

THE blarney stone

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



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Tech-town

Notre Dame named to rare group of tech-savvy schools in the U.S.



Notre Dame was named a Microsoft Associate Showcase School, joining only 60 other schools in the U.S. recognized for education technology. Tablets in the classroom are as ubiquitous as no.-2 pencils once were.

With more than 1,300 computer devices and an average of 450 gigabytes of network traffic pulsating through every school day, Notre Dame is a major hub of academic technology that rivals many public schools with much larger enrollments.

Eden Konja, who is director of information and academic technology at the school, pretty much confirms that NDPMA occupies a leadership role in technology, particularly information technology, which is vital to the uninterrupted operation of all three Notre Dame divisions.

“I have gone to several conferences since coming to Notre Dame and it is apparent that we are pretty far ahead of the curve compared with other schools when it comes to ed-tech,” Konja said. “We demand a lot from our students and we have to meet their educational technology needs to allow them to learn not only in the classroom but outside as well.”

He said the school continues to invest in the right technologies to improve communication, learning, services and operations.

“In fact, we recently have earned the distinction of being named a Microsoft Associate Showcase School,” he said. “This

gives NDPMA a global-scale recognition as an innovative school with a strong leadership vision for change. Technology is always moving quickly and we should be open to learning and understanding its use in our school.”

As leader of the school’s technology operations, Konja, along with the school’s network administrator, Jason Borngesser, and staff members Eleanor McCaskey and Melissa York are overseeing all technical aspects of the school. According to Konja, his main responsibilities are the overall management, planning, organizing and execution of all IT functions at the school, which includes Haiku Learning, NetClassroom and the school’s critical online-enrollment application.

Because of its Microsoft Associate Showcase School designation, Konja said NDPMA now joins an elite and exclusive community of only 60 premier schools from around the U.S. that are recognized due to their true pioneering efforts and innovation in rethinking teaching, learning and assessment in order to drive deep 21st-century competencies.

Anthony Salcito, who is vice president of worldwide education for Microsoft, said Notre Dame and other “Showcase” schools “are shining examples of those applying purpose-driven innovation in a variety of ways to build connection, motivate students and to create community in and out of school. These schools are truly transforming

Please see HEAVY, page 3

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 MIDDLE-SCHOOL TEACHER FINDS HER NICHE IN WORKING WITH 6TH, 7TH AND 8TH GRADERS: PG.6

God, career, family and Notre Dame

Notre Dame graduate says her high school prepared her for everything life throws at her

Amy Kuechenmeister graduated from Notre Dame in 1999. Since then, she has made a number of important strides in her life that ultimately led to a family and a career as a medical doctor. She is forever grateful for the education she received at Notre Dame and believes the school was a critical factor in the success she found in college and in life.

Kuechenmeister also says her faith in God, which she said was consistently reinforced throughout her time at Notre Dame, was just as important to her educational — and spiritual — journey through her life so far.

In a wide-ranging interview with Kuechenmeister where she discusses everything from her great grandmother and equal rights for women to the Irish games and Mr. Greg Simon's tutelage on essay-writing, it became abundantly clear that she is passionate about her faith, her family, her career and her high school. So because she does it best, let's let Kuechenmeister herself continue the conversation on where she's been and where she expects to be in the years ahead.

On her experience in college and how she believes that her education at Notre Dame prepared her for success in college and beyond:

College is all about transition and growth. It is a place where you are able to search deep within yourself, and reflect about the path

you wish to forge, as well as the person you wish to become. It is a place to think about the path that has led you to be the person you are, as well as to think about which path you wish to go down to enrich the person you hope to be. Spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. Notre Dame helped prepare me to embark on this journey by setting a solid foundation of awareness and faith that God was on this journey alongside me, and that I was not alone.

Notre Dame prepared me for this journey not only academically, but emotionally. Academically, the education I received at Notre Dame was completely unmatched by anything I have experienced thus far. I was able to select electives that fostered my interest and love of science, medicine, and humanity. I absolutely love fostering humanity — be it through the arts, the sciences, through spirituality — humanity has so much potential. Each person has so much potential, so much promise, they just need another to urge them to follow their dreams, another to believe in them. Notre Dame believed in me. Every single teacher believed I had every quality necessary to succeed. Their dedication toward me mastering the material, their dedication to their calling inspired me, their belief in me made me start to believe that I was capable of incredible, magical things. I no longer saw dreams as insurmountable, I saw

Please see KUECHENMEISTER, page 4

Amy Kuechenmeister '99 (NDP) has high praise for the teachers at Notre Dame.



HEAVY, from page 1

learning and providing more personalized education to students, which is empowering them to achieve more,” Salcito added.

RECENT MAJOR UPGRADES

Konja noted that a number of big upgrades and improvements have been made at Notre Dame in recent years to keep up with demand, including one that he said is a huge step forward.

“We are moving our Student Information System hosting from our in-house network to a vendor,” he said. “This model has many advantages that will benefit everyone in our community because it will take better advantage of industry-security standards and we will have much-improved data backup and disaster-recovery procedures.”

He also said it will allow for the use of the latest software and hardware technologies needed to make the system much more responsive and accessible. Overall, Konja said, it will ultimately increase efficiencies and effectiveness throughout its use in the school environment for everyone — students, teachers and staff.

In addition, Notre Dame has a number of other technology-related upgrades happening now or planned in the near future that will improve device management, communication and collaboration. The new tools will help the school in taking a significant digital leap toward improving each student’s ability to learn with technology. Among those upgrades are the following initiatives:

- With so many devices connected to the school network, Konja and Borngesser are looking at improving its internal firewall as well as accessing better tools to more efficiently analyze network usage.
- The school is reviewing a digital-documentation system to help archive and reduce printing. This will allow staff the ability to find archived information more quickly and at the same time provide a better document (disaster) recovery solution.
- Notre Dame is piloting a classroom-management tool that will allow teachers the ability to broadcast content, view screens live and lock screens for each device during the class session. It will also allow the IT depart-

ment the ability to manage devices even when they are outside of the classroom.

- The school is working on implementing Microsoft Office 365 throughout the facility. Konja said the many apps in the software will be beneficial in the classroom and for student collaboration.
- Microsoft Intune, a mobile- and PC-device management tool, has been purchased by the school to allow its IT department to more easily deploy applications and settings to all devices.



Tablet use also extends to Notre Dame’s music classes.

1:1 SUCCESS

Now in the second year of full 1:1 implementation, Notre Dame currently is using Apple iPads in its lower division, while the middle and upper divisions use Microsoft Surface tablets. The school also invested in a learning-management system called Haiku Learning to streamline the addition of all those devices in the classroom.

Borngesser said NDPMA utilizes Google, Apple and Microsoft in a variety of ways to help students learn.

“Overall the 1:1 program seems to be very effective in providing our students a way to learn with technology,” Borngesser said. “We have worked closely with Microsoft to build a stronger relationship that has improved our warranty claims and increased support needs. The Surface devices in the middle and upper divisions are functioning well and will prepare those learners with the technologies used at universities and workplaces.”

He also said the iPads in the lower division are working well in engaging its students.

“Our network is functioning well with all of the devices moving all over the campus,” Borngesser added. “Students seem to enjoy having their own device to take notes, open

eBooks, and submitting work onto Haiku Learning.”

Konja said his department is also working to implement technology enhancements in the Media Center to better support Notre Dame’s 1:1 device program. This includes charging ports and common TV monitors to allow students to work collaboratively on class assignments and projects.


“In summary, the 1:1 device program is going well and the department hopes to provide a survey soon to get a better pulse from our community,” said Konja. “There is no one solution that fits every school and it has taken a complete commitment and great community support to make this 1:1 device program such a success.”

TECHNOLOGY NEEDS FUNDING TO KEEP UP

Konja noted, however, that they certainly are not resting on their successes. He said there is no sitting around and waiting in IT because technology moves at such a rapid pace.

“Having a fully functional network 24-7 is imperative for our 1:1 program, specifically, and for the school in general,” he said. “Our school network needs to be completely operational as we cannot tolerate downtime that will halt the educational process. Federal funds are provided to public schools to improve their network infrastructure, but since we are a private, Catholic school, we do not qualify for much of those funds at all.

“We have an enterprise infrastructure need at NDPMA just like the public schools and we need to continue to constantly improve our network to maintain a positive learning environment,” Konja said. “With continued support from our community, we should be able to keep the network going well within our learning environment.”

He acknowledges and is extremely grateful for the technology fees that are a big part of helping to keep the school on its technology cutting edge. But Konja also wanted to remind all that donations to the “Scholars Way” segment of The Notre Dame Fund is still another important way to support the school community’s strong commitment to academic scholarship by helping to fund technology needed for academic programs, instructional resources and professional development. 

my future through eyes of hope, eyes of enlightenment, eyes of optimism and positivity. Notre Dame allowed me to be my unique, quirky self. They did not pressure me to change, they accepted me as I was and thus I accepted myself, wholly and completely.

My education was so well-rounded. I was unable to travel a lot growing up, but within the walls of Notre Dame, I may as well have experienced the world. Reading “The Odyssey” in Ms. Bembas’ class, I was able to travel to Greece. Reading “The Great Gatsby,” I may as well have been on Long Island. As I crafted art in Mr. Kirby’s class, I could have easily been at an art gallery in New York City. As I sat in my Spanish class, I could imagine I was sitting in a little café in Spain as we learned not only the language but the culture. Mr. Simon taught me an invaluable skill that has served me well throughout my entire life: how to write a well-thought-out essay. In his class, as he taught American government, I could have easily traveled to Washington, D.C. The list goes on and on. Physics, chemistry, biology with Ms. Weston, anatomy and physiology, chemistry — all these topics would enrich my life and lead me to find my true passion in life: medicine.

On her career thus far and how she thinks she arrived at it:

My career path was, much like me, untraditional. I knew I had a love for medicine. I felt it in my heart from the time I was a young child and I had been gifted my first “Doctor Kit.” I would carry it everywhere with me. Much to my family’s chagrin, I would often “borrow” all the band-aids in the house, and provide first aid to every doll, animal (stuffed or live) that I could find. I never doubted for a minute that my calling from God was to practice medicine. I had a knack for science, a gift, and I soaked up information like a sponge. I remember in sixth grade, there were two lungs brought in, that of a smoker, and that of a nonsmoker. While other classmates gagged over the smell of formaldehyde, I was hooked. I was completely in awe. In seventh grade I wrote an essay about how I would become an emergency physician. In eighth grade I learned every single bone in the body by anatomical name, knew every muscle, and knew how light rays would hit the eye to be interpreted by the brain (I was an unusual child with unusual hobbies.). After attending Notre Dame, I had the foundation and the background to succeed with my goals.

Due to my great grandmother being ill, I decided to stay close to home for college. After graduation, I attended Oakland University. I stayed there for a year until I decided I needed to transfer to a university with an undergraduate degree that I could really feel passionate about. I subsequently transferred to Central Michigan University for a major in neuroscience. My education there was amazing. I went to school year-round, and finished my degree magna cum laude after just three years. In that time, I was awarded a grant and an undergraduate publication for my research on the effect of stem cell transplantation in rodent models of Huntington’s disease. It was an amazing opportunity, and I was fortunate to have the best mentors there, who also saw my passion and fostered it.

After graduation from CMU, this is where things got a bit tricky. I knew I loved medicine, and I knew I loved children. I wanted to go to medical school, but would that interfere with my other passion: becoming a mother? I decided for this reason to apply to the physician assisting programs to obtain my master’s degree in medicine. I found a program at the University of Colorado that would allow me to complete a fellowship in pediatrics a

year after graduation. I then embarked on a three-year journey out to Colorado.

Never one to make things easy, I decided to pursue my other dream in the meantime. I married my high school sweetheart, and I had two of my three daughters while in PA school: Autumn, now 11, and Kara, now 9. Autumn is by far the most beautiful season in my opinion, and the time of year when I found out I would be a mother. Kara means “sweet melody” in Greece, and Ms. Bembas fostered my love of Greece, so there you have it. After graduating with my master’s, I decided that I missed our families, so we moved back to the Detroit area.

My first job out of school was in the emergency room of the Beaumont Health System. I worked there as a physician’s assistant for about six years. I had one more daughter, Skyler, my little inquisitive “scholar.” I worked nights, raised the girls by day, and tried to be content. I was helping people, practicing medicine, living my dream. Yet, it was not quite my dream. My dream was to be a medical doctor. Being a PA was wonderful, but it had its limitations. I wanted to provide free health care to those who were uninsured, I wanted to change the infrastructure of health care and attainability, I wanted to change the future of medicine to include more holistic patient-centered care. I felt restrictions in my career of choice, and I decided that I had done the whole suburban working mom thing to the best of my ability, but I could not ignore the call that I needed to do MORE. I think God was working within me to do more.

After much prayer, I took the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), I applied to medical schools, and I interviewed. I took the girls with me to each interview, and made sure they had a say in the place we would end up. The year I applied, serendipity/fate/destiny (whatever you want to call it), made it so that Central Michigan University was opening a medical school. So on December 14, 2012, my life changed. I received a phone call that I was one of sixty-four students accepted into the inaugural medical school class at CMU. Moving back to Central Michigan University was like coming home. I had traveled the world searching for my destiny, but had returned home to find it.

I am currently in the middle of my third year of medical school. In that time, I have founded a “Women in Medicine” student organization and an “Emergency Medicine Association.” I have mentored local high-risk groups, I have linked first-generation college students with mentors in their area of interest. I have volun-



Kuechenmeister is with her husband and three daughters.

teered with local Head Start preschools, doing science experiments to encourage and foster a love of medicine.

I am also in the process of applying to residencies and will graduate with my M.D. in May of 2017. Ironically, my seventh grade self was spot on, I hope to continue in the field of emergency medicine. My journey was long, it was not easy, but it was so rewarding and absolutely humbling. The things we can accomplish when God lives in our hearts! The people who have had faith in me, who have held me up when I was tired and wanted to fall,



my family, my friends, I am beyond blessed. My hope is that another woman will see me accomplishing motherhood along with my career goals, and know without a doubt in her heart or mind that she, too, can do the same. For all things are possible with God.

On any favorite memories or special teachers she had at Notre Dame:

I have so many favorite memories that I am able to look back on and hold dear. My favorite teacher? All of them! Mr. Simon, Ms. Bembas, Mr. Borton, Mr. Kirby, Mr. McCaskey, Padre Juan, Mr. Seigel, all the “Senoritas and Senoras,” Brother Louis, Father Leon (who always caught me if I broke the dress code). Everyone had a part in making me who I am today.

My friends who have become lifetime friends: my soul sister, Caitlin Dodge, also born on the same day as me, July 4! My partner in crime, Dana House (Crawford). Mis amigas (Kia and Kelly Myricks). The laughter we shared, the

acceptance of each other AS IS, was a gift, a blessing that helped see me through the rough times, and still gives me laughter every day. I am blessed to still have all of you in my life.

A few favorite memories: I absolutely HATED speaking out loud or completing speeches in front of the class. Whenever I am nervous I just laugh. I flat out laugh until I cannot breath, tears, shaking, the whole shebang. One day in American government class, I was supposed to give a speech on a very serious topic. So serious in fact, that I knew I was going to be mortified when my nervous habit presented. Sure enough, I get up behind “the podium,” and I make it through a few sentences before the laughter bubbles up and the tears start coming down. Mr. Simon waved for me to hand my speech to him. He looked over it, and stated, “I could not understand a thing you said, but this is well-written.” I received an A. His acceptance of me, his understanding that I was not laughing to be facetious, turned a rather humiliating experience into a more comforting one. With time, and with practice, I

overcame my fear of public speaking, and the laughter subsided as the passion behind the topics grew.

Ms. Bembas once assigned us the task of creating a product and completing a “commercial” to promote it. I remember I made this product that was so safe you could clean anything with it: the floor, use it as shampoo, use it as body wash, you name it, you could use it for that purpose. My friend, Corey Porterfield, agreed to help me out. He got down on his hands and knees and started scrubbing the floor and then jumped up to wash his hair with the product. I immediately, once again, started hysterically laughing, and Ms. Bembas just shook her head and chimed in. That is the thing about Notre Dame, the teachers know you, they know who you are as a person, every idiosyncrasy, and they do not try to change you, they accept you, they foster your uniqueness into success.

Also, the Irish games are always a favorite time. Once my friend Dana and I tried to win the three-legged race warrior-style, and we practiced so much, we went home with rope burns, and bruising all the way up from our ankles to our thighs. I had my share of falls from the top of the pyramid as well. Definitely not for the weak!

On how as an alumna she feels about supporting her high-school alma mater:

Support of an alma mater is like supporting your family. Extended family who has helped you grow, who has enriched you into a well-rounded person, and who has provided you with the tools to succeed. In addition, every single student is also extended family, whether you have met them or not. They are going through the same experiences you once did. They are getting the same chances, the same opportunities that you once had. If you think about the difference that Notre Dame has made for you, the only option is to pay it forward.

We all have gifts. One of the most valuable gifts we have is the gift of time. In our high-tech, fast-paced world, we often forget this. Time is finite, but it is free, it can be opened up. When someone gives you their time, there is no greater gift. They are giving a part of themselves to you, a part they cannot give back.

Every single teacher, every single administrator at Notre Dame would give you their time, even today, were you to need it. Were you to need their help, their guidance, they would provide it. Time is a gift that everyone can give back in their own unique way. Notre Dame is a place we will always belong, a place we can all find comfort, for the simple fact that “once family, always family.”

We are the heart of the Fighting Irish. We are “one Notre Dame.”

One final thing: If anyone needs a mentor for science, or has any questions about pursuing a career in the medical field, please feel free to contact me at kuechlar@cmich.edu. 🇺🇸



Kuechenmeister said she has many favorite memories from Notre Dame. “My favorite teacher? All of them!”

From psych major to middle school

Notre Dame middle-school teacher finds her niche in working with 6th, 7th and 8th graders

When Amanda Knapp, who currently teaches 8th-grade “Language A” and 6th-grade “Individuals and Societies” classes at Notre Dame’s middle division, was in the middle of her first year at Oakland University, she began to rethink her life-long goal of becoming a psychologist. Knapp, a 2000 Notre Dame Prep grad, took a couple of classes in psychology at O.U. in addition to the usual core classes, but quickly became disenchanted with her career goals.

“At the time, I was coaching a 5th- and 6th-grade cheer team at St. Lawrence Catholic School in Utica, Mich., and felt a real pull toward teaching,” said Knapp. “I also worked for the Sterling Heights Parks and Recreation Department summer playground program around the same time and was drawn to working with children even more.”

So before she even started year-two of college, Knapp dropped her psychology major and went into elementary education. “I think it was when I started going into classrooms for field assignments that it really, really hit me that I was making the right decision.”

FOUND A HOME

As she got close to graduating from Oakland, Knapp initially thought she wanted to teach lower elementary, but as she completed field assignments in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, she quickly learned that that might not necessarily be the right fit for her.

“When I had an opportunity to student-teach in a middle school, I finally found my niche,” Knapp said. “I love teaching students in grades 6-8! There is so much going on with these kids — the mental, physical and emotional changes — which challenge me as a professional on a daily basis, and they always keep me on my toes.”

Knapp actually started her full-time teaching career at St. Lawrence, where she spent seven years. But in the fall of 2012, she walked into her high-school alma mater



Notre Dame middle-division teacher Amanda Knapp and husband, Ryan, are at the Detroit Historical Society’s “Society Ball,” which was held at the Packard Plant in Detroit in December of 2015.

at 1300 Giddings Road to teach in the middle division and she hasn’t looked back.

Well, maybe a little. . .

“Because I went to high school at Notre Dame, I already knew a lot about the building, the classes offered, and even some of the staff,” she said. “However, this was not the same school that I attended 16 years ago. (Wow, that seems so long ago!) When I was in high school, Notre Dame was a good school, but it was still in the early stages. As students and staff back then, we were focused on building the right culture and a good reputation among a field of very high-profile schools in the area.”

In 2012, when she got the teaching job at Notre Dame Marist Academy, Knapp immediately found out that the change of culture that everyone had been working so hard to achieve when she was a student had been firmly established and normalized.

“One aspect of this established culture here is that the faculty and staff — really, ALL aspects of the school — are so welcoming,” she said. “To me, this ideal is difficult to put into words, but it is something of a felt presence.

I was, and continue to be, drawn to the culture that is Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy. I was drawn to the staff that inspired me to be the teacher that I never knew I could be, and I wanted to grow and learn — and to be an IB (International Baccalaureate) learner as I educate my students.”

‘EVEN MORE CHANGES’

Knapp said since she’s been on staff at Notre Dame, there have been even bigger changes to the Notre Dame community.

“The most significant difference since I started teaching at NDPMA is the growth of the IB program, especially in the middle division,” she said. “For most of our faculty members, the IB mindset now is a regular and normal part of our everyday classroom culture.

“I have also witnessed the further development of the educating-the-whole-child concept. Helping our students to grow as Christian people and teaching them the Marist values as well as the Habits of the Heart are critical as they continue on through NDPMA.”

Knapp points out that besides the obvious — teaching subjects to the

students — the most important part of her job at Notre Dame is ‘connecting’ and creating strong relationships with students and colleagues.

She said as those strong relationships grow, she’s better able to model and show the community how to live out the Marist mission.

“While it’s important that the kids learn how to dissect a book or formulate an essay — I am a language and literature teacher, after all,” she said, “it’s even more important that they know what it means to be a Christian person, an upright citizen and an academic scholar, with an emphasis on being a Christian person first and foremost. I try to model that mission every day in my classroom, and I hope that my students see that in me as well.”

Asked what she might be if she was not a teacher (or a psychologist), this married mother of two said it’s kind of hard to even think about doing something other than what she loves so much.

“I sometimes wonder what other careers would fit me if I wasn’t a teacher, and truthfully I can never seem to figure it out,” she said. “I have juggled the idea of being a fitness instructor with a focus on yoga, barre and pilates. Also, I have thought about working for a nonprofit organization, visiting schools and educating children in some way, though I don’t really know if that is even a job! Truth is, though, that I am so right at home in the middle-school classroom here at Notre Dame, why do anything else!”



Knapp is with her husband, Ryan, and their two children, Libby and Colin, on a recent trip to Walt Disney World.



Two more student-athletes sign to play college sports

Notre Dame hosted a college signing ceremony in the school’s cafeteria on April 13 for two of its senior student-athletes. Ian Genord (left, in photo) will be playing lacrosse at the University of Indianapolis in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Nathan Mylenek has committed to join the cross country team at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. In February, Notre Dame held a signing ceremony for five other student-athletes.



Membership with a mission

Gym membership. Loyalty membership. Club membership. Costco membership. From the local club to the gym, memberships seem to be everywhere. In the case of the St. Peter Chanel Society (SPCS), however, your membership has a mission—challenging young people to be their best!

The St. Peter Chanel Society is made up of donors to The Notre Dame Fund who have taken the extra step of making an annual contribution ranging from \$1,000 to as much as \$50,000. Last school year was a record year for both new members (50) and total membership (160). We hope by June, we will be celebrating another record by reaching 200 members for the first time.

Through their generous annual contributions, members lead the way in providing the school with resources to keep school programs healthy, innovative, and accessible.

Members of the St. Peter Chanel Society include parents, alumni parents, alumni, grandparents, friends, faculty and staff. SPCS members come together for dinner each fall to celebrate the year’s success and hear about the “state of the school” from the school president. The SPCS dinner and reception serves as a small token of gratitude and a powerful reminder of the SPCS members’ individual and collective impact on the lives of every student, every day.

For more information about The Notre Dame Fund and the St. Peter Chanel Society, feel free to visit the fund page at www.ndpma.org/ndfund or the SPCS page at www.ndpma.org/advancement-office/st-peter-chanel-society/.



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A world of education



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



Notre Dame named best Catholic high school in state



Notre Dame Preparatory School was named the top Catholic school in the State of Michigan for 2016, according to Niche, a national organization that annually ranks colleges and K-12 schools across

the country. Niche also rated Notre Dame the 7th best private high school, religious or non-religious, in the state. Cranbrook and Country Day were ranked one and two, respectively, on the list of all private schools.

According to Niche, the 2016 Best Catholic High Schools ranking provides a comprehensive assessment of the overall experience at a Catholic high school. This grade takes into account key factors such as the strength of academics, school culture and diversity, as well as student and parent reviews, in an attempt to measure the overall excellence of the school.

Factors used in the ranking include average ACT/SAT composite scores; "college scores," which means the average score of colleges that students are most interested in or go on to attend based on Niche's best overall college rankings; four-year matriculation rate, which is the percentage of seniors who go on to four-year colleges; and student-teacher ratios.

Parent and student surveys of opinions on the overall experience at each school also are part of the rating process. Data and statistics were obtained by the U.S. Department of Education, says Niche. 🇺🇸

Notre Dame gets 'Safe Sports School' award

Notre Dame Preparatory School has been named the recipient of the National Athletic Trainers' Association "Safe Sports School" award for its athletics program. The award champions safety and recognizes secondary schools that provide safe environments for student athletes. The award reinforces the importance of providing the best level of care, injury prevention and treatment.

"Notre Dame Preparatory School is honored to receive this Safe Sports School 1st Team recognition from the NATA," said Chris Polsinelli, AT, ATC, who heads Notre Dame's athletic training department. "We remain committed to keeping our student athletes safe during physical education classes, team practices and games so they can accomplish their own goals of great competition, winning records, fair sportsmanship and good health. Our goal is to lead our athletics program to the highest safety standards for our players." 🇺🇸

