

Catholic school's model emulated

Michelle Martin/CNS

CHICAGO — When Cristo Rey High School opened in Chicago seven years ago, Jesuit Father John Foley had confidence in the formula that allows students to provide the cost of 75 percent of their tuition by working as interns five days a month.

But the president of the Chicago school didn't know how quickly it would take off.

There are now four schools operating on the Cristo Rey model around the country, with two more set to open this fall and seven more in the planning stage. And the program will receive a major financial boost with an \$18.9 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Cassin Educational Initiative Foundation.

"Nobody expected that there would be four schools up and running in seven years," Father Foley said. "Not only has the model worked, it's spreading and it's spreading fast."

In addition to Chicago, the schools already operating are in Portland, Ore.; Austin, Texas; and Los Angeles. Cristo Rey schools are to open in the fall in Denver and New York, while others are in various stages of planning in Tucson, Ariz.; Waukegan, Ill.; Boston and Lawrence, Mass.; Cleveland; New Bern, N.C.; and New Brunswick, N.J.

The reason for Cristo Rey's success is simple, Father Foley said: It provides an economically viable way to bring Catholic education

Education

back into inner-city neighborhoods. Under the plan, four students share an entry-level clerical job at a local company, each working five days a month. Instead of paying them, the companies pay the school \$25,000 for the year.

That covers Cristo Rey's nine-and-a-half months of school. About half the companies offer students summer jobs, for which the students are paid directly.

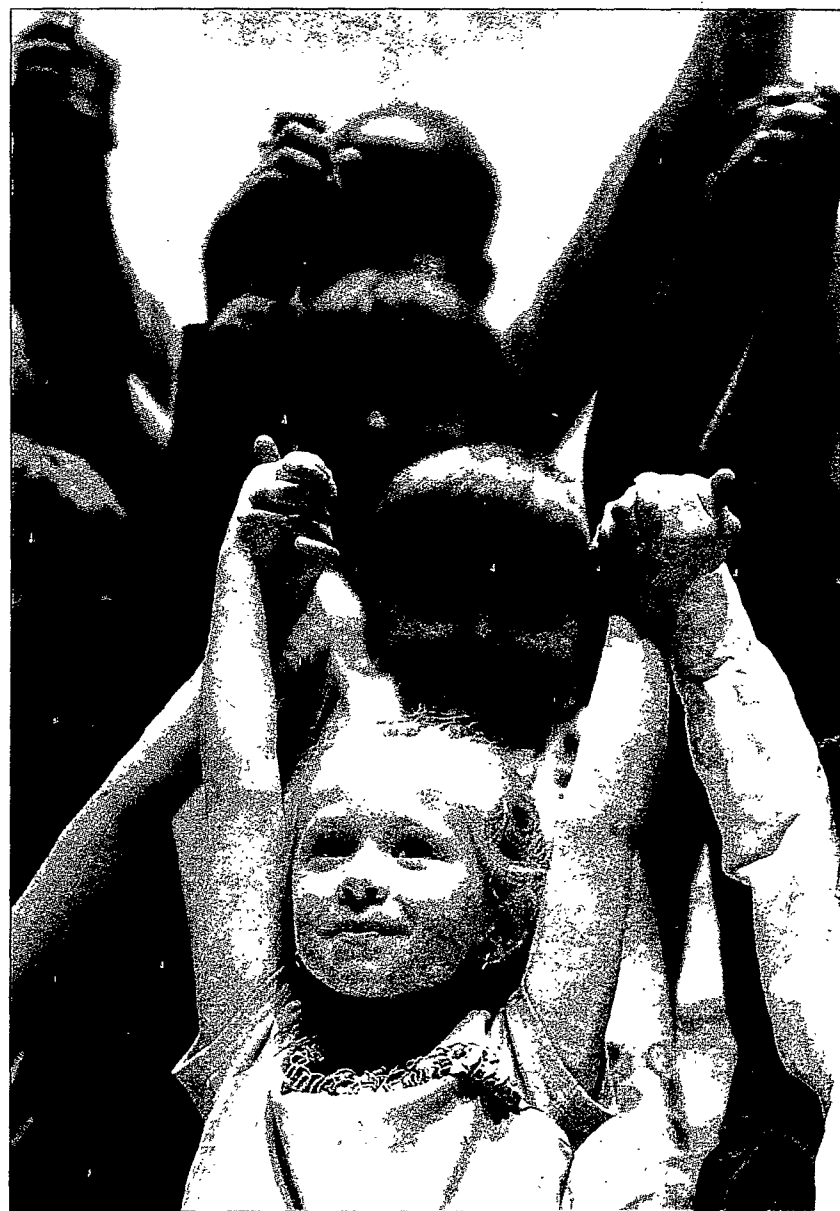
The foundations' grant money will be used for the development of 12 new schools, including those planned to open in the next two years.

Tom Vander Ark, Gates Foundation director of education, said the foundation wants to provide as many quality options for poor and minority students as possible, and said the small public schools the foundation supports have learned much from their Catholic counterparts.

While Cristo Rey was specifically created to allow low-income families to get the advantages of a Catholic education, Father Foley said, for many students, the financial benefits of their internships are secondary.

The students gain valuable work experience, contacts in the professional world, mentors and role models and even a chance to explore career options they might not have considered.

"Worlds open up for them," said Father Foley.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Musical performance

Katie Huurman performs with other Nazareth Hall Elementary School first-graders May 22 during their spring concert.

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