Four Blue Ribbon Schools

Four Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis were named national “Blue Ribbon Schools” for 2003: St. Paul School, Sellersburg; St. Louis School, Batesville; St. Jude School and Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. Roncalli earned the honor for the third time and St. Jude for the second. And, their repeat performances are even more remarkable because the schools were evaluated using a new set of standards under the new federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation. School leaders received their Blue Ribbons in Washington, D.C., in late October.

Archdiocesan schools received four of only 47 awards to private or parochial schools, and the archdiocese had more winners than any other Catholic diocese in the nation. The new standards judge a school on either academic superiority or significant increases in student performance. A total of 214 public and private schools were honored across the country.

St. Paul School in Sellersburg nearly closed a few years ago when enrollment dipped under 100. It now has 298 students and a new activities center built and shared with a neighboring parish, St. Joseph Hill. Recently, each student was given a blue ribbon and a letter announcing news of the award to take home.

A total of ten schools in the archdiocese, including the four honored this year, have received national Blue Ribbons for Excellence in past years: Holy Family School, New Albany; St. Charles School, Bloomington; Our Lady of Providence High School, Clarksville; St. Lawrence School, St. Mark School and Cathedral High School, all in Indianapolis.

The Blue Ribbon Award reflects well on school administrators, teachers, staff, supportive parents and motivated students. It is also a tribute to the entire archdiocesan network of Catholic schools.

Four archdiocesan principals are shown in Washington, D.C., after receiving their school’s Blue Ribbon Award: (Left to right) Fran Matusky, St. Paul, Sellersburg; Sr. James Michael Kesterson, SP, St. Jude, Indianapolis; Mike Amrhein, St. Louis, Batesville; and, Chuck Weisenbach, Roncalli High School, Indianapolis.
**Communication Improvements**

Recently we asked the following question of ourselves at the Office of Catholic Education: In the light of staff and budget cutbacks and heavy e-mail traffic to constituents, how can the OCE facilitate formal written communication to constituents more economically, with more regularity, less overall effort, less paper, fewer individual e-mailings, and exercise quality control of all mass communications to constituents?

Our final answer has several aspects that we think will go a long ways toward answering the question.

First, we decided to drop the monthly *Good Word* memos to school and faith formation administrators. These were sizable formally formatted newsletters that took several people several days of labor to deliver to principals and parish administrators of religious education in a timely manner.

Second, we will replace the monthly *Good Word* memos with brief simply formatted weekly e-mail “notes” (OCE-notes or E-notes) to all faith formation administrators, school administrators and youth ministers each Thursday. *E-notes will become the primary way that the Office of Catholic Education will communicate with its major constituencies.* The content will be mostly informational regarding upcoming events, deadlines, requirements, etc. rather than “news”.

Third, we will use urgent mass e-mailings to constituents only when absolutely necessary. *OCE urgent or U-urgent messages will be those occasional critical time-sensitive messages that a field staff member needs to send to our major constituencies.* These are messages that cannot be held for the weekly E-notes or are of a special nature requiring separate handling, responses, etc. (examples: death announcements, legislative alerts, cancellation or change of time or place for events, etc.).

Fourth, we will continue publish the *Good Word from the Office of Catholic Education* three times a year. This is a formal newsletter to circulate news about education and faith formation to a wider group of readers including all the regular groups mentioned above, as well as all priests, parish life coordinators and many friends of Catholic Education.

Key publication times will be: September (back-to-school and Catechetical Sunday), January (Catholic Schools Week) and May (end of academic/program) year. It will be formatted on desktop publishing software and professionally printed and mailed with generous help from Hobby Copy Printers.

Fifth, there is also a project to improve/streamline telephone responses from OCE. We are working with consultants to design a new telephone intake process.

Last, but possibly most importantly, we will use the new and improved OCE Web Page to provide current information on events, programs, news, etc. Public documents such as the Good Word newsletters, press releases, notices, etc., will be posted under News Pages on the front page of the web site. The web page has a sophisticated calendar function that allows direct connection from e-mail to information about events and online registration. Articles in E-notes will refer directly to web page articles and event links in the weekly mailing and other correspondence. It will also allow for forums or “chat groups” on topics of interest to educators, parents and others.

The phone intake project and the improvement of the web site have been made possible through the grant for Project EXCEED from Lilly Endowment Inc. and generous corporate and individual donors as part of the objectives on better data management and communication.

**TAP Teachers Attend Conference**

Thirty-one principals, master, mentor and career teachers from the archdiocesan Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) attended the TAP conference in Charleston, South Carolina, in November. The fourth annual conference focused on the theme “TAP Turns Four: Progress, Challenges, and Solutions.”

Archdiocesan principals and teachers participated as presenters in several sessions. In a session titled “What is a Cluster Group and How Does it Function,” the intermediate cluster from St. Lawrence School, Indianapolis, led by mentor teacher, Pam Wells, modeled a cluster group in action. *Our Lady of Lourdes* principal, Rob Rash, was a panelist in the “TAP Implementation Nuts and Bolts” session, while Betty Popp, principal at *St. Lawrence* led a discussion session on “Leadership is Fundamental.” Sara Browning, master teacher from Central Catholic School, assisted with “The Pivotal Role of the Master Teacher” question and answer forum.

The conference gave educators the opportunity to share both the successes and challenges of implementing TAP within their schools. TAP is a program of school reform sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation that provides a “career ladder” for teachers who become mentor, master or career teachers; plan and train together intensively in “clusters;” and are rewarded for successes in student performance. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is now in its second year of TAP.

The TAP program in Indianapolis is funded mainly through Project EXCEED, which is made possible by a challenge grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., and matching gifts from generous corporate and individual donors and the Milken Family Foundation.

**True Spirituality consists of:**

--Presence
--Caring
--Perseverance
--Struggle and pain

Rev. Hillary Otsenmeyer, O.S.B.

**Tish Pyritz Honored**

Patricia “Tish” Pyritz is the Indiana School Social Worker of the Year. She was nominated by her peers and honored by the Indiana School Social Work Association and the Indiana Department of Education. Tish is Director of the School Social Work Services Program of Catholic Social Services supervising 15 professionals serving Catholic schools in Indianapolis. She also chairs the School Crisis Response Team available to all archdiocesan schools in times of crisis. She has served the archdiocese for 16 years. Congratulations, Tish, the first non-public school social worker to receive this award.
2004 Tribute to Teachers

The third annual Mother Theodore Guerin Awards: Tribute to Teachers will take place on Wednesday, February 11, at Primo Banquet Hall, Indianapolis. The awards are named for Blessed Mother Theodore Guerin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, whose dedication to excellence in teaching continues to inspire Catholic educators nearly 150 years later. Each of the seventy-two Catholic schools in the archdiocese is asked to select one outstanding teacher based on a set of exemplary teacher criteria in spiritual, relational, instructional, and leadership areas. In addition to the awards for exemplary teachers, the Tribute to Teachers event will also recognize those individuals who have taught in the archdiocesan schools for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or more years. Archbishop Daniel Buechlein and Executive Director of Catholic Education, Mickey Lentz, will present the awards to the 2004 recipients.

Clean Sweep for 3 State Football Champs

Three Catholic high school football teams from interparochial high schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis recently won their respective Class State Football Championships – all with shutouts.

Cardinal Ritter High School's Raiders beat Seeger High School for the Class A championship 28-0. The Bishop Chatard Trojans outscored Northwood by 49-0 for the Class 3A championship, and the Roncalli Rebels swept past unbeaten East Noble 17-0.

It was Bishop Chatard’s third consecutive year for a state championship and both Roncalli and Bishop Chatard tied the state record with seven state titles each to date.

Certainly these successes speak well of the players, the coaches and a system that produces teams of excellence. Detractors might say that Catholic schools have an advantage. If they do, it is most likely in the CYO football program that the vast majority of the players went through as grade school students. According to CYO Director, Ed Tinder, "easy 90 percent of the players in the Indianapolis interparochial high schools are products of CYO teams." This three-tier program begins with third and fourth graders, then continues with fifth/sixth and seventh/eighth grade teams playing city-wide.

According to Mr. Tinder, these teams are coached by committed volunteers and are open to both Catholic school and public school children from the parishes and schools throughout the metro area. Most public school football programs start in higher grades and are coached by paid employees. Over 100 football teams and some 2000 boys were involved in CYO football this past fall.

Congratulations to the players, coaches and high schools as well as the CYO coaches and programs that helped to motivate and produce such teams of excellence.

Holy Spirit School Band Hits the Road

The performance schedule for the Holy Spirit Middle School Band expanded considerably during the 2003 pre-Christmas season as the fourteen band members and their director, music teacher Brenda Dugan, took their talents on the road. The band, composed of students in grades six, seven, and eight usually performs at school pep rallies and music programs and participates in the annual CYO music contest. In 2003, this Indianapolis group also performed at two Green Tree assisted Living Homes and at Washington Square Mall. Since their music was so enthusiastically welcomed by both Green Tree residents and mall shoppers, Principal Rita Parsons reports that plans are underway to continue this outreach to the community.

The Holy Spirit Middle School Band enrichment program was established in 2001 by Brenda Dugan who is confident that exposing students to the fine arts can lead to increased success in other academic areas. Ms Dugan notes, “research by the College Entrance Examination Board has shown that students who study the arts continually outscore their non-arts peers on the SAT.” In 2002, SAT takers with coursework and experience in music performances scored 57 points higher on the verbal section and 41 points higher on the math section.” Ms. Dugan also cites the need to prepare students for participating in high school bands and calls her program a "stepping stone to building good high school band programs.” The Holy Spirit community can be very proud of the accomplishments the band is making through its diligent practice and service to others.

Year-Round Gets Two Thumbs Up!

In August, 2002, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis made history when two of its center city schools moved to year-round education. Since that time, Mrs. Kathy Tichenor, principal of Central Catholic, and Mrs. Mary Pat Sharpe, former principal of All Saints School, have reported many successes and feel that the change was a good one.

Both Mrs. Tichenor and Mrs. Sharpe have reported seeing a renewed sense of spirit and improved attitudes in their respective students. The level of enthusiasm for learning, according to both principals, gives a different feel to the climate of the schools. In addition, the time spent during inter-sessions – the period when regular classes are not in session – is well spent. Students are engaged in enrichment activities that are embedded with mathematics and language arts basics. Mrs. Sharpe indicates that it’s wonderful to be able to involve children in the kinds of activities they normally would not be able to do without the bonus time that the inter-sessions provide.

Not only do the students appear to be happier, but the teachers are also reaping the benefits of a year-round calendar. Mrs. Tichenor indicates that her faculty members have more opportunities to stop and refresh themselves, not only physically, but emotionally as well. Perhaps most importantly, they feel as though they really have the time to do what they should be doing as teachers – concentrating on their students’ learning. And, it appears that this time well-spent is paying off.

This fall, Central Catholic reported an increase in their overall ISTEP+ results. While it may be too early to tell whether or not a year-round calendar will positively impact standardized test scores, Mrs. Tichenor certainly believes it played a role in this year’s results. Both principals indicated enthusiastically that “time will tell.”
Pat Musgrave Honored

Longtime Roncalli High School special needs coordinator, Pat Musgrave, is the Indiana Teacher of the Year for the Learning Disabled Association of Indiana. Pat’s program at Roncalli is known as STARS – “Students That Are Ready For Success” – and it serves around 90 students with special needs each school year. Students attend regular high school classes with assistance from Pat and two other resource teachers. Congratulations Pat and Roncalli!

Archdiocesan Mentor Certification Training

In compliance with new Indiana Professional Standards Board certification requirements, the Office of Catholic Education has become a certifying agent for beginning teacher mentors. This district certification has allowed us to design a mentor training program which not only exceeds state proficiencies, in terms of requirements, but also maintains the Catholic identity of our schools.

Now in our first year of mentor training and certification, 56 candidates representing all of our deaneries are training to become certified mentors. We have six different training teams who travel to all corners of the diocese to conduct the intensive 36 hours of instruction needed to complete the course. By the end of this school year, our first cohort of trainees will become fully certified mentors ready to meet the needs next year’s new teachers.

In the intensive six-day training sessions, the essence of the program focuses on cognitive coaching to promote self-reflection, content-specific practices aligned with the Indiana teaching standards, emotional support and encouragement, and information about the cultural norms of the school community. Additionally, the participants are required to complete “The History and Mission of Catholic Schools,” a graduate course offered through Marian College in partnership with the archdiocese.

The overall aim of the certification program is to produce quality mentor teachers who will share their skills and expertise with beginning teachers. In doing so, it is our hope to reverse the current national trend – fifty-percent of all new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years – by offering the support necessary to retain quality teachers in our schools. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is currently the only Catholic “district” in the state that has an approved program for providing this kind of training and support for mentors and new teachers. All of this has been made possible with funding from the Project EXCEED grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. and other generous corporate and individual donors who have contributed matching funds.
What is Project EXCEED?

The Lilly Endowment Inc. grant of $10 million, matched with $5 million in additional funding from generous corporate and individual donors, has made possible Project EXCEED. The project has allowed the staff of the Office of Catholic Education and the project staff to help Catholic educators put theory into practice by implementing a vast array of proven best practices in our Catholic schools. The following outline provides an overview of the many initiatives currently underway in Project EXCEED. Each initiative is directly linked to one or more of the three major goals (below) delineated in the original program proposal.

As these initiatives are successfully implemented in our Marion County Catholic schools, most are then replicated in our schools outside Marion County. Our own teachers and administrators, trained and qualified through Project EXCEED, are sharing best practices in schools throughout the archdiocese, affording all schools the opportunity to meet the objectives of the grant proposal and ultimately to improve student performance.

Project EXCEED Goals and Initiatives

Goal 1: Recruit, retain, reward and develop the best Catholic school teachers and administrators

- CELL (Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning) -- a program partnership with the University of Indianapolis for school reform
- Mentor Teacher Certification using the state-approved training program with assistance from Marian College
- NCA (North Central Association) School Improvement Planning and Accreditation
- Project REACH (Recognizing Excellence in All Children) -- brain compatible and multi-sensory reading courses providing the tools for teachers to reach all children
- SRI Teacher Perceiver Training for principals to aid in the selection and retention of quality teachers
- Milken Family Foundation TAP (Teacher Advancement Program) -- a “master teacher career ladder program” to challenge and reward excellent teachers and administrators
- Visionary Leadership -- a group of principals pursuing excellence in school leadership

Goal 2: Raise the level of student performance and report their progress

- Extensive gathering of student and school assessment data
- Extensive gathering of satisfaction survey information from parents, staff and graduates
- Value-Added Analysis of testing data -- pre and post testing of student performance to show actual progress
- Development of an electronic standards-based report card
- Pilot testing program in ISTEP grade levels
- Scantron Curriculum Designer for alignment of curriculum with standards
- MISi (Management Information Solutions, Inc.) -- a student and staff data management and data “warehouse” system for accountability and reporting
- OCE website development for improved communication and information sharing

Goal 3: Reach out to special populations with advanced capabilities or special needs

- Learning 24/7 -- Consultant assistance in curriculum alignment and customized programs of instruction for urban schools
- Project REACH -- Brain research, differentiated instruction and gifted and talented education preparation for teachers
- Support for schools serving Hispanic Populations including English as a Second Language with Marian College
- Urban school technology implementation programs -- to “level the field” in urban schools’ instructional technology
- Framework for Understanding Poverty -- training for teachers in urban schools
- Lalanne -- teacher placement program in urban schools from University of Dayton
- Shared services: Indianapolis Marian County Public Library branches in urban schools
- Summer coursework for teacher preparation in custom programs for urban schools

For more information about Project EXCEED or any of its initiatives contact Barb Shuey at 317-236-1443 or (800)342-9836, extension 1443 or mail to:bshuey@archindy.org
Remarks from Mickey

Last week I was privileged to represent our archdiocese at the NCEA Centennial Symposium in Washington, DC. The assembly was held to celebrate the past 100 years in Catholic Education and to set the mission for the next era. It was an awesome experience.

Many belief statements were written about Total Catholic Education at the assembly, but I have chosen just a few to share with you here, specifically about “Catholic Schools: A Faith-Filled Future:”

Catholic schools:
…create an atmosphere which prepares students for a faith-filled future;
…are an “A plus” for America in serving the community, church and nation;
…evangelize along with the church – bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to our students who, in turn, will bring the Good News to the world;
…are the best investment parents can make for their children;
…offer a faith-filled environment in a blend of diversity;
…provide a prophetic voice for our church and our world and strive to educate our youth to integrate Gospel values into their lives;
…expect the best and give the best in a ministry that proclaims the Gospel message of love and hope.

Today, more than ever, we need to uncover the presence of God in all of life, and this is the real value of a Catholic education where faith and knowledge meet. People need to know that this is what we do. Jesus is the reason for our work and continues to call us each day to this ministry.

May God continue to bless those of you who educate our youth and have dedicated your lives to the ministry of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. You make a faith-filled future real today and ensure its promise for tomorrow.

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