

THE blarney stone

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



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IB, Notre Dame and Catholic education

School president discusses IB and its role in Catholic education

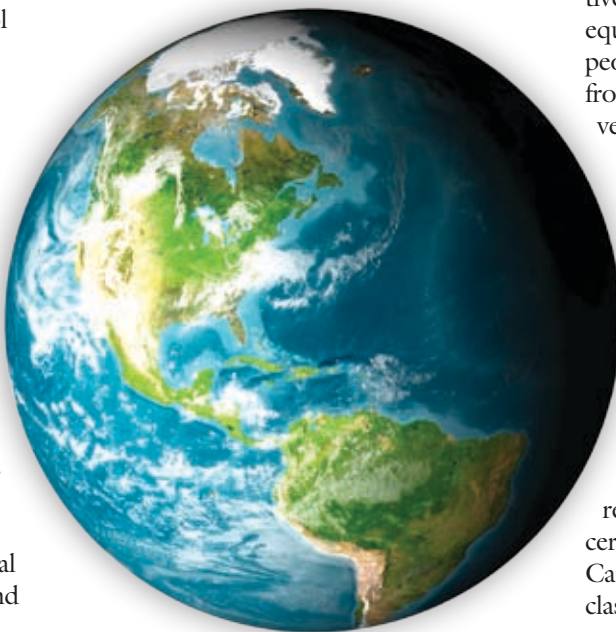
by Fr. Leon Olszamowski, president, NDPMA

From time to time, we receive inquiries regarding the International Baccalaureate program and its place in a Catholic school such as Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy. As school president and the Diploma Programme *Theory of Knowledge* instructor at NDPMA, I thought I would spend a few minutes to comment.

It is important to say that International Baccalaureate programs do have historical origins. Further, IB programs are enhanced periodically at the hands of many educators from around the world. Naturally, then, the programs exhibit characteristics that mirror educational practices from many countries. It is essential to add, however, that the International Baccalaureate Organization and its programs eschew any particular political or religious ideology. They consciously and consistently present a particular *Student Profile* that prepares students to live as citizens of an ever-shrinking world. Content and teaching technique support this student profile.

Before adopting the IB as part of this Roman Catholic school, we carefully reviewed the offerings of the International Baccalaureate Organization over the course of two and a half years and found that the mission of the IBO and its student profile

do not conflict with the mission of Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy. In fact, we found that our mission statement, the IB mission statement, and the IB student profile helped to focus and enhance the NDPMA educational delivery system. There have been some pockets of



dissent, however.

With regard to observations made about other schools, mostly public schools, we have no way of accounting for the delivery system of the IB programs in those environments. We know that public education philosophy, for instance, is specifically directed *not* to support any particular religious ideology or set of values; but we

have no basis for knowing or judging what individual schools or their teachers present to students in public classroom. In fact, we must say the same thing with regard to other Catholic schools. Here at NDPMA, we present the IB student profile and its supporting programs in a way that is sensitive to our Roman Catholic heritage and equally sensitive to the heritage of other people who see and understand things from very different points of view. It is very important to us that our students be exposed to a variety of world issues and perspectives so as not to isolate them or shock them when they discover other—even radical or reactionary—viewpoints in college and beyond. We want our students to address important issues intelligently and open-mindedly. Concomitantly, our religious NDPMA education programs offer our students a strong Catholic Christian framework against which to review and evaluate issues students will certainly encounter. We deliver our native Catholic perspective primarily in religion classes but, obviously, our Catholic heritage makes its way into all parts of our traditional, Honors, AP, and IB curricula.

There are some who say that IB programs exhibit too much tolerance for the world view of others. Regarding the issue of tolerance of others' beliefs, the word "tolerance" itself means "the capacity for or the practice of respecting the beliefs or practices of others." The word tolerance

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

SCHOOL CONTINUES TO EXCEL
IN ACADEMICS
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Caring for God's creatures

Notre Dame Prep grad is at Mississippi State's veterinary school learning to treat and heal animals

Becca Sidor, Notre Dame Prep class of 2009, is starting her junior year at Mississippi State University. She says the AP classes she took at NDP gave her a big head start at MSU because she began her post-secondary education with 21 college credits already on her record. Sidor spoke with NDPMA Director of Alumni Relations Kelly (Cole) Patterson on how and what she's doing at Mississippi State. She also looks back at her time in high school.

We'll start with the easy question: How did you decide on Mississippi State University?

What appealed to you about MS State?

My mother suggested that I Google schools with early admission and I found the Early Entry Program for The School of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University. I applied my senior year at NDP. The weather also is part of what attracted me. There were other schools—some in Boston—but I wanted to go where it was warmer.

What is the Early Entry Program and what is the application process?

The program admits students into the

veterinary school program from the beginning and they are automatically matriculated into the vet school after receiving a bachelor's degree. The applicant qualities they focus on are the ability to handle animals, attitude toward others, character, industry, maturity, motivation, understanding of dedication, and understanding of veterinary profession. The requirements include maintenance of a 3.35 GPA in all subject areas. All applicants must have documentation of 480 hours of veterinary and/or research science experience at time of matriculation to the CVM professional program.

Wow! When did you know you wanted to be a vet?

I knew since I was in kindergarten. And sophomore year at NDP, I started working at the North Hills Vet Clinic. I gained experience with surgeries, with blood work, with equine and large animals, and in-house animal therapy, which brings animals to humans in nursing homes.

What practice do you get at MS State?

I joined the Block & Bridle club, which my mother endearingly calls the "cow club." I learned about calf breaking.

What's that?

Animals are wild and don't like to be touched at first, so you start off petting them and getting close to them in order for them to get used to you. Then you put a rope halter on them and walk them around.

What else does the Block & Bridle club do?

It's for students with an interest in livestock and agriculture. During the school year, we participate in the Annual Crawfish Boil, Bulldog Stampede Rodeo, Little International Livestock Show, and many more. The latter, though, was where I had an interesting experience.

What happened?

It was the Little International Livestock Show and I had to stand with my calf. We did this show, and [at the time] I didn't have any cowboy boots. I was wearing my tennis shoes. And, the animal stepped on my foot—the 700-pound calf stepped on my toe and it really hurt! Right after that



I got cowboy boots.

Have you ever participated in an animal surgery?

The first surgery I saw was neat. It was on a small intestine of a cat. The inflamed intestine had to be cut and then the two ends had to be stitched together. But one end is larger than the other, so I watched how to stitch the bigger one into the smaller end. Really cool.



Any hands-on yet?

We were working on a knee tendon, which crosses over like an X, for a dog. I got to staple him shut. I was excited about that!

What was NDP like for you as a student?

I'm proud of the way I went through school. When I first came into Notre Dame, Mr. [Greg] Simon asked, "What is your goal when you walk across the stage at graduation?" I said I want to be valedictorian. He said, "That's a good goal as long as it's your own and no one is making you do it." No, it's my own! I had a couple Bs but in the end, I made the cut! I don't think I would change anything. Nothing was perfect, but it was my life.

Do you have any advice to current and future NDP students?

If there is a goal—something you want to do as a career and there is a program that allows you to do that—research it. Find out what you need to do. And start early. If it's veterinary medicine, start working at the vet clinic. Start volunteering and start building relationships with people who know what they're doing and

have reputations that can help you get to where you want to be.

Hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the next 10 years?

Hopefully, I'll have graduated and be working at an externship or a clinic. I have an interest in small animals, so maybe working in a clinical setting.

So, in 2016, we can interview again and refer to you as Dr. Rebecca Sidor?

Yeah!

Is there anything you miss about your days at NDP?

I miss the teachers. I liked the teachers there. They just seemed more personal than college professors; you know, 200 student classes where the lecturers don't really know your name unless you keep bothering them.

A particular teacher from ND?

I loved Ms. Phillips. Actually, the other day I became friends with her on Facebook. When I first had her in class, she would always ask about my siblings Vicki '01 (NDP) or Jeff '99 (NDP). I love talking to her. She's funny. She's nice and a great teacher! 🇺🇸

Notre Dame Prep continues to lead in academics

Notre Dame Preparatory School, recently named once again one of the top-50 Catholic schools in the country, has had much to celebrate academically in 2010, when it graduated its sixteenth class.

The 161 graduating seniors, including eight valedictorians, one of whom scored a perfect 36 on his ACT, walked the stage in May as one of the most awarded classes in NDPMA history. Still more accolades for this academic powerhouse of a school.

The Class of 2010 was accepted into 128 colleges and universities across 29 states and the United Kingdom and was offered over \$10.4 million in scholarships—that's an astounding average of over \$64,197 per graduate! 100% of NDP's graduates were accepted to a four-year university and 36 of the 162 graduates scored a 30+ on their ACT. The average ACT score was 26.25. Students at ND Prep have access to more than 150

college-preparatory courses, including honors courses in each subject area, as well as 18 Advanced Placement course offerings.



The school's first class of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme candidates graduated this past spring—16 in all.

Notre Dame Prep is considered a National Top 50 Catholic High School, making the prestigious Honor Roll four times in the last five years and the school's FIRST Robotics Team won the Michigan Chairman's Award, one of the highest honors given at this year's state championship.

With all faculty members having or pursuing at least one master's degree or Ph.D., and teachers averaging almost 14 years of classroom experience, Notre Dame Prep and Marist Academy is poised for a future as exciting and successful as its first 16 years. 🇺🇸

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does not mean that our students accept automatically and without question as good, proper, and true the particular beliefs or practices that other persons espouse. It



Fr. Leon says IB studies help students create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding.

means that we accept that others have a right to state and defend their own positions, beliefs, and actions. Tolerance at its base is about respect for other persons whether we agree with their ideas and actions or not. Our vision is based on a healthy Catholic anthropology.

At NDPMA, issues of religious belief certainly come into the IB classroom, particularly in the *Theory of Knowledge* class, and we carefully listen to and evaluate what others have to say about their personal beliefs; but beliefs are always open to challenge and, as such, invite a response. Our aim in such discussions is to create more light than heat. The core of the IB TOK class is not essentially about particular beliefs. It is about knowledge, as such, i.e., what we know, how we know it, and how we judge what we know to be true. It is a course in basic epistemology, not a course in theology or Biblical studies. Theology and Bible studies belong properly in the religion classroom where they are managed deftly with regard to individual religious preferences.

In nuce, the IB curriculum is about a *method of teaching and about a profile of*

the kind of student/citizen we are trying to create. It is not about ideology, indoctrination, or proselytization of students. It is far more about questions than answers. It is about appreciating the value and values of each person within his or her particular historical setting and learning to respect people from places and cultures very different than ours—all this for the express purpose of creating a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding.

As sometimes happens, people read far more into the IB programs than these programs actually espouse. It is also probably true that, in some settings, educators will teach far beyond the curricula, espousing their personal beliefs in a doctrinaire fashion. Such a shadowy teacher/student transaction can lead to valid though sometimes misguided questioning of the IB curriculum and its Learner Profile. I believe that a broader reading of IB curricula and continuing dialogue on IB/religious issues generally allay such fears. 🌍

MEDIA CENTER GROWS

The St. Peter Chanel Media Center at the Pontiac campus of NDPMA is a buzzing hive of activity. On any given day, you can find a student working on a project, printing out homework, working on a problem with a teacher, engaged in peer-to-peer tutoring, or recording an online language assignment.

The summer break brought a number of changes to the media center. The floor plan has changed somewhat to accommodate an additional lab of computers. The media center now is outfitted with two labs of desktop computers—24 desktops in each lab. With the new desktops, Windows will be updated to Office 2007 Business Apps. The desktops and Ethernet connections should provide a faster service for the students. Additionally, net books and notebooks will be available on three circulating carts for use in the classrooms.

With the coordination of hardware, software, and network access, the media center offers an array of resources for students to utilize on campus or from the convenience of their homes. Additionally, the Michigan Electronic Library, which is immediately available on campus in the media center, is also available from home. This database requires a Michigan ID to gain access.

For those students on a college-level academic quest, Oakland University will allow NDPMA students to utilize its resources at no charge. Students need to visit OU's Kresge Library to tap into these resources. With a driver's license they will be given access to the entire online selection of databases available on the university's campus.

The media center is open daily Monday through Friday before school and until 4:30 p.m. after school.

And last, but not least, the media and resource centers are maintained by a full-time librarian with a master's degree in Library and Information Science from Wayne State University. Marna Nemon, who is starting her eighth year with NDPMA, has been a librarian since 1994. Nemon has dedicated herself to the art of information literacy by working with students in or out of the classroom, including Saturday morning field trips to OU's Kresge Library.

She loves being able to work with students on research, especially when they need a sounding board. "It is great to be with the kids when something clicks," she said. "At that moment, the work stops being work and starts being fun! It's those moments of serendipity in research—so challenging to teach in the initial stages—that really hooks the students. I love it when I'm there for that moment." 🌍



NDPMA librarian Marna Nemon loves working with students on research.

Deacon Tony looking out for students' spiritual well-being

NDPMA Campus Ministry Director Tony Morici was ordained a deacon in the Archdiocese of Detroit in 1987. He was first assigned to St. Jane Frances de Chantal parish in Sterling Heights for six years and then to St. Louise in Warren for the next seven years. Since May 2001, Morici has also served as pastoral associate at St. Lawrence in Utica. Morici has an associate's degree in Ministry from Sacred Heart Seminary, a bachelor's degree in Pastoral Ministries from Madonna University, and an MBA in Church Management from the Graduate Theological Foundation. Morici lives in Clarkston with his wife Betty, a religion teacher at ND Prep, and has four children and seven grandchildren. He also manages to squeeze teaching religion and accounting out of a very busy schedule.

Morici graciously found time to answer a few questions from the Blarney Stone.

How did you come to be campus minister at NDPMA?

I first hired in at NDP as a religion teacher. I taught Morality and Spirituality for the first four years, and the administration asked if I would accept the campus minister position. I have been in that position for six years now.

Why did you become a deacon?

Every Christian is called to love one another as Christ has loved us. That mission leads us all in many directions. In my case, I was led to love and serve through official ministry in the Church. I began taking classes at Sacred Heart Seminary in the fall of 1981 and, after the formation process, was ordained in October of 1987.

Who else is in campus ministry and what are their roles?

There are two others working directly in campus ministry. Fr. Brian Cidlevich is the chaplain, and Grace Seroka is assistant campus minister. The main areas of responsibility in campus ministry are liturgy, service, retreats, and pastoral counseling. Fr. Brian is responsible for the liturgical area, and Grace is responsible for the retreat area. We share responsibilities in all areas. Campus ministry highly promotes student-peer ministry. We have at least 100 students who actively help develop retreats, service opportunities, and liturgical events. We also have other teachers who play an active role in campus ministry functions. Art teacher Kati Sweica-Brockman is the facilitator of the Kairos Retreat, and her fellow art teacher Ned Devine is the facilitator of the Habitat for Humanity Club. All of the Religion Department teachers take active roles in campus ministry by helping coordinate and run events. We also have many parents involved, helping in retreats, service projects, and liturgical events. So as you can see, campus ministry takes a complete collaborative effort.

What was your first impression of NDPMA when you began here?

I was impressed from the first moment I walked into the school and saw the mission statement right on the wall in front. The fruits of those efforts depicted in our mission statement have

consistently been borne out in the accomplishments and growth of our students—truly impressive.

What are the most significant changes to the school since you first started?

Since I have been here, we have had advancements in our athletic programs and facilities, and we've all witnessed many accomplishments there. We have consistently advanced in our academic programs and offerings, the latest being the IB program, and we have advanced in the campus ministry area with many new offerings and accomplishments, especially in the retreat area. I believe the continued commitment to our Mission is what led to so much accomplishment.

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

I believe it is paramount that the students have the best possible spiritual life experience here on campus, and that opportunity be made available to them through all the campus ministry programs.

What exciting and/or new things are happening related to campus ministry?

There will be new retreat offerings including an optional three-day retreat for the 11th grade, called the Emmaus Retreat, which will be student-led in a similar format as Kairos. Tenth-grade students will be offered an optional two-day, service-based retreat called the Good Samaritan retreat. We also will be establishing a new segment to our service program, which will give students an opportunity to share and celebrate their service experiences with one another.

How do you balance the spiritual needs of students with their intellectual and emotional ones?

That is what the pastoral counseling area of campus ministry is all about. When the need arises, pastoral counseling is available to the students on a one-to-one basis.

What would you choose for a job if you weren't a deacon or campus minister?

I don't know—do you think Pope is out of the question? 🇵🇦



Sophomores visit China

by Brenda Kambakhsh, IB coordinator, MYP

Two Notre Dame Prep students traveled to China this summer with the Chinese Summer Bridge Program, sponsored by Michigan State University's Confucius Institute and Hanban (Chinese Language Council International).



Arian Kambakhsh, left, and Chinese student Xu Peng Xiang at the tomb of Confucius in China.

Tenth graders Arian Kambakhsh and Ryan Dau joined 15 Michigan high school students and other students from around the U.S. for a two-week trip to Beijing and Shandong province. In Beijing, the students visited museums and other cultural sites, including the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China.

They spent the remainder of the tour in Weifang, a city known as the kite-making capital of the world. The students stayed at the boarding school of Weifang Middle School, where they were partnered with Chinese students. Visiting the home town of Confucius and learning calligraphy, kite making, martial arts, participating in sports with Chinese students, and visiting a host family were some of the activities of the cultural exchange.

Ryan Dau felt the Mandarin he had studied this past year at NDP was useful and found bartering for purchases easier than he expected. "Most kids in the group, even those who had no formal training in Chinese, quickly learned how to haggle with the street merchants of Tiananmen Square and the Silk Market," Dau said. "Since I had a year of Mandarin Chinese, it was easier for me." 🇨🇳

IB PROGRAM HELPS BRING JAPANESE STUDENTS TO NOTRE DAME

Forty two high school students from Japan landed at Metro Airport Aug. 20 for an amazing 16-day visit to Notre Dame Prep.

The students, from an International Baccalaureate school in Kyoto, arrived on the campus of Notre Dame Preparatory School for an intense two-week English-immersion study.

The kids are from Ritsumeikan Uji school in Kyoto, and their school requires all of its students to take an English-immersion study tour prior to their senior year. The program is sponsored in part by Global Football, Inc., an organization that promotes the



Students from Ritsumeikan Uji school in Kyoto, Japan, listen to a lecture given by (retired) NDP teacher Dr. Laurie Alkidas.

American sport of football to young people worldwide.

Very few schools in the U.S. are chosen to host such groups. Notre Dame Prep was picked for a number of reasons, including an extremely positive experience from the NFL Global Jr. Championship when ND Prep hosted Team Germany; the fact that ND Prep has an active IB program as does Ritsumeikan Uji school; and a dedicated group of staff and parents who expressed an interest in helping to make the visit a success. 🇺🇸

A higher grade of learning

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Mariast Academy - Middle Division are International Baccalaureate "World Schools"



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