

# THE STORY WE WANT TO TELL

by Dayle Vienneau, Secondary Vice-Principal

Stories are powerful. Stories are personal. They connect us to new experiences, people, and ideas. They teach us empathy and open our eyes to the changing world around us. Jesus, one of the greatest teachers we could ever learn from, frequently used stories as a way to connect His message with all of us. Why? That personal connection we get from sharing our stories opens the door for learning to take place. It's that connection that helps us reach our potential.

The story of learning is no different. I have been studying the work of Ron Ritchhart (2015) in my professional learning and he wisely states that, "Each and every day, year in and year out, students are being told a story of learning." The old story of learning focused on 3 Rs - reading, writing, and arithmetic. Far too often, academic test scores are turned to as the best way to measure the quality of a school and while this is true to a degree, test scores are unable to tell the whole story. The new story of learning, the story we want to tell at CCS, focuses on a different set of 3 Rs - relation, rigor, and relevance. These new Rs allow us to achieve the old Rs in a way that meets our 21st century learners.

When I reflect on my own time as a student at CCS (back in the day...), it was the relational aspect of teaching that allowed me to become the person I am today. I will never forget when one of my teachers was diagnosed with cancer. I was in Grade 8.

While she may have taken a leave from school to go through treatment, she never took a leave from "teaching". She encouraged me to enter into hard conversations with her - ones that focused on faith, life, and death. There were questions, tears, and authentic conversation.



Gr9 Diversity Team



*"That is what Calgary Christian School is all about: Relational, Rigor and Relevance."*

She helped me grow and understand what it truly means to own your faith and live it out (while helping me with my English homework on the side). Her passing, just two years later, was hard for me but I am forever grateful for the time she put into building a relationship with me.

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This is what Calgary Christian School is all about: Relation, Rigor, and Relevance. It's the relational piece that makes the other two Rs fall into place. When we create a trusting relationship with our students, they are more willing to take a risk and try something new or push themselves further than they believe they can go; increasing the rigor. Creating a safe space to encounter hard conversations that are relevant to our world today (LGBTQ, Indigenous relations, racial tensions, and more) doesn't happen by chance. It happens through relationships.

A team of Grade 9 students currently meets monthly with two other schools within the Palliser School Division. Together, they "Speak Out About Diversity". This group is student-led and conversations cover topics such as breaking down some of the assumptions of the Muslim and Christian faiths, differences between small town living and city living, breaking down racial barriers, and learning more about the Indigenous culture and beliefs. They focus on things they have in common and celebrate the differences they discover along the way. The learning that is taking place within this group is fostered through the relationships that they are forming, even outside our building. Focusing on the social and emotional dimensions of learning promotes long-term success in so many ways for our students.

Our theme verse for this year, "in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3b-4) centers around the relational piece of storytelling as well. Where do we find ourselves within God's story? How do we, as Christians, respond to people or events around us?

We each have a story and we all play a role in God's story. Another one of my teachers once shared, "It doesn't matter what your experience is, that's why He chose David. It doesn't matter what your gender is, that's why He chose Esther. It doesn't matter what your age is, that's why He chose Abraham. It doesn't matter what your past is (what you have or have not done), that's why he chose Paul." Covid-19 brings disruptions to how we usually connect with our students, parents, staff, and community. This just means that this past year, we made sure to be more intentional in how we connect. We invite you to come inside our story and see what comes next!