

KIPP students jump start the school year in the summer

Written by

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While most kids are still relaxing at the pool, students at KIPP Stand Academy are already headed back to school. The charter school opens its doors today for its second year, welcoming a new class of fifth graders and its returning class of sixth graders. The mandatory summer session, which goes until September 4, gives KIPP Stand students a head start on the school year and preparing for college.

KIPP Stand Academy's summer school day runs from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm on the school's campus, located at 1601 Laurel Avenue in the Basilica School Building, behind the Basilica of St. Mary. During the mandatory summer session, teachers, students, and parents become acquainted with KIPP's high expectations.

"We are extremely proud of all the hard work that our students have done over the past year," said KIPP Stand Academy founding school leader Mike Spangenberg. "With the support of involved parents and the commitment of our teachers, we are providing more children in Minnesota with a high-quality public education."

The success of KIPP has been featured recently in several national media outlets. On July 17, Gilberto Cruz wrote in Time Magazine that KIPP's charter schools are "high-performing," and, "combine more class time with a rigorous curriculum and exceptionally devoted teachers." On June 5, The New York Times columnist Bob Herbert cited KIPP as "one of the most academically sound public school programs in the nation."

Located in the North Minneapolis, KIPP Stand Academy is the first school to open in the KIPP Minnesota region. Founded last summer by Teach For America alumnus Mike Spangenberg, KIPP Stand Academy currently enrolls about 180 fifth and sixth graders. It will add a new grade for two more years, becoming a full middle school in 2011, serving approximately 320 students in grades five through eight.

KIPP Stand Academy's students have posted some impressive academic results. During the school's first year in 2008-09, its fifth graders grew a full grade level in reading and 1.5 grades in math, according to the NWEA MAP assessment. At KIPP Stand Academy last year, 95 percent of the students were African-American, and 95 percent were eligible for the federal free-and reduced-price meals program. As a KIPP school, KIPP Stand Academy takes a rigorous, "no excuses" approach to education, with extended school hours, nightly homework and supportive teachers available after hours for help.

For incoming fifth graders, the summer session is a chance for them to be introduced to and become acquainted with KIPP's unique school culture. After assessing each student's individual strengths and weaknesses, teachers emphasize the basics of English, math, science, and social studies. This is also when the process of team building—essential to KIPP's spirit and success—begins, and students are introduced to the, challenges, strengths, and rewards of working together as a team.

In addition to summer school, KIPP Stand Academy students benefit from a longer school day (7:30 am to 5:00 pm) and bi-weekly Saturday school, which allows for enrichment classes such as yoga, film, art, basketball, and jewelry-making. Committed and talented teachers are available by cell phone in the evenings for homework help. On the first day of school, students

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will learn the year they go to college: 2017 for the fifth graders and 2016 for the sixth graders.

“KIPP Stand Academy is raising the Twin Cities’ expectations of what we can and should achieve in public education,” explains Daisy Mitchell, Executive Director of KIPP Minnesota. “Those expectations go beyond increasing just next year’s test scores. We won’t consider ourselves truly successful until our students graduate from college.”

As one of only two cities selected as expansion sites by KIPP in 2008, KIPP Stand Academy has been fortunate to enjoy ample community support and resources. KIPP Minnesota hopes to open up to five new schools over the next ten years, eventually serving 1,500 of the Twin Cities’ students.

KIPP Stand Academy’s mission is to help each student acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and character habits necessary to succeed in high school, college and beyond. For more information, visit: www.kippminnesota.org .

Two teachers, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, started KIPP in 1994 in Houston, TX after completing their commitment to Teach For America. KIPP has grown to a national network of 82 public schools in 19 states and the District of Columbia serving over 16,000 students. More than 90 percent of KIPP students are African American or Hispanic/Latino, and more than 85 percent of KIPP students are eligible for the federal free and reduced-price meals. KIPP schools have been widely recognized for narrowing the achievement gap in public education, and putting underserved students on the path to college. For more information, visit www.kipp.org