

THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND MARIST ACADEMY



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School moving to digital technology

In the next few years, beginning with the fall 2013 semester, NDPMA will undergo dramatic technology changes, including the way students access textbooks.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, educators and students in the U.S. spend more than \$7 billion every year on K-12 textbooks. High school and college textbook prices have increased by over 800% since 1978, according to the American Enterprise Institute. Fortune Magazine recently reported that college students pay an average of \$655 per year on books and supplies. And at the other end of the spectrum, some educators are looking at open-source, Internet-based textbooks that allow teachers to customize them by adding videos, charts and illustrations.

With that as a backdrop, on April 11, thousands of educational leaders from across the country and the world

gathered near Washington, D.C., for the first “Future@NOW: Transition to Digital Classrooms” international conference. The event, hosted by Discovery Communications, a media company responsible for TV content that includes the Discovery Channel, TLC and Animal Planet, also

was streamed live to more than 1,600 sites nationwide.

The overriding theme of the conference, whether it was official or not, was the headlong rush of schools and school systems into digital textbooks and learning.

U.S. Congressman George Miller (Calif.) attended the conference.

He recently proposed legislation to speed technology innovation in schools in the U.S. “There is a new imperative of digital learning in this country,” he said. “The classroom has already evolved in such amazing ways and must continue to do so for us to compete on the world stage.”

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is embracing this evolution and moving forward with a technology plan that will soon make digital devices in the classroom as ubiquitous as desks.

According to Joanne Widmaier, NDPMA’s registrar and academic technology coordinator, access to tablets will be available to all ND lower division teachers and students by the time school opens in

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.

NOTRE DAME MATH TEACHER SAYS LOVE OF BOOKS IN SECOND GRADE LED TO TEACHING CAREER (See page 5)

NDP alum is looking for a long career in the Air Force

Ruairi McGreevy ('12) meets with U.S. senator on a recent visit home from Air Force Academy in Colorado

Ruairi McGreevy, a 2012 graduate of Notre Dame Prep and a cadet in the U.S. Air Force Academy, met with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan on March 27 at an event in Southfield. McGreevy was appointed to the academy a year ago and is well into his freshman year at the Colorado Springs-based military service school. Stabenow was instrumental in the nominating process last year that earned McGreevy his appointment. McGreevy recently received his “wing and prop” from the academy, which recognizes him for outstanding work during his first 10 months of service. He now is no longer considered a “doolie” and has officially moved up in rank as a full member of the USAFA. NDP grad Nick Hafner ('10) also is at the Air Force Academy, currently a junior.

McGreevy talks about his first year in the academy as well as his time spent at Notre Dame.

Can you briefly summarize your experience thus far at the USAFA?

So far I have been through basic training, Recognition and a semester and a half at the academy. Basic training and Recognition are both very stressful—probably the two hardest things I’ve done here. I had to learn to be able to not be flustered when reciting quotes, while at the same time somebody is standing in my face yelling at me to be louder. They test us physically and mentally all the time. I would say the academics here is another very hard part of being a cadet. Our schedule is similar to that of high school where we have seven one-hour periods a day, though you may not have class every period. Being here is all about time management and how important it is to stay ahead.

When are you planning to graduate?

I am planning to graduate on May 29, 2016.

What about extracurricular activities. Are you involved in any clubs, sports or extracurricular organizations?

At the academy if you are not an intercollegiate athlete, you are required to participate in intramurals. My intramural sport for the fall was flag football and during the spring I played soccer and team handball. I also have been attending Aikido, a type of martial arts, with my roommate. In addition, I have been volunteering on the Saturdays I have free at my local PetSmart store to help with pet adoption. Another group I was just recently involved with was the academy’s civil engineering department. We built a canoe out of concrete and brought it to a competition in Utah to race it.

A concrete canoe! Did it float?

Yes, the concrete mix contained glass spheres that made it less dense than water and therefore able to float.

Your dad mentioned something recently about your “run to the rock.” Can you explain what that is?

The “run to the rock” is a tradition that occurs at the end of Recognition. It is the moment that we are all waiting for because



Notre Dame Prep graduate Ruairi McGreevy ('12), met with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow in Southfield last month. Stabenow recommended McGreevy for his U.S. Air Force Academy appointment when he was still a student at Notre Dame.

it means the end of the three days of “torture” that is Recognition. The run basically involves all of the freshmen along with the seniors. We run to a rock formation that is about two or three miles away and when we get there, we have to find a 250-pound concrete slab with a rope that allows six of us to carry it. We then run back, carrying the charge with us. When we did it, there was a blizzard happening and the dirt road that led to the rock was extremely icy, so we weren’t able to run the whole time. But still, it was a fun way to end Recognition.

What are your post-graduate plans?

After graduation I want to become a civil engineer in the Air Force. I want to get into what is called RED HORSE, which means Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer. This is essentially a team of engineers that goes into combat zones or rough terrain areas to quickly build an outpost and then get out.

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August. “The current plan is to have two carts of thirty Apple iPads available division-wide with two Apple MacBooks, one for each of the carts,” she said. “The MacBooks will be used to configure iPads and create iBooks.” She said each student will receive a digital pen and ear buds for their personal use.

Teachers in the lower division also have been preparing for the digital change. A number of them recently attended a MACUL (Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning) conference on using technology in the classroom, and one of them will be attending the “iPad in the Elementary School” workshop this summer at Harvard University. Widmaier says the other teachers have been receiving regular updates from these conferences and workshops and will continue to do so.

“There will be a professional development workshop for the entire lower division staff this August as well,” she said.

One class at the lower division is not waiting for August, however. Donna Stuk’s first grade class is already “swiping away” on iPads, according to Widmaier. “They love the iPad math apps, the reading, drawing and interaction with their teacher,” said Widmaier. “Mrs. Stuk has definitely seen an increase of student engagement when using iPads in the classroom. In fact, the most popular educational apps for iPads today are for geared for students ages 3-11. These kids were born digital learners!”

“ETT, PHONE HOME”

Going forward, the plans for the middle and upper divisions may go in a different direction than iPads, Widmaier said. Notre Dame’s Educational Technology Team (ETT), a group of teachers and staff charged with bringing the school into the digital world, has been comparing tablet devices and currently are leaning toward a Windows 8-based hybrid tablet/PC.

“A tablet/PC is a kind of mobile computer with a touchscreen and a pen-enabled interface that runs on a desktop operating system,” Widmaier said. “The screen detaches from the dock (keyboard) and becomes a fully operational tablet. The team brought in several devices to evaluate and compare for ease of use, collaboration, operating systems, battery life, size/weight, student/teacher work

flow, mobile device management, available applications, benefits to the students, cost and how the device enhances and supports curriculum and academic achievement.”

Teachers in the pilot program will receive the device in August while students and all other teachers will receive devices in January. Sometime during the 2013-14 school year, a teacher workshop will be held at NDPMA for all divisions, and a “boot camp” for students is planned so they can receive their devices, load apps and learn device skills and digital citizenship.

WHY 1:1?

Many advantages have been cited for going all-out digital in today’s schools. For Notre Dame with its IB programs, going global and going there quickly just makes sense for a “world school,” officials say. Among other reasons for going to 1:1 tablets are:

- It allows learning anywhere, anytime, with many more resources than students can possibly carry in a backpack
- Interactive simulations and illustrations that can produce a much greater depth of understanding of a concept
- New media: students can use PowerPoint and Prezi, record their own words, use photography, make a video, create a website and blog to get their points across
- Collaboration: a vital skill in a digital world is the ability to work collaboratively on projects with others who may be in the next classroom or in a different hemisphere
- Attentive students: studies show student engagement increased when using tech tools and that achievement levels are greatly improved
- Productivity: allows for a unique academic profile, creating a virtual three-ring binder that is omnipresent, all work in one place—great study tool for final exams



NDPMA registrar and academic technology coordinator Joanne Widmaier says the digital world will be a big part of Notre Dame’s academic offerings.

Widmaier says that as professional

development is key to the program’s success, the school plans to designate certain teachers who have previously embraced technology in the classroom as educational technologists. “The educational technologists will then help develop and implement technology to enhance learning while working with teachers to help make them more comfortable with the tools and to track individual and group assessments,” she said. “We will then evaluate impact as well as survey teachers, students and parents during our first 1:1 year.”

Currently, there are few students who bring their own tablets to school. But Widmaier says that they do not have access to the school’s wireless infrastructure at this time. “Our plan ultimately is to have one device for every teacher and every student and wireless for all. But the network will only be available to a school-issued computer or tablet.”

SOCIAL MEDIA

It might come as a surprise, but Widmaier says it is possible that social media—Twitter, for example—will be open and available to students. “While NDPMA will have definite restrictions in place to protect students, certain social media sites will definitely be open and used in the classroom,” she said. “We believe social media and existing school user policies can coexist. Part of our mission statement says that we form moral and upright citizens. That includes digital citizens as well.” She stresses the fact that definitely the school will be in full compliance with COPPA, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, which was enacted as a federal law in 1998.

Widmaier says Twitter has become a highly productive source for information—a tool for both students and teachers as well as for professional development. “The number one hashtag in all of the Twitter universe is #education,” Widmaier notes. “And teachers can have their students follow Pope Francis or President Obama for a week and write a report, create a timeline, embed videos or photos of achievements, etc.—the possibilities are endless!” School officials stress, though, that NDPMA will continue to actively filter the web and secure all devices that use its wireless Internet system.

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New lower division building making progress

Work continues on the new lower-division school on Giddings Road in Pontiac with demolition of two homes, grading of the site and ongoing renovation of a building that will be used for the division's administration, media center and athletic activities.



According to Carl Bruckner, who is working on the renovation of the former church building, roofers are nearly done and he expects to have certain building and electrical inspections completed so that insulation and drywall installation can be finished.

Grading and excavation for the foundation of the classroom building is nearly complete. The classroom building will house 12 separate classrooms and be constructed on-site as materials and components arrive.

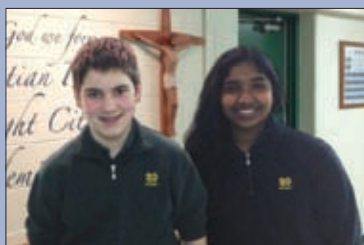
Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., who is Notre Dame's head of school, hosted a town hall meeting at the lower division's current location in Waterford on April 15 to inform all interested parties of progress on the new building as well as the logistics of the move to Pontiac this summer.

"We also plan to celebrate a closing mass at St. Benedict Church in Waterford and an opening blessing ceremony at the new site on the same day," said Olszamowski. "This will serve as part of our 10th-anniversary celebration of the lower division."

Two 7th graders achieve perfect scores in national competition

Two students representing Notre Dame Marist Academy recently received perfect scores in the second of three meets for this year's WordMasters Challenge™—a national vocabulary competition involving nearly 150,000 students annually.

Competing in the difficult Blue Division of the WordMasters Challenge™, seventh graders Patrick Convery and Asha Raghavan earned perfect scores of 20 in the February meet. Nationally, only 70 seventh graders achieved a perfect score. The students were coached in preparation for the WordMasters Challenge™ by ND Marist teacher Kelly Patterson.



Patrick Convery and Asha Raghavan were among only 70 students out of 150,000 nationwide to earn a perfect score in the 2013 WordMasters Challenge™.

Notre Dame Prep seniors sign to play sports in college



Payton Hoff, from left, Troy Kauffman, Alec Naseef and Andrew Winiarski were celebrated April 17 in front of fellow students after signing to play athletics in college. In addition, senior Kelly McElreath, who is not pictured, signed to play golf at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts next year.

In a ceremony held April 17 in front of a cafetorium full of fellow students, four Notre Dame Prep seniors were honored after signing to play athletics at the college level.

Payton Hoff signed to swim at Hope College in Holland, Mich., Troy Kauffman will run track and cross country at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Alec Naseef will play lacrosse at Florida Southern University in Lakeland, Fla., and Andrew Winiarski will be playing football at Hope.

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Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

My overall plans as of right now are to stay in the Air Force for 20 years and then retire and start my own construction company or become a civilian contractor for the U.S. Government.

Why have you chosen this path?

This is a question that we are asked a lot here and it is always hard for me to answer. A lot of my fellow classmates give the typical "I want to serve my country" answer or "I want to give back," which is true for all of us here, but I think there needs to be more. As of right now, I really just want to be here and take advantage of this opportunity while I still have the chance. But it really is hard for me to put into words why I chose this path.

Can you share something interesting—maybe that we wouldn't know or expect—about life at the United States Air Force Academy?

There are a few things that are pretty interesting. Before Recognition, all freshman have to have their room doors open from 7 a.m. to 7:50 p.m. Closing our doors was a privilege we had yet to earn, along with accessing media of any kind and talking in the hallways. Another interesting thing is that lunch is mandatory every day and all 4,000 of us eat together. Finally, almost every single academic class is in the same building, Fairchild Hall.

Do you feel that Notre Dame Prep prepared you for life and education after high school?

I believe that NDP was a great help for the development of my time-management skills. I did a lot of sports at NDP and had to find the time to get my school work done. Also, without NDP, I don't believe I would be able to make it through the academy academically. NDP always offered challenging classes and it gave me the opportunity to experience what college courses are like.

Any favorite memories from high school?

My favorite memory at NDP would probably be playing football in the Prep Bowl at Ford Field. As for a teacher, I would have to say Mr. McCaskey because after two semesters here at the academy, I realize that I will never again have a math teacher who can actually make you as interested and engaged in math as he did.

Love of books led middle division math teacher to career

Growing up in northwest Illinois, Notre Dame Marist Academy math teacher Cindy Brown knew that teaching was her destiny. In fact, she knew when she was in second grade that running a classroom could be in her future. “The public school I attended did not allow students to take any books home, even library books,” Brown says. “I figured if I was the teacher I could take home as many of the books as I wanted to. Then as I got older

ence at all and, she says, no athletic ability. “The girls were really coaching me. What a riot! God has such a sense of humor!”

After moving from Hooks, Brown taught at a four-year college where, to her great relief, she didn’t have to coach anymore. Life was good, but then her family moved again and she found herself teaching middle school for the first time.

Then it was on to NDPMA where she once again felt like she found her home.

“I remember walking down the ND

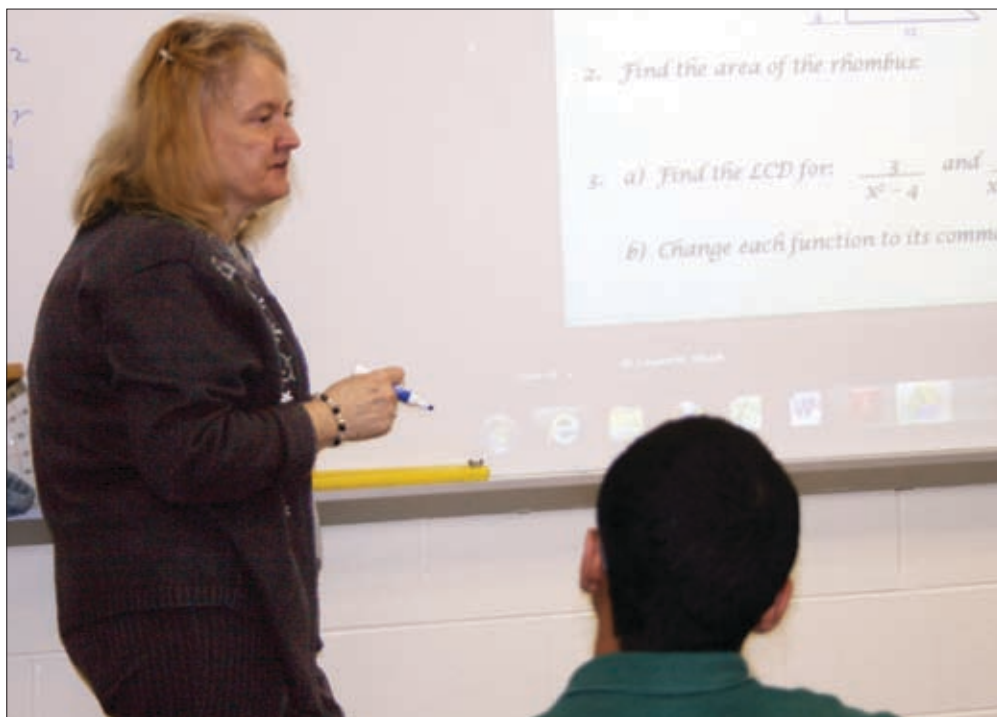
will have a new building just up the street. I love seeing all the little kids when they join us for liturgy.”

Brown also was quick to embrace the school’s International Baccalaureate program and the way it has changed how students are taught and how it has brought a new level of achievement for them. Middle division principal Jill Mistretta said that from the very beginning of the IB program, Brown has been 100% all in without any hesitation. “She has developed some of the most creative mathematics units and interdisciplinary units of study in the entire school.”

Now, as Notre Dame continues its aggressive technology upgrades, Brown says she can’t wait. “In the next two years as we put tablets in the hands of each student in the classroom, all kinds of new, exciting and creative teaching and learning opportunities will be possible.”

While technology is necessary and important for the continued success of Notre Dame and its students, Brown knows that there are a few fundamental basics that will never change. “There are two things I teach the children every day,” she says. “First, of course, that math is very, very cool and everyone can do it! Second, there are only two things more important than math—your character and your faith in God. Your character determines the quality of your life on earth and your faith in God determines your life in eternity.”

Brown thinks that her life on earth as a teacher is exactly right. But if for some reason her career had not been in the classroom? “Clearly I have no future in athletics or coaching,” she says. “But there may be some other jobs I might enjoy though—like collecting data in a national park about plants or animals, working in a bakery inventing new kinds of cakes or singing with a contemporary Christian rock band. But, you know what? I think I’ll stick to teaching at NDPMA.” 🇺🇸



Notre Dame Marist Academy’s Cindy Brown teaches math to middle-division students. She says that a love of books that dates back to when she was in second grade is partly responsible for a career as an educator. Brown started teaching at Notre Dame nearly 14 years ago.

I realized that school felt like home to me, like it was the place I was supposed to be. I was sure I should be a teacher.”

Brown has been at Notre Dame’s middle division since she first arrived on campus almost 14 years ago and loves her “home.” ND wasn’t her first gig, though. “My first teaching job was at Hooks High School in Hooks, Texas,” she said. “My classes were great, but I also was given the job of coaching the Hornets cheer squad. ‘Buzz Buzz Sting Sting, Go Hornets!’” But Brown had no cheerleading experi-

Marist hallway for the first time and I had that feeling again that I had as a kid in school,” she says. “It really felt right, like this was the place I was supposed to be. It seemed like a serious but fun school and best of all, it was a Catholic school.”

Since she joined the Notre Dame family, Brown has witnessed a lot of change. “So many amazing things have happened. I thought it was awesome that we added a lower division to the school and now in the fall that school

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DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER

Major changes are already afoot in the school's media center when it comes to the digital world. Currently, the media center is donating, purging and has begun the process of removing many volumes of print material from its library. Marna Nemon, Notre Dame's media specialist, recently turned faculty and staff on to the many e-resources readily available today, including the Michigan Electronic Library, Credo Reference, a new Gale Reference eBook collection and other online reference books, all in full text.

As for classroom textbooks, the school is moving toward ePubs and Digits, and teachers could also use iBook Author to create their own books. School administrators say they will ensure that all digital classroom media follows State of Michigan guidelines as well as International Baccalaureate requirements for each subject area.


Widmaier notes that the 2013-14 academic year will be a transition year for hard copies to digital books. "In some instances there will be hard copies in classroom and digital copies for computer

use," she said. "But it will become obvious for most that the digital copies will be much easier to navigate. Students will be able to log into the books from

any device, whether it's a desktop, laptop, tablet or even a smartphone. It really is a whole new world!" 



3D PRINTER ON THE WAY

Starting in the fall of 2013, students in Notre Dame Prep's computer-aided-design classes will have access to a 3D printer that will be installed in Katrina Palushaj's CAD classroom. 3D printing is already well established today in industries ranging from automotive manufacturing to consumer goods to the military, as well as the medical and pharmaceutical industries. Notre Dame officials say that it just makes sense to get students familiar with the technology, especially since many of today's high school students eventually will be working with 3D technology during their careers. 

A 3D printer, similar to the one shown top left, will be installed at the Pontiac campus before the new school year in 2013. Bottom left are a few examples of 3D designs by Notre Dame Prep students.