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The Wisconsin International School will feature the International Baccalaureate curriculum

Gina Mangan

Paul Schneider and his wife Nicole have been instrumental in launching the Wisconsin International School in De Pere, a new independent preschool through eighth grade school with an international emphasis.



Wes Garner serves on the board for the Wisconsin International School. Three of Garner's four children were adopted abroad and he believes the environment they will grow up in will become increasingly diverse and international.



Stanley Way, who has served as middle school director at an international school in Copenhagen and associate head of school at the independent Lake Ridge Academy in Cleveland, Ohio, will serve as the Head of School for the Wisconsin International School.



Like so many business people in today's global marketplace, Paul Schneider has spent nearly half of the past year working overseas in Schneider National's China offices.

Adjusting to a new language, a new land and cultural differences has been an eye-opening experience.

"It's occurred to me that I wish I had gone to a school that had prepared me for these types of experiences," he says. "I think there are a lot of people who grew up in Green Bay and are now having international experience who would say the same thing."

With that in mind, he and his wife Nicole have been instrumental in launching a new independent preschool through eighth grade school with an international emphasis.

After more than a year of planning, the Wisconsin International School in De Pere is set to open its doors on Sept. 2 to an estimated 60 to 75 students in preschool through grade 8.

School leaders have adopted the International Baccalaureate curriculum, which is delivered in 2,376 schools throughout the world and is regarded for its rigorous curriculum that promotes intercultural respect and understanding. The curriculum emphasizes a global perspective in all subject areas,

as well as daily foreign language lessons starting as early as age 3. The school is offering Spanish and Mandarin.

"What you see happen in an international school is that it opens up the world for the kids," says Head of School Stanley Way, who has served as middle school director at an international school in Copenhagen and associate head of school at the independent Lake Ridge Academy in Cleveland, Ohio. "These students often see a bigger picture — how something happening in Green Bay, for example, is connected to something going on in London. The families who started this school really saw those connections, that it's not just Northeast Wisconsin any longer. There are companies and organizations marketing to further reaches."

The International School, located in the recently renovated former St. Boniface Catholic School across from the St. Norbert College library at 405 Grant St., is global not only in terms of its curriculum, but its student body. Some of the families attending the school are from countries other than the U.S., and the school board includes representatives from China, India and Mexico. Several others have connections to businesses that operate internationally.

Three of board member Wes

Garner's four children were adopted from India, Ethiopia and Vietnam. Garner chose the school for his children because he believes the environment they will grow up in will become increasingly diverse and international. Not only have communities in Northeast Wisconsin become more diverse, but burgeoning economies in India, Asia and other regions also present opportunities for children growing up in Northeast Wisconsin.

"I want to prepare my children to be able to take the entrepreneurial spirit that flourishes in Northeast Wisconsin and apply it wherever they can," says Garner, owner of Great Lakes Calcium. "In many cases, these opportunities will be overseas. In order to feel comfortable going over there, they need to have a level of cultural understanding that will help them function well in other cultures."

With its world-recognized International Baccalaureate program, the International School may also serve as a draw for individuals who are considering jobs in Northeast Wisconsin, Garner says. Many companies, particularly those in the health care industry, recruit employees from overseas. This school will boost the attractiveness of the region for those with young children, he says.

Schneider says his company has more than 100 employees from overseas who move their families to the Green Bay area for work assignments.

"We have a growing population of families who are moving to the community who expect those international standards in school," he says. "Some are preparing children to move to other countries or cities with international schools, and they want their kids on a level playing field when they do."

The very fact that the school is a private, non-religious school could also attract talent from other regions of the U.S., where the local cultures are ones that private school education to public school education, Garner says. Many business executives, for example, look for private schools when they are choosing com-

munities for their families.

"Wisconsin's strong public and parochial school systems have lessened the demand for independent schools in the state," he says. "The problem is that a lot of people from outside the area aren't willing to consider public schools, or Catholic schools, because of religious differences in background."

The Wisconsin International School will be Brown County's first independent school and one of the few secular private schools in Northeast Wisconsin. Like other independent schools, its mission includes providing a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, developing leadership skills, providing state-of-the-art classroom technology and developing values of honesty, self discipline and fair play, Way says.

A recent U.S. Department of Education study found that independent school students go on to four-year colleges, pursue professional degrees and participate in community service at greater rates than students educated in other types of systems.

"These schools really develop the talents of their students, who often end up becoming community leaders," says Way.

The families involved in the school's formation have worked closely with educational consultants experienced in private school development. So far, families from eight counties throughout Northeast Wisconsin have applied to send 60 children to the school this fall. Class sizes per grade will range, depending on enrollment, but should not be larger than 15 students, Way says. Parent meetings continue to be held, and enrollment will remain open through the beginning of the school year.

The school's operating budget, seeded with \$100,000 raised from area businesses and families, will be funded entirely through tuition and fees.

"We have a lot of very passionate people," says Schneider, "and enough support in the community to really make this go." M

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