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## STUFF AND NEW STUFF

# Rich resources for teachers and families and two new picture books for children

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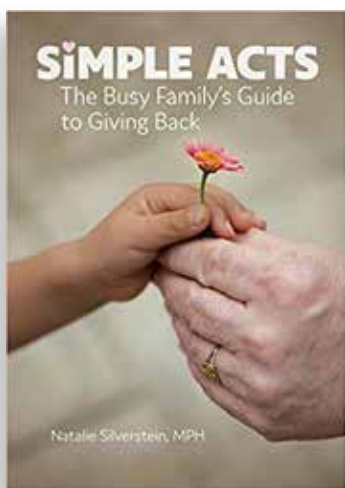
## Simple Acts: The Busy Family's Guide to Giving Back

Written by Natalie Silverstein. Gryphon House, 2019. (\$19.95)

As early education teachers strive to engender compassion and generosity with children, families are eager to work in tandem—modeling ways to serve the wider community. This resource book brings a fresh approach to giving back—families volunteering in community service.

Natalie Silverstein is a community volunteer coordinator and brings her years of practice—mistakes and successes—to this short and rich book. She reviews the proven value of service in raising compassionate children and looks at ways to evaluate whether and when a specific volunteer opportunity is appropriate for a particular family.

Chapters are dedicated to ways families can give back in traditional celebrations like birthday parties,



baby showers, and wedding anniversaries. Could there be a better, long-lasting activity than planting a tree or building a picnic table to commemorate a life event? Numerous references to calendar celebration days, organizations that exist only through volunteer support, and tips on make-at-

home and donate materials make the book an efficient tool for entering the community service world—even with young children.

Many of the ideas Silverstein offers apply to small learning communities as well as families. The book is a great reminder of the many ways in which adults can—and should—model the behaviors we expect of self-regulating, kind children.

## Loose Parts 3: Inspiring Culturally Sustainable Environments

Written by Lisa Daly & Miriam Beloglovsky; photographs by Jenna Knight. Redleaf Press, 2018. (\$32.95)

Sometimes there's a book that invites a deep dive—the urge to engage in every activity, to touch every material, and to work in every environment. While true of all three books in the *Loose Parts* series, Part 3 explodes with inspiration. Exquisite photographs coupled with meaningful, deliberate, and focused prose invite, educate, and ignite enthusiasm for the tools, materials, and environments that every program can replicate with attention and determination.

And as if it needed to do more, *Loose Parts 3* focuses on supporting children's academic skills while



embracing the unique cultural identity every child brings to the classroom. This focus on cultural sustainability is deep and specific, not the glossed-over concept presented in so many resources. The reader can sense the depth of respect and value Beloglovsky and Daly bring to their work

with children. They ably communicate the fact that children best succeed when they are able to define their own identities with integrity and work with others with respect and acceptance of differences.

A culturally sustainable environment is one in which the culture, history, language, and traditions of every learner is validated and supported without compromising (or endangering) future generations. Daly and Beloglovsky exhort teachers to offer children opportunities to value the social and cultural contributions of others, demonstrate compassion and empathy, and feel valued and respected. And they use loose parts as basic tools for achieving these goals.

Each of 12 chapters guides teachers through the world of loose parts—natural, open-ended, inviting, and easily collected—that promote a variety of play and learning opportunities. Without a list of how-to's, photographs remind us that weaving is universal—Scottish tartans, Persian rugs, Indian saris, and Mexican tapestries. Loose parts—yarn, fabric strips, and craft sticks—invite children to engage in this basic art. Similarly, cooking activities, agricultural offerings, and food preferences and traditions are universal and a perfect way to explore cultural differences with respect, curiosity, and mindfulness.

*Loose Parts 3* combines visual appeal with sound practice—respectful of every culture and tradition—to improve not only early childhood education but also the lives of individual children and their families irrespective of cultural history.

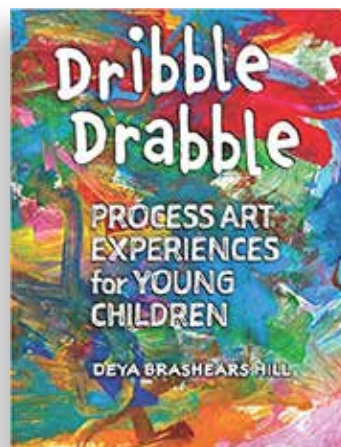
## **Dribble Drabble: Process Art Experiences for Young Children**

Written by Deya Brashears Hill. Redleaf Press, 2016. (\$15.95)

Creative art is unique to every artist. In classrooms, it reflects the originality, creativity, flexibility, experience, and sensitivity of child artists. *Dribble Drabble* will remind you why it's the process and not the product that marks successful (and satisfying) art experiences for young children.

Brashears Hill offers guidance on using paint, crayons, and chalk for painting as well as offering appropriate materials for collage, sculpture, and printmaking. The activities are designed for children as young as 2 years but will be satisfying for older and more experienced artists.

The book opens with a brief review of the stages of art development and tips for creating a stimulating art environment—complete with lists of useful and unusual supplies. Subsequent chapters cover basic techniques, each with ideas for individual and group experiences.



All activities include an itemized materials list as well as step-by-step procedures. Some of the activities may be familiar to

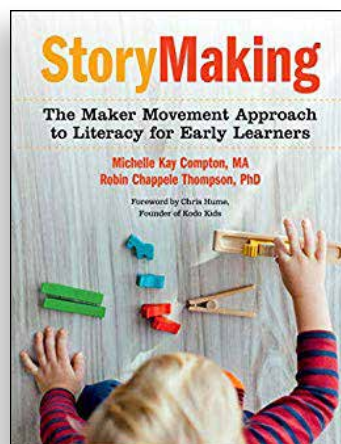
experienced teachers (bubble-blowing painting or liquid starch and chalk, for example) but everyone—teachers and families alike—will find new and interesting ideas for enriching and encouraging art engagement.

## **StoryMaking: The Maker Movement Approach to Literacy for Early Learners**

Written by Michelle Kay Compton & Robin Chappelle Thompson. Redleaf Press, 2019. (\$39.95)

Capitalizing on the maker movement and the resultant popularity of crafting with simple and honest materials, pre-K teachers Compton and Thompson offer a supported and concrete connection between children's constructive work with loose parts and sharing stories about the *what*, *how*, and *why* in their individual lives.

Steeped in the philosophy and practices of the schools of Reggio Emilia, the StoryMaker framework is built on the belief that children are intelligent, creative, and resourceful and express their ideas, interests, and understanding through many different *languages*—in art, music, science, math,



games, and physical activities. These languages, and the individual differences they represent, give teachers a multitude of observation, planning, and assessment tools. And like Montessori education, children are taught to plan, commit to the plan, execute the plan, and self-assess in a report of their activity.

The book is organized with step-by-step guidance for organizing StoryMaking. The earliest chapters explain the concept and give concrete examples of supportive environments—what a StoryMaker space looks like—materials, timing, and tools. The authors offer tips for making StoryMaking an essential in the classroom culture with practical suggestions on getting started.

The later chapters offer lesson plans and hypothetical scripts for engaging children and supporting them as they enter the cycle of *imagine* (with teacher prompts), *make* and *play* (planning and constructing props with open-ended materials), and *share* (telling the story with illustrative constructions). Throughout the book a teacher will find classroom anecdotes, charts, scripts, and photographs of children (with their work, stories, and products).

In StoryMaking, children have the props they need to make sense of their own lives and the world around them. Each story is unique, each child can build or clarify the story with detail, represent the story with authentic materials, and share the story with the learning community. Perhaps a stretch for many teachers but a worthy system for integrating learning goals in all developmental domains.

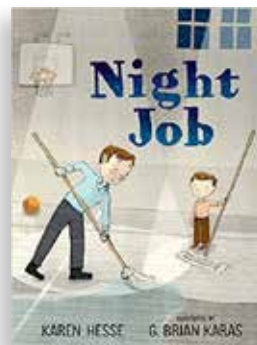


## Night Job

Written by Karen Hesse and illustrated by G. Brian Karas. Candlewick Press, 2018. (\$16.99)

As the sun sets, the school custodian's job begins, and on Friday night his son goes along. The father and his son motorcycle through the darkened city and reach the school as the "...building sighs. Come, it whispers to us." The boy is an active participant in the cleaning, sweeping, polishing, and mopping (stopping for a bit to shoot a few hoops) until it's time for an egg salad sandwich and falling asleep on the library sofa. By dawn the two are home again, tired, and ready for a sleepy snuggle.

The illustrations are quiet, both muted like dusk



and alive with subtle detail—a green sofa, an orange basketball, and red sneakers. *Night Job* invites all readers (and listeners) into an endearing and affectionate father-son relationship. With the book we can celebrate a powerful though everyday loving connection.

## Hello Lighthouse

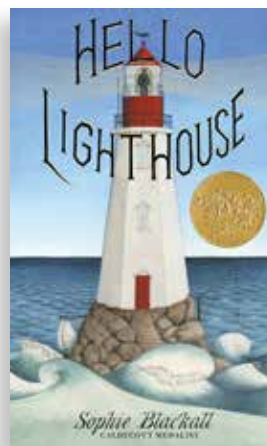
Written and illustrated by Sophie Blackall. Hachette Book Group, 2018. (\$18.99)

Part history, part an evocative family tale, Caldecott medalist Sophie Blackall introduces children to a small yet essential piece of Americana—the lighthouse.

Blackall's prose is simple, lyrical, and inviting. Her illustrations are softly detailed—there's lots to explore and discuss on every page.

Sending its light out to sea,  
Guiding ships on their way.  
From dusk to dawn, the lighthouse beams.  
Hello!

For years, every lighthouse had a keeper who, sometimes with a family, lived in the tiny tower.



Through storms, winter ice, fog, and shipwrecks, the keeper kept daily logs and tended and polished the lamp lenses that made the light steady and bright. Then automation comes—machines now record weather conditions and keep the lights burning. The keeper's work is done. ■