

# KIPP Academies

## A Summary of:

**“KIPP Results: Stanford Achievement Tests, New York State Standardized Tests, and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills”** (2001) KIPP Academies (Internal Documents). Compiled by Michael Feinberg.

**“No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High Performing, High Poverty Schools”** (2000) The Heritage Foundation. By Samuel Casey Carter.

## “The KIPP Academy: An Innovative and Effective Framework for Public Schools”

(2000) The KIPP Academies. By Michael Feinberg.

### Focus

- Early Childhood
- ✓ Primary School
- ✓ Middle School
- Secondary School
- Postsecondary
- ✓ Extended Learning

## Overview

In 1994, former Teach For America instructors founded the first Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) in Houston, Texas. One year later, the KIPP Academy became a charter school in the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Since its inception, the KIPP Academy has provided underprivileged students in grades 5-9 with a rigorous academic curriculum that prepares them for success in college and careers. The KIPP Academy classes are taught in more than a dozen temporary trailers in the southwest quadrant of Houston. A second KIPP Academy was set up as a school within a school, in the Bronx, with a similar commitment to serving minority students.

## POPULATION

Enrollment in KIPP is based on a lottery system, which randomly selects students from a pool of applicants. Before the children start school, KIPP staff meets with parents and students to discuss a commitment contract. Approximately 320 students in grades 5-9 attend the KIPP Academy in Houston. Ninety-seven percent of the Houston KIPP students are African American or Latino and 90% of them are eligible for federal breakfast and lunch programs. Of the approximately 250 KIPP students in the Bronx Academy, 45% are African American, 55% are Latino and more than 95% are eligible for federal breakfast and lunch programs.

## Key Findings

One way that the KIPP in Houston measures student achievement is through the Stanford-9 achievement tests. The following graphs chart the increases in Stanford reading and math scores for various classes after one, two, and three years at the KIPP Academy between 1998 and 2001. In reading, students came into the school scoring between the 35<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> percentile. After three years at KIPP, they were scoring between the 60<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on the reading test. KIPP had a similar, positive effect on math achievement (see charts).

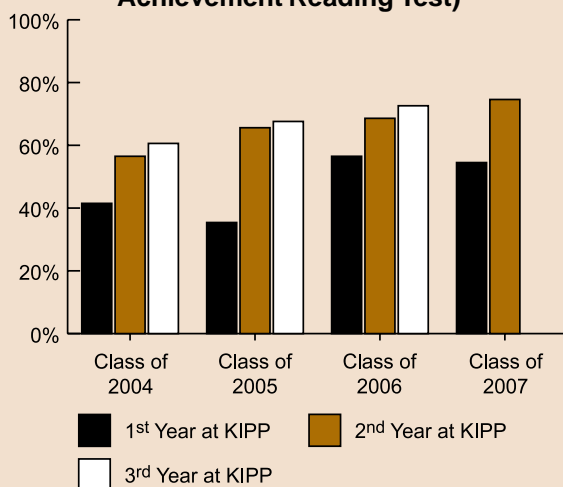
Another measure of KIPP’s effect on academic achievement is the percent of students who pass the standardized Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) tests in math and reading.

- ◆ Before attending KIPP, between 33% and 66% of the incoming students had passed TAAS tests for their grade level.
- ◆ After one year of KIPP instruction, more than 90% of each class passed the tests and after two years, nearly 100% passed.

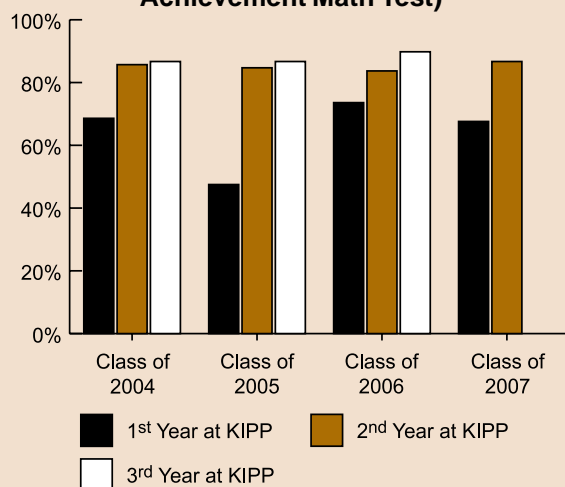
- ◆ The 2000 and 2001 TAAS results showed that no fewer than 97% of each KIPP class passed the math assessment, while no fewer than 93% of each class passed the reading assessment. Although KIPP does not exempt students from TASS, many classes had pass rates of 100% in both subjects.
- ◆ The percentage of KIPP students reading at grade level rose from 40% to 61% while the percentage of New York City students (grades 5-7) reading at or above grade level rose from 37% to 42%.
- ◆ The percentage of KIPP students performing at grade level in math rose from 40% to 60%, while the percentage of New York City students (grades 5-7) at or above grade level on math tests fell from 34% to 31%.
- ◆ The KIPP Academy has been rated the highest performing middle school in the Bronx in terms of average attendance (96%), reading and math every year.

To measure academic achievement of students at the KIPP Academy in the Bronx, KIPP reports compared the percentage of students scoring at or above grade level on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, with figures for middle school students throughout the New York City school district. Between the 1998-99 school year and the 2000-01 school year:

**Fig. 1 - National Percentile Scores for KIPP Students (Stanford Achievement Reading Test)**



**Fig. 2 - National Percentile Scores for KIPP Students (Stanford Achievement Math Test)**



## Program Components

The KIPP school reform model stands on five “pillars” or components:

- ◆ The KIPP founders and teachers have *high expectations* that all students can learn and conduct themselves in a disciplined manner while in school. In Texas, these high expectations translated into the assumption that all students can and should score at proficient levels on the TAAS test.
- ◆ Because enrollment at KIPP is voluntary, students and parents must sign a contract agreeing to work together to reach the high goals set by the school. Program directors emphasize *student choice and commitment to the school and to each other*.
- ◆ *Extended time on task* is another integral component of the program. KIPP students spend 67% more time in class than the average

public school student. During the normal school year, KIPP students arrive at school at 7:30 a.m. and depart at 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, getting out a little early (4:00 p.m.) on Fridays. In addition, students agree to attend four hours of school most Saturdays and four weeks of school every summer.

- ◆ KIPP directors want to lead the school reform movement by example, emphasizing what they term *the power to lead*. As charter school principals, they have complete control over their budget and personnel decisions. In 2000, KIPP partnered with the founders of Gap, Inc., to start a Fischer Fellowship program, which will train a corps of education reformers to found their charter schools across the country to serve disadvantaged youth. The fellowship involves a summer institute on school management at the University of California at Berkeley followed by a fall residency in KIPP network schools and a

*“There are no shortcuts.”*

—KIPP motto from Rafe Esquith,  
1992 Disney Teacher of the Year

spring planning period. Fellows are expected to open up their own schools after their fellowship concludes.

- ◆ *A focus on results* is the final component of KIPP Academies, which includes evaluating program outcomes with state and national standardized test scores.

In addition to the above components, both KIPP Academies integrate music into the school curriculum. For example, in the New York KIPP Academy, all students play instruments in the school orchestra. Orchestra performances have garnered local fame and funds, which have allowed the school to provide instruments to students.

## Contributing Factors

### *Extended Learning*

The extended school day, Saturday classes and summer sessions provide additional time for KIPP students to learn. This is not simply additional “seat time,” however. These extra hours spent in class seem crucial for achieving the high academic standards set by KIPP.

### *Parent Support*

Enrollment in the KIPP Academies is voluntary. Parents choose to send their children to KIPP schools. Both parents and students must sign a contract committing to the extended class time. Parents also agree to supervise their children’s homework assignments every night.

### *Small Learning Communities*

In both Houston and the Bronx, KIPP has set up small learning communities of 250 to 300 students who stay together for four years from the fifth

through the ninth grades. The small size of this community fosters a sense of belonging to the school.

### *Teacher/Administrator Commitment*

Teachers commit to the same extended class time as students. They remain “on call” to help students or answer parent questions 24 hours a day with cell phones and toll-free numbers provided by the school. Teachers also regularly visit students in their homes and work with parents to get them involved in student work.

### *Professional Development*

KIPP pays for teachers to travel to observe the master teachers who inspired the program. With the Fisher Fellowship, the KIPP founders provide developmental opportunities for teachers and others interested in education reform to become school administrators in their own right.

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**

This was not a formal evaluation, but an analysis of data taken from the state educational agencies in Texas and New York. The editor of the “No Excuses” report visited the two academies and interviewed the KIPP superintendents and district officials. Test score data came from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, the Stanford-9 Achievement Test, the California Achievement Test-5 and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. Comparisons are made with national, state and citywide data.

**EVALUATION & PROGRAM FUNDING**

Casey Carter’s research on KIPP was funded by the Heritage Foundation. KIPP Academies are funded by the public school systems in Houston and New York City as well as numerous individuals, foundations and private corporations. The list of private funders includes The Brown Foundation, The Fondren Foundation, Houston Annenberg Challenge, Rockwell Fund and many others.

**GEOGRAPHIC AREAS**

KIPP Academies are located in Houston, Texas and the Bronx in New York, New York. By August 2001, three additional schools based on the KIPP model had opened their doors to students: The 3D Academy (Houston, TX), Gaston College Preparatory (Gaston, NC) and Key Academy (Washington, DC).

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