



# MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNAE

## Mercy on Staff

### Mercy Alumnae on Staff

Mercy has the pleasure of introducing three of our staff members who had attended the college as students.

Diane Psaila, Alumnae Relations Officer, invited Tania Ragusa, class of 2015, Rebecca Mazzone, class of 2011, and Brianna Shears, class of 2018 to share their insightful perspectives of when they were students of Mercy and returning as current Mercy staff.

They are pictured here looking through their peer yearbooks.



***Tania Ragusa - Class of 2015 (left)***  
***Learning Area Leader: English***

***Tania, did your ambition to become an English teacher stem from your time at Mercy?***

Most definitely! I was fortunate to have been taught by a range of talented and dedicated English/Literature teachers including Jane Stiles, Mairead Kennedy, Suzanne Lake and Kay Toll (who is still part of the English team today). What I admired about each of these women was their passion for the subject and their creativity in bringing the discipline of English to life – we often acted out scenes in class, completed sensory writing activities outside in nature and had many class debates about characters who were right or wrong. Kay and I still reflect upon the closeness of those Year 12 Literature classes and the rich discussions we shared, all whilst enjoying ourselves and having a great time. This has inspired me to make English as engaging as possible for our young people today.



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***We know you enjoyed the Performing Arts too! Tell us a little of your experience and how it has benefited in building personal confidence.***

The Performing Arts was a key highlight of my time at Mercy College and some of my fondest memories and friendships have stemmed from participating in the school productions. We would rehearse twice a week and over the school holidays as well. We would try to make holiday rehearsals fun and lively, with lunchtime singalong sessions and themed dress-up days. Whilst the rehearsal process felt long, production week would fly by in an instant and there was always a great sense of sadness once a show had finished its run. The 2014 College Production of Hairspray is a personal standout. We had achieved 5 sold-out shows and 5 standing ovations: an amazing result for our hard work and effort. I still participate in the school productions today as a choreographer, and seeing students flourish from these experiences is heartwarming.

I've always stated that being onstage in front of an audience is very similar to teaching (except in teaching, your stage is a classroom and a whiteboard, and your audience is a class of teenagers). I attribute a lot of my confidence and my theatrical teaching style to the Performing Arts, and it has shaped my teacher identity in many ways. Even small things such as how to position my body and shoulders towards the class when writing on the board, making eye contact and projecting my voice are key skills that I use everyday thanks to the Performing Arts.

***Rebecca Mazzone – Class of 2011 (centre)***  
***Learning Area Leader: Health and Physical Education***

***Rebecca, what are your impressions of then and now of Mercy's current learning spaces and sporting program facilities?***

Tough question: I guess coming back as a teacher and seeing the school progress, develop and change over the last 7 years and even prior has made me think about how we teach and how learning has progressed! We have had the creation of new learning break out spaces in the VCE building, interactive learning boards, the construction of the soccer and basketball outdoor courts, renovation of the College Hall, Gym, Performing Art's space and science labs just to name a few.

All these upgrades and changes have been centred around student engagement, student centred learning, collaboration and instilling proactive learners. Ultimately these upgraded facilities are proving to provide students with a more enhanced and enriched educational experience in all facets of their learning! The CGSAV college sporting program has grown to 11 sports and it's rewarding to see so many students attending lunchtime tryouts and training sessions. It warms the heart to see so many students keen and eager to participate, whilst recognising the importance of health and physical education.



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### ***Had your experiences at Mercy influenced your career path working in Health and PE?***

Absolutely! I have always loved all things Health, PE and Sport and knew from a young age that I would more than likely head into a field of work in line with this. I still vividly remember my relationships with my teachers and how they helped me further grow and develop into the teacher I am today! Every teacher in the school knew you, your strengths, your weaknesses, and the goals you were aspiring to achieve. It was through these interactions and reassurance by my teachers, which made dealing with the general nature of “school pressure” quite easy allowing for a smooth transition beyond year 12. That has been the biggest impact on my own teaching ethos – connections and relationships with the students, and through being heavily involved with sport I was able to further develop this.

Given my role as Head of Health and Physical education, Teacher of Junior, Middle and Senior Health and PE, it's very rewarding to see students thrive in and outside of the classroom. The difference we make every day in students' lives, the connections we build and the growth we see is the most rewarding aspect of this job! Also working alongside (once before teachers but now colleagues) is also special too!

### ***Brianna Shears – Class of 2018 (right)*** ***Teacher: Health & PE, Maths, Sports Convenor***

### ***Brianna, it wasn't too long ago that you were a student of Mercy. How does it feel to be back at Mercy as a teacher?***

Returning to Mercy as a teacher is a special experience. As a former student, I have a deep appreciation for the values and community spirit that define Mercy. It feels like coming full circle, being able to give back to the institution that played such a significant role in shaping who I am today.

### ***A great majority of the teachers you work alongside now as a colleague were your class teachers too. What are your impressions from a teacher's perspective?***

Working alongside many of my former teachers is both inspiring and insightful. From a teacher's perspective, I have a newfound appreciation for their dedication, hard work, and the challenges they face daily. Seeing their commitment to education and their passion for teaching firsthand has been inspiring.



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Thank you to Tania, Rebecca, and Brianna for sharing your reflections.

As a former student of Mercy, it is lovely to meet others who have returned to Mercy as staff members.

Diane Psaila  
Alumnae Relations Officer

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