



The Leap Year: Strategic Plan

2023–2025

The Linden School at 30: Jumping into 2024 and Beyond

The Linden School celebrates its 30th anniversary during the 2023–2024 school year. Much has changed—both in and outside of the school—since founders Diane Goudie and Eleanor Moore envisioned, and created, a Toronto girls’ school that is responsive to the educational and developmental needs of girls, yet the core values that provided the underpinning for their courageous leap into the unknown continue to inform the mission-aligned work that takes place in the school today. Linden fosters academic excellence through an innovative curriculum that combines cutting-edge research and its teachers’ training and experiences to provide a girl-focused, social-justice-based education. Linden’s graduates explore their chosen paths with a unique resilient combination of confidence and resourcefulness. And, as it stands to enter its fourth decade, the school is poised to leverage its past success to secure a bold and bright future.

“Leaping” is defined as the movement created when one or more self-propelled objects spring lightly upward and forward. In Linden’s case, the leap envisioned to take place in the 2023–2024 school year—as well as in 2024–2025—is the culmination of an evaluation and planning process that has incorporated 30 years of experience with a fresh-eyed examination of current and future circumstances and opportunities. As part of a multi-faceted strategic plan designed to leverage the school’s core strengths to ensure future growth and stability, Linden will expand on its mission in three key areas that mark both a recommitment to what makes the school exceptional, and a joyous, open-armed, future-embracing leap forward.





Linden's Board of Trustees, working with the school's leadership, has developed a 2023–25 Strategic Plan for the school. The key elements of the plan are:



Create New Foundations

Sell our property at 10 Rosehill to create a new endowment fund, and relocate to a new facility in several years that is better suited to Linden's needs.



Mobilize Cutting-Edge Research

Renew and expand professional development opportunities and partnerships to identify, evaluate and synthesize recent, credible, and cutting-edge academic research on topics relevant to Linden's mission.



Light a Beacon for Changemakers

Invest in market research to better reach prospective Linden families and invest in a major marketing campaign to raise awareness and fill our classrooms.



Create New Foundations

Create New Foundations

Linden is unusual among independent schools of its size—and extremely fortunate—that founders Diane Goudie and Eleanor Moore, in tandem with committed school supporters, made the visionary investment to purchase our property at 10 Rosehill Avenue. After starting out in a rental space on the third floor, the school expanded to fill the entire building, which it bought in the mid-2000s. At the time, this move took audacity and courage, along with enormous personal commitment and assistance from the school's dedicated community, but in hindsight this has proved to have been a transformative investment. Today, Linden owns the building outright, with a remaining mortgage of \$600,000, a fraction of its market value.

For almost 20 years, the school has been approached by property developers interested in buying the land. Linden's leadership and support community, which has included some of Toronto's most experienced real estate analysts and professionals, has historically concluded that a sale or partnership was not in the school's best interests. Recent analysis reveals that we have been wise to have waited. Based on input from our advisors and other sources, we believe that the market value of 10 Rosehill, net of the mortgage, is now sufficient to provide Linden with a very substantial endowment to support the school's long-term future. This would require that the school's equity is made available through the sale of the building.

What's more, lengthy and thoughtful research and analysis, including professional consultations, has led the Board of Trustees to conclude that it is not in the school's best interest to remain at 10 Rosehill in the long term. The owners of the adjacent parking garage and Pleasant Boulevard convenience store have stated their preference that 10 Rosehill be included in a future redevelopment of a larger property, but our due diligence work leads us to expect that these adjacent land owners will eventually pursue redevelopment on their properties without 10 Rosehill if Linden refuses to join a collective redevelopment project. The 10 Rosehill site is too small to support a meaningful redevelopment of its own. Therefore, if Linden chose to remain in place in the long term, the school would end up with an orphaned property, surrounded by high-rise developments, and would have to operate for multiple years through construction on all sides. Furthermore, in that scenario we do not see a realistic path to fundraising the capital required to renovate 10 Rosehill into a modern building that could meet the needs of Linden's students, families and staff for another 30 years.



Create New Foundations

Linden's leadership—again, in consultation with top advisers—does not plan to wait until the 10 Rosehill site loses value; instead, we have decided to seize this moment of opportunity for the school's community and future. While the Toronto market for residential development property is very strong, the market for commercial office space is very weak, because many office workers are choosing to work from home following the pandemic, and office tenants are releasing space as their leases expire. With our advisers, we have also identified and explored opportunities that have been opening up in the market for space vacated by traditional educational, cultural and religious institutions.

Given the above, Linden's Board of Trustees has concluded that the school should sell 10 Rosehill to capture the substantial redevelopment value of the property, leveraging this valuable capital asset to its fullest use for the school's long term future. Linden will be able to convert the value of the property into an endowment that can be used to make significant investments to support the school, and locate appropriate space for the school's new home within a comparable time and distance to what the majority of Linden families and students now require for their commute to 10 Rosehill.

A key component of the plan to sell our building will include leasing back 10 Rosehill, to give the school time to locate a new home for Linden and carry out any improvements needed at this new site, ensuring we have a facility that will serve Linden well for many years to come. Linden will operate at 10 Rosehill for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years. We do not anticipate a change of ownership to result in any substantive changes to the school's operations while it remains at 10 Rosehill.

Create New Foundations

In the meantime, we intend to consult closely with our community to better understand their hopes and needs in a new facility. At this point, we expect that a new facility:

- Will be located within walking distance of a TTC subway station on either Line 1 (Yonge-University) or Line 2 (Bloor-Danforth), to ensure that most of our students and staff can continue to reach Linden via public transit
- Will have access to the amenities needed for a school, although some of them (such as a full-size gymnasium) may need to be accessed at a nearby facility within walking distance, similar to what we do today
- Could be in a stand-alone building where Linden is the only user of the building, or in a multi-use building where Linden is one of several users, subject to appropriate arrangements for security and other considerations

That said, we recognize that not knowing where Linden will be located in a few years will be unsettling. Our intention is to move as quickly as we can with a search process, while balancing our intention to seek stakeholder input on the priorities for a new location.

In addition, Linden has engaged Jones Lang Lasalle, known as JLL, one of the top commercial real estate brokers in Canada, with a proven track record of working in the educational sector, to assist with the sale of 10 Rosehill and the search for a new location. The sale process and the search process will proceed in parallel, and JLL is already working and reporting to Linden's board of trustees as to the results of its efforts to advance both goals.



Mobilize Cutting-Edge Research



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Since its inception, Linden has used the tag “Where Girls find their Voice”, which came directly from educational research and Linden’s leaders’ and teachers’ combined experience about what was important to girls and women—and would lead to classroom practices that reflected ways in which “girls learn best”, another Linden tagline. These phrases are much more than mere words. In fact, the feminist pedagogical practices that were pioneered at Linden in the 1990s and 2000s—factoring in “whole child” teaching approaches to questions of social and gender identity, ability, historical privilege and representation, empowerment, and both understanding and honouring the value of multiple paths to knowledge—have been adopted not only by girls’ schools but by many educational systems and progressive organizations.

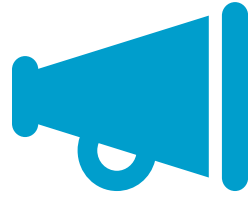
The school remains committed to a process that consolidates Linden’s unique experiences and accomplishments with both credible and leading-edge research into how and what a girl-focused, social justice-based education must look like in the 21st century. Linden is committed to both explore and contribute to areas of on-going research into pedagogical practices that foster academic confidence, which enables sustained resilience and wellness support when faced with academic and personal challenges, that bolster confidence in diverse, thinking skills for encouraging different forms of expression across all disciplines, and that focus on combating common stereotypes about the areas in which girls excel.

Critical curriculum choices have a significant impact on how the school develops the community and leadership skills that our students require to become compassionate, competent, and cooperative leaders and community members who incorporate social, environmental, cultural and economic justice in their careers and lives. Our objective in this aspect of the 2023-25 strategic plan is to incorporate these 21st-century learnings into our curriculum and pedagogy, and to share these concepts and methods with the wider community, thereby reinforcing Linden’s position as a thought leader. The academic committee of Linden’s Board will work with the school and the community to develop an appropriate scope of work and identify needed resources.

Mobilize Cutting-Edge Research

Funding from a new endowment will provide the school with an opportunity to:

- **Explore one or more partnerships** with universities doing research in gender studies and education so as to expand Linden's expertise as a thought leader on developing wellbeing and resilience in adolescent girls.
- **Engage** in a literature search of cutting-edge pedagogical theory and practice that supports and expands the teaching/learning process at Linden.
- **Provide** opportunities for our faculty to expand their use of inclusive pedagogical and curriculum tools and practices.
- **Encourage and support** faculty access to interaction with tertiary-level educators as well as collaborative experiences with their colleagues in other regions.
- **Promote** leadership growth and opportunities for Linden faculty via professional and financial support for our distributed leadership practice.
- **Expand** our curriculum to engage our students to explore their strengths and interests. We will offer a high school Passion project which will be supported by a faculty member and have a mentoring component.
- **Motivate all Linden students** to employ their knowledge, critical thinking and actions to embrace opportunities to "give voice" and express clearly their views to those who can provide the avenues for change.



Light a Beacon for Changemakers



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As a small school, Linden has historically faced significant constraints on its ability to invest in advertising and other forms of marketing.

Word-of-mouth referrals from families have for 30 years been by far the most effective source of prospective families, yet raising awareness of the school among families who lack these personal connections, and whose daughters would flourish at Linden—the ones who say, year in and out: “I don’t understand how we did not know about you given the perfect fit”—is also an important goal for our community and enrolment-building efforts.

Linden’s goal of directing every possible dollar into the classroom, and the value the school places on voice, honesty and authenticity, means that the school has never launched conventional promotional campaigns. Our staff who have overseen marketing have relied on volunteers and professionals willing to take on this task as a labour of love because they are dedicated to Linden’s mission.

On the other hand, we need to ensure that we communicate with prospective families in a way that describes and articulates the school’s unique strengths using language that will resonate with today’s parents.



Light a Beacon for Changemakers

Toward that end, we will earmark and utilize funding from a new endowment to retain professional and mission-aligned communication advisors to assist with stakeholder consultations, research and communications strategy development in order to better understand how to reach and communicate effectively with families who would be a good fit for Linden.

Using that advice and expertise, the school will invest in a dynamic communications and outreach campaign that reflects:

- Data and analysis from our consultations and research;
- Paths of exploration and action revealed by our academic research; and
- The advantages and opportunities opened up by Linden's new home, once our search process has identified and secured a new location.



There is a great deal of work to do, and a number of key questions that are in the process of being answered. But we continue to be inspired by work that has already been done to transform Linden from a vision to a reality, a school in which girls can feel both safe and challenged, a space into which they could bring their dreams, frustrations, abilities and potential, and be supported in their efforts and hopes. At no time has that reality been more inspiring than during the past several years in which our community has weathered the challenge of a global pandemic.

We are confident that this strategy will use the best of what's been accomplished and learned during Linden's first three decades and create the conditions for Linden to thrive for many more. Linden's mission is more important to our community—and the world—than ever. The school's leadership is grateful for our community's continued support, and looks forward to ways in which members of that community will each contribute in their own way to building Linden's future.





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