

# Mental Health and Well-being for Learning

This is our first **Mental Health and Well-being for Learning** newsletter for families in Prairie Spirit School Division. The purpose of this newsletter is to strengthen our learning communities as we share our commitment to supporting our students and their mental health and well-being. We will be sharing resources with families regularly during the 2024/25 school year.

Mental health and well-being is a priority and a focus in many areas of Prairie Spirit's [strategic plan](#) (see the strategic goals below).

Prairie Spirit is committed to integrating mental health and well-being education into the curriculum, classrooms and workspaces. Our goal is to raise awareness, reduce stigma, build resilience, and equip students and adults with the tools, strategies and language they need to be well, learn, grow and advocate for themselves.



## The Essential 8

**Mental Health and Well-being for Learning: The Essential 8** document (right) highlights the eight areas identified by Prairie Spirit as being foundational for mental health and well-being.

These eight priority areas are the focus for Prairie Spirit staff in supporting students in safe, caring and healthy schools.

We're sharing this information with families so we can work together to support the mental health and well-being of all students.

Please see the following pages for highlights of three of the Essential 8 areas that families can consider as we head into summer:

- **increase opportunities for play**
- **increase time in nature**
- **decrease time spent on technology**





**Summer is a great time for people of all ages to find playgrounds for safe expression of emotions.**

- [What is Outdoor Play?](#)
- [Rest Play Grow](#)
- [Nature Saskatchewan](#)
- [Sask Outdoors](#)

## Increase opportunities for play

Play is critically important for people of all ages, and especially important for children and youth.

In her book *Rest Play Grow*, Deborah MacNamara, clinical counsellor and educator, explains the key to healthy growth and development can be found in opportunities for safe expression of emotions. When children and youth have agency in their own emotional worlds through play, it allows for freedom of emotional expression without the repercussions that often follow in everyday life.

According to MacNamara, the type of play all humans benefit from is characterized by freedom, enjoyment, and exploration. Play consists of whatever a person is not obligated to do and can include both playful construction as well as playful destruction.

Examples of playful construction:

- Stitching
- Sewing
- Beading
- Art projects
- Clay
- Building in nature

Examples of playful destruction:

- taking things down
- transforming things
- cutting up things
- building and destroying with play dough
- mock aggression, such as war games or battling

## Increase time in nature

A growing body of research pointing to the beneficial effects of exposure to the natural world on health and healing has many people re-thinking the time they spend in nature.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, bestselling author Robin Wall Kimmerer opens our eyes to the wonders of nature, teaching us the importance of giving back to nature, not just taking from it. Through Kimmerer's eyes we learn:

- the wisdom of the plant world, which teaches us about resilience and living in harmony
- to embrace gratitude, turning every nature walk into a moment of thanks
- to build a bond with nature that is a two-way street where we nurture the Earth and it nurtures us in return



**Summer is a great time for people of all ages to increase time spent in nature and reaffirm this reciprocal connection to the Earth.**



Mental Health  
Literacy



**Summer is a great time to re-evaluate family tech use and implement a healthier family tech plan.**

- [Media Smarts](#)
- [Safer Schools Together](#)
- [Caring for Kids](#)
- [The Tech Solution](#) (Dr. Kang)

## Limit time spent on technology

Limiting screen time often opens the door for more time spent engaging in other activities such as play or time in nature. However, despite believing this is a goal worth focus and energy, many parents find it an incredibly challenging battle. As with many challenges in life, it's good to have some tools to support the goal.

In her book *The Tech Solution*, Dr. Shimi Kang, a Harvard trained psychiatrist and mom of three, outlines for parents the tech habits children need to achieve their full potential – and a plan to put them into action. Through building an awareness of how different technology impacts mood, Kang believes children and youth can learn to be conscientious about the amount of time they spend on various forms of technology.

Dr. Kang makes a compelling case for our need to raise Future Ready Kids – kids who can use tech wisely while not allowing it to use them or consume their lives. She provides a step-by-step approach parents can use to help all family members regulate their tech behaviours.

## The Joys of Summer

Summer provides an opportunity to slow down and enjoy the outdoors. With fewer obligations, summer can provide the opportunity to focus on building connections, disconnect from technology, play, and be in nature.

- [Family Fun Saskatoon](#)
- [Warman Summer Programs](#)
- [TD Summer Reading Program](#)
- [Wheatland Library](#)

