit Communication

Explicit communication involves the facilitator *explicitly communicating* the intended goals and ensuring the goals are a part of the instructional process (Kreber, 2010, p. 220). As demonstrated in the data, explicit communication highlights the importance of sharing the role and responsibility of communication among the school community. This needs to be done as a means to enhance continued and long-term learning (Parker et al., 2013, p. 453). In being explicit, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to use communication methods appropriate for their audience, respond to the needs identified by the audience, and to foster communication between school community members (e.g., student-to-student, staff and student, staff and families, students and families, etc.). I know this because during the facilitation sessions I am asked by teachers, staff, students, and families about policy (the guidelines and expectations of play), intervention (when and how to intervene) and timelines of implementation (what needs to be done and within what period of time).

As demonstrated in the data, a key action with explicit communication is using scholarly and evidenced-based practices to validate and support your approach. Referencing theories and research specific to outdoor play and loose parts play such as Brussoni et al. (2012, 2015),

Houser et al. (2016), Hughes (2012) and Nicholson (1972) help craft, communicate and rationalize the guidelines and expectations being used to inform school policy, support teaching and learning and establish the school's social and physical environment. Ideally and intentionally, the guidelines and expectations should align with the existing school policy, or become part of a revised school policy. When hosting a loose parts play information session for families during a teacher interview night, aka. parent-teacher interviews, I posted the guidelines/expectations (see appendix 1.3) for loose parts play, informed by the aforementioned theory and evidence, near the entrance of the gym for both students and parents to read (journal entry #4, p. 5). The guidelines are descriptive more than prescriptive, influenced by the phrase, "as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible" (Brussoni et al., 2012). The expectations were also created keeping in-mind the safety guidelines for physical activity in Alberta schools (2013) to ensure explicit alignment with provincial standards.

The data also demonstrates how guidelines and expectations need to be communicated regularly and explicitly among staff, between staff and students, and between staff and the school community. When discussing initiatives and responsibilities in schools it is not uncommon to encounter a disconnect or misunderstandings between staff, between staff and students or between the school and the school community. During facilitation session #1 a teacher shared their confusion about supervision expectations during recess. The teacher continued to explain how a group of students were engaged in rough and tumble play and the teacher was unsure about letting it continue or intervening. As noted by Niehues et al. (2013), adults, when supervising or facilitating, tend to have a fixed state or "risk-productive mode" resulting in constraints and control, which creates an environment of play rooted in predictability and safety. The teacher explained there was a lack of communication and clarity about permissible activities

during recess. They also acknowledged they are comfortable supervising rough and tumble play, but felt other staff members would not be as comfortable and would likely tell the students to stop. As highlighted in this example, common or implicit understandings cannot be assumed, because practitioners experience a dilemma between ensuring ‘safety’ which may result in children being prevented from taking risks in their play (van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017, p. 947).

It is important for facilitators to train participants and other facilitators using clear and specific language in their teaching and learning. Determining how and when to intervene during student’s play was a frequently asked question. My critical friend asked, “Are there guiding practices for facilitators? like a motto or something to live by like the student guidelines?”

(journal entry #2, p. 6). I responded,

The closest example I can think of is the analogy of the hummingbird we share during professional learning - “buzz in, buzz out.” This serves as a reminder of how to openly observe students in the play space. Again, I LOVE this suggestion, it gives me reason to consider what/if more can be done to practically and tangibly guide facilitators (journal entry #2, p. 6).

The analogy of the hummingbird paired with the catchphrase ‘buzz in, buzz out’, and accompanied by a physical demonstration tells it like it is, and makes clear the need, when intervening, to first and foremost pass through and stand back. In a different instant, my critical friend asked, “What [is] the training for a facilitator like? you mentioned: When should a facilitator transition from open observation, to focused attention, to active intervention... I feel like this might be learning *from* and *through* experience but I don’t know what the ‘guides’ say.” (journal entry #1, pp. 6). This is an example where, as a facilitator, I share with the audience an evidence-based, tiered, risk benefit assessment model specific to outdoor play (Child & Nature Alliance of Canada, 2019, van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017). This resource is used to suggest to the audience a way to approach supervising loose parts play. The model names three stages: open

observation, focused attention and active intervention. Within each stage the document provides prompts, actions and ways to communicate for supervisors to consider and practice based on the play they are observing and the type of intervention they are considering. The goal is to supervise at the open observation stage. When we act with focused attention or active intervention, the intention is to always return to a state of open observation which allows play to continue to be self-directed.

The same was experienced with communication between students. I found it difficult at times, as an observer, to discern if the need to pause or withdraw during play was being communicated clearly by students, and if the communication was being received knowingly by the other participants (journal entry #1, p. 2). When reflecting upon this with my critical friend, the question came forward if this would be the student's job to pause and break, or the facilitators. This exchange highlights the consideration for the need to be explicit with students about how each of us plays and reacts differently, recognizing the need within ourselves to take a break, or how we can recognize that others might need to take a break or be given some space.

Finally, the whole school community wants to know the tangible logistics of implementation such as how and when it's going to happen. I know this because when I was facilitating a workshop for school health champions from various urban schools' educators at the end of the session were wondering, 'what next?' (journal entry #3, p. 3). Furthering the conversation, Hayley asked if, as a next phase, I set goals with the school health champions, and how the school curriculum aligns with loose parts play. While it may not be called goal-setting, a backward design (Richards, 2013) is used, beginning the planning process with a clear understanding of the ends in mind, and explicitly communicating the requisite steps and actions to be taken during implementation. It serves both as a timeline and a checklist of activities to be

accomplished. The planning template (see appendix 1.2) is explicit in identifying tasks and actions to be completed, yet remains flexible enough to be adapted to school calendars and school needs. The key benefit of the planning template is mapping the milestone moments critical to a holistically successful implementation and helps answer the school health champion's questions about 'what's next?'

Relationships

During the facilitation and implementation of loose parts play it became clear the responsibility of the facilitator was to make the experience communal. As a facilitator we have to help identify and connect members within and beyond the school community. There are layers to the relationships beginning with the facilitator's relationship with the school - know the audience and context. Afterward connect staff with students, as well as, staff and students with parents and caregivers. Dialogue within a community stimulates further thinking, and working as a group allows staff to actively participate by sharing ideas and consulting with one another on relevant issues (Parker et al., 2013). This finding is similar to existing literature recognizing the value in bringing different school communities together to learn, relate, and explore community partners well-suited to share knowledge and experiences. Learning is experiential; it is also a social process that needs to be situated within a supportive community to foster risk-taking and shared responsibility (Parker et al., 2012).

Based on the child-centred nature of loose parts play, students are an integral part of implementation and can be a valuable contributor during facilitation. Through reflection and conversation with Hayley, I identified an opportunity where engaging student support to facilitate a loose parts play experience had the likelihood of making the event more successful: "it was challenging making sure each student had a chance to read or be made aware of the

guidelines/expectations while playing in the space. In a few instances, it wasn't until I intervened in play did students have their attention brought to the guidelines posted on the wall. Perhaps I could have made it more visible at the entrance" (journal entry #4, p. 3). Whereas my critical friend responds, "Ya this is where you need to recruit some volunteers or senior level students to help the transition into the space be smooth and get all the deets out" (journal entry #4, p. 3). I now realize as part of my role, this would have been an ideal opportunity to involve the group of students who already were contributing with the implementation of loose parts play at the school.

Additionally, having the students help may have altered the perception and discourse of my relationship with the school. As also noted in journal entry #4 (p. 3), "at times I felt there was a disconnect in the language being used by school staff introducing me to the families. Instead of presenting it as a program the school is pursuing through a partnership with EAS, the language used on occasion came across as EAS bringing it to the school." The terms of the relationship, along with a sense of responsibility and accountability is different if you consider your school community co-implementers of the initiative, as opposed to beneficiaries of a program. This is a unique finding within the professional development / facilitation research and may be useful in circumstances when continuous professional learning is provided by an external partner.

Participants must be aware and intentional about the language used to describe the partnership and how ownership of the teaching and learning is shared.

A case can also be made for the engagement of specific students. Following the step-by-step loose parts play implementation guide, one early action is to host a 'teaser' session. The purpose is to preview loose parts play to staff and introduce the experience to a small group of students before the entire student population participates. At one particular school the participants were from the school's Healthy Living Team, which is composed of students who

volunteered to be a part of a team interested in planning and delivering health and wellness opportunities in their school. During the student's play session, I was observing alongside the school's two wellness champions and we noted the advantage of specifically observing the Healthy Living Team because it provided insight into student strengths for possible future roles (e.g., clean-up and set-up, supporting adult supervision), and storage logistics as we watched the students clean-up the loose parts." (journal entry #7, p. 1). Also of note from the same session was learning from the students the parts they enjoyed playing with the most based on the parts they chose to keep to add to the school's inventory (journal entry #7, p. 3). Clearly the facilitator has a responsibility to work together with students and staff throughout the implementation and to ensure the student's relationship in the process is purposeful and ever-present.

It is vital to facilitate dialogical engagement between different school communities to help share best practices. I know this because during the afternoon portion of a professional learning session for school health champions it was arranged for school health champions from the previous school year to attend to share their experience and answer questions. As written in journal entry #3 (p. 1),

the champions for the 2019-2020 schools seemed to really appreciate this opportunity and I am inferring part of the reason is because the 2018-2019 champions lived the realities of implementation day-in and day-out and had to address issues that neither myself or my colleague likely faced as 'outsiders' supporting implementation. The fact they continued with loose parts play the following year and could comment on what it has been like also appeared to be a crucial feature of the 'buy-in' from the participants. Ultimately it wasn't Ever Active Schools and school division consultants telling you this could be done; these were folks in the trenches being living proof!

Parker et al. (2010) states in their work with developing and maintaining a community of practice, in building relationships and sharing examples between schools, we are deepening participants' understanding and creating a community of practice. Together, schools will contribute to a shared practice and network of support for loose parts play.

For the instances when it is not possible to have different schools connect and build upon each other's experiences, I am reminded regularly that school communities find legitimacy in, and are keen to know and learn from the experiences of other schools. Parker et al. (2013) recognized the importance of groups publicly sharing their work with others. In instances when groups do not, or are unable to, disseminate their own work I, as a facilitator, can serve as an intermediary and support the dialogue within the community. As noted in journal entry 7, p. 6, by collecting stories from other schools and their implementation experiences I establish trust and credibility with future schools. I can draw upon instances from past schools and share strategies and success. Although the work is not shared directly from the source school, we are working towards a similar outcome - to stimulate further thinking and enhance continued long-term learning (Parker et al., 2013) and share stories of experience to relate, to connect and to affirm.

Contextual Considerations

To know how best to implement and facilitate loose parts play, it's the facilitator's role and responsibility to draw attention to the autonomy of each site. This involves knowing your audience, being flexible and adaptable to their needs and readiness (Parker et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011), and offering activities relevant to the issues and dilemmas of individual school settings and the contexts of teachers' day-to-day work (Armour & Yelling, 2004). As a facilitator I have worked with urban and rural school communities, as well as schools identified as having a low socioeconomic population. I have worked with audiences of teachers, students and parents/caregivers. Individually or in combination, these factors may impact: (a) the school's policy specific to play, (b) the collective knowledge of, value for, and comfort level with play, (c) the goals identified in the school's development plan, (d) the number

and type of existing programs on-site, (e) the availability of space and resources to support loose parts play, (f) the quality of relationships between school community members, and so on.

In some cases, the context in need of consideration first is the school health champion(s) leading the work of loose parts play. During a facilitation session #3 with school health champions from different schools I introduced myself to a school champion I had not yet met. When I asked them how they were feeling about the content and the session thus far, they openly admitted they were unsure if they belonged at such a presentation. They weren't sure if their personal and professional values about play, as well as the environment at their school aligned with the values being expressed by the other school champions. They explained they were appointed to this leadership position and were not provided many details about loose parts play. This learning shifted my thinking, as I note in journal entry #3 (p. 3), "even if other practitioners volunteered to be their school's loose parts play champion it doesn't guarantee that their views/pedagogy on play are going to align with others who also are labelled 'champions.' It is a common expression in our culture to refer to a like-minded group of people by saying, "I know I am preaching to the converted," and we need to be mindful and openly and directly acknowledge (i.e., set the tone) that while we all might not be present and in our roles under the same conditions, circumstances and/or beliefs; and that is okay. Rather than assuming we all fit, this process and experience is about identifying where and how we fit as individuals as well as in relation with others.

In journal entry #6, p. 6, I write,

The invitation into the play space (albeit with a different directive/purpose) became a living example of what we were discussing and sharing as a group earlier in the presentation about the benefits and opportunities of play and loose parts play specifically. To the best of my memory it was the first instance when impromptu play occurred without it being explicitly communicated to the audience that it was time to play; it happened organically. While it wasn't what I expected or intended, my role as facilitator

required me to roll with it, and go where the audience was going. Much like the strategies I share with participants, I needed to step back and let 'em play. Like a hummingbird, I buzzed in, listened to conversations, watched play, chatted with participants when invited, but then I buzzed off/out and went elsewhere. I "read" the crowd and as they began to, on their own, tone down their play and naturally begin to form a circle, I made the decision to intervene, interrupt their play and re-direct their attention to the initial task. For the participant's play experience to be freely-chosen, personally-directed and intrinsically motivating I needed to respond to their cues, rather than impose my agenda on their play and learning experience.

In my experience as a teacher I have been expected to implement initiatives that ultimately were unsustainable because of their lack of relevance or suitability with the school's values and priorities. Such experiences have been shared by many fellow teachers. If an initiative is to be implemented collaboratively and achieve sustainability, the focus needs to be on pulling staff into something they find energizing (Parker et al., 2013). It is pivotal that staff have a platform to actively participate and contribute to the implementation of the initiative, including the learning experiences in which they will be involved (Patton et al., 2012, Armour & Yelling, 2004; Parker et al., 2013). As documented in journal entry #5 (p. 1), prior to hosting a staff presentation I was able to meet with staff from the school leadership team and learn about school policies as well as the physical and social environment. Stemming from that meeting we were able to identify many natural connections between loose parts play and other school initiatives/practices. As I highlighted these synergies throughout the staff presentation 'buy-in' and enthusiasm amongst the staff became evident. During a staff presentation with a different school I recapped student responses from an earlier teaser session when students were asked four questions about their play experiences: (i) what is play?; (ii) why is play important?; (iii) what might you feel when you play?; (iv) what stops you from playing?. The entire team of teachers were impacted by the responses of the students. Their answers were insights into the social and emotional difficulties experienced during play. It got several other teachers wondering, "how

would my students respond to these questions?” Based on that shared curiosity it was decided that each class would experience a teaser session, including answering the four play questions. This would be the first time in all of my facilitation experiences that every class at a school would experience loose parts play at such an early stage in implementation. While this step was born out of a question about the students, I would also argue it was in-part for the staff too, to help grow their competence and confidence with loose parts play (journal entry #2, p. 8).

There is also a responsibility to make time to share learning with parents and caregivers. School-to-school, engaging parents/caregivers differs, and it is a matter of understanding the community you serve. As demonstrated in the data from journal entry #4 when I facilitated a session after school hours with parents and families one of the goals of the event was to collect data about experiences with and perceptions of play, to inform the choices we made for implementing loose parts play.

Each of the previous paragraphs highlight grasping the context of the school community, including the physical and social environment, policy, and relationships with staff, students and families. Literature on the efficacy of professional development and professional learning acknowledges the need for activities to be relevant to the issues and dilemmas faced by teachers in the individual school settings or the ‘real world’ of a teacher’s day-to-day work place (Armour & Yelling, 2004, pp. 80-81). While the findings of this research are consistent, I would expand the need to include, in addition to teachers, the ‘real world’ experiences of students, families and community partners within the individual school setting. As a facilitator it is your responsibility to invite the school community to participate in the process and learn for yourself the possibilities and opportunities for loose parts play. Staff members can likely provide you with an accurate depiction of the community context, but this research has also demonstrated moments of

surprise and unexpected involvement, which can arguably increase the efficacy, inclusivity and responsiveness of implementation.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is also a key component for those implementing loose parts play. When facilitating, I have found there is a responsibility to teach through my own reflective practice, described by Schon (1983) as reflection in-action (professional knowledge used to make decisions from moment to moment) and reflection on-action (professional knowledge used to analyze past experiences to decide how to adapt for the future).

A reflective practice can spur change for the better. As I reflected on the loose parts play session hosted during the teacher interview night, I learned and noted, “the challenge with this specific setting was the ability to communicate the messaging effectively to adults based on the ‘walk-in/drop-in’ nature of the experience. Perhaps, with better planning and prep, I could have created a ‘PARENT ZONE / ADULT ZONE’ with chairs and painter’s tape on the floor to delineate a ‘viewing gallery’ type of experience. On each chair there could have been a write-up or visual of what LPP is about to explain and simultaneously distract the adults so the kids could play freely.” (journal entry #4, p. 2). As I reflected on this session afterward, there were many ways I could do better, and I had an opportunity to apply my learning from this reflection at another teacher interview night at a different school. I didn’t incorporate the adult zone idea, but I did prepare a handout that served multiple purposes: (a) a loose parts play FAQ (frequently asked questions); (b) a tip sheet about how to encourage play at-home, and (c) a list of items to facilitate loose parts play at-home that could also be donated to the school. The physical space was set-up into interactive stations including sample loose parts, a game to teach about the different types of play, an area for families to share their opinions and experiences about play,

and loose parts play themed books for families to read together. What I continue to learn is reflective practice is a cyclical process. Speaking from my experience, the purpose of reflection is to investigate, inquire and consider for the purpose of clarity and possibly change. Rarely is reflection an endpoint; it is ongoing. It usually triggers further thought, action or deeper evaluation, which then provokes reflection again. I connect this with the concept of cycles in action research discussed by Lewin (1946) and Casey, Fletcher, Schaefer, and Gleddie (2018). Action research is a cyclical process beginning with a thought which develops into a plan. The plan is then brought into action, followed-up by an evaluation of the act. Finally, the practitioner/researcher reflects on the total experience, producing a newly developed thought, and triggering a new cycle. It is critical for facilitators of loose parts play to be reflective; to constantly question, inquire and observe to provide the best experience possible.

There is also the impact of reflective practice when engaged in dialogue with someone else. At times, reflecting with a critical friend has shifted my perspective and practice. For example, I was explaining to one critical friend how, during facilitation, I explicitly communicate with staff to be mindful of assumptions we might make about colleagues' readiness and comfort with play (journal entry #3, p. 3). The critical friend responded, "Nice. I'm thinking about how you say this to the staff and what might be said to students when students also assume that others will "share" or "play with me" or "they get" how LPP works..." (journal entry #3, p. 3). This exchange gave me reason to pause and think about if I should or how I could incorporate similar messaging with students to more explicitly ready the space for play. Depending on the quality of our independent reflections we might gain insights that provoke change in our practice. This demonstrates it is the responsibility, and to the benefit of the facilitator, to engage in dialogue with others as an additional pathway for reflection, probing and

prompting to inquire into pedagogical decisions and their outcomes (Beni et al., 2019; Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Costa & Kallick, 1993; Schuck & Russell, 2005).

I am often asked by school staff if loose parts play can be facilitated indoors during indoor recess, especially considering some of the teaser sessions are hosted indoors in the school's gymnasium. As I compare and reflect upon the sessions facilitated indoors and outdoors, I respond to the indoor recess question by saying, "the four walls of the gym may physically contain and restrain the students (compared to the openness of the outdoors). For some it also contains and bottles-up their energy which might cause an up-regulation or over-stimulation for some players" (journal entry #1, p. 2). Being mindful of relationships and contextual considerations, I also advise staff to connect with (and where possible, observe) schools who are doing indoor loose parts play, and to try the indoor session for themselves and reflect while in the experience, and reflect on the experience. Reflective practice requires reflection in-action or on-action, and the key to each is action! Schools need to act and create their own experiences to reflect in and reflect on. While answers and insights can be gained by learning from the experiences of others, the role of the facilitator is to provide experiential learning for school staff to draw upon or, to foster the responsibility in the school to act and reflect.

As demonstrated in the data there is a responsibility, as a facilitator, to encourage a reflective approach in others. For instance, at the conclusion of an outdoor staff play session we gathered in a circle and took time to reflect on the experience and one staff member noted even in Winter weather it feels good to be outside and the time can pass quickly; it doesn't feel like we were outside for 30 min. (journal entry #5, p. 1). Such a reflection has the potential to reframe a facilitator's assumptions about the practicality or meaningfulness of loose parts play as a winter

experience. At one point during the champions professional learning session the group was tasked with critically analyzing principles of play, developed in the United Kingdom.

The purpose of the activity was to make the context of the principles specific to loose parts play for us, as implementers in Alberta, serving as a guide and rationale for the 'what, why and how.' At times the discussions were polarizing and I was aware of my feelings of wanting to land on some common ground for all. Simultaneously the opinions expressed were diverse and insightful and warranted consideration. My role was not to provide some form of definitive opinion or action, or to bring closure to an idea/expression that seemed to be hanging in the unknown/unattended. Engaging in a self-reflective practice helps the individual take responsibility, even if according to my critical friend, "some of these participants probably hated you for this btw (entry #3, p. 5).

It was OK to let ideas and comments just be; to let them hang for reflection and future consideration. Parker et al. (2013) mention teachers, at times, want easy answers and wished facilitators would simply provide solutions instead of being noncommittal. The role of the facilitator isn't to give (or have) the answers, but to foster, support and contribute towards reflective practice in others. This can be achieved by using questioning that can prompt critical thinking and reflection, modelling reflection through their own practice, such as thinking and/or reflecting aloud) (Westberg, 2011), by being a critical friend with others, and reflecting within their facilitation (reflection-in-action). What is also worth noting is the importance and need to clearly discuss and define the expectations of the facilitator and critical friend so as to avoid any possible role ambiguity (Schuck & Russell, 2005).

Applying Theory to Themes

To better understand the five roles and responsibilities of experiential learning, explicit communication, relationships, contextual considerations and reflective practice, I completed a deductive analysis of the themes using the theoretical frameworks of SEL and CSH. By demonstrating this additional layer of interpretation and interconnectedness between the themes and the theories I am providing more evidence in support of facilitators considering these five themes to critique and enhance their own practice.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

This section will analyze each of the five themes against each of the SEL competencies and demonstrate how they align and support one another. SEL relates to the roles and responsibilities of facilitating loose parts play in several ways. When I facilitate workshops about LPP and share the evidence-based benefits of this form of play, connections are made to the development of SEL competencies and the recognition of positive social and emotional outcomes in students (Gibson, Cornell & Gill, 2017). For example, during facilitation session #5 after school staff played with the loose parts, one teacher shared, “as I watch my colleagues play and see examples of problem solving, communication, collaboration and design thinking I might need to speak specifically to what I see to others who might not notice what I am noticing or see it in the same way” (journal entry #5, p. 1). Connections to SEL competencies are being made through loose parts play (e.g., problem solving, collaboration, etc.) and there is an identified need to communicate these learning benefits across the school community to ensure they go beyond subliminal and are made explicit. **What I have learned, and can’t be overlooked is, the influence and impact that SEL has on the facilitator, people the facilitator works alongside, and the opportunity for growth across the school community.**

While analyzing the data and reflecting on the constructed themes, SEL competencies were prevalent in facilitator actions and interactions (see table below for a summary). The facilitator provides moments of self-awareness through experiential learning by engaging participants (the facilitator included) to think about and explore their own past and present play experiences. When the facilitator commits to reflective practice, they closely examine their own choices and experiences in an effort to better understand who they are and the decisions they make to further their learning and the learning of others. Explicit communication between the facilitator and participants, helps everyone manage the process of implementation using goal-setting and progress tracking. To be considerate of the context within which you are facilitating means you are demonstrating your social awareness for the strengths, needs and readiness of the school community. Making the facilitation experience communal requires the building and maintenance of positive relationships with groups including students, staff, parents/caregivers, other schools and local organizations. Foundational to these relationships is the communication of critical information such as guidelines/expectations, roles and responsibilities, and implementation goals and timelines needs to be explicit. Finally, a key piece to making responsible decisions as a facilitator requires reflective practice. Exercising honesty, humility and vulnerability, independently and with others, strengthens a facilitator's ability to make constructive choices.

Table 4. *Social Emotional Learning Competencies and Corresponding Role and Responsibility*

SEL Competency	Facilitator Main Roles and Responsibilities
Self-Awareness	Reflective Practice, Experiential Learning
Self-Management	Explicit Communication
Social Awareness	Contextual Consideration

Relationship Skills	Relationships, Explicit Communication
Responsible Decision-Making	Reflective Practice

Experiential Learning: Self-Awareness

Experiential learning provides the opportunity for participants to live the reality of loose parts play through action and observation. Students and staff play in an environment that aims to encourage and engage self-directed, voluntary and intrinsically motivating experiences. They learn to recognize the joys, the challenges, and the effort it takes to be present in such a space and to negotiate the nuances of an autonomous, yet shared environment (e.g., use of loose parts and sharing, access to space, deciding how/what to play, addressing disagreements).

As a facilitator observing these experiences you are able to connect the abstract, the theory to the lived experience. Playing with the loose parts and observing students play with the loose parts is a sensory experience (i.e., physically and emotionally) highlighting the value and benefits of play. It also draws your attention to your personal strengths and limitations with facilitating and implementing, as well as the benefits to, and needs of, the school environment and community. Quite often, after playing with the loose parts or watching students play and witnessing their emotional responses and positive engagement, I am told by teachers and staff, “this isn’t what I thought it was” or “this changes the way I think about play and doing this.” These examples of experiential learning along with intentional acts of self-awareness demonstrate moments that can lead to shifts in practice. The facilitator has a responsibility to begin with and connect to the past and present play experiences of participants and to draw upon learning from these experiences (Armour et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2013; Westberg, 2011). Doing so creates potential in participants to think and act differently, using their past and present experiences to help situate themselves in their current, lived reality.

Explicit Communication: Self-Management and Relationship Skills

Goals are seldom made explicit and are not always part of the instructional process (Kreber, 2010, p. 220). Explicit communication is critical in helping everyone involved understand the purpose (e.g., school policy, guidelines and expectations), the process (e.g., steps to implementation), how to participate (e.g., role of staff, students, parents/caregivers and community partners), and how to assess and evaluate performance (e.g., what's working, what might need to change). Communication is foundational to support individuals with managing their individual participation and involvement in the process, as well as foundational to the community managing the implementation process. In setting a goal or establishing a timeline, details need to be clear and specific. When necessary, facilitators need to be strong in re-direction, revisiting goals, emphasizing essential information and refocusing efforts (Parker et al, 2013, p. 451). Checking-in on progress, including individual and collective understanding needs to be constant and ongoing.

Explicit teaching and learning about play cannot be overlooked. Debriefing the play experience with staff and students is crucial. To foster long-term inquiry “learning by sharing” strategies were used (Parker et al., 2013) and I found it can be more relatable, contextual and beneficial when experiences are shared with the entire class/group. Social awareness and relationship skills can be developed as students and staff practice empathizing with the feelings and experiences of others, and using the information shared to help build positive relationships. Sharing among the group can also offer opportunities for responsible decision-making as individuals share problem-solving strategies. It allows for others in the class to communicate their knowledge, attitude and skills. When possible and appropriate, rather than privately addressing a matter with only the students involved in the misunderstanding or conflict, make the

example communal as a means to be explicit and focused (journal entry #1, pp. 6 & 7) in which the collective has an opportunity to learn and benefit.

Relationally, communication not only brings and keeps all members of the school community together, it can also bridge multiple school communities. Opportunities to communicate need to be open, available and ongoing. Communicating our triumphs, challenges and uncertainties is how we will learn *about* one another and learn *from* one another. To be engaged is to be seen, heard and felt. Through this platform of play, there is the potential to reach every student, which means every staff member and parent/caregiver is impacted too and needs to be included.

Relationships: Relationship Skills

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to establish and maintain broad relationships, creating a space for shared responsibility pre-, mid- and post-implementation. Learning is a social process (Patton et al., 2012, p. 526) and students are partners in the process and have essential knowledge and experience that can contribute to the creation of policy and support the teaching and learning of loose parts play. As noted by Parker et al. (2010, p. 353) teachers often feel their learning is less meaningful when they are removed from their students and teaching environment. Positive relationship building with students during facilitation and implementation also strengthens the social environment of the school, as the students see their work, effort, and thoughts reflected throughout. Parents/caregivers can also be an equally enthusiastic partner. At the very least, relationships can be built and maintained through an ongoing process of communication and awareness with the progress and outcomes of loose parts play. There will likely be varying degrees of participation in other logistical aspects including donating loose parts and fundraising/resource support to secure storage. We want students to share their

experiences of loose parts with their families, but the families also want to (and need to) learn about the experience from the staff and/or community partners.

Relationship skills have the opportunity to develop through play. For those who choose to participate in loose parts play there will be an opportunity to establish new relationships with peers or maintain or deepen existing relationships. For others who choose to play on their own I have found that there is a communal aspect of being in a shared space and feeling connected with others, even if you are not directly engaged in activities with anyone. Relationships also exist between players and nature. Hosting loose parts play in the outdoors is intentional because of the evidence linking the natural environment with wellness, restoration and connectedness (Kaplan, 2015; Capaldi, Passmore, Nisbet, Zelenski & Dopko, 2015; Berto, 2014). Loose parts play can also be a safe space for students, thus establishing a relationship between the student and the school environment.

By committing to relationships, we are better positioned to take the perspective of and empathize with others. Whether we are facilitating, playing or implementing, we need to directly and openly communicate and acknowledge how we each bring our own knowledge, values and skills to the play setting resulting in different contributions and outcomes that we will try to identify, appreciate, utilize and learn from. Let's also remember relationships of shared experience with other schools and colleagues facilitating loose parts play. To each other we are resources and critical friends. Sharing our different contexts and experiences adds perspective to our own understanding and may help us to approach scenarios with greater empathy and a diversity of strategies.

Contextual Considerations: Social Awareness

Regardless of your relationship to the school (e.g., internal staff or external partner), you need to know your context as best as possible. Implementation of loose parts play is detailed and strategic, but it's not rigid, it's malleable. Working with the context of individual schools requires facilitators to be flexible and adaptable with the timeframe to complete implementation. Different school settings work at different paces, due to a variety of circumstances. My experience has also taught me schools are engaged and cooperative when they recognize the process is modified to meet their needs, rather than being expected to alter aspects of their programming and policy that result in broader disruptions to the social and learning environment. Therefore, being socially aware of the school's level of readiness helps facilitators work collaboratively with school staff to establish the best fit for loose parts play within the school's context and implement loose parts play at a pace, and in a manner, that is respectful of the holistic goals and needs of the school.

I also found it valuable and considerate when facilitators demonstrate patience and empathy for the readiness and capacity of schools to move forward with loose parts play. Being ready at the school level to proceed with loose parts play doesn't always correlate with complete staff support. Furthermore, staff can agree with the policy and rationale for loose parts play, but still might have challenges or hesitations with identifying their role with supporting implementation. Being sensitive to these needs, as a facilitator, contributes to the likelihood of sustainability, and also helps build community. When we talk about the social environment of the school this encompasses the students, as well as the staff, believing they are accepted and valued.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that loose parts play isn't for everyone, and it is the responsibility of the facilitator to maintain this perspective and share it with the school community. Remembering that play is spontaneous, voluntary and intrinsic, it must come from the student, first and foremost. While there should be at least one opportunity for all students to experience loose parts play, it must be the child's choice to participate. Recognizing and respecting students' experiences with loose parts play and supporting their choice positively contributes to the social environment of the school.

Reflective Practice: Responsible Decision-Making and Self-Awareness

To best understand your roles and responsibilities as a facilitator, and to have the greatest confidence and competence in your decision-making you need to engage in ongoing self-reflection and reflect on your interactions. The roles and responsibilities for loose parts play, as determined by this research, are consistent with the literature on professional development and facilitation (Parker et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Armour & Yelling, 2004a). Specifically, facilitation and implementation must be interactive and relational, situating learning perspectives in the belief that knowledge is inseparable from the contexts and activities in which it develops (Parker et al., 2010, p. 338).

It is important to be mindful of the personal choices we make in our role, as well as to consider the impact of our interactions on the self, on others and the process. This aids in our ability to make responsible decisions, and enhances the self-in-practice. With the role expectations of a critical friend being clear (Schuck & Russell, 2015), the researcher can be challenged to articulate as well as interrogate their beliefs and assumptions in situations of practice to determine alignment between their beliefs and practice (Andrews et al., 2020). Being clear with ourselves about the areas of focus from which to examine and reflect upon also

ensures the choices we make are constructive and responsible. If I am explicit with myself and my critical friends about my desire to examine the assumptions and biases that influence my decisions, then I am more likely to address these behavioural and interactional aspects of my practice. Similarly, if I intend to ensure loose parts play facilitations are inclusive, equitable and just, then my reflections should be guided by these principles in order to focus and align my decision-making processes.

In order to do so, self-awareness is key. Self-study research requires the researcher to be vulnerable by exposing their doubts, confusions, failures and uncertainties (Loughran, 2004). I encountered moments of indecision and insecurity when I froze, not knowing how, when or if to intervene during rough and tumble pool noodle play. And I wondered if my indecision would discredit my capability as a facilitator (journal entry #1, pg. 4). I failed to share the responsibility with staff and student champions, and to capitalize on the work and learning of these teams when facilitating the teaching and learning of loose parts play with school community members (journal entry #4, pg. 3). I have questioned the efficacy of my facilitation techniques, recognizing the limitations or missed opportunities during training sessions for staff health champions. By doing so it motivated me to think creatively about ways to facilitate with staff and students together, where we can learn experientially and reflect collectively (journal entry #3, pg. 7).

I had to own it, and must continue to own it. Desire is one of the three key features of self-study and the practitioner's desire exposes the uncertainties, inconsistencies and risks involved in putting the self-in-practice as the focus of the inquiry (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p. 7). I recognized my own emotions, confronted my thoughts and critiqued my values as a means towards change and clarity in my overall practice. Being self-aware requires humility and examination of the self. It is not about masking my mistakes or 'playing it safe.' Much like play,

it involves taking some risks as we learn through the act of doing. We learn by reflecting on our own choices and the factors that influence those choices. And it is through reflective practice that we deepen our ability to be self-aware; possibly finding pleasures when taking up new, contradictory, alternative or subversive positions (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014).

Comprehensive School Health (CSH) & Interconnectedness

In this section the concept of interconnectedness will be applied to each of the five themes, much like the interconnected relationship between the four pillars of the CSH framework. CSH is also used to analyze how each of the five roles and responsibilities fits within the four pillars of the framework. CSH is designed to build capacity and incorporate well-being as an essential aspect of student learning and achievement (EAS, 2020). It is practiced by addressing four distinct and interrelated pillars of policy, social and physical environment, teaching and learning, and partnerships and services.

The CSH framework was used as a guiding framework with schools during the implementation of loose parts play. During the analysis a similarity emerged between the five roles and responsibilities and the four pillars of CSH. The CSH framework places the student at the centre of the four pillars. The actions within each of the four pillars are intended to promote, support and develop the academic and health outcomes of all students. Professional development and facilitation places staff at the centre (Patton et al., 2012). The roles and responsibilities of the facilitator identified through this research are intended to promote, support and develop the abilities of staff to implement and facilitate loose parts play in their school settings. Additionally, this analysis demonstrated the facilitator's five roles and responsibilities are interconnected and complementary, to the four pillars of CSH. This leads me to believe when facilitating loose parts play and following the five roles and responsibilities, it is possible the actions and outcomes of

CSH could also be accomplished. In the following sections I will outline and highlight in bold text these connections and the interconnectedness of the themes alongside CSH.

Table 5. The Five Roles and Responsibilities and the Corresponding CSH Pillars

Five Themes	Four Pillars
Experiential Learning	Teaching and Learning
Explicit Communication	Policy, Teaching and Learning, Social and Physical Environment, Partnerships & Services
Relationships	Social and Physical Environment, Partnerships & Services
Contextual Considerations	Policy, Social and Physical Environment
Reflective Practice	Teaching and Learning

Experiential Learning

Education for the individual and for society must be based on experience which is always the life experience of some individual (Dewey, 1938). Recalling past and present play experiences as well as observing and participating in loose parts play teaser sessions provides meaningful and grounded **teaching and learning opportunities**. These moments acknowledge a person's lived experience with play or their lived experience during loose parts play. By doing so all participants are situated in personal experiences that help us recognize our own strengths and challenges as well as the strengths and challenges of others. All of which provides an evidence-base that informs responsive and responsible actions.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice, akin to this self-study research, is a form of **professional learning** that leads to improvement in practice (Griffin and Fletcher, 2018). Dewey (1938) states, drawing

upon the lived experiences of students and adults helps their experience to live on in further experiences. Reflecting on my experiences and the roles and responsibilities of facilitation builds tangible **evidence** to inform future practice. It is a form of **teaching and learning** for the facilitator and for others, provided you share the learning from such experiences. Committing to an ongoing reflective practice also models the process for other practitioners to learn from (Westberg, 2011), which, arguably, is professional learning for those practitioners work alongside. The vulnerability, candor and insight shared as part of the reflective practice helps inform what to do next to meet the needs of the practitioners (Westberg, 2011) and also normalizes the feelings, conflicts and curiosities that may be shared by others. Such shared experiences provide validation as well as evidence to build and deepen collaborative efforts that lead to competent and confident decisions.

Interconnectedness Between Experiential Learning and Reflective Practice

Experiential learning is interconnected with reflective practice and both impact the **teaching and learning process**. Experiential learning and reflective practice are mutually dependent because as facilitators we must ensure learners have worthy experiences on which to reflect (Westberg, 2011, p. 315) and if we rush from one experience to another without reflecting there is a risk we will fail to learn from the experience (Westberg, 2011, p. 314). Reflective practice is a means for facilitators to reflect in- and reflect-on (Schon, 1983) their experiential learning, which encompasses the learning experiences of the facilitator, the facilitator's experiences shared with others, and the learning experiences of others. Reflective practice is part of an ongoing, cyclical learning process. Engaging in reflective practice enhances the quality and meaning of experiences, draws upon learning from the past, reminds the self to be attuned to

learning in the moment, and considers minor or major adjustments to future experiences in an effort to further one's learning and augment experience.

Explicit Communication

Explicit communication is a responsibility that requires facilitators to be clear, consistent and continuous in their communication with **members and partners of the school community** because goals intended by instructors are seldom made explicit and are not always part of the instructional process (Kreber, 2010). Explicit communication addresses the specificity needed in **policy** that contributes to the **social environment** of the school setting and the use and maintenance of the **physical environment**.

Relationships

Relationships impact how an individual feels within a given environment. One way relationships serve as a role and responsibility is by targeting students as change agents (**partners**) within learning and facilitation. Working with students and guiding their involvement strengthens the **social environment** of the school: feeling welcomed, included, valued. Relationships also identify how this role and responsibility does not fall squarely on the shoulders of the facilitator. Beyond engaging students, facilitators emphasize the importance of situating ongoing PD within a supportive community to foster risk-taking and shared responsibility (Patton et al., 2012; p. 530). Through shared lived experiences, and sharing our lived experiences, we learn more about those we work and play with, building a stronger social environment and deepening the relationships with peers, students, and community partners and services.

Contextual Considerations

Contextual considerations as a facilitator establishes a point of reference for every school being unique. It is critical to acknowledge the autonomy and **environment** of each school and work within their respective readiness and capacity. To do so, the relationships practitioners focus on will help as they get to know your audience, those they work alongside and those available to **partner** with. Contextual considerations guide the facilitator to share rather than impose experiences and actions. As a facilitator of loose parts play, the role and responsibility is to listen, observe and learn to best understand the community being served. Based on practitioners' understanding, they can provide contextually appropriate and practical approaches which the school "finds energizing while respecting their professional autonomy"⁹ to select the goals and actions they deem best to move forward.

Interconnectedness Between Explicit Communication and Relationships

There is an interconnectedness between explicit communication and relationships that impacts all four areas of CSH. The quality of communication between all parties involved in implementation impacts the quality of their relationships between **partners**. Explicit communication requires being open, direct and transparent about the **policies** guiding the implementation - the purpose and intention, guidelines and expectations, and timelines. Through such communication the **social and physical environment** can be examined and established as participants share personal experiences/feelings with facilitating, playing and implementing. Relationships defined by a shared responsibility and knowledge exchange help create a highly inclusive environment of ongoing **learning** that "fosters long-term inquiry" (Parker et al., 2013). As the facilitator models explicit communication and promotes it within the school communities,

⁹ P. 442, Parker et al., 2013

every individual involved in loose parts play has a stronger sense of their role and how it relates to the roles of others. There is a similar intersectional relationship between the many roles of loose parts play implementation and the pillars of CSH, and the communication of, and between, the intersecting parts is vital for coordination and inclusion.

Interconnectedness Between Relationships and Contextual Considerations

Devoting time and attention to relationships with individuals that practitioners facilitate, play and implement with, provides opportunities to best understand the **environment**. Situated learning perspectives assume that knowledge is inseparable from the contexts and activities in which it develops (Parker et al., 2010; p. 338). As a **partner**, the school community wants to know and feel that the facilitator is tailoring their approach and practice, as much as possible, to the needs and strengths of the school community; and the activities have relevance to the issues and dilemmas being faced in the ‘real world’ (Armour and Yelling, 2004). This means assumptions can’t be made and realities must be understood, respected and valued. Relationship-building assists the facilitator with **identifying partners within the school community** (e.g., the staff, students, parents/caregivers, external community partners, etc.) who can provide diverse and inclusive perspectives which can help identify and respond to the contextual conditions of the school.

Conclusion

Self-study research afforded me the opportunity to think deeper and more critically about my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator of loose parts play. When I began this research, I was more drawn to and consumed by the content of loose parts play and how to disseminate it. What unfolded was a gradual and resounding call of attention to the intricacies and art of delivering professional learning and facilitation.

I discovered parallels in social and emotional learning between facilitating loose parts play and loose parts play itself. Most notably how,

trust and respect ultimately leads to a safe and supportive environment in which teachers are more “likely to take risks and engage in challenging discussions that push them to deepen understanding and attempt new practices that will reach more learners (Parker et al., 2010, p. 339).

Although as a facilitator you are in service to the individuals you work with; facilitation is a form of professional development and learning for the facilitator as well, because they are a part of the learning exchange within the community of practice. This outcome cannot be understated.

Facilitating a collaborative work environment built on trust and respect not only allows the participants to take risks and further their practice, but consciously or unconsciously, the facilitator may be inclined to take their own risks, explore new ways of thinking and doing, and be able to critique and reflect alongside trusted peers.

I found the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator align seamlessly with the pillars of implementation in the comprehensive school health framework. The facilitator’s roles and responsibilities are: (i) to recognize and provide opportunities for experiential learning, (ii) be explicit in their communication and promote explicit communication between others, (iii) to build relationships with their audience and to foster relationships between others, (iv) to consider the contextual intricacies and nuances within each school setting, and (v) to reflect in and reflect

on their own practice while also modelling and encouraging reflective practice in others. In committing to these roles and responsibilities the facilitator is exercising and developing their social and emotional learning skills and facilitating an experience that supports the achievement of academic and health outcomes in students.

As a practitioner the findings highlight the value and need to situate the learning of participants in meaningful experiences worthy of reflection (Westberg, 2011, p. 315). The tasks, challenges and environments must capture and connect with the day-to-day realities and contexts in which the learning will take place in order to make the learning authentically experiential. From a community standpoint I implore others to heed the findings that emphasize the need to communicate! All stakeholders involved need to contribute and be informed throughout the process. We must ask whose voices, perspectives and stories have been invited, and are present. For facilitators and practitioners alike, before you begin, dig in. Dig in, and familiarize yourself with the context of the individuals, the community and the work. You likely have as much to learn as you do to share. No two environments are identical and what worked in one setting is not likely to work the same in another. Be mindful of and flexible with the nuance and intricacies of each situation.

There are two matters I am left to wonder and wish to share for further consideration as a facilitator and researcher. First, as the findings from this research demonstrate, facilitation is about more than the content, it must be about community and relationships. In the work of Parker et al. (2010) the facilitation process led to the maintenance and support of an effective professional development community of practice. What remains unknown from this research is the efficacy of facilitation in terms of establishing sustainable communication and relationships within and between the participating school communities to ensure loose parts play continues

beyond the guidance and collaboration with the facilitator. Perhaps the next step requires a longitudinal study in which researchers monitor the progress and activities of communities of practice for consecutive years in an attempt to identify the strengths and needs of sustaining such relationships. Second is the depth of reflective practice. Play can oftentimes be generalized as a shared experience by all. I have met individuals who were not able to recall fond play memories for reasons such as trauma or culture. As a researcher this gives me cause to consider the universality of play, specifically the relationship between equity, access and play. We need to consider the “criticality of the context and the wider, moral and political issues that impact on practice” (Issitt, 2003, p. 180) as we reflect on our personal experiences and the experiences we facilitate with others. This presents an opportunity for future research to investigate how play, such as loose parts, can be facilitated for individuals and/or by individuals who identify as being marginalized from play experiences.

Experiential learning, explicit communication, relationships, contextual considerations and reflective practice are five roles and responsibilities that provide a tangible framework to structure, guide and assess facilitating loose parts play in a school setting. Working with the understanding that to facilitate is to make an action or process possible or easier (Oxford’s Learner’s Dictionary, 2020), I learned the act of facilitating is dynamic and integrated. I also learned although facilitation might often be delivered individually it is influenced by and reflective of the facilitator’s interactions with the self, others and the environment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.1 - Reflection Template

REFLECTION NUMBER _____

NAME: **DATE** **:** **CONTEXT:**

Purpose: to examine a practitioners' experience with implementing loose parts play (LPP)

Research Questions: Some ideas are:

- What are my experiences implementing LPP?
- What is my role in the space and implementation and facilitation of LPP?
- What changes in my experience of implementation and facilitation of LPP with kids vs. practitioners?

- Deductive Analysis (after the data collection has taken place) I think we ask a question about the attention given to school policy, the social and physical environment, ongoing teaching and learning, and forming community partnerships – this will guide the theoretical lens being part of the understanding / conceptualization of the experiences you've had

Fill out the following reflection and send to critical friend for their response

Overall Reflection

1. What worked well with facilitation/implementation?

2. What didn't work so well? What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them?

3. What are your impressions of the facilitation/implementation based on these experiences?

4. What about your facilitation/implementation did you find helpful for your practice or your understanding of practice?

Critical Incident Reflection

IDENTIFY ONE CRITICAL INCIDENT RELATING TO IMPLEMENTING LPP

Name:

Date/ Week/ Class no:

Context:

What happened?

Why did you choose to write about this incident?

The implications for my facilitation/implementation practices are....

The critical friend will fill out their response and send it back to you for the final individual reflection.

CRITICAL FRIEND RESPONSE

What resonated with my thinking about the facilitation/implementation was...

The questions that it raised for me about your facilitation/implementation are...

Thinking about facilitation/implementation LPP and from the outside looking in I wonder if...

Complete this reflection. Then we can schedule a verbal conversation to follow.

FINAL INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Reflecting on the response above:

What are you thinking now? What made your thinking change/ stay the same? What questions have been raised? How might you do differently next time?

The implications for the facilitation/implementation of LPP are...

Appendix 1.2 - Loose Parts Play Planning Template (order of actions)

- Establish a team to lead the initiative (health champ + student team)
- Assess the Environment + Determine Storage
- Professional Learning with Whole School Staff
- Begin Backwards Design of Ongoing Implementation:
 - goals + targets
 - actions to prepare students, staff and school community
 - how to involve student team
 - culmination/celebration
- Address Scheduling + Supervision Needs/Changes
- Develop a Process for Requesting + Accepting (Collecting) Parts
- Professional Learning with School Council / School Community
- Ongoing Monitoring of Implementation Plan

Appendix 1.3 - Six Guidelines for Loose Parts Play in Schools

- Make your own fun!
- Be safe with yourself
- Be safe with others
- Be safe with nature
- Be safe with the loose parts
- Stay within the boundaries



Image courtesy of St. Luke Catholic School, Elk Island Catholic School Division (Sept. 2019)

Appendix 1.4 - Coding Consolidation

A sample of coding from entry #1 which included the initial journal entry, a reflection and critical friend conversation(s). A similar coding consolidation was completed for each of the seven entries.

Entry #1 (coded April 5th)			
Code	Page #	Paragraph #	Line #
connect audience to personal play experiences	1	1	1
SEL	1	2	3-7
range of play opportunities being offered	1	3	2-8
guidelines/expectations for the play experience	1	4	1
awareness of others in the space	1	1	1-4
learn from others	2	1	7
communication between students	2	5	9
skill development	2	1	8
observer	2	2	4
communication between students	2	2	6-7
student responsibility / accountability / ownership	2	2	5
assess + evaluate physical / emotional cues	2	2	2-4
knowledge of students in play space (know your audience)	2	2	4
communication between practitioner + student	2	2	2-4
value judgement of play experience	2	2	1
physical location / environment to host play	2	2	5-6
self-regulation	2	2	8
location of play	2	2	1-2

Appendix 1.5 - Multiple Codes for One Piece of Data

In first image, the legend displays the codes generated and their respective colours.

Legend	
Charcoal	Training
Grey	Experiential Learning
Aqua / Teal	Discomfort / Unlearn / Re-learn
Brown	Explicit Communication
Neon Red	Reflective Practice
Red	Name / Title of Role
Neon Orange	Intervention
Orange	Guidelines / Expectations / Timelines
Neon Yellow	Assumptions / Biases
Yellow	Diversity of Play Experiences
Neon Green	Change in Practice
Green	SEL Competencies
Neon Blue	Inclusion / Equity
Blue	Lived Experiences
Neon Purple	Flexibility / Adaptability
Purple	Curricular Competencies
Neon Pink	School Community Engagement
Pink	Know the Audience
Olive	Student Engagement
Burgundy	Theory / Scholarly Evidence
Royal Blue	Logistics
EAS Green	Staff Customization
Mustard Yellow	Mentorship / Connection / Collaboration
Black	Capacity (build within school and leader(s)
White	Unsure???

Appendix 1.5 - Multiple Codes for One Piece of Data (continued)

In this second example, you'll note several lines have multiple colours (e.g., lines 13, 14 or 21) indicating multiple codes for the one item of data.

1	Entry #4 (coded April 11th)	Page #	Paragraph #	Line #
2	Code			
3	engage with families in school community	1	1	1-2
4	teaching and learning prior to schoolwide implementation	1	2	1-3
5	speaking for a position of privilege / experience with LPP	1	2	3-4
6	ensure exposure of LPP to ALL students @ school	1	3	1
7	parallels to play @ home	1	3	2-6
8	wide variety of loose parts; full range of play possibilities	1	4	1
9		1	4	3-6
10		5	3	
11	experiential learning + visuals	1	4	6-7
12	my role = creative, self-directed engagement with others	1	4	6-7
13	promote independent, open-ended thinking	1	4	6-7
14	*matching game: pics of loose parts match with 12 types of play			*self-in-practice / impact on practice
15	communicate expectations / guidelines of the play space - set the stage	1	5	1-3
16		3	1	1-3
17	role of the adult in LPP as compared to other contexts	1	5	3-9
18	stand back and let 'em be (connect self to world; where else do we do this'	1	5	3-9
19		2	1	*self-in-practice / impact on practice
20	explicit messaging	2	2	4-5
21	co-facilitation of the play space; be the example	2	3	5-6
22	share stories / experiences; involve school community	2	4	9
23		2	4	11-13
24	students as change agents; student team	3	1	5-7

Appendix 1.6 - Collating Codes into Respective Themes

In this example codes are represented in the vertical columns. Within each column is the individual data item identified in parentheses by a numeric code describing the entry #, page #, paragraph # and line #). Finally, any data item highlighted in green describes the self-in-practice and impacts on my practice.

[Entry, Page #, Paragraph #, Line #] Green Highlight = self-in-practice / impact on practice	Discomfort / Un-learn / Re-learn	Explicit Communication
Experiential Learning	unsettling / disruptive space = learning provocation (1.5.1.1-3)	Explicit Communication
model / role play choices (1.5.6.1-2)	conflict in play (2.2.1.4-5)	communication between practitioner + student / explicit (1.2.3.2-4)
physical environment - indoor v. outdoor (1.5.7.1)	unlearning behaviour (2.4.2.1-8)	explicit teaching (1.3.2.2)
location of play (1.2.4.1-2)	unlearn together (2.4.2.12-13)	explicit teaching (1.3.3.1)
mini / teaser sessions (1.2.4.1)	unlearn vs. outside of comfort zone (2.4.2.13-14)	explicit communication (1.3.4.2-3)
physical location / environment to host play (1.2.3.5-6)	unlearn notions of play (2.4.3.19)	communication + understanding of expectations by ALL (1.3.5.1-2)
role play as a teachable moment (1.3.1.1-6)	unlearn cultural / social normative practices (2.5.3.2-6)	communicate roles, benefits, rationale (1.4.1.6)
model through play (1.3.1.4-6)	comfort zone (2.8.4.4)	transparent communication / explicit? (1.4.1.9)
modelled behaviour by practitioner (1.3.2.3)	demystify / know the unknown (2.8.4.5)	safe = acceptable / permitted types of play (1.4.2.7)
staff play with loose parts (2.1.4.1-2)	unlearn (2.8.4.7)	explicit communication (1.5.4.1)
teaser sessions as professional learning (2.1.4.10)	comfort zone as a barrier (2.8.4.20)	explicit communication of permissible types of play with practitioners (1.7.2.6)
assessment for/as play (2.1.4.10-12)	the unknown / tension (3.6.1.1-3)	sharing student experiences with staff (2.1.4.8)
physical environment of play (2.2.2.1-3)	lingering sense of uncertainty / tension (3.6.2.4)	communication / preparation (2.2.2.9-11)
physical environment of play and its physical/emotional influence (2.2.3.1-2)	learning = mistakes (4.6.3.2-5)	sharing experiences (2.3.2.4-5)
environmental influences (2.3.1.2-5)	learning = mistakes (4.7.1.1-3)	sharing experiences (2.4.2.8)
teaser sessions as practice / prep / info gathering (2.3.3.2-4)	learning = outside own comfort zone (4.7.1.3-6)	explicit messaging (4.2.2.4-5)
model behaviour (2.3.4.5-7)	promote / encourage potential risk-taking (5.8.1.3)	delicate balance communicating experiences without prescribing (5.2.1.3)
role play as training / use of case studies / resource / Play Literacy? (2.4.1.5-8)	go beyond personal / professional comfort zones (5.8.1.5-6)	communication - live, shared space (5.4.1.4-6)
experiential learning / kinesthetic (2.4.2.11-12)	acknowledge uncertainty; we don't know (7.4.3.1-2)	explicit communication before and after play (5.4.3.1-3)
experiential learning (2.4.3.17-20)	opportunity to learn, re-think, re-see; experiential learning (7.4.3.2-4)	intentional, focused action with parts (6.1.1.3-5)
experiential learning (2.5.2.3)		explicit vs. implicit instruction (6.2.1.5)
role play (2.7.3.1-7)		explicit instruction (6.4.2.1)
experiential learning (2.8.1.1-3)		explicit vs. implicit learning (6.6.2.1-3)
experiential learning (2.8.4.1)		explicit vs. implicit learning (6.6.2.4-5)
interaction with parts / experiential (3.1.5.1-2)		communicate what could happen; "you can likely expect..." (7.5.7)

Appendix 1.7 - Thematic Grouping

Themes were sorted based on the characteristics of (i) teaching / facilitation (with an adult audience or student audience); (ii) space (being present while student's play with the loose parts); and (iii) implementation (the holistic process of bringing loose parts play to a school setting) Through this process 7 themes were identified across all three of the sorting characteristics: Reflective Practice, Explicit Communication, Change in Practice, Inclusion / Equity, SEL Competencies, Flexibility/Adaptability, Know Your Audience

Teacher	Facilitation in the Play Space	Co-implementor
Experiential learning	Intervention	Guidelines / Expectations / Timelines
Explicit Communication	Assumptions / Biases	Reflective Practice
Reflective Practice	Reflective Practice	Explicit Communication
Discomfort / <u>Un-learn</u> / <u>Re-learn</u>	Experiential learning	Change in Practice
Assumptions / Biases	Explicit Communication	SEL Competencies
Diversity of Play Experiences	Diversity of Play Experiences	Inclusion / Equity
Change in Practice	Change in Practice	Lived Experience
SEL Competencies	SEL Competencies	Flexibility / Adaptability
Inclusion / Equity	Inclusion / Equity	School Community Engagement
Lived Experience	Flexibility / Adaptability	Know Your Audience
Flexibility / Adaptability	Curricular Competencies	Student Engagement
Curricular Competencies	Know Your Audience	Logistics
Know Your Audience	Theory / Scholarly Evidence	Staff Readiness
Theory / Scholarly Evidence		Mentorship / Connection / Collaboration (aka. Relationship?)

Appendix 1.8 - Thematic Re-Grouping

Themes were consolidated based on how one or more themes complimented one of the main 7 themes. After the analysis, 5 main themes were constructed, and each theme included at least one attribute that acts as a support, practice or consideration that can/should be used or experienced by the facilitator when delivering the main theme.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
Discomfort / Un-learn / Re-learn
Diversity of Play Experiences
Lived Experience

EXPLICIT COMMUNICATION
Theory / Scholarly Evidence
Logistics
Guidelines / Expectations / Timelines
Training
Intervention
SEL Competencies / Curriculum connections?

RELATIONSHIPS
Student Engagement
School Community Engagement

Appendix 1.8 - Thematic Re-Grouping (continued)

CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS
Flexibility / Adaptability
Know Your Audience
Staff Readiness
Capacity

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
Assumptions / Biases
Inclusion / Equity
Change in Practice