



Art Norman's Chicago

By Art Norman

NBC 5 Chicago (WMAQ TV)

September 15, 2003

<http://www.nbc5.com/news/1191996/detail.html>

Newscaster: Well he believes kids on the Westside are just as smart as the kids on the North side. And this rookie principal is out to prove it. He is turning some inner city kids into top-notch students. Meet him now in Art Norman's Chicago.

Art Norman: Thank you Marion and Don. This is a pilot program aimed at kids in one of the cities poorest communities, the Austin community on the West side of Chicago. You are going to meet 5th grade graders who start class, listen to this: they start class everyday at 7:30 in the morning and for many class is not over until 5 pm, a long day but get this... they love it.

John Breen: Are you ready to multiply?

Students: Just watch me and you'll see!

John Breen: Are you ready?

Students: Ready!

John Breen: Are you ready?

Students: Ready!

John Breen: Are you Ready?

Art Norman: In Mr. Breen's math class and for these 5th graders what they are learning is a lot more than just a song. They are preparing to go to college. And to get there they need to be must be superior to good and better than great.

John Breen: Oh, oh, oh, 5 times 7 is.....?

Students: 35. Oh, oh, oh 5 times 7 is 35.

John: Good.

Art Norman: And across the hall is Ms. Hill's 5th grade writing class. Where the subject verb agreement is paramount.

China Hill: If we think Tracy is right give her a clap. <CLAP> Excellent! Yes!

Art Norman: And after several hours of talking about English the music comes on...then its their turn.

This classroom environment is the brain-child of rookie school principal, Jim O'Connor. He knows the kids who walk the hallways with him because he recruited them much like a professional athlete. The selling point was a longer school day and college.

Brenda McElroy: They think a lot of us in Austin don't really want our kids to go to college. Actually I do. It has been on my mind since I first had my little one.

Mr. O'Connor: They like it first because it matches their schedule better. They don't need to worry about that 3 to 5 time period.

Art Norman: What is your favorite subject in this school?

David Wolfe: Math.

Art Norman: And for many of the kids they are really starting to like school because of what they can be when they grow up.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

David Wolfe: I want to be a brain surgeon.

Jim O'Connor: If you talk to our students, they will know universities. They will know several in Chicago. In fact we will visit DePaul in a month. They will know about the Latin School. They will know about the U of C Lab School. They will know about Francis Parker—some of the best schools in the city. They will know that is where they are headed.

Art Norman: And once again this is a pilot program. KIPP Ascend is the first charter of its kind in Illinois. It is supported totally by Chicago Public School's CEO, Arne Duncan. For more information about this you might want to check out their web site at www.kipp.org. We'll have links on our website.