

THE blarney stone

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

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Big step forward

Notre Dame gains independence in innovative transaction, ensures a strong future in Oakland County.

In a deal worked out over 18 months with the Archdiocese of Detroit, Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy has become an independent Catholic school by virtue of its purchase of a majority of the property and assets on its Pontiac campus.

NDPMA Head of School Fr. Leon M. Olszamowski, s.m., said the ownership change is intended to ensure “the continuation of Catholic education and the Marist Fathers and Brothers’ apostolic mission at the school for future generations of south-east Michigan families.”

Under this arrangement, according to Olszamowski, the school’s Board of Trustees has total fiduciary and oversight responsibility of the school. “The Marist Fathers

will continue to administer the school in the name of the board and is charged by the Archbishop with maintaining the Catholicity of the school,” he said.

As a result of the transaction, ownership of the property (64 acres), buildings and assets of the school has been transferred from the AOD to a Michigan nonprofit, tax-exempt educational corporation called Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy, which will be governed by the board. The Catholic sponsorship and educational-program management by the Marist Fathers continue at the school as before. All academic, athletic, art and other programs—as well as the school’s administration, faculty

and staff—also continue without change.

Olszamowski said the agreement was a critical part of the school’s strategic plan developed and released two years ago by the Board of Trustees. “It is a major step forward that will help us achieve our key initiatives and further strengthen an already strong academic institution.”

QUARTER OF THE PROPERTY PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY MARISTS GIFTED TO NDPMA

Not included in the deal with the archdiocese is land already owned by the Marist Fathers of Detroit, Inc., which was gifted to the new non-profit entity. The tennis courts, the recently constructed lower-division building and the advancement offices (20,000 sq. ft. total building space) are located on those nearly 20 acres of land.

The Marist Fathers and Brothers have been sponsoring the mission at Notre Dame in Pontiac since 1994 when the Archbishop of Detroit, Adam Cardinal Maida, asked the Boston-based order to take over the campus, which closed as Oakland Catholic High School in June of that year. Maida made the offer to the Marists based on the academic reputation of Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods, also operated by the Marists at that time. The site originally was built as Pontiac Catholic Central High School in 1968, when two Pontiac-area schools, St. Michael and St. Frederick, merged. In 1988,



More than 64 acres of land and buildings were purchased from the Archdiocese of Detroit by a Michigan nonprofit, tax-exempt educational corporation called “Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy.”

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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.



COUNSELING GETS BIG CHANGES FOR SCHOOL YEAR
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Parents knew best: Alum and business owner says going to NDP was right move

Notre Dame Prep graduate Julia Shenck ('00) owns horse farm and training center in Dryden, Mich.

When 2000 Notre Dame Prep alum Julia Shenck and her parents were considering high schools for her next stage of education, NDP was on her parents' radar. But it wasn't on hers.

"When I went through the interview process to attend 'the Prep,' I was not happy or open to the idea of the school and what it had to offer," she said. "My parents, however, knew exactly what I needed."

Shenck now recalls her four years at Notre Dame with much fondness. "NDP allowed me to take college-level courses and flourish more because of all of the diverse classes offered," she said. "By NDP always demanding the best of me and my work, I was greatly prepared for what was ahead of me academically and in life."

What was ahead for Shenck was a Michigan State University education and a career as a horse trainer and horse farm owner that she said was always part of her dream. "Believe it or not, I've always known my career and life path would lead me to be a horse farm owner, trainer and caregiver."

FAST LEARNER

A high school graduate at 16 years old and a college graduate at 20, Shenck also was way ahead of most contemporaries when she opened a new business in 2004 right after finishing her bachelor's degree in animal science. She loves to reel off all of the services offered at her 40-acre Shenck Training Center in Dryden: boarding, lessons, 4-H and training—for horses "and people!" Shenck says that training riders is just as important, if not more important, than training horses.

"If you want to learn how to ride or if you want to become a more advanced rider, I can help," she says. Her business also provides guidance on maintaining proper handling techniques after professional training has been completed.

"I also take care of injured horses and, along with our staff veterinarian, we provide sports therapy as part of their recovery process," she said. She gets to watch many vet procedures and medical treat-

ments, thus enabling her to "witness the wonders of modern science." As a matter of fact, she said, her staff veterinarian, Dr. Roland Thaler, has performed stem-cell harvests via liposuction and stem-cell placements—right in her buildings on the farm.

"Dr. Thaler was the first veterinarian in the world to perform stem-cell therapy using ultrasound-guided liposuction," Shenck said. "I have seen and been a part of many successful outcomes, but unfortunately I have also seen injuries and horses that we were just not able to save."

Witnessing the few "downs" along with the many "ups" in her career thus far has not tamped down her enthusiasm, however. And there have been some naysayers, she says, when it comes to her professional career. "Some people have not always been very supportive of my career choice," Shenck said. "Even my own mother questions it sometimes, but I have encountered so many positive people and great horse stories along the way that I'm reminded every day that I am exactly where I'm supposed to be. I truly believe that because I treat every horse like my own and that I had such a great education at NDP and MSU, I am better prepared than ever to be successful for a long, long time."

TEACHER FAVES REMAIN ANONYMOUS

Shenck was asked if she had any especially favorite teachers when she was at Notre Dame Prep. "I'd have to say there were three of them: my government teacher, my world history teacher, and my AP English/composition teacher. She wants them to remain nameless because "who doesn't like a little mystery?"

She said all three teachers made it feel as if the students were living right in that moment in time and space. "They made the topics enticing and flavorful enough to capture my attention, and made me want to expand on the subjects we were learning about, which for me says a great deal," she said. "As these three teachers can probably attest to, sometimes it was a major project just to motivate me in the first place. But all three hold a very special place in my heart and are charter members of the 'Julia Shenck Dream-to-Life' Club. They each opened my eyes to potentials that I didn't know I had—potentials that once unlocked were no doubt a big reason for my success now." 🇺🇸



Notre Dame Prep graduate Julia Shenck ('00) always knew what her career would be.



Services offered at the 40-acre Shenck Training Center in Dryden include boarding, lessons, 4-H and training.

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the school was renamed Oakland Catholic, but the new name did not revive enrollment and the school closed in June 1994.


Fr. Joe Hindelang, who is principal of the high school, said Notre Dame will continue its ties to the archdiocese as an approved outlet for teaching the Catholic faith. "Also, the Marists' main mission of education will continue at NDPMA," he said. "We have been in the U.S. for more than 150 years and education has been one of our main missions from the beginning."

Andy Guest, executive vice president and director for advancement for NDPMA, said one of the biggest changes as a result of the transaction is that now Notre Dame is controlled by a 22-member school board that has more power to set policy and control financial decisions. "In the past, the board had a more advisory role," he said. "This means the Marist administrators will not have to worry as much about the financial decisions, but will have the freedom to focus on academics and religious education at the school."

Included in the acquisition are the athletic fields and the buildings that house the school's middle and upper divisions, the Jim Grimaldi Athletic Center, Beverly Gifford Music Center and Betty Wroubel Athletic Performance Center, all totaling

about 153,000 sq. ft. of building space.

The reorganization coincides with other Marist initiatives in the U.S. and is expected to be a model for other Catholic elementary and secondary schools whose Catholic mission and identity are overseen by religious orders and congregations.

"This is a great accomplishment, indeed, with real vision for a different future that is coming to the church," Fr. Timothy G. Keating, s.m., provincial of the U.S. Province of the Society of Mary (Marists), said. "We will continue to relish our relationship with Notre Dame all through this new corporate structure." 




Twenty acres of property and buildings, including the lower-division campus opened last year, which were already owned by the Marist Fathers of Detroit, Inc., were not included in the transaction with the Archdiocese of Detroit. The Marist Fathers are gifting the property to the new educational corporation called Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy.

NDP boys lacrosse with highest GPA in Michigan



Five from Notre Dame Prep were named to the Michigan High School Lacrosse Association's boys all-state list in Division 2. Peter Eichorn, Ian Genord, Jake Jeszke, Reid Siano and Mark Thierbacker earned spots on the list based on their 2014 season.

In addition, according to MHSLCA, the Notre Dame team as a whole earned the highest overall grade point average in the entire state of Michigan with a 3.966, besting teams from many other elite private and public schools. NDP's Eichhorn, Hunter Hoenschied and Thierbacker also were named to the individual academic all state list for Division 2.

Notre Dame Prep ended their 2014 season with a 13-6 record after falling in the MHSAA regionals to East Grand Rapids. 

Notre Dame IB graduation rate again surpasses worldwide and U.S. averages

Notre Dame announced in July that 85% of those enrolled in the school's International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP) have successfully received an IB Diploma, again beating the worldwide average of 78 percent and the U.S. average of 70 percent. Last year, 100 percent of Notre Dame's DP students earned the IB diploma, a rare accomplishment for IB schools worldwide.

In addition to the Diploma Programme, which is for students in the upper school, NDPMA offers a related International Baccalaureate curriculum to students in its lower and middle schools.

This year, more than 135,000 students from over 141 countries participated in the examination session for the DP, which is known for its extremely high academic rigor. They join a community of more than one million DP graduates across the world. The marks are internationally moderated so that the same standards apply everywhere.


With more than 790 examination papers processed in 74 languages, this was the largest exam session conducted at the IB since the birth of the Diploma Programme.

"I wholeheartedly congratulate the 2014 graduates. I commend them on their dedication and drive in accomplishing this hard-earned achievement," Dr. Siva Kumari, IB director general, said.



Notre Dame is the only school in Michigan with all three levels of the International Baccalaureate program.

"Since universities continue to value the diploma graduate, we look forward to seeing more students in the Diploma program. We know the graduates are well conditioned in critical thinking, researching and deep knowledge that prepares them to thrive in the universities they attend. And just as importantly, to enter their next phase of study with the mindset and inspiration to give positive shape to and influence today's complex world."

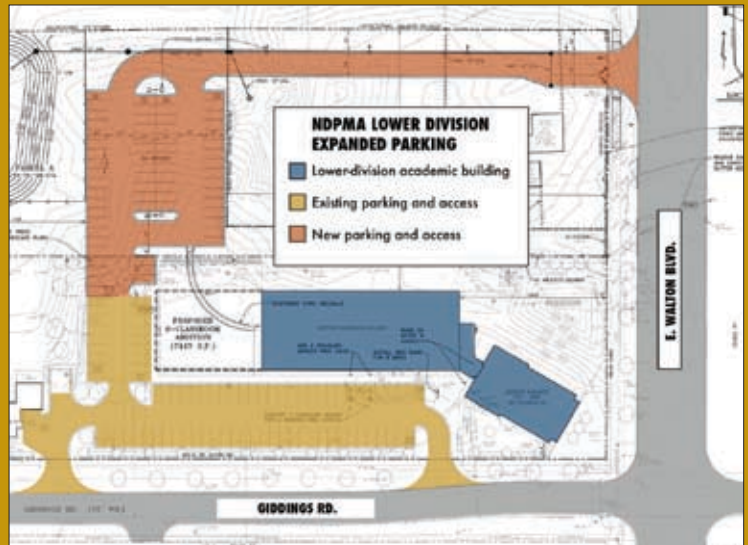
International research shows that university admissions staff have very favorable impressions of the IB Diploma Programme. Additionally, research provides evidence that IB Diploma students enroll in higher rates at more selective universities, and perform better once there than those with other secondary-school qualifications. 

Work begins on lower division parking lot expansion

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy announced in July that it received approvals from the City of Pontiac and the State of Michigan to begin an expansion of the parking lot at the school's lower division campus. Work has already begun on the project with property surveying and staking completed.

According to Notre Dame Head of School Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., the plans have been approved and permitting is in place for the expansion, which will include up to 64 new parking spaces and a new access road from Walton Blvd. "The approved plans were sent out for bids," he said. "And our chosen contractor is beginning the project with completion planned for the last part of October or early November."

Olszamowski said he had hoped the expansion would have been completed earlier, but a harsh winter and a longer-than-expected approval and permitting process delayed the original timeline of the project. 🇺🇸



Work has begun on the parking lot expansion at its lower division campus. Expansion will include 64 new parking spaces and a new access road from Walton Blvd.

Notre Dame graduates match record-breaking ACT score, beat state average by more than 7 points



Notre Dame Preparatory School continued its string of matching or beating previous academic records by posting an ACT average composite

score of 27 for the 2014 graduating class. It's the third straight year the graduating class hit that score. In 2011, Notre Dame's graduating class posted a then school-record 26.58 score and the 2010 class averaged 26.27, both of which far exceeded state averages for each year. According to the American College Testing Program (ACT), the Michigan average was 19.9 and the national average, 20.9.

Scores are on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest.

It is also worth noting that in the past six years, Notre Dame has had six students earn a perfect individual (student) ACT score of 36. Less than one-tenth of 1 percent of test takers nationwide attain a perfect score.

There are a total of 215 questions on the test: 75 in English, 60 in mathematics, 40 in reading and 40 in science. 🇺🇸

Major renovation of studio art room complete

The renovation of the A3 studio art room in the upper division of Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy has been completed, the school announced over the summer break. New tables, storage cabinetry and special lighting were among the upgrades to the room, which is home to classes ranging from art foundations and painting to design and digital photography.

Head of School Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., and art faculty members Sandra LewAllen and Ned Devine said a big thank you is

due to the major contributors to the project: the Schwabauer and Carballo families as well as the McManus Foundation, which helped to finance the \$130,000+ renovation.

Notre Dame's visual art program also features advanced placement art classes and an International Baccalaureate art course. NDP art students routinely earn awards in public and privately sponsored art competitions. 🇺🇸

Wroubel enters Hall Of Fame

The Michigan Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association (MIVCA) has voted NDPMA coach and athletic director Betty Wroubel into the 2014 Volleyball Coaches Hall of Fame. She was formally inducted July 25 at the MIVCA coaches banquet in Battle Creek, Mich.



The criteria for induction into the MIVCA Hall of Fame is as follows: the individual must be a former or current member of MIVCA in good standing, have 500 career wins and/or 20 years of coaching the sport of volleyball at the high school level, have demonstrated leadership in the sport and have demonstrated commitment to the sport.

Wroubel, who has coached at the varsity level for 36 years at Clawson, Pontiac/Oakland Catholic and Notre Dame Preparatory School, has earned an overall record of 1203-274-117. Her teams hold 21 conference championships, 23 district championships, seven regional championships, two state "final four" appearances and two state championships (2007 and 2013). Wroubel also is head coach of Notre Dame Prep's softball team.

Annual fund sets multiple records

NDPMA announced this summer that it had raised a record \$467,222 in unrestricted gifts when its 2014 Notre Dame Annual Fund, now called The Notre Dame Fund, closed on June 30.

The fund total, which comprises gifts from nearly 1,000

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New school year brings changes to counseling department

In a July 1 speech before the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, first lady Michelle Obama told attendees that she is amazed at what a typical school counselor goes through in an average day. “I know that you all have one of the hardest, most stressful, most important and most underappreciated jobs of anyone in this country,” she said.

advising, testing, academic assistance, etc., that our counselors provide on any given day.”

Post-secondary planning and the application process, career planning, coping strategies, conflict resolution, classroom guidance, academic skills support, organizational, study and test-taking skills, and study skills are among an extensive list of services that ASCA says school counselors must provide

In addition, Salic says, the department will have a greater focus on helping students get into their college of choice, and they will be able to explore all of what it takes to be successful in terms of a career and in life in general.

“It’s not that college counseling is unimportant,” he says, “but we want to build on the whole student that hopefully will lead to a healthier, more satisfying future for them.”

The counseling group—which, in addition to Salic and Whalen—includes Margie Bond, Jamie Rodda and Stacy Golliff, also plans to provide students with additional programming to help inspire them, to mentor them, to teach skills and provide an environment where they can develop their passions for the things in which they might excel, according to Salic.

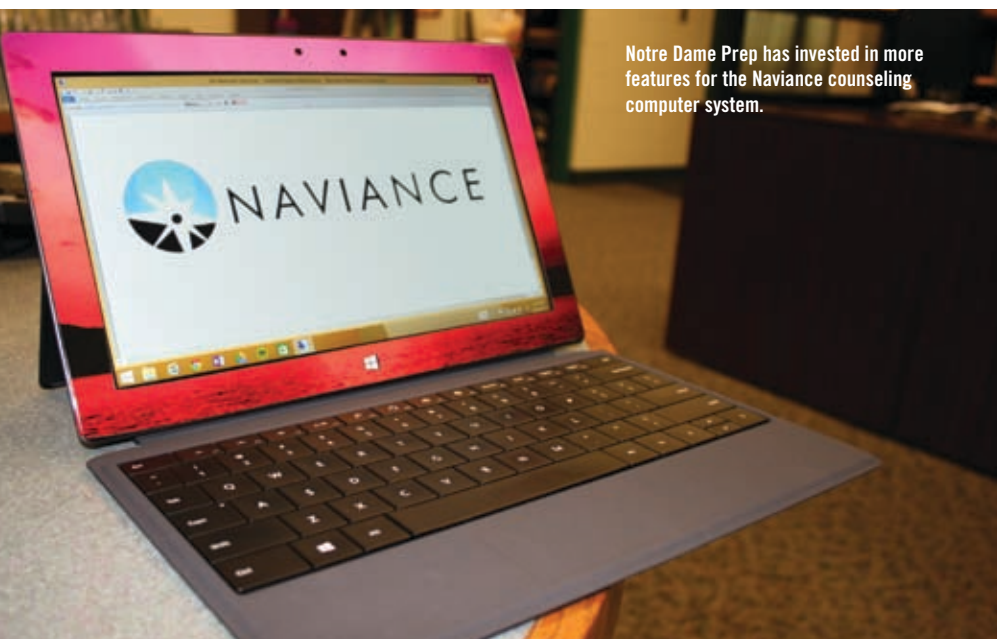
“We will have a greater focus on early college and career exploration, starting at middle school and even in elementary school, and offer students opportunities to sink their teeth into something—something that interests them as they head to the four years of high school and college,” Salic said. “At the elementary to middle school transition, for example, students are undergoing big changes. On the instructional level, where just a few months ago they had only one or two teachers, now they may have seven or eight. We want to make sure we’re all looking to better help them ease into these very dramatic new phases of their lives.”

The department also plans to bring in a greater variety of outside career presenters as well as to promote a job shadowing program at Beaumont Hospital for careers in medicine.

NDP’s annual college fair has moved to the spring and there are plans to have smaller but more frequent junior- and senior-parent meetings to discuss college preparation as well as to provide advice on paying for college.

On the more personal level, Salic says counseling will have a renewed focus on

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Notre Dame Prep has invested in more features for the Naviance counseling computer system.

“And I live with the president of the United States!”

Vlado Salic, who heads Notre Dame Prep’s counseling department, says that while he isn’t too concerned about the “underappreciated” part, he does agree that there is much for today’s school counselors to do.

“We wear so many different hats in a given day that it’s tough to pick the most important one,” he said. “But what I think is very critical for us and for the students is the personal aspect of counseling—just being there for them. Someone they can count on, who helps teach life skills, healthy coping skills and can mediate the occasional conflict between friends, parents, teachers, etc.”

Salic says the other equally important side of counseling is the academic and college advising. “I certainly don’t want to minimize the college preparation, career

to be effective. And that’s not even half of what’s on ASCA’s list.

MORE COUNSELORS

Salic, who has been at Notre Dame since 1999, says beginning with this new school year, students and parents will see a number of significant changes to the counseling function.

Chief among them is the new face in the group. Over the summer, NDP hired Jason Whalen, who is replacing Justine Sciriha as a high school counselor. Whalen comes to NDP from Clarkston High School, where he served as a school counselor for four years, and University of Detroit-Jesuit High School, where he was director of college counseling. He will be a big help with a substantial number of juniors and seniors, Salic says.

Inspired teaching

English teacher says inspiring students is exactly what he's always wanted to do.

Anthony Butorac, a teacher at Notre Dame Prep and chair of the school's English department, is living his "prep school" dream.

"As corny as it sounds, I always thought I'd like to teach literature in a prep school in that clichéd 'Dead Poets Society' kind of way," Butorac says. "So far, it appears that everything has worked out as I envisioned. I'm really happy here at Notre Dame."

Butorac majored in English at Oakland University and then received his master's degree, also in English, from Saginaw Valley State University. While in college, he started to think about what he would do with an English degree. Teaching English, of course, was always there, he thought.

"At first I thought it was the only thing an English major could really do," he says. "But once I started doing the work, it became clear to me that it in fact was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

THE RIGHT PLACE

Butorac came to Notre Dame in the fall of 2007 after a year as a substitute teacher in the Rochester school system. Once he got his footing on Notre Dame's campus, however, he knew he was in the right place.

"Notre Dame was different from the other schools I spent time at in that it has a very strong community where there is a lot of support for me to grow as a teacher and professional. It's also a place where I felt I would be respected as a professional."

Butorac says that at Notre Dame he gets to be creative and has the freedom to be very passionate about the literature he teaches. He says his students seem to really latch on to that passion.


STELLAR TEACHERS

Since joining the teaching staff at NDPMA, Butorac says he's witnessed a lot of changes, especially within the English department. "We've had some new hires in the department and we've been able to

put a stellar group of teachers together," he says.

"And each new hire seems to fit in so well. I feel like I've really watched the department grow in such a healthy, positive way."

Butorac, who is married (Angela) and has a one-year-old son (Troy), also has a healthy respect for the mission of the school. "I think the most important part of my job is mentoring the students and being a strong role model. This is how I've always interpreted the Marist philosophy of education."

When asked about what he might be doing if he wasn't a teacher, Butorac doesn't hesitate. "If I were not a teacher, I would be a very lost soul who wished he were a teacher." 



English department chair Anthony Butorac with wife, Angela.



Butorac competed in a recent Spartan Race, a nearly 10-mile fitness and obstacle-course race.

alumni, parents, faculty and other friends of the school, represents a 9.3 percent increase over 2013 and is the highest amount in school history.

“The dollars raised will support today’s Notre Dame students in the form of classroom enhancements, extracurricular activities and financial aid,” said Gregory Simon, director of The Notre Dame Fund. “In addition, it will be applied to continuing teacher development and allow us to more fully support our areas of greatest need.”



Kelly Patterson, a humanities and language A teacher in Notre Dame’s middle division, goes over an assignment with one of her students. The Notre Dame Fund helps support continuing professional development for teachers in all three school divisions.

(‘95), a high-ranking administration official in the City of Pontiac, quite clearly he appreciates his Notre Dame and Catholic experience. He is a product of Catholic education from preschool through undergraduate school and says he is fortunate that his parents sacrificed to send him to parochial schools and to Notre Dame.

Sobota stresses, however, that it’s important for those who benefited from a Notre Dame education to give back. “My motivation for contributing to Notre Dame Prep,” he says, “is to ensure that an exceptional Catholic and Marist education will still be possible for others well into the future.”

Fighting Irish get accolades from state for sportsmanship

The Michigan High School Athletic Association has notified Notre Dame Preparatory School that its athletic program had demonstrated “positive sportsmanship throughout the entire 2013-14 school year,” putting the program in rare company.



According to John E. Roberts, executive director of MHSAA, the association received zero negative officials’ reports of concern, ejection or sportsmanship about Notre Dame Prep during the previous school year. “It is a credit to your student-athletes, coaches, administration, staff and community for demonstrating such positive sportsmanship throughout the entire school year,” Roberts said. Such an accomplishment is very rare, according to school officials.

More than 470 MHSAA member schools in Michigan received at least one report of concern, most with two or more. Teams eligible for evaluation included varsity, JV, freshman and 7th- and 8th-grade teams, which were monitored by MHSAA during the 2013-14 seasons. Schools are evaluated in a number of categories,

including officials’ reported concerns along with player ejections, coach ejections and fan misbehavior.

Roberts added that the MHSAA especially recognizes “the coaches and student-athletes who make up such exemplary teams.”

ND names new assistant athletic director and strength/conditioning coach

Notre Dame’s athletic department announced recently that Aaron Crouse has been hired as an assistant athletic director. Crouse replaces Dean Allen, who has taken a position at Allen Park Cabrini.



New NDPMA assistant A.D. Aaron Crouse.

Crouse comes to Notre Dame as a graduate student currently at Eastern Michigan University with an expected May 2015 graduation. He served as assistant hockey coach and goaltending coach at Livonia Stevenson High School and has more than two years of experience working as part of the administration of the athletic department in Livonia’s public school system, first at Holmes Middle School and then at Stevenson, where he worked on scheduling, student-athlete eligibility and game management among other responsibilities.

With a bachelor’s degree from Bowling Green State University, Crouse currently is in the master’s program in the School of Health Promotion and Human Performance at EMU. He is a member of the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association and National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association where he was certified as a registered athletic administrator.

A news strength and conditioning coach also has come on board in the athletic department. Jake Siebert comes to NDPMA from Oakland University where he served in the strength and conditioning department.

Another NDP student with a perfect ACT, sixth from Notre Dame since 2009

Michael Soisson, a senior at Notre Dame Preparatory School, has scored a perfect 36 on his ACT — the highest score available — and is now the sixth Notre Dame student since 2009 to achieve such perfection.



Michael Soisson

According to test administrator ACT, Inc., less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all test takers earn the top score.

The ACT is comprised of four sections — English, math, reading and science — that are each scored on a scale of 1 to 36. A student’s composite score is the average of the four individual scores. Last year, the national average was about 21. Of the 1.8 million students who took the exam, only 1,162 earned a 36.

In 2012, Notre Dame’s Eric LaRose and Michael’s brother, Joe Soisson, earned a perfect 36 on their ACT tests. In 2011, 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.



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A world of education



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suicide prevention programs, a greater awareness of mental wellness and the coping skills and strategies to deal with stress and life’s disappointments.

“We also will be using some new didactic activities to better teach communication skills and substance abuse prevention as well as identifying potential self-destructive behaviors,” he said.

IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY

Salic says the school has invested in additional features on the Naviance system to help promote career and personal-strengths exploration and there are plans to have a counseling Twitter account to help disseminate information and reminders to students and parents.

In the next couple of years, the department plans to offer more diverse job-shadowing opportunities and an even more concentrated focus on programs that help reduce stress for students and staff, improve wellbeing and improve students’ sense of direction in life after high school and beyond.

“We at NDP really want to drive down the number of students who lack direction



NDP hired Jason Whalen, who is replacing Justine Scirha as a high school counselor. Whalen comes to NDP from Clarkston High School, where he served as a school counselor for four years, and University of Detroit-Jesuit High School, where he was director of college counseling.

or purpose in college and careers,” Salic says.

When asked about what he thinks is the number-one responsibility of his counseling department, Salic says it’s to be a total advocate for the student.

“We want to inspire them, mentor them and truly believe in them,” he says. “We also want to provide the kind of environment that is comfortable, where all students feel

safe and healthy—a place where they can feel free to explore their passions and still be challenged enough to reach their potential.

“Academic-learned skills will help get them through college, but counseling-learned skills will help carry them through the rest of their lives.”