



International Coalition of Girls' Schools

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Advancing Girls'
Education Globally

2022-2023 Ransome Prize Recipient Martha Perry



Martha Perry is a passionate advocate for girls' education. As the Principal of St. Clement's School (SCS) in Toronto, Canada, a position she has held since 2010, Martha is focused on ensuring that a school with almost 125 years of storied history continues to embrace its solid roots - while also being well positioned to innovate and reimagine what it means to learn, both in the present and in a quickly changing future. Martha works tirelessly to ensure that St. Clement's School's path forward is aligned with its stated mission of developing curious, courageous, and compassionate young women. In an ongoing effort to ensure that each student is known and valued - a key goal of the School - Martha has also overseen significant initiatives related to equity, diversity, and

inclusion. This work remains a cornerstone of SCS's vision for the future.

Community is everything at SCS; Martha experienced this firsthand as a student herself, attending SCS from Grades 7 to 13. Being an alum of the School has allowed Martha to bring a valuable and unique perspective to her role as Principal. Martha has long believed in the importance of connections - across the street from SCS, and around the city, country, and globe. She has personally worked to encourage and forge new community partnerships during her time as Principal, while also supporting and strengthening existing ones such as SCS's longstanding relationship with the Moose Cree First Nations community at Moose Factory.

Martha has a wealth of experience in the independent school system, working with staff and with students at all levels and in all aspects of school administration. She was Assistant Head of Academics at Pickering College, and has been Director of Admissions at SCS and Director of Academic Support and the Advisor program at Trinity College School and early on, a special education teacher at Crestwood School and Montcrest School. Martha's background as a Special Education specialist, combined with her leadership training through the CAIS Independent School Leadership diploma program, has enabled her to support both students and staff to be their most authentic selves.

Opportunities to support and sponsor women interested in leadership are important to Martha. She was a facilitator for Canadian Accredited Independent Schools for New Heads, having led the Women in Leadership module for five years; she also co-taught the Accreditation and School Improvement module for eight years at the CAIS Leadership Institute. In 2017, Martha co-developed and co-taught a CAIS Heads' Retreat. Martha was appointed President of the Board of Trustees for the International Coalition of Girls Schools in 2016, after serving two years prior as Trustee and Vice President, respectively. Martha's role with ICGS affords her tremendous opportunities to meet with and learn from leaders in girls' education from all over the world.

Martha Perry reflected on the benefits of leading and learning within a small, close-knit community in a recent blog post:

Learning is Growing

One of the many blessings of working in a school where Grades 1-12 are together under one roof are the occasions to literally run into great moments of learning. In addition to frequent class visits, at the end of the day, I often wander around the building, coming across evidence of the many ways our students demonstrate their ability and capacity to learn and grow.

For example, a display posted outside the Grade 1 classroom highlighted their understanding of how effort and a growth mindset will allow them to acquire new skills. As one Grade 1 wrote, "I can't ride a two-wheel bike YET but if I try my best, practice and learn I will be able to." That day, I also came across a great post on a different Junior School wall about setting math norms, including, "Mistakes are valuable," and "Math is about learning, not performing."

As we collectively work to ensure that our students are being challenged by an academically rigorous experience, providing a supportive environment is important as we strive to help them to understand that learning is growing, and that growth requires a mindset that is open to hard work.