



## State of the School

Thursday, January 24, 2019

Chair-Elect, Holly Fogle

We have been talking a lot about growth and exciting changes. As Bart just said, I have always thought we are the small school that dreams big. As much as I am excited by these changes, what I love most about this place are the things that stay the same.

My family's St. Luke's journey started ten years ago. Jeff and I — then proud parents of 3-year-old John — walked under the St. Luke's School sign, through the gate, and sat on those benches in the front hall as we waited for our tour. (Little could I predict how many hours I would spend on those benches in the coming years!) After the tour, we waited until we were out of earshot to compare notes. In my head, I was impressed by Bart's warmth and vision, and particularly the algebraic equations on the Grade 5 smartboard. I anxiously turned to Jeff, who had been solidly in the "public school" camp, and said "what did you think?" He calmly said, "I liked it. A lot. Their shoes were good." As I was checking out bulletin boards, Jeff had been checking out feet. Turns out he was impressed — the shoes were dirty, scuffed, and generally not too nice. They were functional. It was a symbol for him of a place where learning and the joy in childhood were front and center.

Fast forward a few more years, and Bart asks me to join the Board and lead our Strategic Planning Committee. In the process of working with our committee to develop a new five-year strategic plan, we held parent coffees, faculty discussions, board discussions, and I interviewed the senior administrators. We simply asked, "What are our strengths?" and "What do we need to work on?" From every group, the resounding answer on our strengths was "The St. Luke's Way," but I found it a bit "mushy." It was never defined. We have our community standards and our mission but the St Luke's Way is different. It is the "pixie dust" and the "ethos" of the place. I came to realize that we all have to experience it and define it for ourselves.

For me, one of those defining moments came when my Alex, my youngest, in K, was on the playground, but couldn't reach the monkey bars. John's partner, Patrick — and for those of you who have little guys you know that the partners are only one deviation from God — was playing a game of pick-up basketball with a bunch of other big boys. Alex calmly winds her way through the melee and tugs at Patrick's pants and quietly asks him to come over to the monkey bars and lift her up. John is watching this unfold from the four-square court and is beyond mortified. You don't talk to your partner unless your partner talks to you, but Patrick not only smiles and takes her hand in his paw and lifts her up on the monkey bars, but he stays and laughs and does it over and over. It is about a community that cares and watches out for one another — whether you are a parent or a kindergartener that can't reach the monkey bars.

I think part of the St Luke's Way is also a community that values everyone's participation — whether it is donating baked goods, volunteering time at the Christmas Fair, or striving for 100% participation in our Annual Fund. It matters that we all contribute — time, energy, and financial resources. We want to ensure that stays the same too. We would love for you to be involved in the PA Meetings, the three coffee chats to learn more and provide input on the playground planning, and the Spring Benefit. We are also going to need everyone's support if we are going to raise funds for our new playground. *So please, participate!*

Finally, fast forward to today and now I am the mother of Grade 5 and 7 students. John, Alex, and I were having a discussion about vaping. Many of John's friends in other downtown schools were really struggling with its prevalence, particularly in the bathrooms. I asked, "Do any of the kids vape in the bathrooms at St. Luke's?" Alex immediately chimes in. "Mom — they would be caught so fast by the teachers." John then says, "Yeah, and they would be in BIG trouble." He then paused for a moment and turned something over in his mind. Then he looks me right in the eye and says, "Mom, you know what the worst part would be? It isn't how much trouble I would be in. It's that Mrs. Rosado might not give me a hug anymore."

So, as excited as I am for the changes ahead that will continue to improve this place we love, I do have a few hopes for us:

May the shoes always be a bit scuffed.

May the Grade 7 students always think that helping a kindergartener is as important as playing pickup basketball with their buddies.

May our community always come together and rise to the challenges before us.

And may the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders always be slightly scared of disappointing Vanessa Rosado.