

LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

For Our Children and the Future

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS GROW, IMPROVE WITH CENTER-CITY CONSORTIUM

TERRI RODRIGUEZ, PRINCIPAL AT HOLY CROSS CENTRAL SCHOOL, SEES BIG IMPROVEMENTS IN HER SCHOOL. And she's not alone.

As one of six archdiocesan schools in Indianapolis involved in a center-city consortium, Rodriguez observes the overwhelming benefits first-hand. "Before, we were always in the red," she said. "(The aid) frees me up to be what I'm supposed to be and what I'm trained to be—the educational leader. I have time to focus on kids, on the teachers and on the learning."

The consortium started in September with a single goal: to improve Holy Cross and other center-city schools, including St. Philip Neri, Holy Angels, St. Anthony, Central Catholic, and St. Andrew & St. Rita Catholic Academy.



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"It's a collaborative effort where we're all moving in the same direction at the same time," said Connie Zittnan, consortium director. "Our children are going to be the winners out of what we create."

That's where *Legacy for Our Mission* comes in. Campaign funds will support center-city schools while students and teachers focus on academics.

Benefits are already surfacing in the beginning stages. At Holy Cross, test scores have improved steadily over the past

four years. At a time when many schools must cut enrollment for financial reasons, Holy Cross's enrollment grew this year. Rodriguez continuously sets higher goals for the school in her pursuit of improvement.



Holy Cross students work on lessons at the center-city Indianapolis school.

In addition, center-city ISTEP scores have shown a combined improvement of 16 percent since the start of Project EXCEED, a classroom-based initiative funded by a challenge grant through Lilly Endowment Inc. as well as matching gifts from businesses, foundation and individuals. Other changes within the schools include—at St. Philip Neri School—the growing Hispanic enrollment, which is approaching 70 percent of the student body.

And it's the consortium that will enable the schools to better serve their children with various programs. "Our primary goal is to create highly successful schools for our children," Zittnan said. "I don't think we ever have an end in mind—it's a continuous improvement model."

At Holy Cross, many of the programs, including after-school programs, academic programs and various clubs, are now funded by a previous archdiocesan campaign supported by businesses, foundations and individuals. But the school needs additional funding to continue the programs when the grant runs out, and that's what *Legacy for Our Mission* is providing for these inner-city schools.

Financial benefits are just the beginning. By joining in the consortium, the schools can pool their resources to find the best programs for the children. "I think that individually, every school has its strengths, but I think this will allow us to maximize those strengths among all the schools," Zittnan said. "Through this collaborative effort, we can make sure we're putting the best practice in place and that we're going to share the strengths that each one of us has."

Zittnan plans to complete a general overview of the program by mid-November, with details completed by January. As each school continues to grow, the future keeps looking brighter.

"We don't say it enough, but I truly believe that our teachers, our principals, our personnel, our volunteers and all of those who contribute in some way are those who make it happen," Zittnan said. "I feel blessed to be a part of this consortium."

Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's upcoming capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as Catholic education. By contributing to Legacy for Our Mission through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to Catholic education programs and distributed to organizations such the center-city consortium.