

Wildwood School Playground Project

December 16, 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Anne-Marie Rollo, and I serve as a Trustee with Saskatoon Public Schools. I am writing in strong support of the proposed playground project at Wildwood School. In addition to my governance role, I have spent the majority of my career in education, including teaching, administration, and applied work grounded in research on learning and brain development. From both a research and practice perspective, this project is not only worthwhile, it is essential.

Play is a foundational component of healthy child development. It is not supplemental or optional. Extensive research across neuroscience, psychology, health, and education demonstrates that unstructured, active play plays a critical role in how children regulate emotions, develop social skills, and build the cognitive capacities necessary for learning.

Playgrounds provide children with opportunities to move, explore, take manageable risks, collaborate with peers, and make decisions independently. These experiences directly support the development of executive functioning skills such as attention, working memory, self-control, and cognitive flexibility. These are the same skills that underpin success in classrooms and across the lifespan.

From a brain development perspective, play supports neural growth and neuroplasticity. When children engage in imaginative and physical play, multiple areas of the brain are activated simultaneously, strengthening connections that support learning, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. Children who have regular access to active play opportunities are better able to manage stress, adapt to challenges, and return to learning tasks with improved focus and readiness.

Outdoor play environments are also strongly associated with improved mental and emotional well-being. Research consistently shows that children who play outdoors demonstrate lower stress levels, improved mood, and stronger emotional resilience. For many students, particularly those who experience anxiety, attention challenges, or difficulty with self-regulation, playgrounds provide a critical space to reset and re-engage.

Playgrounds also function as powerful social learning environments. Through play, children learn how to negotiate, collaborate, resolve conflict, and develop empathy. These skills are not only essential for healthy relationships but are increasingly recognized as core competencies for success in school and beyond.

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From a physical health perspective, active play supports motor development, balance, coordination, and overall physical well-being. These outcomes contribute to long-term health while also supporting children's confidence and engagement in school activities.

Importantly, play does not compete with academic learning. The research is clear that access to regular, high-quality play opportunities enhances attention, memory, and classroom engagement. Children who are given time and space to play return to learning more regulated, focused, and ready to engage.

A thoughtfully designed playground is far more than recreational infrastructure. It is a critical developmental environment that supports the whole child. Investing in play spaces is an investment in students' well-being, learning capacity, and long-term success.

I strongly support the Wildwood School playground project and believe it will have a meaningful and lasting impact on the children and families it serves. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to supporting healthy development and learning for students.

Sincerely,
Anne-Marie Rollo
Trustee, Saskatoon Public Schools