

Featured Alumna: Jennifer GRANGER Blankenship, Class of 1994



Jennifer's passion for early childhood education began with a Social Awareness assignment in 11th grade, in the Condit Elementary classroom of fellow Duchesne graduate, Jennifer YOUNG Beck '87.

Until then, **Jennifer GRANGER Blankenship '94** had envisioned a career in pediatrics. This True Child of the Sacred Heart and Duchesne lifer knew she wanted to help people and had always been good with children. She was also strong academically in STEM. At Spring Hill College, Jennifer embarked on the pre-med track, but swiftly discerned it was not her calling. Her fond memories of the Condit classroom prompted a major switch midway through her freshman year, "and I've never looked back." She graduated with a Bachelor of Education in 1998.

This year marks her 16th in the classroom, and her first at Duchesne as a faculty member. As the Pre-K3 lead, she joins 10 other alumnae (including Jennifer Beck!) and former students currently on staff for the 2023-2024 school year.

Although new to campus as faculty, Jennifer is far from new to the Sacred Heart way of teaching. She previously taught at the Regis school, where her three boys were students.

Her only daughter joins Jennifer in the Lower School this year, making her a third-generation Sacred Heart girl (Jennifer's mother was a graduate of Grand Coteau), and making Jennifer one of 49 current Duchesne parents who were once students at this school themselves.

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As an alumna, parent at two different Sacred Heart Schools, and a Sacred Heart educator, Jennifer has a unique perspective on what makes a Sacred Heart environment so special: “There is a serious commitment to educating the whole child.”

Jennifer emphasizes the significance of faith life in school as a foundation for establishing meaningful connections: with God, with oneself, and with others. At Regis, each grade (PK3-8th) was responsible for one prayer service or Mass throughout the school year. She recalls the joy of seeing “the sense of ownership that each of [the students] would gain through the process.” It’s a sentiment that evokes her own student days as Campus Ministry president. “It was so fulfilling to reach people in their faith through different types of prayer... connecting people with Jesus outside of the formal liturgy.” She notes how valuable those connections have been throughout her life; her best friends are still the ones she made at Duchesne, some of whom are now fellow Duchesne parents.

Campus has changed since Jennifer was a student: for one, the Lower School building in which she now teaches—and where her daughter takes classes—was still under construction the year Jennifer she graduated (it opened its doors for the 1994-1995 school year). In Jennifer’s Lower School days, students took lessons in the fabled log cabin (which no longer stands). But, she notes, the school has not changed in spirit. “It is still the same place that helped mold the person I was when I graduated almost 30 years ago.” It’s the people—not the bricks nor the plaid—that make Duchesne ‘Duchesne.’ “I am constantly blown away by the commitment every faculty and staff member has when it comes to the *Goals and Criteria*. The entire faculty and staff radiate the mission of the Sacred Heart Network. It is truly a privilege to now be considered part of this amazing group. It pushes me to want to be a better teacher every day.”