

Q&A

ROSEMARY BEIRNE

Principal of The Ursuline School, New Rochelle



Photo by Chris Pope

By Barbara Moroch

Mrs. Beirne has extensive experience in education as well as a noteworthy background in journalism. She was appointed principal of The Ursuline School earlier this year and prior to that, she was part of the school's English faculty since 2011. Before joining Ursuline, Mrs. Beirne was most recently an assistant managing editor at Newsday in Melville, Long Island, where she co-supervised a project about the aftermath of September 11 that garnered a New York News Emmy. In various news editing capacities, her work has been honored by the New York Deadline Club, the Silurians, the Pulitzer board and the New York State Associated Press Association. Mrs. Beirne also taught journalism at the Arthur Carter Journalism Institute of New York University, and public relations in The College of New Rochelle Graduate School. A lifelong New Yorker, Mrs. Beirne resides in Yonkers with her husband. They have two sons and a daughter who were all educated in Catholic schools. She remains active in her Yonkers community, where she organizes regular

collections for emergency shelters and schools, and has done extensive volunteer work for the Luther Burbank Garden Club.

Q: What led you to pursue your interest in teaching?

I spent much of my career in journalism, which developed a natural curiosity in me and a desire to get questions answered and to delve deeply into the way things work. There is much about teaching that is similar. I have always been passionate about digging deeply into literature, current events, history, those areas that help explain the world and how it has changed. Developing this kind of curiosity in students is what teaching is all about, and for me that is very much like covering stories and teaching young reporters to develop their passions and curiosity.

Q: In what ways do you think your background in journalism can benefit you in this new role?

My work in journalism required me to

set priorities, plan and organize coverage, handle breaking stories, recruit and hire talented reporters and editors, use solid news judgment, and teach young reporting interns. Being a principal and helping to lead change will require many of the same qualities. Journalists are always learning, and that is what educators must do as well.

Q: In what ways do you think Catholic education has changed in the last 25 years?

We who work in Catholic education have been faced with many challenges and opportunities. We must provide an outstanding education that prepares young people for the technological challenges of the 21st Century and all its amazing possibilities. We must remain financially competitive. Most importantly, we must educate the whole person. As a Catholic school, Ursuline strives to produce, as its mission states, "women of faith and integrity, lifelong learners and wise, responsible global leaders committed to the Ursuline tradition of Serviam – I will



Mrs. Beirne with teachers training for the new robotics course at The Ursuline School.

serve." This mission has helped us to thrive in a world where it is getting harder and harder to do so.

Q: What are your plans for the school moving forward?

Our biggest investment is in our students, so everything must put them at the center. We are beginning a new modified block schedule this fall that adds 40 minutes per week of

instructional time, as well as 90 minutes per week that is set aside for teacher collaboration and professional development. We are confident that this will position us to keep up with the increasing demands of educating young women for 21st Century careers. We are developing plans for a new design lab where students can work with teachers in groups or individually on projects that complement our engineering program, our new robotics course, and classes across the curriculum. We also have built a model science lab classroom designed specifically for project-based and collaborative learning. We will continue to develop our Global Scholars program in which girls graduate with a specialty in global issues, and in which they study in depth one global challenge and complete a capstone project on the subject. I want to continue the strong bond we have with all our global Ursuline partners, from Australia to South Africa to right here in the United States.

Q: What is the biggest "takeaway" you'd like your graduates to carry with them from their experience at Ursuline?

I want all our girls to be lifelong learners, to understand how important service to others is, and to remain true to the Ursuline mission and involved for life in the Ursuline community. They should go out and change the world with the education they have been given, and then come back and share their gifts with the girls who follow them here.

Q: What are your hopes for the Millennial generation?

The Millenials are an amazingly talented group of young people. My hope is that they use the talents and opportunities they have been given to make the world a safer, happier place for generations to come. There are daunting challenges ahead for the world, whose future is endlessly promising yet fraught. Commitment to others and to that future should be the greatest legacy of this generation. •