

THE blarney stone

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



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Eight years with IB and counting

As the International Baccalaureate program at Notre Dame finishes up its eighth year on campus, it is important to note that the curriculum and its teachers have not simply rested on the program's lofty laurels. And it's just as important to note in fundamental terms just how much the program has changed elementary and secondary education both worldwide and on Giddings Road.

In a recent article published by the International Baccalaureate organization, the authors discussed the changing landscape of education today. "The average teacher in the 1950s would scarcely recognize education. The Internet has transformed students' ability to research, collaborate, work and test. The number of Chinese graduates will soon surpass that of the USA and didactic models are being challenged and, in many places, supplanted—a process in which the IB has played an ever-growing role.

"The IB's agenda has evolved over time, but the idea of expanding opportunity to as many students as possible remains. As

IB Director General Jeffrey Beard puts it, the organization's remit is to 'reach out to anyone who doesn't have access to an IB education.'"

PROFOUND CHANGES

In the mid-2000s, Notre Dame's student and parent body could have scarcely imagined the profound changes that would soon

laureate diploma. Notre Dame Preparatory School is the only Catholic high school in Michigan to offer this challenging program known for its demanding curriculum and global perspective."

That announcement was followed two years later by another noting the school's authorization to offer IB's Middle Years program for its sixth- through tenth-grade

students and then in 2010, authorization to offer the IB-PYP program to students in the lower division, making the school the only one in Michigan offering all three levels of IB.

FAST AND FORWARD

Fast-forward to 2015. NDPMA still remains the only school in the state with

all three IB levels, but much has happened on the Notre Dame campus since 2007. This past April 16, thirty-seven International Baccalaureate Diploma Program candidates were celebrated in a ceremony held in Notre Dame's media center. The event marked the continuing growth at the school of a program that today works with



Thirty-seven International Baccalaureate Diploma Program candidates were celebrated on April 16 in a ceremony held in Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy's media center.

come to this school in Pontiac.

In the summer of 2007, the official announcement came from Notre Dame:

"Beginning in the fall of 2008, Notre Dame Preparatory School will be offering the Diploma Programme, a rigorously academic two-year program for high school juniors and seniors which leads to the internationally recognized International Baccala-

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 IS GLAD HE'S WORKING AT NDP (PAGE 4)

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Easy transition

Notre Dame alum says his high school made college and career success possible

Michael Kurowski, a 2012 graduate of Notre Dame Prep, seems to be on a real upward trajectory in his pursuit of a career. Now in his third year at Columbia College Chicago, a liberal-arts college focused on the arts and media education, he's already been in six college "Mainstage" musicals/shows, and recently made his Chicago debut as a lead in Jackalope Theatre's production of "Four." He soon will appear in the ensemble cast of the first Chicago-made production of "American Idiot," and he's landed a Lunchables commercial as well as a small role on the TV show, "Chicago Fire."

"It has been an exciting three years," said Kurowski.

Now that he's getting real close to a BFA from Columbia in musical theatre, Kurowski says looking back at his college experience is kind of difficult to describe, other than to say it has been incredibly eye-opening for him as both a performer and as a person.

"In the fall of 2012 when I got here, I was thrown into the heart of the theatre capital of the world and since then it has become a home to me," he said. "The thing about Columbia is that it's a place where students must push themselves and their talents to their limits—and then find ways to blend that into their careers."

'DECENT HUMAN BEING'

Since matriculating at Columbia, Kurowski has become an accomplished singer, musician, actor, dancer and, most especially, a student. "I could go on forever about my classes and how the teachers at Columbia have helped pave my way into the professional world, but I should give credit where it really is due," he said. "Honestly, NDP is where I learned to be a great student and a decent human being. It gave me a safe place to make mistakes, both in an out of school, and then to learn from them."

He said making the transition to college was easy for him because Notre Dame prepared him well beyond anything he could have

imagined.

"NDP gave me the opportunity to balance my school work and theatrical work at the same time, which is an invaluable skill, plus I was involved in choir, musicals and the school band, which helped me develop an ear for music. Thanks, Mr. Martin and Mr. Fazzini!"

Kurowski also credits Notre Dame for helping him make good first, second and beyond impressions. "Interestingly enough, I found that talent and reputation are of equal importance in my career," he said. "NDP helped teach me how to make a good impression to others and how to be professional in a new environment. That is incredibly important because performers are constantly job searching since shows never last long enough to make a real salary from them. Truth is, if you create a good reputation for yourself and always bring your best work to the table, people take notice. Because everyone knows everyone else in this city, it doesn't take long for a reputation, good or bad, to spread to directors higher up in the food chain."


NO HALF-BAKED PAPERS

A lover of literature and writing, Kurowski goes especially out of his way to also give props to NDP's English department.

"Mrs. Bembas always had a comfortable classroom to be creative," he said. "And Mr. Davis helped me appreciate all forms of literature—'Heart of Darkness' is

still one of my favorite books—and Mr. Butorac helped push me to my limits as a writer and a student. I actually owe Mr. Butorac quite a bit. He never settled for anything less than the best from his students. He constantly demanded more from my writing, which now has turned into my own subconscious demand for better and better work from my writing and music."

He said it physically hurts to turn in a half-baked paper or compose lazily written music. "Mr. Butorac always made class discussions interesting and held his students to the highest educational and moral standards. I can't thank him enough."

So while he's looking forward to a great and rewarding career after college, Kurowski can't help but look behind to what likely helped make that possible. "I am very proud of where I came from and I want those that follow at NDP to know that." 



3,946 schools in 147 countries to offer and develop its challenging programs to approximately 1,235,000 students ranging in age from 3 to 19.

According to IB-DP coordinator Kim Anderson, the April 16 ceremony was a special way to recognize the hard work, dedication and talent of the seniors who are heading into the IB examination period next month and also the NDP juniors in the program who will follow in their footsteps.

Notre Dame administrators say that 98 NDP students have received IB's official diploma since 2010 when the school's first IB students became eligible. Last year, 18 Notre Dame students earned the IB diploma. The current 37 DP candidates find out in June whether they also receive the highly sought after diploma.

Ryan Roose, a senior and one of the DP candidates, said the IB program has had a profound effect on him as a student and person. "IB has opened my mind to a lot of possibilities and a new style of thinking that previously I was not exposed to," he said. "It has allowed me to apply my own skills and talents to real world situations and find a path in life where I can make a real difference in the lives of other people."

Making a real difference in the lives of NDPMA students and the people they come in contact with has always been the central tenet of the Marist Fathers and Brothers, the religious order sponsoring the school. Gaining access to the world's most innovative school curriculums just seemed natural to the Marists.

BEST EDUCATION YOU CAN GET

"We provide the best education you can get—Catholic and internationally speaking—at Notre Dame," said Fr. Leon Olszawski, the head of school and founder of NDPMA. "That's why we went with the IB curriculum. We are not preparing kids to live in our world—we are preparing kids to live in their world, 20 or 30 years from now, when they are prosperous and productive people. When they are CEOs and leaders, we want them to be good CEOs and leaders and we want them to live in the world and not get swallowed up by it. Ultimately, we want to continue to provide to our kids the education they need to be successful in this world and the next."

Brenda Kambakhsh, Notre Dame's IB-MYP coordinator, says since the school



NDP senior and IB Diploma candidate Ryan Roose said the IB program has opened his eyes to a whole new world.

implemented the Middle-Years curriculum in 2009, there have been a number of significant changes to the program.

"This year we began official implementation of a new and improved Middle Years Program framework, known as 'MYP—the Next Chapter,'" she said. "This new framework aligns more closely with our other two programs (PYP and DP), and provides a clear continuum as students move through all three programs."

While always a concept-based curriculum, the new MYP framework is more implicitly designed around concepts and inquiry. Key and related concepts are purposefully chosen by teachers within subject areas, but also transcending the subjects, providing academic challenge, sustained inquiry and strong interdisciplinary connections.

Kambakhsh said that another MYP enhanced element, which blends well with the Christian service mission at Notre Dame, is connecting inquiry to responsible action within one's community. "We are working with campus ministry on mindfully teaching the understanding of service across the subject areas, creating opportunities for students to explore action and service as a purposeful, lifelong endeavor, and not as a stand alone activity," she said.

Kambakhsh said that the newer MYP also has an enhanced focus for helping students create their toolbox of learning skills called Approaches to Learning. These include critical and creative thinking skills, communication, social skills such as collaboration; self-management skills, which include time management, organizational and affective skills; and research skills that

include information literacy and media literacy.

Kambakhsh noted that support from the IB organization also has improved since Notre Dame first signed on.

"The IB Schools of Michigan (IBSOM) is working with Oakland University to host the first official IB workshops locally through our regional organization this June," she said. "As a member of the IBSOM Board (Kambakhsh serves as vice president of MYP), I am delighted that our region is receiving more support from IB Americas, both with workshops and with collaboration on orientation sessions for interested schools at our fall symposium."

Support from IB for the lower division is also of critical importance to Paul Frank, assistant principal and IB-PYP coordinator.

"The IB organization provides many opportunities for training and has support options to answer questions," Frank said. "I have to say also that our own administration is very supportive and makes sure that all teachers are able to get the professional development needed to successfully teach to the PYP curriculum standards. They also allow time for teachers to collaborate in order to support each other in their IB units."

Frank said that since PYP was implemented at the lower division, he's noticed that students are becoming much more exposed and immersed into an inquiry-based environment that teaches them to take advantage of their natural curiosity of the world, which he said is many times more suppressed in a traditional classroom. "Students take ownership of their learning with strategies that use key concepts as tools to unlock knowledge," Frank said. "Our students at a very early age learn global perspectives that help them become caring, open-minded and well-adjusted students in the middle and upper divisions, first of all, and as productive and caring citizens ultimately."

MYP coordinator Kambakhsh says that what she really appreciates about being involved with IB is what the students are getting from the program. "When I see the work being done in our classrooms by trained teachers utilizing the IB framework with all its new and important components, I know that our students are receiving the best education available today. This is what excites me the most about my position as an MYP coordinator." 🌍

Glad he's teaching people again

Upper-school math teacher finds out that computers don't make good "students"

When Notre Dame Prep math teacher Mark McCaskey decided years ago in Pennsylvania that he might be happier as a computer programmer than a teacher, he gave up his school job to work at Electronic Data Systems.

For twelve years he toiled at EDS.

"I moved to computer programming, thinking that a computer would be like the ideal student. One that follows every one of my instructions to the letter," McCaskey said. "I was wrong. I missed the fun of teaching and working with people. Teaching is where I belong."

It seems teaching is where McCaskey's destiny has always pointed. He comes from a family of teachers—five of the seven McCaskey kids in Pennsylvania became teachers. His great-great grandfather taught in Pennsylvania schools for 50 years and they even named a school in Lancaster after him.

But armed with a B.S. in mathematics from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, a Certificate in Computer Education from Penn State University, five years teaching in public schools and 12 years as a systems engineer at EDS, McCaskey signed on at NDP as a math teacher in 1997.

"I fell in love with NDP right from the start," he said. "The people, faculty and students are what makes it such a great place to teach."

NDP principal Fr. Joe Hindelang, s.m., said McCaskey was a great hire. "Mark cares deeply about our students," Hindelang said. "He challenges them and helps them to understand and accomplish more than they think is possible. He loves math and works tirelessly with creative—

some might say strange—methods to get them to remember and relate concepts and formulas. More than that, he inspires students to be better people by his genuine concern, humor, faith and humility."

LOTS OF CHANGES

Since 1997, McCaskey says he's witnessed much transformation at Notre Dame.

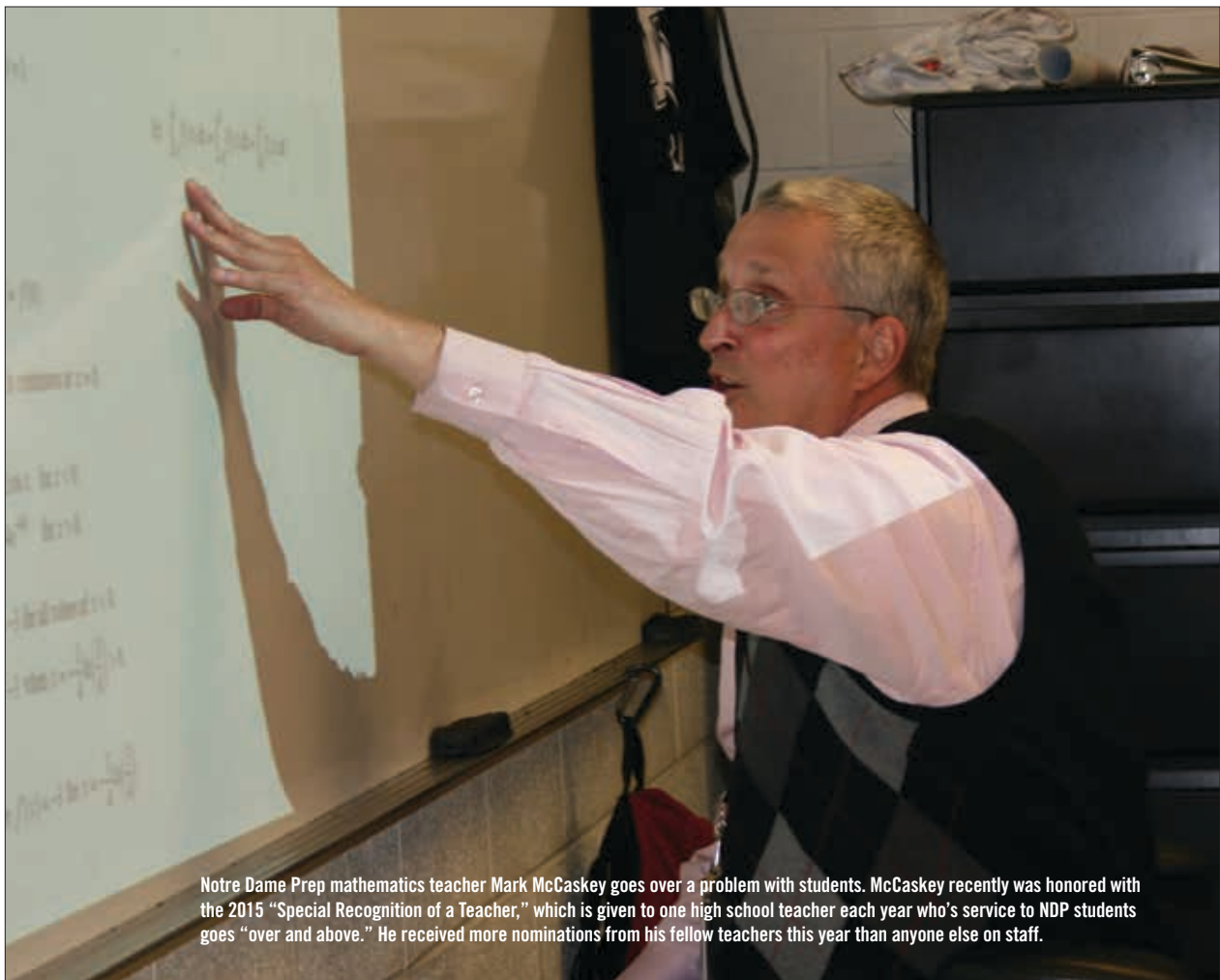
"I've seen three big changes in the school since 1997. The campus, the number of faculty members and the curriculum have all grown tremendously," he said. "Since I first got here, I count at least eight building projects, from the B-wing construction to the new lower-division facility. The year before I started, there were two teachers in the mathematics department. Now there are seven. And with the addition of the IB program, what we offer our students in terms of opportunities for study has really blossomed, too!"

NOT ALWAYS ABOUT MATH

It's not all numbers, high school kids and whiteboards everyday, 24/7, for McCaskey, however.

He and his wife, Eleanor, who works in NDPMA's IT department, have four children, now all grown and independent, which leaves them with time to ride their motorcycles. Mark said he also rides his bicycle more than 1,000 miles each summer.

But getting back to school each fall remains a special time for him. "I look forward each new school year to having another opportunity to prepare more students for the next level, for the college math classes they will meet," he said. "I also always hope each year that I act as a good role model for the kids—as a person who really loves his job, loves mathematics and truly cares about the students." 🌈



Notre Dame Prep mathematics teacher Mark McCaskey goes over a problem with students. McCaskey recently was honored with the 2015 "Special Recognition of a Teacher," which is given to one high school teacher each year who's service to NDP students goes "over and above." He received more nominations from his fellow teachers this year than anyone else on staff.

Notre Dame alum gets rare honor and responsibility at MSU

Notre Dame Prep graduate ('14) and Michigan State University freshman Caroline Kelly was chosen as a Tower Guard at the university for the 2015-16 term. Kelly was chosen as one of 77 members of the 7,800 students in the freshman class. The 'Guards' learned of their honor at an early morning April 17 ceremony in front of the John W. Beaumont Memorial Tower, located on the north campus of MSU.



Only the top five percent of MSU freshmen, or about 400 students, are asked to apply to be a member of the organization that focuses on assisting MSU students and employees who are visually impaired or have another reading-related impairment. In order to be chosen for Tower Guard, members must exemplify leadership, scholarship, outstanding character and commitment to service.

Founded at MSU in 1932, Tower Guard is the oldest continuously active student organization on campus whose members' main function is to devote at least four hours per week to assisting MSU students who are visually impaired or have another reading-related impairment. Their time is spent reading exams and/or translating textbooks and other print materials into an accessible format through the MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD). Most reading for the blind is done by Tower Guard, thus maintaining MSU's outstanding service to students with disabilities.



Students take home medals in national examination

Congratulations to the Notre Dame students in both the upper and middle divisions who recently attained national recognition for excellent performance on the 2015 National Spanish Examinations.

In the middle division, a gold medal was awarded to Isabel Collazo and silver medals were earned by Carson Heimbeck, Amelia Cumming and Sana Muqueem. Bronze medals were awarded to Itala Gimelli, Michael Robbins, Ishwar Surendran, Alexandra Case, Mikaela Crute and Austin Greif. In addition, honorable mentions went to Jonathan Raju, Allison Creek, Jacob Galloway, Eliana Gebara, Natalie Lyijyne, Erin Patterson and Matthew Wood.

In the upper division, a gold medal was awarded to Caterina Nassi; silver medals went to Aleksandra Salic, Robert Joseph, Elena Nassi and Anthony Bokshan; and bronze medals were earned by Nicholas Fraser, Braeden Fromwiller, Lauren Neiheisel, Cameron Rubino, Kayla Stencil, Jessica Caruso, Peter Miklas, Sydney Pauls, Gabrielle Jacoby and Lia Mastroianni.

A total of 29 NDP students earned honorable mentions: James Bishop, Kyle Weaver, Emily Ridge, Hunter Hoensheid, Cara Bonanni, Katherine Swartz, Nina Michielutti, Victoria Mazur, Alexa Magsoudi, Daniel Koch, Angela Fan, Dominic Maniaci, Julia Warsecke, Deema Ujayli, Julia Pagnucco, Benjamin Mancini, Ryan McIntyre, Rosella LoChirco, Sabrina Kloss, Madeline Fazio,

Julia Ebben, Chanel Dore, Marisa Meyer, Julie Boniface, Halaina Jimenez, Jessica Jimenez, Diego Collazo, Olivia Finn, Alicia Ringwood and Abigail Rankin.

"Attaining a medal or honorable mention for any student on the National Spanish Examinations is very prestigious," said Kevin Cessna-Buscemi, national director of the exams.

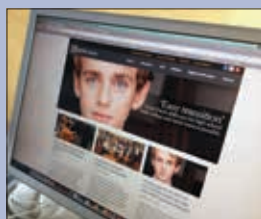
Sophomores and Chef Matt Prentice prepare food for the homeless

A group of Notre Dame sophomores spent the day on April 21 with noted local celebrity chef Matt Prentice cooking and preparing food for the homeless at the Cass Community Social Service in Detroit.



Prentice helped organize the event with the sophomores and computer science teacher Katrina Palushaj as part of the Cass Community Social Service's continuing work in the city on behalf of the homeless and hungry.

Notre Dame launches new website



On Friday, April 10, Notre Dame went live with a new website. While decidedly different in both appearance and function when compared to the previous site, it retains all of the relevant information contained on the old site and streamlines access to that information, according to school officials.

And like most new websites generated today, Notre Dame's site is based on a "responsive" platform, which means it is more compatible with all digital devices, from computers to tablets to smartphones. Responsive websites are designed to make text and images easier to read on any device; plus page navigation is intuitive and simplified.

Over the past several years, the former Notre Dame website has averaged more than 25,000 visitors each month and more than one million total page views per year. Notre Dame's administration anticipates continued growth with the new site, especially now that it is better able to provide a more user-focused experience for visitors.

Nine Notre Dame student-athletes sign to play at college level

In a ceremony held April 15 at Notre Dame Prep in front of their peers, nine seniors signed to play college athletics. Congratulations to: Ryan Moreno, Soccer—Univer-



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Notre Dame
Preparatory
School and Marist
Academy is an
International
Baccalaureate
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School website: ndpma.org

A world of education



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NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find a link on the NDPMA web site: ndpma.org.



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sity of Findlay; Angela Adams, Volleyball–Albion College; Eric Leduc, Track & Field–University of Detroit Mercy; Emily Ridge, Diving–Bowling Green State University; Emily Daenzer, Golf–Hope College; Matthew Bur, Baseball–Albion College; Kayla Stencil, Tennis–Oakland University; Hunter Williams, Cross Country–Albion College; Erin Herrgott, Cross Country–Madonna University. 🇺🇸

VEX IQ Robotics team finishes third in the world



Notre Dame’s VEX IQ robotics team, 3333Q, part of the Bumblebees contingent competing at the world championships in Louisville, Kentucky, last month, brought home a well-deserved third-place trophy. Team 3333Q is

Maddy Beaudoin (6), Lee Lindsey (5), Myles Hill (5), and David Brouns (5). They joined ten other Bumblebees from Notre Dame’s lower division in Louisville and competed against 15,000 other students from around the world.

“Going into the finals, our team was in 13th place,” said Jerry Palardy, a parent coordinator who traveled with the teams to Louisville. “One of the reasons we were able to move all the way up to 3rd was because we were able to work well with our partner, a team from China.” 🇺🇸

Notre Dame Fund nearing goals

From Gregory Simon, director of the Notre Dame Fund: “Help take The Notre Dame Fund over the top! With its new donor-empowered ‘ways,’ the NDF is on the verge of a record-breaking year! Please consider making a gift today at www.ndpma.org/ndfund.”

