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Arrupe is a model for success

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A success story is unfolding all too quietly at Arrupe Jesuit High School in northwest Denver. It's a story that deserves to be shouted out loud. The headline on a 9News.com article about the small school said it all: "Every single senior heading to college."

Arrupe students are mostly from groups often doomed to failure. Yet in June, the school will graduate its first class of 47 seniors - and all will go on to college. That's 100 percent - a figure any school would salivate over. And it isn't just the students' destination that stands out, but the journey. They all get real-life work experience, thanks to the school's innovative work- study program.

The graduation numbers are especially meaningful because the school serves primarily low-income, Hispanic students. Educators have been wringing their hands for years over what to do about low-income and Hispanic or black students who drop out of school, or perennially under-perform in class and never make it to college.

They ought to investigate the model at Arrupe, where many of the students have earned merit-based scholarships for college. Nearly 75 percent of the students there qualify for the federal free and reduced-cost lunch program. The average income for an entire family of an Arrupe student is less than \$32,000 a year.

Arrupe is modeled after the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago, and is part of a network of schools that offer college-prep courses to low-income students, who are required to work one day a week in entry-level corporate jobs. The students work at 67 area businesses, including banks, law firms and hospitals, and it's often not just clerical work, or busy work. Students get real-life experience with possible careers, and witness adults at work. The companies that sponsor the students give the school about \$20,000 for the labor and that compensation pays 70 percent of their tuition.

We salute the upcoming graduates of Arrupe Jesuit, and hope they're just the beginning of a long tradition of Arrupe graduates who serve their communities and get a hand up in return.

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