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KIPP students heading to boarding schools

Two eighth-grade graduates to attend out-of-state schools this fall

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Some of Austin's students are heading off to boarding school this fall.

KIPP Ascend Charter School, 715 S. Kildare, will send some of their graduating eighth graders to out-of-state high schools where they'll attend classes and live in dorms on campus.

KIPP Ascend, part of the Knowledge Is Power Program national school network, actively recruits the best high schools for their students, including boarding schools around the country.

Sister and brother Darrionna and Darnell Barnes, are two KIPP's students set to take the unique experience. Darrionna will attend Phillip Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and Darnell Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts.

The Austin siblings are looking forward to the experience.

"I'm not so much nervous as I am excited," said Darrionna. "I would like living on campus because I don't have to worry about being late and I can study with friends. It teaches responsibility."

Darnell added, "I'm excited and jubilant, but kind of scared for my parents because they may be scared for me. There is more to dorm life than there is day school and I'm excited about that."

Their mother, Catece Sanders, said she's very comfortable sending her children off to a boarding school. Sanders describes the school's environment as welcoming, sociable, and very diverse.

"I'm not nervous at all," she said. "They (schools visited) made me feel so comfortable that I could have left them there the same day. They were very attentive to our needs. I did not know what to expect but had expectations."

Her kids actually wanted to go to a boarding school and came to her with the idea. Sanders left it up to them to do the academic part while she researched the schools.

"Boarding schools also teach students that the sky is the limit," she said. "They teach them to be leaders."

Carol Hill, director of development at KIPP Ascend, stressed what type of behavior the school expects from their former students. Hill explained that the students are just like any others needing guidance and learning how to respect others. Sanders added that just because KIPP is in a low-income neighborhood,

Moving out: Darrionna Barnes and her grandmother at KIPP Ascend Charter School's eighth-grade graduation in June. Darrionna will attend a boarding school in New Hampshire this fall.

Kipp Ascend School

that doesn't mean children here can not grow and learn.

"What KIPP is doing is what the kids need for college and life," she said.

Rebecca Farell, KIPP Ascend's business manager, explained how the Barnes children and other students are "KIPPmitized" when it comes to behavioral expectations.

"We are strict for the first couple of weeks into the school year," she said. "We call mothers if the kids talk back [and] we teach team-building strategies."

Darnell and Darrionna agreed that KIPP has helped them prepare for a boarding-school education. For Darnell, KIPP was strict at times, but overall, helpful, he said.

"I would not have gotten a better education at my other school. KIPP teaches us to do the right thing, because it is right."

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