

Celebrating Women Leaders at Cranbrook



CRANBROOK SCHOOL



Tara Schmidtke

Director of Digital Learning & Research

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?

I began my journey at Cranbrook in 2017 as a member of the Digital Learning Team, helping with the implementation of our Learning Management System, Canvas. Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving in diverse roles across the School. I have taken on responsibilities such as Acting Housemaster of Hone, Assistant Head of Library Services, and Head of Digital Teaching. Currently, I am delighted to be in my second year as the Director of Digital Learning and Research, overseeing classroom technology and research initiatives that support student learning.

What do you love about your job and the School?

I find joy in the dynamic nature of my role. Working directly with all the different departments, I have gained a unique perspective on the teaching and learning landscape within the School. I am blessed to work with a team of creative thinkers dedicated to exploring innovative ways

to support teachers and students in the classroom, which is both inspiring and fulfilling. Being at the forefront of technological advancements in education and actively participating in research in this field adds a layer of excitement to my work.

What sets Cranbrook apart for me is its nurturing and supportive culture. The compassionate environment is evident in the unwavering support provided by mentors, Housemasters, and classroom teachers to students. Witnessing the genuine care and encouragement among students themselves, particularly in experiences like CITE, is truly inspiring. The collaborative spirit and support teachers give to one another at the School allows us to be innovative in creating rich learning opportunities for our students.

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

Since I began teaching in 2010, it has been heartening to see a positive shift in the number of women teaching STEM subjects. More women are taking the

cont...

lead in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education, bringing invaluable perspectives to the classroom. Increasing the diversity within school labs and workshops increases the richness of valuable, varied ideas and viewpoints. This not only enriches the content that students are engaging with, but also inspires young women to explore and excel in these fields.

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

I am excited to welcome girls to the School and see a continued growth of females in STEM subjects. I envision that the supportive culture that already exists at the School will allow girls to flourish in these areas. Learning in a coeducational environment aligns with what the world outside the classroom looks like, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and support, irrespective of gender. It is about everyone working together, and I am excited to be part of this educational journey that prepares both boys and girls to lead together.

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

Hands down, the most unforgettable moments for me at Cranbrook have been all the drama, art, and musical showcases. Witnessing the boys step out of the classroom and demonstrate their passions and hidden talents is nothing short of amazing. The sheer dedication and hard work they put into making these performances spectacular is truly awe-inspiring. I am always blown away by their bravery in putting themselves out there. I try to never miss an opportunity to witness the talented students of Cranbrook.

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

Ask for help. Educators are a passionate bunch and love nothing more than to talk about their teaching and what is working for them in their classrooms. Team teaching has been incredibly rewarding for me; collaborating with colleagues brings diverse strategies into the classroom. I would recommend whenever you can, observing other teachers in their classroom and inviting them into yours. There is so much value in working with teachers who have a breadth of experience and knowledge. And remember that teaching is a journey, and it is important to celebrate the small victories along the way.