

Title of Training: Responsive Circle: Loose Parts & Celebrations!

Board Present: Jennifer Bowman – President, Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Anna Cannon – Washington Count Member-at-Large, Debbie Mays – Advisory Board, Terri Teters - Ex-Officio

Participants in attendance: 17

The meeting was called to order at 6.30pm by Jennifer Bowman. Jennifer welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting.

Business:

1. **Winner of our 'Tip Share' for last month was Jill Kleinebreil** – you all have another chance to win when you visit our [Facebook](#) group or email nwaeca@gmail.com when the next Tip Share goes live on May 25th!
2. **AECA Conference** – save the date for Ole Pete Key (yes, he's back!) on Saturday June 12th! Registration opens soon on the AECA website.
3. **Treasurer's report** – we have \$1297.11 in the bank with no outgoing expenses.

Susanna Creed from Be Well Care Well Arkansas shared a program with Curricula Concepts that is specifically focused on YOU – the child care educator! A recent study showed that child care providers demonstrated high rates of poor sleep, low levels of activity and high bloody pressure, all symptoms of chronic stress! Child care providers are so often focused on everybody else that it is hard for them to think about themselves – especially when faced with highly stressful situations at workday in and day out. Be Well Care Well is a yearlong program that supports the wellbeing of providers, so that they are better equipped for the daily challenges of their work. The program encompasses 8 different dimensions of well-being – intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, occupational, social, environmental, and financial.

There are three main components to the program: 1) a well-being committee comprised of at least three staff members, including the owner/director 2) well-being activities that are fun as well as learning opportunities for the whole site and 3) a well-being coach who supports and encourages the team to achieve goals and help find connections to local health and wellness partners. If you are a family child care provider working solo, the program will connect you with other providers so you are not alone!

Susanna asked three questions to the participants to reflect upon – how could taking care of yourself impact positively on you, your staff, and the children you work with? When we feel better, we do better! Learn more & apply at curriculaconcepts.com/be-well-care-well. You can email susanna@curriculaconcepts.com if you have any questions!

Speaker: Emma Tempest

Emma started her presentation by re-sharing the definition of loose parts, as proposed by Simon Nicholson who founded the theory of Loose Parts back in 1971. You can read his original article [here](#). Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are materials with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials. You can read more about the other definitions of loose parts in the minutes for our April meeting [here](#).

Emma shared that the most important loose part in any classroom is YOU – the adult. When you are more relaxed and interested in what the children are doing and WHY they are doing it, you are more likely to have children in your care who are keen to investigate and explore materials confidently. She reminded everyone that wherever they are on their loose parts journey, to know that being self-aware precedes being able to change. Knowing where your staff are in terms of what they allow children to do with materials in the classroom will help you to guide them to becoming looser in their approach. How could you model looseness in your classroom to other staff who may be tighter in their use of materials?

Loose parts are the perfect tool for helping children explore how they learn, not just what they are learning. Observing children and really paying attention to how they interact with materials, what they like to do, what they dislike...will inform providers as to what other materials to provide, what to potentially take away and what other ways materials could be used that they may not have thought of before. Observing children's play will help you understand what brings them joy, challenge, and stress, as well as what their individual talents and strengths are. It is an honor to witness children at play and loose parts are a great opportunity for them to really get stuck in!

Schemas are another way to observe children's play – looking at their play through the lens of a schema can sometimes help providers understand children's behaviors that may seem odd or repetitive. When providers look at children's play with 'schema goggles' on they can understand children's interests and behaviors more easily, and through this lens the children can also have a deeper understanding of how they like to learn.

Emma finished her presentation by sharing a quote from O. Fred Donaldson, "Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn **how** to learn." Loose parts and play are wonderful vehicles for children to understand the world around them, as well as understand themselves.

If you want to get in touch with Emma, her email is emma@makeyourownrainbows.com

We invite you to share your thoughts about loose parts over in our [Facebook group](#)! We would love to hear what your children are currently interested in when it comes to loose parts play and social emotional development and maybe you can inspire some other people!

We finished the meeting with our NWAECA celebration video which you can find on our page on the AECA website as well as in the Facebook group. We are so proud of all our NWA providers who have done amazing things this year – things you have never been asked to do before! We salute you! We look forward to hopefully seeing you at some face-to-face meetings next year – we will let you know when we have the details finalized.

Please Save the Date for Tuesday 8th June to join us for an Appreciation Party for our VP of Communications, Emma Tempest - she will be moving to Connecticut! Watch your email and our Facebook group for more details to come!

Thank you for everything that you do for children and families in NWA and beyond! We invite you to join AECA as a member and continue to represent our field as the amazing leaders you are! Please do stay in touch on our Facebook page over the summer – ask questions, share your ideas, and celebrate your wins! - and keep your eyes peeled in your email inbox for more info about our meetings for the 2021-2022 year. Remember to take care of yourself and don't forget we are all in this together!

Meeting was adjourned by Jennifer Bowman

Next Meeting: Tuesday 14th September 6.30pm

Topic: TBA

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest