LA TROBE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH · 2026

the school of PLAY

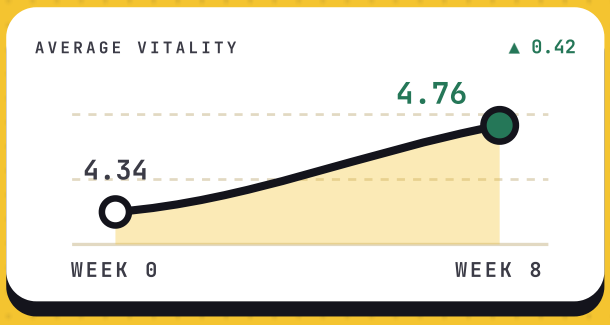
Play is more than fun. Now the *research* is in.

Play isn't a break from learning. It's one of the most powerful ways learning happens. In 2026, La Trobe University researchers studied The School of Play curriculum in real classrooms, taught by students' own teachers. **Here's what they found.**

STUDENT VITALITY · GRADE 3 & 4

+9.7%

Student vitality rose in just eight weeks.



Grade 3 and 4 students at Keilor Views Primary School reported more energy and enthusiasm, with average vitality rising from 4.34 to 4.76.



45% of Year 8 students reported a higher sense of school belonging after eight weeks

MCKINNON SECONDARY COLLEGE



43% of Year 8 students reported higher resilience after eight weeks

MCKINNON SECONDARY COLLEGE

+9.4%



Student autonomy after five weeks of peer-led play, against a control group

PEER-LED PLAY · 5 WEEKS

+40%

ONE HOUR

Adult vitality after a single one-hour session

PEER-REVIEWED & PUBLISHED

THE VERDICT

What the researchers *recognised*

- Strong foundations in established psychology and Social and Emotional Learning
- Structured, purposeful activities with a clear learning focus
- A teacher-led model that fits into everyday school life
- A focus on respect, relationships, teamwork and positive peer interaction

102	2	8	7	5
students	schools	weeks	research foundations	La Trobe studies since 2022

SOURCE La Trobe University, 2022–2026 (Ruddock et al.; O'Dell 2024; Pearce 2026; Mirabella 2026).

CASE STUDY · KANANOOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Play became a specialist subject. *The whole school felt it.*



WATCH THE FILM · 4:44

Hear it from Kananook.

Hear from Kananook's students, teachers and principal.

SCAN TO WATCH →

> **Attendance is up. The wellbeing of each student is up. They're enjoying being here, wanting to come to school each day."**
>
> — **Michael Block** · Principal, Kananook Primary School

ATTENDANCE **Up**	STUDENT WELLBEING **Up**	IN THE YARD **Kinder words**	BACK IN CLASS **More regulated**

FROM THE STAFFROOM

"I've heard them in the yard differently, sometimes speaking kinder to each other. Holding the door open, giving high fives, asking how your day was."

A KANANOOK TEACHER

FROM THE PLAYGROUND

"It helped me communicate to my classmates a bit more and, like, make new friends."

A KANANOOK STUDENT

P PLAY · **E** EXERCISE · **G** GRATITUDE · **G** GIVING

WHAT STUDENTS PRACTISE EVERY WEEK

Play, Exercise, Gratitude and Giving. They learn to show respect to teammates and opponents, back each other, notice how others feel and say thank you. These everyday habits build positive classrooms and school yards.

KINDERGARTEN TO YEAR 9

Bring it to your school in 2027.

Teacher-led, research-informed play from Kindergarten to Year 9.

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