

The CONNECTOR

FOCUSING ON NONPROFITS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

Winter 2011; Vol. 3, No. 2

DeAngelo Is a Perfect Fit at KIPP



Drea DeAngelo's mother would tell you that Drea wanted to be a teacher from the time she was five years old, when she was setting up a classroom in her bedroom to make sure her younger brother knew his multiplication tables. It is therefore no surprise that, today, her ability to connect with kids and families has made her not only a great teacher, but also a well respected leader – and the incoming Principal of KIPP

Academy Lynn Collegiate High School.

DeAngelo's story is not the typical one. One of the reasons she has been so successful at KIPP is because she has had so many different experiences working with kids. As a junior math major at Colby College she volunteered as a tutor at a school in Waterville, Maine. The following summer she worked in an Upward Bound program at UMass Boston, and then spent three very challenging years as a Teach for America Corps member in Phoenix. She even taught on a sailboat for a year, teaching four girls in grades 3, 6, 10 and 11. It was an experience which she fondly recalls as a once in a lifetime opportunity. "The experience taught me how to be creative and adapt to the needs of each child, keeping them focused while learning and still having fun," says DeAngelo.

Anxious to get back to teaching in an urban setting, DeAngelo returned to Boston and found KIPP. "A huge part of my motivation for joining Teach for America was to teach in an urban setting," she said. "I needed to find the right school for me –KIPP was it. I was immediately drawn by the unyielding commitment to excellence of teachers and students. Everyone is working towards the same goal – it takes a lot of hard work, but the joy factor is still there."

She joined KIPP Academy Lynn in 2007 as a 7th grade math teacher and as her students and colleagues will attest, she exemplifies everything that is KIPP.



“Drea throws herself 100 percent into everything that she takes on - be it in the classroom, on the basketball court, or one-on-one with a difficult student. She doesn't give up when things get challenging,” said Jennifer Startek, a seventh grade science teacher at KIPP.

Jose Valera, current KAL 8th grader and member of next year's first 9th grade class, has had DeAngelo as both a math teacher and a basketball coach. “Ms. DeAngelo really pushes me in different ways. She is a hero to me and I appreciate having her as both a teacher and a coach. She has made a big difference in my life,” says Valera.

DeAngelo has also coached the boys' basketball team and chaired the math department at KAL. In 2009 under her leadership, KIPP Academy Lynn 7th graders ranked 12th out of 466 middle schools in the entire state of Massachusetts on MCAS math tests. With DeAngelo as their coach, the boys' basketball team won the Charter School Cup tournament 2009 and 2010. She was selected to go through KIPP leadership training in New York in 2008, and was awarded the KIPP Excellence in Teaching Award in 2009. She was then accepted into the Fisher Fellowship program last year – a program created by KIPP to develop leaders for new schools.

When asked about her motivation for leading the high school, DeAngelo said, “The thing that drew me the most was seeing the wide variety of paths our kids take once they leave our middle school, and thinking how amazing it would be if we could create the same culture at the high school level as we have created in the middle school,”



She has spent the last several months traveling around the country to observe high-performing urban charter schools.

“KIPP does a phenomenal job training leaders,” she said. “I've learned what others have been able to put in place and how to create a school design plan so we can hit the ground running next year.”

Nothing is more important to DeAngelo than the success of her students.

You can understand why DeAngelo is excited about becoming Principal of the new KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate High School. KAL has shown remarkable results since its opening in 2004 and continues to outperform other urban *and* suburban schools across the state. Drea will welcome the

new high school's first class of ninth-graders in the fall – many of whom she taught in the 7th grade. One grade will be added each year until it is a 9th – 12th grade school in 2014. The high school will have a temporary home next year while a new facility is constructed in the Highlands neighborhood; the new building is scheduled to open in the fall of 2012.

“The new building represents all the hard work of our kids and families at KIPP Academy Lynn,” DeAngelo said. “By having the kids from 5th-12th grade, it will help us keep our promise to them that they will graduate from college.” The important thing is that we never give up on any of our kids – and we won't.”