

Academy of Notre Dame

The Academy Takes On an International Flare

Preparing students for the future means preparing them to live in a global community.

It's something students in the Upper School at the Academy of Notre Dame know well. For several years, the school has been accepting international students in to the Upper School program. There are currently 20 enrolled international students and several more enrolling in January.

This fall, the Academy admitted their first two international students into the Lower School.

"Our international student program at the Upper School level has been growing for several years," said Jocelyn Mendonsa, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Admissions. "We've been discussing the opportunities to expand the program to the Lower School and these two students were the right fit."



Eighth-grader Jecolener He began at the Academy in September and seventh-grader Charlie Tian started in October.

Chinese-born, Jecolener He had the distinction of being the first international student at the Lower School. She quickly became part of the NDA community, joining the soccer team upon her arrival. She credits her classmates and her teachers for the ease of her transition.

"At first, I was a little surprised by everyone's kindness and willingness to help," said He.

"Everyone respects and treats each other with an open mind and everyone has been so helpful. I quickly felt very comfortable and I'm looking forward to applying for the Upper School next year."

Charlie Tian is also Chinese. He and his parents sought a better educational environment and made the decision to look to the U.S. They heard about the Academy through Jecolener He's family. Tian is already an accomplished artist and enjoys playing basketball with friends. But it's the academics that have stood out for him.

"Teachers consider the understanding of the student as the most important part in class," said Tian.

"They will make sure every student in class gets the concept and understands the materials rather than just provide the facts. It's an active class that encourages everyone to participate."



The Academy hopes that these students will pave the way for the Lower School program to grow as strong as the Upper School program.

"Many of our international students are from China," said Mendonsa. "Right now, three are from Korea and we've had students from Spain, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Brazil."

"With some of our students, the whole family relocates," said Mendonsa. "But most stay with host families. Without them, we wouldn't be able to do this and we're always looking for more families."

Korean International student and Upper School Junior, Eunji Choi contributed to this story.