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Submitted » **How does HFCA measure a successful kindergartener? It's not what you think**



HFCA kindergarten students and supporters cheering on classmates in their Run for Your Wild Life fundraising event. After learning about endangered animals, students raised almost \$4,000 to support Wildlife Conservation Network.HFCA Staff

Kindergarten success is often measured by the students' ability to recognize upper and lowercase letters, count to 100, develop self and social awareness, and become an emerging reader. At Holy Family Catholic Academy (Inverness), success in kindergarten extends beyond the intellectual gains. Success at HFCA is measured when their youngest learners become leaders and move their newly gained knowledge to action.

HFCA, the only International Baccalaureate World School (IB) in the Northwest suburbs, has designed a nationally and internationally recognized thinking curriculum that challenges learners to go beyond a basic understanding of facts, to make connections, and ultimately apply their learning to new situations outside of the classroom. States Principal Kate O'Brien, "The IB framework provides our teachers with worldwide best practices in education which helps us extend our students' learning by applying their knowledge and problem solving skills to make a difference in the larger community."

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The IB framework consists of six trans-disciplinary units that present students with authentic problem solving challenges. The final unit in the kindergarten curriculum looked at how plants and animals need to grow and change, and humans need to care for the earth. Each student researched a favorite animal, built a habitat in the classroom, and visited the zoo to see their animals up close. As they presented their animals to the class, the students had to indicate if the animal was safe, threatened, or endangered. The young learners became passionate about helping the endangered animals, some even moved to tears. States HFCA kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Elizabeth Kruse, "The students actively participated in their own learning which prompted them to take responsibility to save the animals." They decided on a Run for Your Wild Life and shared what they learned with family and friends near and far. They researched organizations that could help and raised almost \$4,000 which was donated to the Wildlife Conservation Network. The organization acknowledged these 49 students publicly by saying, "The passion these children have is contagious, and their love for wildlife gives us so much hope for the future. We are so inspired by their generosity and compassion at such a young age."

Mrs. Kruse and Mrs. Lauren Longmeyer, Teacher Assistant agreed that the lesson encompassed a full circle of learning. "Our kindergarten students were challenged to build their knowledge, share it with each other, and apply their learning to help make a difference. The whole experience truly touched our hearts as teachers."

The motto for HFCA's more than 500 students in preschool through grade 8 is to become global thinkers, leaders grounded in faith. Mission accomplished for HFCA kindergarten learners.

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