



PRAIRIE SPIRIT  
SCHOOL DIVISION

# WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN



# Welcome

We know sending your little one off to start school can be scary and exciting for both you and your child. Our kindergarten teachers know that children are individuals who each start kindergarten with a wide range of skills. You do not need to drill your child with letters, numbers, and facts before school starts, but there are some things you could do to prepare both you and your child for kindergarten. Here are some ideas:

## Before school starts

- **Visit the school and meet the teacher.** Many schools will offer a time for families to come and meet your child's teacher before school starts. Try to participate in that if you can!
- **Start your school routine early.** To reduce stress and get used to new routines, adjust bedtimes or wake up times a few weeks before school begins. Routines are comforting for us and for children.
- **Read books together about starting school.** There are great books at our local libraries.

## On the first day of school

- **Be positive.** Your child's teacher will have a first day routine, so follow their lead. Give your child a smile and a hug, tell them you love them and that they will have a fantastic day!
- **Help your child say goodbye.** Saying goodbye in a new setting can be frightening for some children. Reassure your child that you will see them later. Mention a specific time and a concrete activity.

## During the first week of school

- **Be supportive.** Adjusting to school may take time. Ask: "What was the most fun thing you did in school today?" or "What are you looking forward to your next day at school?"
- **Instill a sense of confidence and independence in your child.** Celebrate your child's successes such as dressing themselves, pouring themselves a glass of water, or picking up their toys.

## Throughout the school year

- **Set aside time each evening to share your child's day.** See if your child has brought home any drawings, paintings, or scribbling. Make time to talk about what they are doing at school.
- **Create a collaborative relationship with your child's teacher.** Building a partnership with consistent communication supports your child's development and responsive learning opportunities to help them be all that they can be.

## Enjoy being the parent of a kindergartner!

This is your child's first step into elementary school and a unique time in childhood; embrace their growth and development throughout **their year!**

## What are the principles that guide the Kindergarten programs in Prairie Spirit?

Kindergarten programs in Prairie Spirit School Division are based on the following principles about children and their early learning experiences.

- **Children as Capable and Competent Learners**  
Children have different strengths, interests, and ways of learning. They come to school competent, inventive, and full of ideas that can be expressed in many ways.



- **Relationships as Opportunities**  
Children develop many relationships with their families, with other people, and with the physical and spiritual worlds. Relationships are opportunities for young children to create a sense of self, identity, and belonging while learning about the world around them.

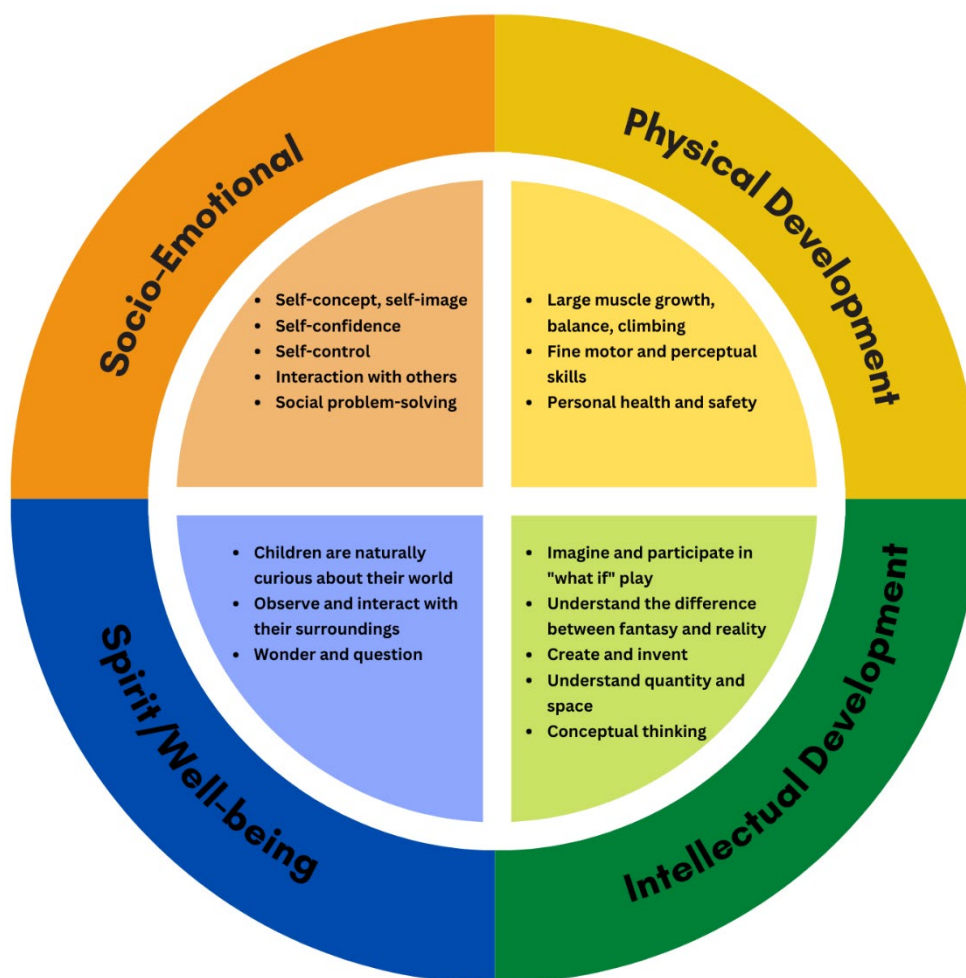
- **Development and Learning as Holistic**  
Holistic development and learning is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to people, places, values, and beliefs.
- **Learning Environments as Stimulating and Dynamic**  
Stimulating and dynamic learning environments are carefully designed to be aesthetically pleasing and inspire children to wonder, ask questions, and be curious.  
  
Children are active learners and construct their own understanding of the world by reflecting on and responding to their environments.





## What skills will my child be developing in Kindergarten?

Our kindergarten programs provide learning experiences to meet the developmental needs of all children. Children move through similar stages, but with their own pattern and at their own rate of development and learning. The following graphic highlights developmental characteristics nurtured in our kindergarten programs.



## How will I learn about my child's progress?

Prairie Spirit School Division uses the Edsby communication platform to provide parents and caregivers with the opportunity to follow their child's progress at school, receive school updates and much more. Stay up to date by viewing the posts in your child's learning menu!

On Edsby, you will also access your child's term 2 and 3 progress reports. The kindergarten progress report is completely comment based. Through the comments, your child's teacher will highlight your child's strengths and next steps within the domains of Social-Emotional, Physical Development, Spirit/Well-being and Intellectual Development.

## Prairie Spirit supports for Kindergarten

### Supporting Speech Language and Communication in Kindergarten

Speech Language Pathologists support communication and student learning in the following ways:

Supports can be provided in various ways including: observing and interacting in the classroom, providing formal and informal assessments/reviews, consultation, direct therapy and programming supports.

- Using and understanding language
- Social skills
- Phonological awareness (pre-reading)
- Fluency (stuttering)
- Articulation (speech sounds)
- Hearing loss supports
- Augmentative/alternative communication
- Voice

**Parents can play, explore and build communication skills with their child:**

**Let your child lead:** Talk about what they are doing or things they are interested in. Follow their interests.



**Be face to face:** Get down to your child's level so they can see your face while playing.

**Add new words and ideas to what your child says:** Expand your child's speech, add new, interesting words and discuss and show meanings. Talk about how things work and explore together.

**Repeat what your child says using the correct words:** They need to hear the correct form, for example, if they said: "Him goed to the store", repeat the correct form such as: "Yes, he went to the store."

**Use describing words:** Expose your child to describing words when you talk together. Use words that describe size, shape, colour, texture, etc. Play games together that explore describing such as "I spy".

**Read rhyming books together:** Talk about how the words have the same endings, listen to and play with rhyming words together.

**Encourage pretend play:** Play with your child as a wonderful way to have fun and build language skills!

**Sing songs together:** Have fun singing songs, use actions with songs.



**Read words on signs and labels:** Explore print in the environment through reading and talking about signs and labels. Talk about the sounds within the words, for example: "the McDonald's sign has a big 'M'. M sounds like 'mmm'."

**Explore interesting books together:** Read books that are of interest to your child. Allow them to help "tell" the story through pictures. Remember to follow his lead; if he wants to stop and look at a favourite page, spend time talking and exploring together.



*If you have any concerns about your child's speech, language or hearing, please contact your child's teacher.*

## Activity Ideas to Develop Physical, Attention, and Independence Skills in Kindergarten

Movement and touch are valuable learning tools. Children develop and acquire skills through exploration of the world and how their bodies work in it. During their early years, allow them to learn through their entire bodies!

As Occupational Therapists (OTs) in Prairie Spirit School Division, we work with children and school staff to help with their learning and functioning in the Kindergarten classroom: gross and fine motor skills e.g., their ability to jump, skip, colour, cut, print); being able to pay attention; and completing routines (e.g., bathroom, locker, snack).

We do this by working with teachers in the classroom to develop strategies to promote learning for all students. We may also make suggestions for individual children struggling with specific skills (fine and gross motor, attention/focus, independence, etc.) through informal assessment, consultation and recommendations for play-based programming.

*If you have any concerns about your child's development of physical, attention or independence skills, please contact your child's teacher.*

### Gross Motor Activities

Gross motor skills are the foundation for developing good eye-hand coordination, two-hand use, trunk control and fine motor control. Participating in gross motor play is also important for learning.

- Play on lots of different playgrounds. This encourages imagination and motor skills (climbing, crawling, sliding, swinging, etc.).
- Play hopscotch and other jumping games.
- Play with balls. Work on catching and throwing a big ball. This develops eye-hand coordination.
- Ride a bike.
- Pretend to be an animal (e.g., bear, frog, duck, inchworm, crab, etc.).
- Play wrestle with your child.
- Make obstacle courses, play "follow the leader" or "Simon says".
- Encourage your child to get outside and play. Limit technology use.
- Encourage your child to play board games, look at books or watch TV while lying on their tummy. This strengthens their trunk and shoulders.
- Get to work! Have your child help with chores (e.g., shovelling, raking leaves, carrying the laundry baskets, etc.) These are great two-handed activities to improve strength and coordination!
- Play in the snow, sand and water.



### Fine Motor Activities

There is no rush to get to printing! Encourage your child by doing a lot of play to develop their small hand muscles as well as draw basic shapes and pictures.

- Play manipulative games such as Connect 4, marbles, card games, pick-up sticks, barrel of monkeys, etc.
- Play with playdoh, modelling clay, etc.
- Do puzzles.
- Make jewelry. String beads, Cheerios, etc.
- Cut up construction paper, playdoh and straws with scissors.
- Play with finger puppets, do finger songs and clapping games.
- Build with Lego, Duplo and other blocks.
- Paint or draw at an easel.
- Make lots of crafts that include ripping paper, gluing, colouring, hole punching, cutting, etc.
- Put money in a piggy bank.
- Eat finger foods (pick up one raisin at a time using a pinch grasp).
- Make cookies (stir the batter, roll out cookies, use cookie cutters, etc.).
- Open containers, twist off caps, rip open bags, etc.
- Try buttoning, lacing and snapping activities.
- Use small pieces of crayon or chalk.
- Do simple tracing, mazes, and dot-to-dot activities
- Finger paint in: pudding, sand, shaving cream, grain, water, etc.



## Independence Activities

Encourage self-help skills at home, such as:

- Dressing: dress and undress with minimal help, put on socks and shoes, understand front versus back of clothing, hang up clothes, zip and unzip zippers, do snaps and large buttons
  - Remember: undressing is easier than dressing
  - Try using loose fitting clothing when practicing
  - Practice dressing when schedule allows for extra time
  - Practice with toys such as dolls or teddy bears
- Toileting: use alone, wipe self, manage clothing
- Basic hygiene: wash and dry hands by self, use a tissue when needed.
- Eating: use fork and spoon with little to no spilling, open containers and packaging or ask for help if needed.
- Establish habits of independently cleaning up materials/toys, opening and closing doors, opening and closing backpack and lunch kit.



***Thank you for beginning your child's school journey in Prairie Spirit School Division!  
We look forward to working alongside you to support your child's learning and wellbeing.***





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Welcome to Prairie Spirit School Division!

As you embark on this learning journey into Kindergarten with your child, I can just feel the excitement and butterflies that come with this new adventure.

Your child's Kindergarten teacher will be your partner in supporting your child as they encounter new environments and experiences, filled with curiosity and wonder. It is my hope that no matter who you meet as you enter your school, you will recognize that Prairie Spirit cares deeply about all our learners, big and small. Your child's school experiences will build friendships, skills and memories that will last a lifetime.

My hopes and dreams for all our learners in Prairie Spirit would best be captured in this quote:

"...we want our learners to engage the world, change the world, do good, learn always, and to know that, without a shadow of a doubt, they matter to the world..." (Fullan, 2018).

Prairie Spirit School Division is committed to partnering with you on this journey – families and school together. We are humbled by your trust and grateful for the opportunity to support and nurture the learning development and well-being of your child together with you.

We look forward to working and learning together with you as we support your child's passions and dreams.

Sincerely,

Tracey Young  
Director of Education