

# THE CAIRN COMPASS

*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Prov 22:6*

## Schools of Belonging

By Kevin Huinink, Executive Director

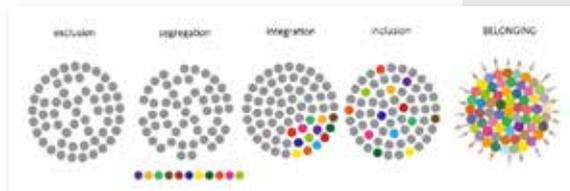
Overwhelmingly, parents tell us that they are looking for a place where their child(ren) will feel safe and nurtured, and where they as parents can trust that their kids aren't just in a place where they don't have to worry about them, but where they know they are thriving academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. A loving environment where each child belongs takes an intentional focus.

This year, Cairn Christian School received a 'Belonging Bursary' from the Christian School Foundation (CSF) to assist us in our work to ensure that our schools are places of belonging for each student, especially those who have different learning needs.

But what does it mean for a student to belong? The graphic above may help. Exclusion does not acknowledge those who may be different. Segregation and Integration acknowledge that others exist but keeps them separate or at a distance. Inclusion allows all to participate but still falls short of our goal. In a community of Belonging, all students are acknowledged as uniquely gifted with specific needs, with the opportunity and responsibility to contribute.

**"Inclusion ensures that all are welcome.... Belonging means that we miss you when you are not there."**

We are on a journey at Cairn Christian School, growing and learning how to serve one another in our uniqueness. We know that each of us and all of our students, regardless of our unique abilities and needs, finds their identity first as a loved child of God. In the Kingdom of God, by the grace of Christ, all belong!



## Winter 2020

Q&A with Mrs. Stronks **2**

**3** Strategy Update

Our support **4**

**5** My introduction to Cairn Christian School

Classroom project focus **6-7**

**8** BTW Campaign update

Christian School Foundation **9**

**10-11** Thank you

Sponsors **12**



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# Q&A with Mrs. Stronks

*Mrs. Stronks is one of our para-educators at Stoney Creek hired specifically to support students who have higher learning needs.*



What does it mean to you in your work supporting students to be a school of belonging?

Being part of this amazing school has been such a blessing for me. I can see every day what a huge part "belonging" is to every student, teacher, paraeducator, and administrator. As I walk down the hall with the students I support, they are greeted, accepted and loved no matter what. There are times when greetings are not returned, or high 5's are left hanging, but no one ever gives up. I love being able to walk beside them, to support when needed, and to witness all of the unconditional love being poured into them.



What does that mean for the student(s) in your care and for their classmates?

All of this love and acceptance has made such a huge impact! These students are thriving and making such great progress both academically and socially. Their classmates and schoolmates have cheered them on to make huge advances. What I have also noticed is that the students I have supported have played an integral part in teaching their classmates patience, resilience and grace.



## Strategic plan update Grow Deeper

It can be overwhelming to join a new school community, especially when you don't know anyone there. New students to our schools typically experience a warm welcome and intentional focus as they 'land' in a new school. Academic approaches will be different with a new teacher, classmates are new, the bus ride is new. Thankfully, 'sink or swim' is not our posture as we welcome new members to our school community. There are four strands in our current strategic plan, and one of them is 'Grow Deeper'. Some of the initiatives in this strand include a deepening of relationships within our community, especially for those who are new to Cairn Christian School. While those already 'in' a community may feel that it is a friendly and hospitable place, it can seem very different for those who struggle to find a connection.

It is our goal that each and every family feels that Cairn Christian School is 'home' for them. That, of course, will mean different things for different families, but a personal connection to another family can make a world of difference. Schedules, buses, uniform shirts, pizza days, chapels, PD days, special events... these are all things that our current families know and

understand but can be difficult to navigate when new to the school.

Twenty-six new families came to check out our schools at our open house evenings in January, and many more are calling in weekly to inquire. Some already have connections as alumni and with friends who currently send their children. Others are saying 'Hello' for the very first time. It is our goal to partner every potential Cairn family with an existing Cairn family. In so doing, we hope that everyone will feel they belong even before they begin their journey as a part of our learning community.





# Our Consulting Support in Belonging



*By Sara Pot*

I'm Sara Pot, Communities of Belonging Liaison for the Christian School Foundation and Edvance Christian Schools Association. My husband Ralph and I are parents to four great girls, two of whom are medically fragile with complex needs. Our family has shaped our perspective of disability, belonging and education. Hence, I have been tasked with supporting Christian schools, such as Cairn Christian School, as they endeavour to either develop or deepen an inclusive vision of belonging. As an example, I help schools who receive a Belonging Bursary from the Foundation; this is offered to schools who request financial assistance specific to supporting students with disabilities.

In our praise for our Creator, do we also celebrate His creativity in us? Many schools will attest to the challenges that face them, as they look to doing better with the growing diversity of students in their classrooms. Becoming a Christ-centred school where students of all abilities thrive is not without its growing pains. Creating a school culture that reflects His diversity of learners and the emphasis of being over doing is a process that is always being refined; it is never completed.

# My Introduction to Cairn Christian School

*By Irene Giesbrecht, French teacher*



In September of this year, I began a new position at Cairn Christian School, teaching French to grade 6, 7, and 8 students on both campuses. Being a career educator, I have had exposure to the delight of teaching, but I have encountered something entirely new here!

In Matthew 28, Christ taught his disciples to spread his teachings to all the world. This Great Commission requires that we teach people to live their faith, to disciple one another so that daily they can observe what Christ has commanded. If we don't instruct and teach our children who God is and His significance, others will teach them that He is not.

While our children are taught at home and in church, the opportunity to offer authentic Biblical direction and guidance daily is crucial. It demands a dedicated Christian community, time, funds, personal sacrifices, and focussed vision and planning.

The opportunity to become a part of Cairn Christian school as a teacher and to be a part of this daily

instruction has been exhilarating for me! The educational support in the classroom as well as a caring and nurturing community I see here are above and beyond anything I have experienced as a teacher in the past. Cairn Christian Schools are communities where God's kingdom is growing and moving!

To be a part of a community that is growing not only in faith, but in size and influence, is awesome. It is a blessing for me to be able to support with my gifts, but also to financially support the building and capital fundraising projects underway.



# Some VIP's

## A Grade 1/2 project

By Kevin Huinink

When what you learn and what that produces meets a need for real people, beautiful things happen. This was the experience not only of our grade 1/2 class in Smithville, but also for the subjects of their study.

Students, in a study of what makes a school work well, realized that people are one of the most important parts of our community of learning. The class set out to profile and get to know some of our 'Very Important People'. Their teacher, Mr. Lee, wove together elements of writing, speaking, math, art, and 'doing hard things' so that his students could learn not only curriculum targets along the way, but also honour and discover others. This included

- writing a formal request for a portrait,
- presenting that to their 'person',
- drawing a rough draft,
- giving one another critical peer feedback and encouragement,
- figuring out proper facial proportions, and
- following with multiple drafts toward a final product: a portrait that would be hung in our lobby to introduce the public to some of our school's 'Very Important People'.

Finally, the class used their newly developed skills to teach their peers in grade one how to draw a portrait in the same way.

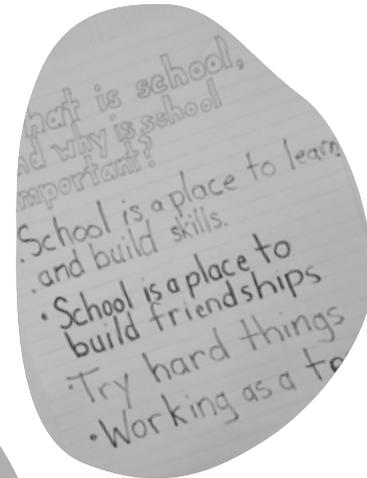
While the teaching and learning in this project was beautiful in and of itself, perhaps the most wonderful result of all was how the final product touched the people that the students drew.

This process helped numerous adults in our community realize that they are seen, known, and appreciated. Teachers, para-educators, custodians, bus drivers, guest teachers, administrators, and volunteers alike saw themselves through the eyes of a grade 1/2 student and the hours of work they had put in to highlight them as valued members of our community.



### CREATED TO CONNECT

We are designed for connection to God and others, reflecting the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Learning deepens when it promotes relationships, is dependent on collaboration, and connects our personal stories with the story of God's redemption.



# Building the Way Campaign update

You may be wondering what is happening with our current capital campaign. Often during the 'silent' phase, it can appear that not much is going on, but nothing could be further from the truth. The most active group of people at this time is our campaign cabinet who meet every other week to strategize, report back, encourage one another and equip even more to help us achieve our goal of raising \$3.2M for our projects.

The book 'A Spirituality of Fundraising' by Henri Nouwen has been of particular encouragement to us and is the content of our devotions together:

*"Whether we are asking for money*

*or giving money we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration... [we are] proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission."* It is in this context that we are joyfully pushing forward in our work. Our schools are a part of a beautiful story, and we want you to belong as a part of that story!

To gain more insight into the campaign and goals, visit [www.cairnchristianschool.ca/building](http://www.cairnchristianschool.ca/building) Along with our launch video, there are details about each project and ways in which you can support us along the way! For more information, contact [campaign@cairnchristianschool.ca](mailto:campaign@cairnchristianschool.ca)



*Please continue to pray for this group of volunteers as they bring together donors and our schools' vision and mission.*



# Foundation Support of Belonging



One of the key characteristics of young people who are happy and engaged is that they can see that they belong. God made human beings to be social creatures, and part of our identity comes from the groups in which we have our place. A family is the first group in which most of us belong, and for many, a faith community is close behind.

Young people who feel safe and who feel like they have something to contribute at their school feel like they belong. Those who don't feel safe often feel alienated or isolated – which is really the opposite of belonging. When Cairn Christian School says it is a Community of Belonging, it is saying that we want all God's children to feel like there is a safe place for them right here. They are valued, they are loved: they belong. This is true no matter what level of ability or disability, any one of us may possess.

Christian schools that are Community of Belonging Schools are really just schools that practice the loving and accepting approach to others that Christ modeled. When Jesus met young or old, males or females, sick or healthy, rich or poor, He seemed to first see in them the image of God. Yes, He quickly saw what their needs were and moved to address those needs (even when the people themselves didn't see their own true needs!), but first and foremost He saw children of the heavenly Father. If we first see each other in this way, and not first as white or black, walking or in a wheelchair, calm or hyperactive, Cairn Christian School will be well on its way to being a genuine Community of Belonging school.

The Christian School Foundation partners with Cairn to develop this understanding that all belong in Christian schools and to bring together donors and schools who share this rich vision. What a delight to reflect the Kingdom of God in this way!

*Tony Kamphuis*

*The Christian School Foundation draws Christian schools and donors together to expand the influence of Christ in our culture. They have been amazed at the blessings we are witnessing in the first year of offering the Foundation's Belonging Bursary*



Kevin Funk

W. VanderWier

Dave Vellinger

Myll Hansen

**Thank  
you!**

DUANE  
VANGEST

Dan Van Driel



D. Haaf

Kei Dube

Kelly Duff

Scott  
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Janya Akida



As someone who supports Cairn Christian School in prayer, encouragement, and finances, you enable us to continue to tell stories such as the ones contained here in the Cairn Compass.

Most students enter our doors at age three or four, and leave at age thirteen or fourteen. The vision of those students as they grow, inspired to love, learn, and lead together in God's world is a vision that you have literally bought into by supporting our annual fall drive.

**At Cairn Christian School, God is at work, transforming young lives for His service!!!**

In thanks to God for His provision through you, we were able to receive more than \$120,000 toward the work we do every day. Praise be to Him!

The Cairn Compass is a quarterly newsletter distributed to the Cairn Christian School supporting community.

**Our Mission**

*Inspiring students to love, learn, and lead together in God's world.*

**Our Vision**

*To be the leaders in education by inspiring a diverse and unified student body to love, learn, and lead with God's grace, bringing Christ's love to the world.*

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