



Fall 2006 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

We just finished up the first quarter at KIPP Ascend, and we're already off to a year full of promise and potential. With the release of last spring's preliminary ISAT test results, we learned that **our founding class of students (now eighth graders) ranked in the top 2% of non-selective schools citywide!** It's no surprise, then, that these students are being highly recruited by top high schools from across the country. College prep schools including Lake Forest Academy, Phillips Exeter, Miss Porter's School, Kent School, Milton Academy, and Avon Old Farms School participated in KIPP Ascend's first High School Fair last month, and admissions representatives were very impressed with the caliber of our students.



In addition to preparing for top high schools, our students know that it's never too early to start thinking about college. In October, our fifth and sixth graders toured the campus of DePaul University with members of the Black Student Union and enjoyed performances by DePaul's Gospel Choir and Step Team. Our students are already asking about the next field lesson to a college campus!

Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to visit our school and lend your support over the past months. We truly appreciate your time, effort, and interest in our students' academic success!

Continue reading for more school updates from KIPP Ascend...

A Full House at Casino Night



The hot ticket in town on September 28 was to our first-ever Casino Night event! KIPP Co-Founder Mike Feinberg joined over 130 guests at the Sears Tower for a memorable night of casino style games and prizes. Generously sponsored by The Metropolitan Club of Chicago, the event raised over \$7,000 to support our hard-working students as they prepare for top-quality high schools, colleges, and the competitive world beyond.

Special thanks to Jessica Otis and the Young Executives Board at the Metropolitan Club, and to all of our volunteer dealers!

MBA Students Make an Impact

For the second year in a row, KIPP Ascend welcomed over 70 students from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management as part of the MBA program's Community Impact Day on September 7. The student volunteers had a tremendous effect in just a few short hours! Projects included: assembling student desks, painting our basketball court and hallways with motivational school slogans, scraping and painting the exterior building fence, as well as labeling and organizing library inventory. Thank you, Kellogg students, for your generosity and service to our students!

SAP Volunteers Set Students Up For Success



On October 14, employees from SAP's Westchester, Illinois office partnered with KIPP Ascend during the software company's National Week of Service.

We were thrilled to have over 20 dedicated (and strong!) volunteers and their family members move furniture and files into our new administrative office space, as well as finish up various painting projects around the school. SAP employee Tony Viviano also coordinated a donation of over 100 student desks for our upper-level classrooms. Volunteers formed an assembly line system up the stairwell to

remove old desks and replace them with the new ones.

Our staff enjoyed the volunteers' enthusiasm and energy throughout the morning, and we sincerely appreciate SAP's long-term commitment to supporting our KIPP students.

Focus On: Grant Awards

We're excited to share the news of two major grants that have been awarded to our school:

A \$144,500 grant from the **Searle Funds at the Chicago Community Trust** will support KIPP Ascend's Continual Assessment Model for Quality Teaching and Learning. The model provides a platform for improving both teaching and learning across grade levels and subject areas. Standards-based assessments are administered to students every five weeks in each subject. Data from these assessments is used to guide curriculum design, steer professional development, and inform remediation plans for students who are struggling with mastery.

Thanks to a \$60,000 grant from the **Steans Family Foundation**, KIPP Ascend has implemented a Library & Literacy Initiative aimed at improving reading achievement for its 5th grade students. After reading "just right" books targeted to their current fluency and comprehension skills, students take computer-based quizzes to test their content knowledge. Reports provide faculty with real-time information regarding student progress. "Accuracy rates are used to determine which students are reading with proficiency and which students need additional support. Students can also use the reports to monitor their own progress and work towards their individual reading goals," says English Language Arts teacher Amy Poubia. If you are interested in donating books to our growing library, [click here to visit our Amazon Book Wish List](#).

Donors Choose KIPP Ascend

Several of our teachers – Cassie Blickem (Math), Rebecca Boncher (Science), and Will Mejia (Physical Education) – have been awarded grants from individual donors through DonorsChoose.org, an online database for public school teachers to post proposals for classroom resources. So far this year, we've received challenging math games, yoga mats for Saturday school, judo mats for PE class, and team starter packs for soccer and volleyball, our two newest club sports. To read more about our proposals on Donorschoose.org, or to fund a current project, [click here](#).

Mark Your Calendars!



Join us for KIPP Ascend's first-ever **Career Day** on December 1, and share your college and professional experiences with our students. For more information, please [contact Lauren Winkates](#).

Who doesn't need a break from holiday shopping downtown? Stop by the State Street Old Navy store on Saturday, December 9 to hear our very own **Rhythm & Strings Orchestra** perform classic holiday favorites. Stay tuned for details!

Our quarterly **Breakfast Open House** is the perfect time to visit our school to learn more about how KIPP Ascend is putting students from Chicago's West Side on the path to college. Bring a friend, neighbor, or co-worker, and come see our hard-working students in action! The next Open House is scheduled for Tuesday, January 23 at 7:30AM. Please [RSVP to Lauren Winkates](#).

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About KIPP Ascend

Founded in 2003, KIPP Ascend Charter School is a tuition-free college preparatory middle school serving over 300 students from the Austin, West Garfield, and North Lawndale neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side. 100% of students are African-American and Latino, and nearly 90% qualify for the federal free/reduced-price lunch program. Students choose to attend class from 7:25 AM to 5:00 PM during the week, every other Saturday, and four weeks in the summer - almost 70% more time in class than traditional public school students! - so that they can gain the knowledge, skills, and character traits necessary to succeed in top-quality high schools, colleges, and the competitive world beyond. At KIPP Ascend, students "climb the mountain" to college!