Ever since high school, Janine Giammanco knew that she had an interest in chemistry. Now, as a chemistry teacher at Princeton High School, she uses her passion for education in order to try and push her students to be the best they can be.

“I had an excellent chemistry teacher in high school who really sparked my interest in science, to the point where I started as a chemistry major in college,” said Giammanco.

Her passion for chemistry didn’t translate in a lab setting, so she decided to pursue a job with a more social aspect.

“When I started working in a lab, in a college, I just decided it wasn’t for me,” said Giammanco. “I wanted to be with people, and I really enjoyed working with kids.”

Giammanco strives to make her class as engaging as possible. Yuyi Liu ‘24, a student in her Chemistry I Accelerated class, appreciates her teaching style.

“There are many interactive discussions and demonstrations during class, which engages students in the content. Giammanco extends class contents in applying it to the real world. During our studies of the chemical elements, we conducted further research on where the materials in cell phones come from...Then we put our research into a project, where we explained why constantly upgrading cell phones is harmful to the environment, connecting our research and studies of chemical elements,” Liu said.

While many teachers found the pandemic to have a negative impact on their teaching, Giammanco remained optimistic. For example, posting instructional videos online allowed her to focus on projects and group work instead of instruction at the board. The new free time
was then focused towards group work, projects, labs, all of which had been removed in the last couple of years, leading to a more student-centered learning environment. With her passion to push her students, Giammanco wants to truly understand what each student needs in order to have an optimal learning environment.

“\[I\] have a well run classroom and set high expectations so that students can push themselves, but at the same time, making sure that you’re treating them fairly in terms of what is going on in their life. The hardest part is striking that balance between setting high standards and meeting individual needs.\]

“She really understands things in general...if you’re really stressed about something, she’s really patient with you,” said Lauren Girouard ‘24, a student in Giammanco’s Chemistry I class.

While the job can be hard, it comes with benefits that make it all worthwhile in the end. Through her relationships and connections with her students, Giammanco was able to build one of her most memorable experiences. At her wedding, she invited Cat’s Meow, an a cappella group at PHS, to sing at her service.

“My favorite part of being a teacher is getting to know the students and I love to see them grow from the beginning of the school year,” Giammanco said. “I really do love my interactions with the kids every day.”