

Model healthy screen habits at home

After a hasty but positive implementation of restrictions on cell phone usage in schools this September, the Department of Education and Early Years this January released new guidelines for promoting healthy screen time habits for children. These guidelines offer useful recommendations for limiting sedentary activities such as watching TV or playing video games while encouraging physical activity and outdoor play. They also suggest setting boundaries around technology use, which can help promote well-being in students. They are a step in the right direction.

While the guidelines provide useful recommendations for screen time usage, they may be lacking in terms of addressing the educational well-being of today's student population. For example, they do not provide specific guidance on how to integrate technology into learning and teaching practices that support academic success. Additionally, the guidelines do not take into account the unique challenges faced by different groups within society such as those with disabilities or special education needs.

To make these guidelines truly effective, parents need to model healthy screen habits at home. Also, the Department of Education and Early Years will need to provide greater teacher training on how best to use technology in classrooms. Technology can be used for routine tasks like creating PowerPoint presentations or grading multiple choice tests but it is only useful when integrated into lessons that challenge students, perhaps even making use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to solve real-world problems that they are passionate about.

Please remember to submit your association's President's Annual Reports. These reports are due on February 28th and will be included in the upcoming 72nd Annual Book of Reports.

Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week from Feb. 10-14 is an opportunity to thank school staff for all they do and Home and School Associations can plan ways to show their appreciation during this week.

Two awards that associations should consider include the Volunteer of the Year Award, which recognizes significant contributions by volunteers in their local communities, and Life Member Award, acknowledging service to the provincial Federation. Nominations for these awards are open until March 2 using online criteria and forms available at P.E.I.hsf.ca/awards/.

Schools across P.E.I. can also celebrate Pink Shirt Day Canada on Feb. 26 with a focus on eliminating bullying and discrimination in all its forms.

Finally, set the date for the Annual General Meeting of the P.E.I. Home and School federation. Saturday April 12, we gather at the Rodd Royalty Hotel in downtown Charlottetown to celebrate our success stories and learn more about timely topics that affect our student's education. Delegates from local Home and Schools/Parent Councils gather to consider resolutions, discuss areas of mutual interest, meet with educational partners, and elect new members to the board of directors. Together, we build better schools.

For more information, go to email peihsf@gov.pe.ca or call 902-620-3186. David Schult, president of the P.E.I. Home and School Federation, lives in Charlottetown with his wife and two children, who attend U.P.E.I. and Colonel Gray Senior High School.