

THE blarney stone

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

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Performance assessment at NDPMA

Introduction of IB leads to better assessment of student progress at Notre Dame

Performance-based assessment of student work in school is something teachers have been doing since the first little red school house was built. But it has rarely been a part of a formal system that determines whether students are ready to graduate or whether the school itself is making progress.

During the 1990s in the U.S., that began to change. School systems from Connecticut to Wyoming were starting to use performance-assessment systems in a big way. But when the federal government passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, it became too expensive for states to implement performance assessment in student and school accountability systems.

Now it seems the pendulum is swinging back in the other direction. A number of states are designing next-generation assessments that may just drive more meaningful learning in schools around the nation beginning in 2014.

Utilizing federal Race to the Top dollars, schools are now willing to develop more stringent exams that include performance-based tasks, which better measure student abilities in ways that filling in bubbles on paper never could.

Performance-based assessment is defined broadly as “authentic tasks that assess what a student knows and can do” (Caffrey, E. D.

2009. *Assessment in Education and Secondary Education: A Primer*. Washington: Congressional Research Service). Students are required “to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list.”

Valid indicator of knowledge and abilities

Tests such as the SAT and ACT and those given as part of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate curricula include a performance-based assessment portion, i.e., students must, for example: write an essay, solve a problem or explain how he or she would perform a hypothetical experiment. Those who believe in this type of assessment say that because it requires students to actively demonstrate what they know, performance-based assessments are a more valid indicator of their knowledge and abilities.

One such believer is Sharon Derico, an English teacher at Notre Dame Prep and the coordinator of the school’s IB Diploma program, which is offered to students in grades 11 and 12. She says that without a doubt she prefers performance-based assessment over standardized testing.

“In the last few years, in addition to my IB classes, which have performance-based assessment as an integrated part of the curriculum, I have adopted IB-like performance-assessment strategies in my AP classes,” she said. “Overall, I have seen a significant improvement in students’ presentations of subject-area understanding.”

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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.



Marketing major credits Notre Dame for college success

2009 alumna says ND Prep's advanced placement classes were exceptionally valuable



Alayna Lekosiotis is one busy person. Currently at Michigan State University in East Lansing, the 2009 Notre Dame Prep graduate says that besides a heavy dose of coursework, she stays very involved in a host of extracurricular activities, including membership in the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and the Women in Business Students Association at MSU's Broad College of Business. In her

sorority, she held a number of positions, including house manager and Panhellenic delegate, which earned her a trip to the National Conference in Arizona. In addition, she also helps market fundraising events for the Haven House Homeless Shelter in Lansing and was working as a student-athlete tutor.

She recently did the Susan G. Komen 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk with another NDP alumna, Carley Palmer, and right after high school graduation, Lekosiotis organized a blood drive for the Red Cross. She is going on three years of experience with internships: the past two summers, she worked at Creative Solutions Group and this summer will be working at Chrysler LLC in the Jeep and International Brand Marketing Department. Also, she recently organized and participated in the Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge in Charleston, South Carolina. Oh, and she currently is working at a newly opened Leo's Coney Island near school. Whew!

Lekosiotis did manage to find a scarce couple of minutes somehow to answer a few questions from The Blarney Stone:

Tell us about your college experience at Michigan State University. Why did you select MSU?

I was always the girl who said "I won't go to MSU, everyone goes there, I don't want to be like everyone else." But after I weighed all my college options and visits, MSU's beautiful campus, Big-10 atmosphere and the people there just won me over. I am majoring in business marketing and will receive a minor in Spanish. Fortunately, I was able to apply to the business school early due to AP credit! Thanks, Mrs. Derico, Mrs. Bembas and all my other AP teachers!

Do you plan to study abroad?

Studying abroad is definitely one of my aspirations as a student, but I've found it more difficult than I originally thought due to planning my class schedules in order to graduate on time. I am currently looking into a business study program in London during winter break or a post-graduation study throughout Europe. I love traveling and studying abroad is such a great experience. MSU offers so many different options, it's hard not to find one!



NDP alums Alayna Lekosiotis, left, and Carley Palmer after finishing the Susan G. Komen 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk.

Do you have any plans for graduate school?

As of right now, I have no plans for graduate school. I would love to move out of Michigan for a couple of years after graduation, but we will see where my career leads me. If I do end up in graduate school, I would love to go somewhere on the east coast to receive a master's degree in business.

What are your career plans?

My ideal job is to be an event planner. I realized this as a senior at NDP when getting ready to go off to college. The experience I had on student council there really influenced my passion for event planning. I love event planning of every kind—from weddings to company events. I plan to work in event marketing after graduation. It really suits me well!

Did anything or anyone at NDP influence you to pursue this path?

Mr. Kator was definitely a huge influence to me and my career path during high school. He was an amazing Student Council advisor and helped me grow as a leader and a person. He really influenced me when he wrote my letter of recommendation for my MSU application (Mr. Kator is the biggest U of M fan!) All my teachers and the administration truly helped me grow as a person, including Mrs. Derico, Señora Anderson and Father Joe.

What do you think was the most valuable part of your education at Notre Dame?

Advanced Placement at NDP was exceptionally valuable to me. Those classes paid off in college—literally—and really helped me with study habits. Church Today class with Mrs. Phillips was also a very valuable class. It put my faith into perspective and I learned a lot about people and society in general. This class should really be required at NDP because what I learned in this class has impacted my daily life ever since.

What do you miss in particular about NDP?

I miss everything about NDP! It was an amazing high school experience and I got so much out of it. It was a lot of fun, but hard work, too. Some of my favorite memories include, but are not limited to, Kairos IV, going early to Mr. Stan's room and bugging him for math help, cross country, every Wednesday at 2:50 in the portable (Student Council meetings), Student Council state conferences in Traverse City, doing the walkie-talkie experiment in Mrs. Northerner's class, Irish Week and when Father Joe gave us a snow day a day early and then there was no snow. Lastly, I miss my uniform. If it was socially acceptable, I would still be wearing that kilt, polo and knee highs! 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿

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According to Derico, much like IB classes, AP courses are perfect venues for performance testing. Even though there is no delivery of the unique-to-IB internal assessments, she said the presentation of AP curricula must be delivered precisely and concisely. In each AP class, there is an extensive list of curriculum requirements to be presented during each school year. Teachers must design lessons that afford the most efficient presentation of material while also



Notre Dame Marist Academy fifth graders present their findings at the lower division's second annual International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme "Exhibition."

determining its successful delivery.

"Performance-based assessment provides a means to that end," Derico adds. "Teachers can design lessons that include group work presentation, partnered share-work and other forms of communal-style learning. Throughout the semester, teachers can test for student outcomes by using portfolio and presentation formats. This overall assessment strategy allows for a clearer indicator for the teacher before moving forward. In my AP English class, for example, students are required to keep a writing journal (portfolio-style assessment) which highlights their continued growth throughout the AP course."

In the white paper *Beyond Basic Skills: The Role of Performance Assessment in Achieving 21st Century Standards of Learning*, by F. Adamson and L. Darling-Hammond, research has shown that the use of performance measurement increases the intellectual challenge in classrooms and supports higher-quality teaching. Moreover, researchers say that performance assessment does a much better job of measuring the

overall progress that U.S. schools are making in teaching students to be college- and career-ready. They say this kind of assessment is better-suited for measuring 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity and innovation—all skills that the IB curriculum was designed to address.

For some educators who advocate for this type of assessment, it has been frustrating that many schools and school systems have been slow to embrace it. Imagine, they say, that you didn't have to take a road test to get your first driver's license, leaving the assessment of your driving skills solely to a multiple-choice exam.

Just like a road test is a common-sense assessment of how one will handle driving a vehicle on the road, performance-based assessment makes perfect sense in determining how well students have learned some of the unique skills necessary in today's Information Age—the ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information—and to do it quickly.

IB, Notre Dame and performance assessment

In Notre Dame Prep's IB Diploma program, all students are required to submit an internal assessment. Unlike external assessments, which are end-of-year written exams delivered to the International Baccalaureate Organization, the internal assessments gauge student progress in the form of a portfolio or performance. In each case, the collection of student work in the portfolio (math, economics, experimental sciences, visual art and music) becomes a sufficient component in the student's overall IB score—the number delivered to universities on applications and credit requests.

The remaining assessment (external assessment) is completed at the end of the course final examinations. The format is always written and assessed by an IBO examiner and moderated twice to ensure the conformity of scores. Therefore, the testing

represents a minimal standardized format, but allows more personal presentation of critical thinking in each subject area.

Heidi Newby, Notre Dame's IB Middle Years Program coordinator and social studies teacher, says that performance-based assessment is an integral and influential part of the MYP philosophy. She said the personal projects presented this year by MYP students were completely at their own discretion. "Students were able to choose and complete a project that they are truly interested in and for which they have a real passion," she said. "While the PP is not connected to any class per se, it does require students to complete their own research and then evaluate their process as a learner."

Among the projects, Newby noted, was one by NDP tenth-grader Gabe Wrobel. "His project was a visual representation of how junk food affects the human body. He created a life-size human body made of junk food (see photo on page 1). Some other examples of PP that we had this year were 'my crazy, beautiful life' in pictures, breeding guppies, making a family quilt, the impact and influence of Photoshop on how we see celebrities, and redesigning the NDP uniform with a modern Irish flair—all of which were picked by the students themselves," Newby said.

Teachers and students adjust

Teachers at Notre Dame have trained for and adopted performance-based assessment techniques because it's an integral part of the IB curriculum. NDP's Derico says that for other schools, it's likely going to be difficult to suddenly include it in the classroom. "The most successful classrooms offer student-centered learning as opposed to teacher-led learning," she said. "This can be a major shift for some teachers. In that case, training is necessary."

Derico also says that for the most part, students like to be in such an atmosphere

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Traditional Assessments vs. Performance Assessments

Attribute	Traditional Assessment	Performance Assessment
Assessment activity	Selecting a response	Performing a task
Nature of activity	Contrived activity	Activity emulates real life
Cognitive level	Knowledge/comprehension	Application/analysis/synthesis
Development of solution	Teacher-structured	Student-structured
Objectivity of scoring	Easily achieved	Difficult to achieve
Evidence of mastery	Indirect evidence	Direct evidence

Sources: Liskin-Gasparro (1997) and Mueller (2008).

Fifth-grade teacher inspires as once he was inspired

ND Marist Academy fifth-grade teacher Paul Frank became a teacher because of teachers. Two teachers specifically. The first was his own seventh-grade teacher. Frank had in his words a pretty horrible sixth-grade year at his elementary school back in small-town Wisconsin.

“My sixth-grade teacher was pretty demeaning and I lost a lot of self-confidence as a result,” he said. But his seventh-grade teacher was, according to Frank, the coolest teacher he’s ever had and he helped Frank in many ways—especially in the confidence department.

“Mr. Knollof was strict and demanding, but he really cared about his students. He helped me believe in myself and taught me to not be afraid to challenge myself in both academics and sports.”

The other teacher who inspired Frank was a child-development teacher in high school. “She told me that I had a heart for children and that I had the teaching mannerisms that could one day make a difference in the lives of children,” he said. “It wasn’t until later that I would realize what she meant. But her words sure stuck in my head.”

Now it’s Frank’s turn to inspire the newest generation of grade schoolers. Principal Diana Atkins says Frank is the type of teacher who in a very special way reaches every single student in his class. “He takes the time to get to know what motivates his students, and then uses that to challenge his students to get to the next level,” she said.

Atkins also notes that he is the most amazing history teacher. “He ignites excitement for the topics by telling stories that are not necessarily in the history books, but nonetheless fascinating. When listening to one of his lessons you never want it to end. Years later his students



come back and always discuss their time in fifth grade, and how Paul’s energy and the skills he taught them are beneficial in things they are doing in their lives today.”

The energy Frank, 48, regularly brings to his students doesn’t end after the school day is done. He says his home life is as busy as his school life. He and his wife Jorja have a very active household to say the least. “I don’t think we’ve had a moment of quiet for a long, long time. We have three daughters: Meaghann, 21, Kaitlin, 16, and Annie, 6, and two boys: Ben, 15, and Will, 9. During the summer when schedules allow, you will find us all bike riding or spending the day out on the lake swimming and fishing.”



Notre Dame lower division teacher and assistant principal Paul Frank with fellow guitarists Chris Walters, left, and Mitchell Housey. Frank often teaches guitar to interested NDMA students.

Now in his tenth year at Notre Dame, Frank, who also serves as the assistant principal of the lower division (and earned “teacher of the year” honors last year), graciously took a few precious minutes of his day to answer a number of questions from *The Blarney Stone*.

What was your first impression of Notre Dame Marist Academy upon arriving on campus?

I fell in love with the school the minute I walked in the building. I still remember

walking into the office for my interview and feeling I was where I belonged. The school mission was evident in the administration and I could feel it walking through the halls and rooms.

Were you teaching elsewhere before coming to NDMA?

I taught for fifteen years in a Catholic school very similar to NDMA in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Since you’ve been here at this school, what do you see as the most significant changes to Notre Dame?

The year I started was the first year for the lower division. It was very cool being on the “ground floor” of the school. Fr. Leon had a vision for what the school could be and how it would be a vital part of the other two divisions. It was a growing process in the beginning for our division to gain the confidence of parents and the rest of the NDMA family, and how we could play an important role in the long-term health of the school. With the leadership of Diana Atkins and dedicated, mission-driven teachers, the lower division has found its niche and Fr. Leon’s vision is becoming a reality. The fact that we will be moving over to Pontiac is proof of that.

So how do you feel about that move to Pontiac?

I am very excited about the move. The lower school has done well in Waterford, but actually being at the Pontiac campus will strengthen the three divisions and help enrollment when parents are able to see the whole “package” when they visit.

What do you think is the most important part of your teaching job?

As a teacher, I think the most important

thing is to be a positive influence on children. I believe in the Marist way of building the spiritual, emotional and cognitive aspects of a child. The students are the stars of our school, not the teachers.

What role do you think the classes you teach play in fulfilling the school's mission?

I don't just teach the mission in religion class. I try to weave it into every class and into everything I do.

Now back to your own "growing-up" days. Where did you spend your childhood?

I grew up in the small Wisconsin town of Grafton. I am not, however, a Packers fan! My dad is a Chicago Bears fan so all my brothers and I grew up that way. I went to St. Joseph Parish School in Grafton for kindergarten through eighth grade and then Grafton High School. Then it was on to the University of Wisconsin after which I taught 15 years in Sheboygan—also known as the "Bratwurst Capital of the World."

What would you choose for a job if you weren't a teacher or administrator?

I have thought about that at various times in my life. Each time I seem to come to the same answer. There is nothing I could do that would come close to teaching. I am blessed because I think I am doing what God has created me to do. Teaching fulfills all parts of my life. It allows me to pursue my passions in things like history and math. Every day is a new day and every situation a teaching moment. I may not have the bank account of some of my friends but I know I have an opportunity to change lives and make a difference.

What person could ask for more? 🇺🇸



Notre Dame Marist Academy's Paul Frank and his son Ben show off their "catch."

Junior scores a perfect ACT; fourth NDP student since 2009 with a 36



Joe Soisson, a junior at Notre Dame Preparatory School, scored a perfect 36 on his ACT — the highest score possible — and the fourth time since 2009 a student from ND Prep has achieved such perfection. Soisson scored 36 on his first try.

According to test administrator ACT, Inc., less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all test takers earn the top score. In 2011, only 704 students of more than 1.6 million test-takers earned a 36.

Last year, Matt Siatczynski scored a 36. In 2010, Jon Sheperd scored a 36, and Ryan McIntosh, who graduated from NDP in 2009, also achieved a 36 on his ACT. 🇺🇸

Three Notre Dame Prep alum athletes slated for hall of fame

The Catholic High School League announced that three former Notre Dame Prep athletes have been inducted into the CHSL Hall of Fame. Jeff Bultinck '06, Molly Coldren '08 and Brogan Wells '08 will be honored at the league's annual dinner to be held June 11 at Fern Hill Country Club in Clinton Township.



Jeff Bultinck



Molly Coldren



Brogan Wells

Bultinck played baseball at Madonna University, Coldren is a shortstop on the Central Michigan University softball team and Wells is on the volleyball team at Hillsdale University. 🇺🇸

The 2012 summer camp lineup and schedule is released

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy youth summer camps provide safe, fun and skill-focused experiences for kids entering grades K through 12.

This year's summer program offers athletic camps in volleyball, soccer, baseball, football, basketball, tennis and lacrosse. Academic camps include sessions in art, creative writing, math and debate. Summer camps range from two to five-and-a-half hours per day and offer instruction for all skill levels, from introductory to advanced. 🇺🇸

Notre Dame students join fight against childhood cancer

NDMA lower-division students (and a few dads) recently participated in a St. Baldrick's Foundation event that included having their heads shaved to help raise money to combat childhood cancer. Participants (shown below) include students, left to right, Aidan Minder, Eli Seitzinger, Grant Brisley, Jacob Bendtsen, Andrew Philippart, Sammy Hoff and Davis Minder. The dads are Dan Bendtsen (lead organizer), Tim Philippart and Sam Hoff. 🇺🇸



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that encourages growth. "My students who perform regularly (group and individual presentations) and submit portfolios (journals) have become more confident in their written assessments and are more comfortable with the subject matter. It's been a very successful venture."

And when parents get to witness their children's presentations, such as those given at the school's recent IB-MYP Personal Projects and IB-PYP (Primary Years Program) Exhibition Projects presentations, it's usually a very powerful and emotional moment. Many NDPMA parents have commented on how proud

they are of what their children have learned and especially how well they've been able to articulate it. 🇺🇸



Fifth graders from Notre Dame's lower division in Waterford pose with a presentation during the March 30 International Baccalaureate "Exhibition."

Criteria for Good Performance Assessment

(from the Michigan Dept. of Education)

Good performance assessment meets the following criteria:

- It aligns with the standards, benchmarks, student learning objective, and actual instruction
- It requires students to synthesize what they know with what they can do
- It emphasizes higher-order thinking skills
- It clearly indicates what students are asked to do, but does not instruct how to do it
- The reading level is appropriate
- The criteria are clear to both students and teacher
- The assessment task is engaging and relevant to students
- Students receive feedback on how to improve their performance
- It reflects real-world situations

ALUM FUNNY MAN DAVE COULIER TO BE AT NOTRE DAME ON MAY 12

Dave Coulier, who has been a regular face on television, first starring as Joey Gladstone in the ABC-TV sitcom "Full House" from 1987 through 1995, will take the stage Saturday, May 12, at NDPMA in a special fundraiser to benefit the Fr. John Bryson, s.m., Memorial Scholarship Fund. Bryson was a Marist priest who served at Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods for nearly 45 years. He died in May of last year at the age of 87. The show is for all ages and starts at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for students and seniors (under 18 and over 65). Premium tickets, which also include a private "Meet & Greet" after-glow reception with '77 NDHS graduate Coulier, are sold out. All tickets are general admission seating. For more info or to purchase tickets, visit ndpma.org. 🇺🇸



A world of education

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