



**OWNING  
PROVING  
SHARING  
OUR STORY  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2020–2022**

# THE LINDEN SCHOOL: WHAT'S THAT?\*

2020 Alumnae Survey: How would you describe Linden to prospective students?



LINDEN IS A LIFE-CHANGING INSTITUTION.  
IT WILL HELP YOU FIND YOUR INNER SPARK, SUPPORT YOU TO  
BUILD YOUR VOICE, AND EQUIP YOU WITH THE TOOLS YOU NEED  
IN ORDER TO PURSUE THAT SPARK.

IN SHORT, LINDEN CAN HELP YOU BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF.

THE BEST EDUCATION ONE COULD EVER RECEIVE.

—2020 Alumnae Survey Respondents

*\* Excerpt from The Linden Song, page 14*

# FROM THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

On behalf of The Linden School's Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff, the strategic planning team is pleased to share the strategic initiatives that will help us set the course for the next three years and beyond. In 2016 the strategic planning team shared a plan that was focused on three key strategic priorities: sustainable school, program excellence and student success. As we neared the end of the three-year period, having made substantial progress toward all three key objectives, we updated our plan with help from international management consultant Ellen Sprenger of Spring Strategies and her colleague Ann Elisabeth Samson, who supported us in identifying areas that would benefit from a strategic focus, and to articulate ways in which we can better understand and strengthen the mission and values at Linden's core.

Our 2020-2022 strategic initiatives are designed to build on our many accomplishments and milestones, including the school's 25th anniversary celebration and recognition of the founders, Diane Goudie and Eleanor Moore, as YMCA Women of Distinction in 2019. The 25th anniversary provided a guide for our exceptional faculty and staff to continue to deliver an inspiring educational program that motivates every young woman who joins our community to realize her own potential and to share it with others wherever she goes. We know from our personal and collective experiences that Linden's unique approach to girl-centred education improves learning and developmental outcomes for students. By evolving our feminist pedagogy and practice, we can continue to improve on how we educate girls. By measuring the impact of our educational and community practices, we can prove that Linden works. Finally, by driving our message, we can share with the world just what makes us so special and effective. By 2022, we want the wider community to be able to answer the question from our well-loved school song\*, in which Linden students playfully ask: "Linden School — what's that?"

These three concepts form the basis of our current strategic plan:

**OWN IT! PROVE IT! SHARE IT!**

Sincerely,



Nasrin Matini

Interim Principal & Member of the Strategic Planning Team 2016-2021

\* see page 14 for our school song

# OWN IT!

2019 Parent Survey: If you were to recommend Linden, what would you highlight most?



**KNOWLEDGEABLE TEACHERS WHO ARE  
COMMITTED TO INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INCLUSIVE OF VARIED  
FACILITATION METHODS RANGING FROM  
TRADITIONAL LEARNING TO EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM.**

**—2019 Parent Survey Respondent**

# OWN IT!

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE ALWAYS HAS BEEN, AND ALWAYS WILL BE AT THE CORE OF LINDEN

The school's mission and values highlight academic excellence and intellectual risk, and we – the students, the teachers, the staff and members of the Linden community – embody these goals and ideals through a feminist lens. We know how life-changing it can be when our students learn to use their voices.

“Own it!” means that we will have the courage of our convictions, and confidently articulate ways in which feminist pedagogy and practice are essential to Linden's culture and accomplishments, and those of its students and wider community. This ongoing phase of the strategic plan puts teachers and teaching at the core of this endeavour. Their work, in the classroom and beyond, shapes the delivery and evolution of Linden's ground-breaking girl-centred curriculum. They are at the forefront of thinking critically about the latest research in girls' education, and in devising and designing methods to apply this research in their classrooms. By supporting their journeys as educators through extra professional development, peer coaching and stretch opportunities, we can continue to empower our faculty to teach in a way that is meaningful, challenging and transformative for our students.

## KEY GOALS AND AREAS OF FOCUS

- Ensuring that Linden's leadership structure is organized to provide strong support for faculty development
- Creating dedicated time for faculty professional development within the school calendar
- Enhancing scope and availability of internal and external professional development opportunities
- Providing encouragement and support for teachers wishing to seek additional education and qualifications
- Creating more avenues for peer-to-peer support and sharing among faculty

## INTENDED OUTCOMES

With dedicated time and additional support for faculty to grow their skills and knowledge as feminist educators, we will enhance learning experiences for our students.

# OWN IT!



BILL NYE, ADA LOVELACE AND THE ENERGIZER BUNNY HAVE NOTHING ON THIS SCIENCE TEACHER AND HER INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING THAT FOCUSES ON GETTING YOUNG GIRLS EXCITED ABOUT STEM AND ICT. FROM A LIFE-SIZE MODEL THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS TO CLIMB INSIDE A COMPUTER, TO A LAB EXPLORING THE CHEMISTRY OF CANDY, BETH ALEXANDER CONSISTENTLY GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND TO TRANSFORM SCHOOL INTO A MAGICAL PLACE FOR HER STUDENTS.

—Prime Minister’s 2017 Award for Teaching Excellence in STEM  
Received By Linden Director of Teaching and Learning Beth Alexander

# OWN IT!



DEIDRE MACPHERSON HELPS STUDENTS MAKE CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES AND ISSUES—WHETHER SHE IS TAKING THEM TO A LOCAL LAWN BOWLING CLUB TO LEARN FROM SENIORS, SHOWING A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S STRUGGLES TO PLAY LACROSSE, ORGANIZING A FIELD TRIP TO TRAIN WITH TEEN ATHLETES IN CUBA, OR LEADING CLASS DISCUSSIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SPORT.

—Prime Minister’s 2020 Certificate of Achievement for Teaching Excellence  
Received By Linden Athletics Director Deidre Macpherson

# PROVE IT!

2020 Alumnae Survey: What has been your proudest moment since Linden?



HELPING DESIGN, LAUNCH, AND IMPLEMENT A BILLION-DOLLAR NATIONAL PROGRAM TO HELP IMPROVE BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN RURAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROVIDING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

TAKING STEPS TO OVERCOME SOME REALLY DARK TIMES WITH MY MENTAL HEALTH AND NOW DOING A JOB WHERE I HELP OTHERS IN THOSE POSITIONS.

EARNING MY MASTER'S DEGREE AND SENDING MY OWN DAUGHTER TO LINDEN.

—2020 Alumnae Survey Respondents

# PROVE IT!

## OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS KNOW FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT LINDEN “WORKS”

Linden students and alumnae are known as young women who are curious, informed and articulate. Each has, and tells, personal stories of self-confidence shaken and then recovered, failure and triumph over new concepts, and of realizations of injustices and the actions they took. These stories are incredibly important — but so are data and facts that in combination tell an even more powerful story about an aggregate population.

“Prove it!” means that we have launched a strategic initiative to build stronger and more enduring relationships with Linden alumnae. The school plans to offer a depth of ongoing support to former students, and to invest in collecting data to support their well-documented anecdotal evidence. Depending on the type of data, this task isn’t going to be easy; it will require a commitment of resources and time. Yet this task is one of significant strategic value, and Linden aims to be both focused and deliberate in our approach to measuring the school’s impact on individual students as well as the communities we have built within, and outside of, our walls.

## KEY GOALS AND AREAS OF FOCUS

- Seeking input from alumnae regarding their current lives and the impact of their Linden experience
- Learning more about similar populations (e.g., specific age groups, students of all-girls schools) so we can provide reasonable comparators
- Establishing specific objectives and corresponding studies to be conducted
- Identifying data sources, developing data sets and analyzing the data
- Sharing findings with the community
- Using data to inform our approach and practices

## INTENDED OUTCOMES

Robust data that describe, substantiate and measure what specific factors, inputs and experiences make the Linden experience transformative will enable the school’s leaders and administrators to be more effective at recruiting new members to our community, including students, families and faculty. In addition, the Board’s Advancement Committee plans to use these data to convince potential supporters that Linden is worth investing in.

# PROVE IT!

## LINDEN ALUMNAE...

### ARE LIFELONG LEARNERS

96% OF ALUMNAE CONTINUED THEIR EDUCATION AFTER GRADUATING FROM LINDEN

### LIVE WITH CONVICTION

93% OF ALUMNAE SPEAK UP WHEN THEY DISAGREE WITH SOMETHING,  
EVEN IF IT MAKES THEM FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE

### ARE DETERMINED

97% OF ALUMNAE KNOW THEY CAN COMPLETE THEIR GOALS  
WHEN THEY PUT THEIR MIND TO IT

### STAY CONNECTED

67% OF ALUMNAE ARE STILL FRIENDS WITH STUDENTS THEY MET AT LINDEN

# SHARE IT!

2020 Alumnae Survey: Is there anything else you'd like to share to help us understand the impact of your experience at Linden?



I REGULARLY CREDIT LINDEN  
WITH SHAPING WHO I AM,  
AND ENCOURAGING ME TO  
ADDRESS HARD TIMES HEAD-ON  
WHILE ALSO SEEING THE POSITIVES  
IN THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIFE  
AND LEARNING CAN OFFER.

—2020 Alumnae Survey Respondent

# SHARE IT!

## LINDEN'S STORIES ARE AS DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE AS WE ARE AS A COMMUNITY

Every single external communication, whether told across digital and print media or through that most powerful media of them all – word of mouth – is an opportunity to tell the broader community about who and what we are. It is essential that our stories be seen and valued as strategic assets. It is equally important, for both the school and larger values that our students embody and practice, that we work to make these stories resonate with equally diverse groups of people beyond our immediate sphere.

With a clear articulation of our perspectives on girl-centred learning combined with supporting data, we will create clear and compelling messages that proudly answer the school song's\* favourite question: “The Linden School: What’s that?”

## KEY GOALS AND AREAS OF FOCUS

- Communicating our stories through words, visuals and other forms and media
- Aligning our communications with our strategic plan
- Identifying and utilizing platforms that allow us to share our story most effectively
- Using data analytics to inform how we allocate our communication resources
- Supporting teachers and community members in sharing their personal stories

## INTENDED OUTCOMES

With continued focus on developing our public knowledge assets through communicating our story, including our views on feminist pedagogy and analyses of our impact, we will create, protect and secure Linden's reputation, and enhance our public visibility.

*\* see page 14 for our school song*

# SHARE IT!



LINDEN SHAPED ME INTO THE PERSON I AM. I FELT SO ENCOURAGED TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS THAT I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY. I TOOK IT FOR GRANTED. IT WAS MUCH LATER, IN UNIVERSITY AND BEYOND, THAT I REALIZED NOT EVERY YOUNG WOMAN FELT LIKE THIS. DEBATING WITH MY TEACHERS AND VOICING MY OPINIONS WITHOUT FEAR OF MOCKERY BECAME SO NORMAL TO ME THAT I WASN'T INTIMIDATED TO DO IT LATER.

—Hilary Straus, Class of 2008.

Excerpt from Linden's news article:

*[What's all the HOOPLA about? Linden alumnae launch new feminist non-profit to celebrate you and your big moments](#)*

# 2020–2021: TODAY’S CONTEXT

## STRENGTHENING RESPONSES TO EMERGING NEEDS

The Board of Trustees leads an annual retreat to focus on the school’s broader, long-term strategy. The strategic planning team includes representation from parents, alumnae, faculty and staff, school leaders, and trustees. The range of voices has been invaluable in developing a series of plans that are aligned with the school’s mission and values. Interested community members can find a [summary of the 2016-2019 strategic priorities here](#). The work of the past several years, guided by Ellen Sprenger’s view of strategic planning as a tool that enables organizations to remain rooted in their principles while formulating agile and nimble responses to a range of challenges, proved invaluable in 2020, a year that saw the world rocked by tumultuous events.

## VIRTUAL LEARNING PAR EXCELLENCE

Both in retrospect and heading into 2021, we conclude that the tumultuous events have shown the value and resilience of the school strategists’ decision to “own it,” “prove it” and “share it.” Within a few hours of launching a virtual learning program driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, school inboxes were flooded with emails expressing appreciation for how faculty and staff had managed and rolled out virtual learning resources, coping strategies and channels of supportive, and creative communication. To use their own words, faculty and staff encouraged and facilitated “student voices in a virtual setting” and found ways to “connect to each other despite physical distancing” by embracing “social solidarity.”

## SAYING “NO” TO WHITE SUPREMACY

During this period, the school community, led as often by Linden’s students as by adults, wrestled, debated and conversed thoughtfully and passionately with the issues raised by rallies and sit-ins to end white supremacy and violence against Black and Indigenous people.

## NEW LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL

At the same time, The Linden School launched a process to explore and map out leadership and organizational renewal that we are confident will build on the accomplishments of the 2019–2021 period and provide us with a strong foundation for strategic initiatives that address the opportunities and challenges of 2022–2024.

# LINDEN SONG

**L-I-N-D-E-N** *(repeated six times, growing louder)*

In September 1993

Linden began historically

With 40-something girls on the third floor

They came because they wanted more

We grew and we grew

And we all learned something new

An experience we'll remember

The teachers are our friends for life

On them, we can depend

Though we bicker and we whine

In the end, we know we're fine

Because we all know

It's a hard-knock life for us

There's a lot of work to do

We all care for you and me

When you're in the Linden tree

***Linden School, what's that?***

We grew and we grew

And we all learned something new

An experience we'll remember

**L-I-N-D-E-N** *(repeated six times, getting softer)*



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