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## KIPP Officials Answer Your Questions

### Knowledge Is Power Program Sends 80 Percent of Its Students to College

Oct. 17, 2007 —

Two days ago we invited you to pose questions in response to Bill Weir's piece on the Knowledge Is Power Program. We sent your questions to the leaders of the program and KIPP public affairs director Steve Mancini's answers are below.

*Question:* Hi, I'd be interested in knowing what the average teacher:student ratio is in KIPP schools and what the average percentage of special ed kids is in KIPP schools? Thanks, Bill Gammon

**Steve Mancini:** The average student-to-teacher ratio at KIPP is 16 to 1. Class size at KIPP depends on the subject being taught and can vary amongst different KIPP schools. The actual class sizes at KIPP schools can reach 30 students in some instances. Regardless of the class size, KIPP is committed to hiring teachers who will do whatever it takes to ensure that students will learn.

All KIPP schools are open-enrollment public schools. We do not pre-screen students at KIPP. The percentage of special education students at KIPP schools ranges from no students at some schools to more than 20 percent at others. At KIPP Academy Lynn outside of Boston, 22 percent of the young people are special education students. KIPP Lynn students appeared in the Oct. 15 ABC "World News" piece participating in an outward bound field trip activity in Wiscasset, Maine.

*Question:* My son is currently in his third year at KIPP Tech Valley in Albany, N.Y. I was wondering if there were any plans to build a high school somewhere in the Northeast?

**Steve Mancini:** In its third year, KIPP Tech Valley currently serves students in fifth- through seventh-grades, and will add an eighth-grade in 2008. KIPP Tech Valley consistently has some of the highest student achievement of any public middle school serving predominantly low-income students in Albany.

As more KIPP middle schools have reached maturity and sent eighth-grade students on to high school, we have recognized a need to increase the supply of rigorous public high schools in many of our communities. To that end, KIPP has begun creating college-preparatory high schools as extensions of our existing middle schools.

Through the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, KIPP has opened public high schools in the following locations: Gaston, N.C.; Helena, Ark.; Houston; Newark, N.J.; and San Lorenzo, Calif.

The decision to open a new KIPP high school is up to the local KIPP Tech Valley board of directors. We suggest that you communicate directly with Dan Ceaser  your KIPP school leader in Albany  to inquire about a high school.

*Question:* I just saw the report on KIPP schools tonight and I am VERY intrigued. I too am a teacher,

but more importantly, I am a parent to five beautiful children. I feel like our public school system is failing my children, especially at the secondary level. What is the process of bringing such a school to our area or is there one in the Detroit/Ann Arbor area?

**Steve Mancini:** We are pleased to learn about your interest in bringing KIPP to Detroit.

Each year, KIPP uses an application process in order to select new communities for future KIPP school expansion. We select new sites nearly two years in advance due to the requirement that all KIPP schools are led by outstanding educators who apply to and are selected for our yearlong principal training program.

We plan to reopen our application process in 2008 to consider new site proposals for the 2010-2011 school year. In the meantime, please visit [http://www.kipp.org/07/KIPP\\_RFP\\_2006\\_Questions.pdf](http://www.kipp.org/07/KIPP_RFP_2006_Questions.pdf) to view a copy of the application from last year's application process in order to gain a sense of the local effort required to bring KIPP to your community.

*Question:* Thank you so much for the story on the innovative KIPP Academy. It is important that educators share our successes and our failures with colleagues in an effort to effect change on the grandest scale possible. What scholarly research is available on KIPP?

**Steve Mancini:** We agree that it is essential to share our insights and lessons learned with the greater education community. To date, KIPP has been the subject of five independent reports that have examined KIPP's effect on student achievement. Those reports have found that students make significant academic gains while at KIPP schools. A complete listing of each report can be found on our Web site at: <http://www.kipp.org/01/independentreports.cfm>.

Here are a few examples of findings from studies on KIPP:

In March 2006, the Menlo Park, Calif.-based SRI International released a report that found that students attending Bay Area KIPP schools "score consistently higher on standardized tests than for comparable public neighborhood schools across grades and subjects □ in a few cases dramatically so."

In addition, a report issued in August 2005 by the Virginia Beach, Va.-based Educational Policy Institute found that KIPP fifth-grade students made "large and significant gains" as compared to the average for urban public school students.

With the generous support of The Atlantic Philanthropies, KIPP will commission a comprehensive, multiyear study to measure the relative impact of the KIPP model on student outcomes over time.

*Question:* Is there a KIPP Web site where we can view a list of school locations? I am a middle school teacher in South Florida, and I was inspired with your school model. I would be willing to work the longer hours and have students call me at home, if it meant that I would have students that are truly interested in learning and an administration that values discipline and order in school. I'm also the mother of two middle school students, and I would love for them to be in a KIPP school.

**Steve Mancini:** We appreciate you sharing your thoughts on our KIPP model. KIPP has grown from one school in Houston to 57 locally run KIPP schools in 17 states and Washington, D.C. For a complete list (and map) of KIPP school locations, please visit <http://www.kipp.org/09/schools/list.cfm>.

*Question:* My name is Andrew De La Rosa and I attend the University of Houston downtown. I'm in my

second year and majoring in interdisciplinary education with the subject of history as my specialty. What do I need to do to become a teacher at one of your schools in Houston?

**Steve Mancini:** We are excited to learn about your interest in teaching at KIPP. KIPP principals are always looking for passionate and dedicated teachers to set our young people up for success. We believe that great teachers are at the heart and soul of KIPP. Teaching the hardest-working students requires the hardest-working teachers.

The rewards of this hard work are endless. KIPP teachers ensure that students in educationally underserved communities receive a college-preparatory education. KIPP teachers thrive on being part of a relentless team that fosters a culture of personal and academic excellence. This culture of high expectations does not happen in just one classroom; it permeates the entire building and results in a high quality public education.

To learn more about teaching at KIPP and how to apply, please visit <http://www.kipp.org/teach>.

A growing number of teachers are deciding they are up to the challenge of building a KIPP school from the ground up one grade at a time. Before opening a KIPP school, we train all prospective KIPP principals through the rigorous and highly selective Fisher Fellowship. The deadline for applications is Nov. 16, 2007. To learn more, go to <http://www.kipp.org/03/>.

*Question:* Wow! Just look at the energy generated by the story! Why aren't there MORE of these schools? Interest is great and parents are hopeful. May KIPP and schools like KIPP have a successful future for the sake of our youth and education in America. It is wonderful to see such stories.

**Steve Mancini:** Thanks. We appreciate your optimism about what is possible for our young people in America. KIPP strives to ensure that as many children as possible across the country have access to a high quality public education.

KIPP began in 1994 when two teachers, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, launched a fifth-grade public school program in inner-city Houston, after completing their commitment to Teach for America. In 1995, Feinberg remained in Houston to lead KIPP Academy Middle School, and Levin returned home to New York to establish KIPP Academy in the South Bronx.

With the support of Doris and Donald Fisher, co-founders of the Gap, Inc., KIPP has grown from two schools serving roughly 600 students to a national network of 57 schools serving more than 14,000 students. We are working on growing the number of KIPP schools in order to serve as many students as possible. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to open and maintain a KIPP school, and we want to be sure that all KIPP schools that we open provide the best possible college-preparatory education for its students.

*Question:* The kids enrolled in KIPP are very bright, enough to understand they are at an advantage to kids who haven't had access to KIPP for any number of reasons, including geographical inaccessibility, a parent's decision against attendance, or simply never having heard of the program. Won't some of the children develop arrogance for having been so much more fortunate than those who only experienced a "normal" public education?

*Steve Mancini:* KIPP believes that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, can learn and be successful in college and in life. At KIPP, we strive to unlock doors of potential for students and turn underachievers into overachievers. We also believe that developing character skills such as honesty,

*integrity and respect for others are just as important as academic skills. Our aspiration is that KIPP students will not only go to college, but will give back to the community and help more kids climb the mountain to and through college.*

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