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What you could say when you're asked...

Why are the children playing so much? When are they going to do the 'real learning'?

- When children don't have lots of opportunity to play, they don't thrive. Play gets the brain wired up for the other kind of 'school learning', like reading, writing and mathematics.
- The brain needs movement to get wired up for growth, development and all learning. When the brain doesn't have enough movement, it often leads to learning difficulties later on, like difficulties concentrating and learning to read. Play is like the foundation of a skyscraper – it's essential to make that firm & deep so the skyscraper doesn't collapse.
- Play is how all mammals, including humans, learn to be human. It has been part of learning and growing for EVER. Play is part of our evolutionary story but there's so much research that shows us that children in (Western society/cities/Australia...) are playing less than previous generations. This is such a worry as our body and our brain can't thrive without play! That's one of the reasons it's essential for schools to provide time for children to learn through play EVERY DAY.
- Play is where children learn how to learn. They learn how to cooperate, to negotiate, to problem solve. When they have a problem in their play, they learn to stick at it and be persistent. This is one of the biggest things we've noticed in education over the past 10 to 15 years: that so many children don't show persistence in their learning when they face a challenge. And they'll face so many challenges in school and in life – social challenges, academic challenges, emotional challenges. It's probably the most important thing we can give our children – to be persistent and resilient when things are not easy or straightforward. Play is where this gets a good work out and gets strong.
- We know a lot more about what it takes to be a successful learner these days. We know that strong learning dispositions are the things that make a difference. These are called the General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum and we often call them our 'Learning Muscles'. These Learning Muscles are best learnt in play, where children are highly involved, they make lots of decisions and problem solve and interact and create with others. If children only have teacher-directed lessons, their Learning Muscles don't get to stretch. They only learn to follow instructions.

