CRISTO REY, THE "SCHOOL THAT WORKS" – "$60 MINUTES WEDNESDAY" ON CBS

These days there is no shortage of news about the sad state of education in the country's inner cities-gangs, drugs and high dropout rates, among other things. So one might be surprised to learn there is a high school in Chicago where every graduating senior is being accepted to college and many of them will be the first in their family to ever attend. Correspondent Vicki Mabrey goes inside Cristo Rey Jesuit High and talks with the faculty and students about the success of the "school that works," on 60 MINUTES WEDNESDAY October 27, 2004 (8:00-9:00 PM, ET/PT) on the CBS Television Network.

The Cristo Rey Jesuit High School was founded in 1996 to advance the human, intellectual and religious capacities of the families it serves, while respecting their cultural heritage. But while it was founded for them, Father John Foley and his fellow Jesuits knew that the students in this immigrant neighborhood wouldn't be able to afford the tuition. Armed with a unique vision, they went to the businesses of Chicago to request support, but not charity. Father Foley says, "We went out and knocked on doors. And said, would you give us a job?" Meaning, would they give their students jobs? "We're getting too many yeses. This is gonna work. We're going to have to do this!"

It's not your average American high school. The students at Cristo Rey spend 4 extended days in class and one day at work. Cristo Rey has its own employment agency and contracts with Chicago corporations to provide work study for its students. Salaries are paid directly to the school which covers most of the students' tuition. Students must adhere to a strict set of rules issued on day one which dictates how they are to conduct themselves even down to the manner in which they dress and wear their hair. To get them ready for the corporate world, freshmen endure "boot camp" where they learn how to give a firm handshake, make good eye-contact, practice good hygiene and use office equipment.

For the 500 carefully selected students at Cristo Rey, exposure to the corporate world is the experience of a lifetime. Alex Macias explains, "We're looked at as equals. You know, it-it surpasses that we're Hispanic. It surpasses that we're 16, 17, 14. And says, you know, here, go into the corporate world. You're destined to work in these big buildings and who knows? Maybe be the CEO of 'em one day." Americo Ochoa says, "I thought I was gonna get through high school and then after that I'm gonna work construction cause my dad works construction. But now, it's college. Like--I wanna go to college."

With all the success, the school hasn't been immune from tragedy. Dean of Students Rafael Torch says "We've had a lot of gang problems here. Shootings happen. And people die. And-- and-- and this is happening in their neighborhoods." It happened to Sergio Garcia, Class of 2004 hopeful, who was shot and killed in the neighborhood last year. Torch, known to students as "The Enforcer" says "You are in a gang or you are not. And if you are gonna come to school and you're gonna act like one, we don't want you here." Mabrey asks, "Aren't you just sending them openly into the arms of the gangs?" Torch replies, "Sure, quite possibly. But at the same time, we're here to educate. We are not here to rehabilitate gang-bangers." Since Garcia's death, Rule #1: No Fraternizing With Gang Members" has been strictly enforced.

All the rules, work and the discipline pay off in the end. Just ten years ago, this Chicago immigrant community had a dropout rate that soared as high as seventy-five percent. In 2004, Cristo Rey posted a dropout rate of less than 1 percent, each graduating senior was accepted to college and of those, the majority will be the first member of their family to attend.

Josh Howard is the executive producer of 60 MINUTES WEDNESDAY and Lisa Cohen is the producer of this report.

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