

Celebrating Women Leaders at Cranbrook



CRANBROOK SCHOOL



International Women's Day



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Drama Teacher

In celebration of International Women's Day 2024 on Friday 8 March, we are proudly profiling our female leaders at Cranbrook as part of our commitment to championing diversity and fostering inclusion in education. This year's theme, 'Count Her In: Invest in women. Accelerate progress', underscores the importance of celebrating the invaluable contributions of women in the teaching profession. By spotlighting female educators, we are sharing their inspiring stories, and showcasing the diverse perspectives they bring to the classroom, whilst instilling a sense of belonging and empowerment for us all.

How long have you worked at Cranbrook and in what role/s?

It's remarkable to believe that this marks my tenth year at Cranbrook. My initial introduction to Cranbrook occurred during my second teaching placement while at university. I was assigned to Year 2 (now in Year 12), surrounded by a remarkable group of educators who possessed profound knowledge about their students, the curriculum, and the IB. Their expertise inspired me to teach in a manner I had not encountered before, both as a student and a student teacher. Upon concluding my placement at Cranbrook, I was fortunate to be offered a role as an Education Assistant (EA), working with a group of highly experienced and passionate educators in Year 1. They guided me throughout the remaining years of my teaching degree. The experience of being an EA while studying allowed me to witness firsthand the theories taught during my degree. I am forever grateful for my time as an EA at Cranbrook, as it provided the hands-on experience I needed before stepping into my own classroom.

While undertaking the EA role and pursuing my studies, I also established the after-school Drama Co-Curricular at Cranbrook Junior School. This endeavour allowed me to merge my two passions of teaching and performing, all while implementing what I was learning at university and in the Cranbrook classroom. I take immense pride in the after-school Drama programme, as it has paved the way for my ultimate dream. Starting with a small group of 5-6 students in each class, the programme expanded over the year to include 20 students in each class over four afternoons.

After completing my degree, I was offered a role as a classroom teacher in Year 1 (the students of my first class are now entering Year 7).

In 2022, I became a boarding house tutor. Being a boarding community member has offered a wonderful opportunity to witness the continuous thread of learning, teaching, and development at Cranbrook. This experience has become an integral part of my teaching career, and I cannot imagine not having this enriching experience.

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It serves as a constant reminder of the significance of teaching and learning in our development, regardless of our age, and the opportunity to make a positive impact.

What do you love about your job and the School?

What I cherish about my job are the students and the variety it offers. Students at Cranbrook exhibit a profound curiosity and a sense of joy. Their inquisitive nature makes them highly receptive to learning. This curiosity is the source of joy, emerging from exploration, and the IB strongly advocates for teaching and learning in this manner.

My job is also diverse. I am fortunate enough to work across all four campuses, providing me with the opportunity to teach every student from P-6, along with a 7/8 mentor group and the boarders in Street House. Conversations can range from discussing favourite animals to being asked, "Miss B, if you could be any animal, what would you be and why?"

The reason I chose to stay at Cranbrook after my placement was because the culture, mission, and vision not only align with my teaching philosophy but, more importantly, resonate with the kind of person I aspire to be. I don't think I would have remained in any job that didn't align with me personally and professionally. This is also why many of my closest friends have taught and continue to teach here. The people is what makes Cranbrook special.

How has the education sector changed for women in your time in teaching?

What I did notice during my placement and what I have continued to observe while working at Cranbrook is the relatively even distribution of female and male teachers and leaders in the Junior School, which isn't always the case in this profession.

What changes do you hope to see continue to happen in the future?

The prospect of coeducation on the horizon, is so exciting. An inclusive and diverse school goes well beyond coeducation and is what will help emulate life beyond the school gates. We all have the responsibility to model trust, respect, inclusivity, empathy, and awareness to create a sense of belonging for every individual. This can be achieved by educating two things everyone has in common: the heart and the mind.

Alongside coeducation, a shift I would like to see continue in the future is the sense of student agency and learning from the students in front of us. They are keeping up with the pace of change in the world around them (something I know I fall short with), and I am passionate about learning from what the students in front of me are

experiencing, needing, and wanting. This way, teaching and learning becomes more of a collective pursuit of knowledge.

What's your funniest/most memorable moment of teaching at Cranbrook?

In 2023, hosting the Junior School Production of Alex in Wonderland in the Packer Theatre was a highlight. A poignant moment occurred when some Year 12 students, who had performed in Alec in Wonderland in 2016, reprised their roles. This allowed current Year 5 students to collaborate with some of the original cast. This unique learning opportunity, spanning across the two campuses, fostered reflection and growth for everyone involved.

Traveling to Nepal in 2019 for the CETOP trip was another memorable experience. Seeing how Cranbrook School supported various community assistance projects was inspiring. Witnessing our students break through language barriers with locals through play served as a real-life reminder that play is a universal behaviour that combines curiosity and fun.

What advice do you have for anyone starting their career in teaching?

I think as teachers, we always want our students to have a great lesson that is engaging, dynamic, insightful, fun, and cultivates learning and understanding. I have learned that this may be our intent, but it may not always come to fruition; you will have shocking lessons, and that's okay. It's a great chance to model to our students owning things and that you will never have it all together all the time. Perhaps what students will walk away with from one of those lessons may not be content driven but something that was more prevalent to them at that time.

A very important mentor of mine at Cranbrook advised me to keep a file on my computer and in a special drawer. This file would contain special emails and letters from students, parents, and colleagues. These messages serve as reminders on tough teaching days or when I struggle to connect with a student as to the reason I chose this vocation.

