Sister Elizabeth (Isaac Jogues) Pardo, IHM, knows her way around the field of education, so it’s no wonder that when she left teaching and school administration, her ministry remained school-based.

Sister Liz is the grant writer consultant for Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School in Chicago. She has an enviable success rate in securing grants for the school: between 70 and 85 percent of the proposals she submits to foundations are funded.

“When I was a school principal, I was aware of the many grant opportunities available to schools such as mine. There was never the time or the resources to pursue them,” says Sister Liz.

Sister Liz finished her full-time ministry as principal of Epiphany School in the Little Village community in Chicago in 2007. She learned (through Sister Mary Ann Penner, IHM) that Mother McAuley, an all-girls school with an enrollment of more than 1,200 students, was looking for a part-time grant specialist. She met with the school’s Institutional Advancement team and was hired for 20 hours per week.

“When I started, I did a needs assessment throughout the school, which was a good way to learn something of the history and successes of a McAuley education,” Sister Liz recalls. “Then I presented the results to the administrative team and the Board of Directors, prioritized the needs and went to work. In my first year, about 75 percent of the submitted proposals were funded. That was very affirming.

“I was part-time for three years and now serve as a consultant. Although I still work at least two days a week, the schedule allows me to volunteer at a local hospital and teach English as a second language (ESL).”

Mother McAuley High School is a liberal arts school with a daily attendance of 98 percent and a graduation rate that has been at 100 percent for the past five years. The school is committed to providing a quality education for its young women, and Sister Liz is always looking for innovative ways to help the school achieve its goals. She works closely with the faculty and administration, listening to their needs and ideas and providing the guidance necessary to write a successful grant proposal.

“Sometimes it’s a challenge for me to help people understand that grant proposals are about building relationships with people and connecting people with people – not just about getting the money,” she notes. “Once a good relationship is established, funding is rarely a one-time deal.”

The relationship-building aspect of her ministry is one of Sister Liz’s biggest rewards.

“When I first started, I went back through the grant records at the school,” she says. “I discovered a foundation that had given funds consistently many years before, but the school had not kept up the contact. I resurrected the relationship and have gotten grants each year since. Seeing the fruits of my work is another reward.”
But Sister Liz – who ministered as an elementary school teacher, in special education, as a learning disabilities specialist and as a principal – knows the biggest reward goes even deeper.

“Knowing that what I do is building for the future; knowing the young women educated here are going to make a difference in our world – that’s my reward,” she quietly observes.