

THE blarney stone

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

Notre Dame Preparatory School: 248-373-5300
Notre Dame Marist Academy-Middle: 248-373-5371
Notre Dame Marist Academy-Lower: 248-373-2573

'For the kids'

Consistent (and increasing) focus on staff professional development is key to improved student performance in the classroom.

While the tide seems definitely to be turning as the U.S. economy has been making steady progress over the past several years, many schools and school districts across the country are still struggling with budgets—sometimes even more so than during the Great Recession.

In fact, many state budgets for public education are providing less per-pupil funding for K through 12 than they did six or seven years ago—often far less. And despite some improvement in overall state revenues, schools in nearly a third of the states entered the latest school year with less funding than a year ago.

A significant portion of that state funding goes toward teacher training and professional development for faculty and staff. So that, too, has seen big cuts.

In North Carolina a couple of years ago, as a result of new restraints mandated by budget shortfalls, local school officials were forced to cut or shut down early-childhood programs, lay off teachers and nearly eliminate training and professional development altogether.

In Michigan, a budget surplus in the School Aid fund at the beginning of this year led some lawmakers in Lansing to advocate re-allocating some of those funds



to the state's general fund.

Fortunately, the picture is quite different for many private or independent schools. And for Notre Dame, the portion of a rather strong overall budget going toward professional development for its faculty and staff has been getting even stronger.

According to Rick Winiarski, who works in Notre Dame's business office and coordinates the school's professional development funding, the budget for PD since 2011 has averaged a year-over-year increase of about 13%. He said the school's overall budget for professional development also includes a significant percentage coming from the

federal Title IIA allocation.

Winiarski, who has a background in commercial banking and corporate finance, has been handling PD and Title II reimbursements for Notre Dame since 2010. He spends an overwhelming amount of his time on campus ascertaining PD needs at Notre Dame and then applying for Title IIA grants. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1965, included non-profit, private and religiously-affiliated schools as eligible for federal funds as long as they received approval from the state.

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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.



**NDP ALUM IN COLLEGE IS WORKING
TOWARD JOURNALISM CAREER**

Journalist in the making

Alum's budding career in journalism began at Notre Dame

Micaela Colonna, who graduated from Notre Dame Prep in 2012, was bitten by the news media bug early in her young life. In fact, while at NDP, she was a staff member and later editor-in-chief of *The Leprechaun*, NDP's main student newspaper. Now well into her fourth year in Michigan State University's journalism program, Colonna is on her way to a future career either behind of or in front of a camera or microphone—or perhaps both!

“When I arrived at MSU, I immediately joined our university's student radio station, Impact 89 FM, using my voice both inside the DJ booth and creating on-air news podcasts,” said Colonna. “The following year, I began working at *The State News*, MSU's student-run newspaper, covering stories from the basketball court to the Lansing courthouse.”

It wasn't long after that when Colonna began assisting with the production of *Focal Point*, the university's student-run television show. (She now is senior producer.) She said she has a huge passion for all kinds of news: entertainment, hard news, politics, sports and feel-good stories, and she's very interested in both reporting and television production.

Her interest in television production and the work she had done at MSU eventually took Colonna to Burbank, Calif., during her junior year at MSU where she interned at *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. “I really found my passion for television production there,” she said.

And that passion ultimately led to fulfilling another life-long dream when during this past summer she interned at *The TODAY Show* in New York City. She's also spent time in Rome studying as part of her program at MSU.

Needless to say, Colonna, a journalism and political science double major with a minor in Spanish, has experienced much since matriculating at MSU. But she said her time at Notre Dame

was the real catalyst for the drive that will no doubt take her much further in her life and career.

“While my experience as a Michigan State Spartan has been absolutely incredible, and I have grown not only as a student, but as an adult and journalist as well, it was NDP that taught me the basic discipline and determination needed to promptly and

successfully complete a task, no matter the size,” she said.

“Whether it's finishing a research paper or interviewing students as President Obama's motorcade rolls by on campus, the stamina, willpower and knowledge necessary to complete these types of tasks have greatly assisted me during my college career.”

She said her inspirational teachers at NDP, the professors at MSU and an overall passion for news and events also definitely have been driving factors in her pursuit of a career in journalism.


Colonna also gives shout-outs to a few teachers and events from her time at NDP. “My favorite teacher from NDP is Mrs. (Kochenderfer) Preiss,” she said. “I miss our world religions and Christian history classes every day! I was never afraid to voice an opinion and she always kept our conversations lively and interesting.”

Her favorite Notre Dame memories also include the time she spent on the 2012 senior-year production of *Grease*, choir

classes with Dave Fazzini, and, of course, Irish Week.

“The sense of school unity and spending time with friends at Notre Dame are priceless memories that I will never forget.”

Colonna sums it all up by saying that Notre Dame Prep gave her the foundation of what it means to be a hardworking and dependable person. She also said it's important to give back to her high school alma mater in order for other students to experience many of the same opportunities to grow and learn that she had.

“For example, through the arts department at NDP, I broke out of my shell and took interest in a career filled with lights, cameras and microphones,” she said. “So by continuing to support the arts department and others at Notre Dame, I hope future students will be able to find what they are passionate about and turn it into their own realities. Like I have!” 



Notre Dame alum and aspiring journalist Micaela Colonna ('12) said NDP gave her a strong foundation of hard work and dependability.

PD, from page 1

For the 2014-15 school year, Winiarski said Notre Dame spent a total of \$365,591 on professional development with roughly half coming from federal Title IIA funding. He said that since 2010, the school has spent more than \$1.4 million on PD. The federal government, on the other hand, spends about \$2.5 billion per year on professional development across the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Education.

IT'S AN EXPECTATION, NOT AN OPTION

Winiarski isn't the only one on staff focused on PD. Notre Dame's divisional administrators have always been tasked with encouraging and promoting professional development for teachers and staff under their tutelage.

But it's usually not a hard sell for NDPMA teachers.

"At Notre Dame, most faculty and staff look on their own to build their knowledge and improve skills in their fields," said Fr. Joe Hindelang, s.m., principal of the upper division. "However, the administration, department chairs and IB coordinators also keep an eye out for workshops and conferences that might be of interest to staff."

Hindelang said that whether people are working on an additional degree or re-certification, or improving their general skill-set, professional development is an important expectation for all at NDPMA. "The school budget includes substantial funds for PD and we're always willing to provide substitute teachers when needed so that everyone can participate each year. Some teachers even look for opportunities during school breaks so they don't have to miss class time."

There is a real and tangible commitment to professional development among the school's faculty and staff, according to Hindelang.

INCREASING STUDENT SUCCESS

When Diana Atkins, principal of Notre Dame's lower division, looks to allocate her portion of NDPMA's budgeted PD funding, she investigates programs that will directly affect student learning or improve the division's curriculum.

"As an example, most recently, all of the core classroom LD teachers and myself



Notre Dame school officials say that faculty and staff have a real and tangible commitment to improvement through professional development.

attended the Daily 5 Conference, which focuses on delivering reading and language curriculum in a student-centered manner," she said. "This classroom method allows students to work independently to achieve personal goals, which frees the teacher to work with small groups or individuals. By providing PD on programs like this, it directly translates into student achievement in the classroom."

School head Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., also is adamant about the importance of professional development. When the school's most recent strategic plan was being formulated a few years ago, he insisted on ratcheting up the percentage of the school's overall budget devoted to professional development from 1.5% to 2%, a goal he says has already been met, even though it's only the third year of a six-year strategic plan.

"The results of this investment have been impressive in both student and staff education output," Olszamowski said. "It is difficult to have teachers out of class for extended periods of time, but it's a small cost to pay for better teachers and auxiliary staff members. Incidentally, one of our best professional development modules, as stated by our teachers and staff, is when they go out to become part of accreditation teams sponsored by ISACS. Actually, ISACS specifically asks for our teachers every year."

Olszamowski also noted that a recent ISM Strategic "marker of school success" review of NDPMA showed that the teachers at Notre Dame are "a happier bunch as a whole than in the last analysis we did three years ago."

He added that given the fact that Notre

Dame runs the prestigious International Baccalaureate programs and the high-powered Advanced Placement courses, it is critical for the sake of the students that the teaching and support staff be very well prepared.

"ISM, Inc., our consulting firm, recommends that 2% of the school's total budget is poured into staff development," Olszamowski said. "I believe we actually exceed this standard from ISM. I have personally seen the academic bar raised for our teachers and have seen them respond well to that raised bar."

'FOR THE KIDS'


For Jill Mistretta, the school's middle-division principal, professional development not only helps the overall organization maintain its accreditations, it provides a consistent way for teachers to keep up-to-date on the latest and greatest in primary and secondary education pedagogy, which definitely "benefits every child that passes through Notre Dame's doors."

Mistretta said she meets regularly with her IB coordinators and campus ministry officials to map out each school year. "And the middle division faculty meets roughly two times a month after school to discuss professional development opportunities," she said.

Mistretta also sends a number of faculty members to conferences hosted by ISTE, MACUL and ISACS each year. "When those conferences are local, we've even closed school and sent the entire staff to the conference," she said.

Like the school's upper and lower divisions, International Baccalaureate training is an ongoing area of professional development for the middle division. "There are three categories of training per several subject areas or departments within the IB framework," Mistretta said, "so there is potential for teachers to be trained at three levels in more than one area of study."

Toss in other new projects, she said, such as the one-to-one tablet program and the relatively recent implementation of Haiku, and Mistretta and her staff have quite a lot to tackle in any given year, she said.

"But it is definitely worth it," she said, "because ultimately we do all this for the kids!" 

Confidence booster

Upper division teacher and Wolverine fan says boosting student confidence a big part of his job

When Notre Dame math and computer science teacher Daniel Chun was still at the University of Michigan, he started working for the Princeton Review, the well-known Framingham, Mass.-based private education and test-preparation organization, to help high school students with the alphabet-soup array of college admissions tests—ACT, SAT, GMAT, and LSAT—to name a few.



NDP math and computer science teacher Daniel Chun is with wife, Brandie, and their daughter, Sophie.

But after a number of years of “taking skills the students already had and translating them into useful test-taking techniques,” he wanted to do more.

“I started doing more and more one-on-one tutoring with academic subjects, particularly math and science,” he said, “and found that teaching real content and not just test-taking tricks was much more fulfilling for me.”

So after spending seven years at the Princeton Review, Chun decided to jump full time into teaching and hired on at Notre Dame in 2012.

“I was friends with two other teachers here, Brian Little and John Smith, for some time before I started at Notre Dame, so I had heard a lot about the school from them,” Chun said. “My first semester

was kind of a blur, just trying my best to keep my head down and do my job, but I had a lot of great support from the other members in the math department as well as the vice principal at the time, Donna Kotzan.”

MAKING MISTAKES GOOD

Now well into his fourth year at NDP, Chun, who graduated from U-M with a B.S. in math, is right where he belongs.

Getting high school students through their math courses—and succeeding on the tests—is still an important part of his job, he acknowledges. But there is a much more important reason he does what he does.

“The most important part of my job now is helping kids gain confidence in their knowledge,” he said. “Most of math is recycled content. You learn something in algebra that comes back in geometry and trigonometry, or you learn something for one

test that you use in a slightly different way on the next test. So, for the most part, I am there to just help the kids see how they can apply what they already know to a new situation.”

Chun also is a huge proponent of students participating in their own learning, and he is constantly encouraging them to be confident enough to volunteer answers or ask questions—and even to make mistakes.

“Lots of students are afraid of making mistakes, especially in front of their classmates,” he said. “But I try to help them see that making mistakes helps them to understand things better, and that making mistakes in class is normal and natural, and that it helps everyone learn together.”

CHANGE ALSO GOOD

Even though Chun has only been on

campus for about three-and-a-half years, he says a lot has changed during that time.

“I think the biggest change at the school since I’ve been here was the implementation of the one-to-one tablet program,” he said. “Between that and Haiku, there have been a lot of efforts made at Notre Dame to help students succeed in a more digital world, and it is great to see how students are taking advantage of it. My wife works at a public school that has been transitioning to one-to-one for a few years now, and seeing how smooth the transition has been at NDP in comparison to some of the issues that come up with her school is encouraging.”

He said that even in his math classes where tablets are not necessarily used as much as in other classes, it’s interesting to see how quickly the students have adapted in these last few years.

There’s also been much change for Chun personally since signing on at Notre Dame. In fact, he was married the weekend before classes started in August of 2012. He and his wife, Brandie, now have a daughter, Sophie, who turned one this past August, and was born on their wedding anniversary.

PATCHES ON THE SLEEVES

So when Chun is not in a Notre Dame classroom, what does he do for fun? “I really enjoy playing and watching sports, especially anything related to the University of Michigan.” He’s also coached football at Notre Dame’s middle division and bowling at the upper division, and when time allows, he says he loves watching movies.

And like most teachers at Notre Dame and elsewhere, Chun loves his job and says he is doing exactly what he wants to do career-wise.

But when asked what he might be doing if he wasn’t teaching?

“I don’t really know; it takes a lot to keep me interested in doing something for any extended period of time, so it would have to be a job that involves working with people,” he said. “I’ve had a lot of different types of jobs in the past and have gotten bored pretty easily. Maybe a college professor, so I can wear those cool jackets with the patches on the sleeves.”

Notre Dame's 1965 football team honored at Prep Bowl



Members of the 1965 Notre Dame High School football team, which won the Catholic League championship in 1965, were celebrated October 24 at the Catholic League's annual Prep Bowl at Ford Field. Team members on hand at the Saturday event

were honored on the field between the CHSL C-D championship game and the A-B championship game.

The 1965 Fighting Irish team, coached by the legendary Walt Bazylewicz, defeated St. Ambrose High School, 27-21, at the 18th Annual Soup Bowl, which was played at the University of Detroit Stadium. The Soup Bowl was the predecessor to the CHSL Prep Bowl and determined the Catholic League champion in football.

Notre Dame's fall musical debuts Nov. 19

The Notre Dame Prep theatre department will be staging the Tony Award-winning musical "Into the Woods" beginning with a first performance on November 19.



Written by James Lapine with music and lyrics by

Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods* is a story of a childless baker and his wife who strive to lift their family curse by journeying into the woods, where they encounter Rapunzel, Cinderella, Jack (of Beanstalk fame), Little Red Riding Hood and other classic fairy tale characters.

The performances will be held at 7 p.m. Nov. 19, 20 and 21, and 4 p.m. Nov. 22 at Avondale High School. More information on Notre Dame's website at ndpma.org.

Super Raffle grand prize winner picks up big check

At Notre Dame's 2015 Oktoberfest celebration held October 3 on the school's Pontiac campus, winning Super Raffle tickets were drawn from about 46,000 tickets, netting the lucky winners big prizes.



Notre Dame's Super Raffle grand prize winner of \$50,000 Antoinette Gebara is with her grandchildren, all students at Notre Dame.

The grand prize winner, Antoinette Gebara, grandmother of five current Notre Dame students, stopped by the school last month to accept her grand prize of \$50,000.

Terri Mitchell, a friend of the school, picked up her check for \$1,000, one of three \$1,000

winners, and current parent Daniel Wiebelhaus picked up a check for \$10,000.

On October 8, current parent John Parrott picked up his check for \$2,500 from the school and \$5,000 winner, Sharron Clevenger, a friend of Notre Dame, visited the Notre Dame campus on October 7 to take home her winnings.

The net proceeds from the raffle—more than \$475,000—will be used to help Notre Dame with financial aid, continuing technology upgrades for the students and other classroom enhancements.

Notre Dame makes it matter

On Make it Matter Day 2015, which was held October 2, all three divisions of Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy came together under one roof on the Pontiac campus to "make it matter."

The school calls this annual event Make It Matter Day because it is an opportunity for more than 1,100 students and their teachers to focus on the "Christian Persons" aspect of the school mission. The goal is to make something useful for people in need in the metropolitan Detroit area and in other parts of the world.

Students worked on specially designed "onesies" for needy infants, packets of materials for children activities in hospitals, decorated photo frames for residents of China, and fleece blankets for families in emergencies or for the homeless among many other projects. In addition, many students in Notre Dame's upper division painted and decorated large plywood panels that will be used as a more attractive alternative for boarding up abandoned houses in Detroit and around southeast Michigan.



Notre Dame students work on fleece blankets on "Make it Matter Day."

Major benefactor honored at football game

At a special ceremony held on the football field prior to Notre Dame's Sept. 25 night game against league rival Loyola, William Kozyra, chair emeritus and current member of the school's Board of Trustees, was honored for his many contributions to Notre Dame, and specifically for providing a major portion of the



At a special ceremony held Sept. 25, William Kozyra, center, was honored for his many contributions to Notre Dame.

funding for the field's new artificial turf.

In remarks during the ceremony, Notre Dame Vice President Andy Guest said the school was grateful for Kozyra's dedication to Notre Dame and its students.

"Earlier this year," Guest said, "we initiated an

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NOTRE DAME

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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.



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aggressive project to re-carpet the field we are now standing on. Bill graciously agreed to underwrite a major portion of the funding, making the new field you see tonight possible for the thousands of students who compete on it on an almost daily basis, and for those who will compete here well into the future. 📸

Champions for Life raise a record

On Sept. 19, Notre Dame's Champions for Life club broke a fundraising record at its 8th annual "Wash for Life" car wash event held at a Shell station in Rochester Hills.



Despite a rain shower that caused a quick change of schedule, 40 NDP students washed nearly 80 cars and raised a record \$1,077 for Birth Choice Pregnancy Resource Center and Mary's Mantle.

"We should be proud that with the help of these funds, those two organizations can help mothers in need and encourage them to keep their babies," said CFL club president Madeline Allard, a junior at Notre Dame.

The NDP Champions for Life club, which has more than 75 members and is helmed by Allard, senior Emily Hampel, junior John Greene and sophomore Alaina Black, coordinates events that help promote dignity for the elderly, the marginalized, the disabled and the unborn. 📸

EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY



THE NOTRE DAME FUND

The Notre Dame Fund provides the school financial support necessary to remain healthy, innovative and accessible. While the fund supports the annual operations of the school, it also empowers donors to give to an area of passion.

Where Notre Dame needs it most: Gifts in this category provide the school with the flexibility to address needs as they arise.

Mary's Way provides much needed annual support to students through need-based and merit-based scholarships to Notre Dame.

Scholars Way supports our community's strong commitment to academic scholarship by helping to fund academic programs, instructional resources and professional development.

Citizens Way supports arts and activities focused on the development of creativity, communication, leadership, and a willingness to contribute to the lives of others.

Irish Way supports the dynamic athletic programs at all levels of Notre Dame.

www.ndpma.org/ndfund