

**Teacher of the Year 2013 -14:**  
**Ms. Cortinas**

**How long have you been a teacher in Cranford?**

*I started teaching in Cranford on January of 2002.*

**Why did you become a teacher?**

*(Laughs) My mom thought it was a good idea. At the time I was a Visual Arts major with a concentration in Photography. Nothing is scarier to a parent than a child who wants to major in art. I was also working at the on campus day care center Free To Be. I enjoyed working with the children and would recount stories from my day to her. My mother, a teacher herself, suggested education. She believed it was a practical career choice and encouraged me to switch majors. I did, and love it. It married the two things I enjoyed most.*

**Why did you decide to teach photography?**

*My concentration in college was photography. Being able to teach Photography just makes me lucky. Not many schools have a photography program. You can't be that selective as an art teacher. You need to be able to teach all disciplines of art, which can include painting, drawing, sculpture, pottery, jewelry making, graphics or photography. My strength has always been photography and crafts.*

**What is one quality you respect most in a student?**

*Perseverance and integrity are the qualities I respect most in a student. The ability to push past frustration and difficulty and continue is an exceptional quality to possess. It helps you as a student and in life. Most things worth achieving will not come easy, you will need to continue through adversity to find success. School is a safe place to test that.*

**What do you do outside teaching?**

*Gardening, rock climbing and knitting are a few of my hobbies. I also am a novice beekeeper. I took classes on beekeeping and am keeping my first hives this summer. I think it is a great way to environmentally pay it forward. Bees are integral pollinators. They are great for our gardens and our dinner tables. Local honey is a remedy for allergies and it is delicious!*

**What do you enjoy most about working with students?**

*I enjoy the fact that I learn so much. I love working with my students because it is fun and it offers a new perspective. It keeps me young. Everyday in the classroom is different and infused with energy and life.*

**What is your favorite quote?**

*One of my favorite quotes is by Rudyard Kipling.*

*“And what should they know of England who only England know?”*

*To me the quote is all about perspective and the importance of broadening your horizons and exploring outside of your small place in the world. In so doing, you learn about yourself, others and the place where you come from even more.*

**What's your funniest experience with a student?**

*When grading exams, I found a dollar bill taped to the bottom after the essay. It was so terribly funny.*

**What cartoon character most resembles you?**

*I haven't watched cartoons in years except for South Park and the Simpsons. Can't say I identify with any of those characters. I always loved Calvin and Hobbes in the Sunday paper. The ability to escape into your imagination never loses its appeal.*

**What superpower would you like to have?**

*Telepathy, the ability to know what people are thinking. It would be so much easier. You would know the truth of one's speech, similar to Wonder Woman's lasso of truth only it would not be so overt. It would be an ability which can be hidden.*

**If Hollywood made a movie about your life, who would play you?**

*Tim Burton's wife, Helena Bonham Carter would be a good casting call. I love her curls, but she would have to lose the British accent.*