



Juntos together

Fall / Winter 2010

The quarterly newsletter
of KIPP Academy Lynn

From Executive Director Josh Zoia

Dear Friends,

It's fall, the time of year when "change" is in the air - very appropriate considering the educational landscape in MA and across the nation is changing before our eyes. Twenty years ago, there were very few examples of high performing urban public schools across the nation. Too many people had come to accept that they were doing the "best they could" given all the challenges urban students and communities faced. Today, things are different - the actual is *proving* the possible - every day. The results of KIPP and other urban charter schools nationwide have thrust the education debate back into the limelight. There is a renewed sense of urgency, and a window of opportunity is opening. I like to think of it as the "perfect storm of education reform." Like most change, it didn't happen overnight - it happened over time.



Josh Zoia with KIPP-sters Andres & Maggie

The Beginning: In 1995, KIPP Bronx and KIPP Houston opened their doors in two of the most difficult urban school districts in the nation. After five years, they were both among the top performers in their cities. After *60 Minutes* featured the success of KIPP students, Don and Doris Fisher, founders of the GAP stores, were inspired by what they saw and gave \$15M to support KIPP expansion nationwide. At the same time, charter laws were being passed in several states across the country including MA. The new laws allowed schools to design their own programs to address the unique needs of urban students. Enough of these schools (often called *No Excuse Schools*) achieved significant success, that people started to see what was possible. It was no longer, "Can it be done?" It was now, "How do we spread this?"

The Spotlight: The media caught wind of the success and began featuring stories about KIPP and other *No Excuse Schools*. KIPP was featured in major local and national media outlets nationwide, including *Oprah*, *60 Minutes*, *The New York Times*, and *The Boston Globe*. The fact that urban students could achieve at high levels began to capture the nation's attention.

The Results: Last fall, there were two landmark studies published in MA about *No Excuse Schools*. The first study, conducted by Harvard & MIT, tracked the progress of students who entered Boston charter school lotteries. The study then compared the students who attended charter schools vs. those who did not get in through the lottery system. The results clearly demonstrated that the positive effect of a high-performing charter school is real and notable, not just a coincidence. The second study, done by The Boston Foundation, tracked the college graduation rates of Boston public high school graduates. The result: less than 7% of students from low income backgrounds graduated from college within 8 years. This was sobering news for a district often considered to be one of the best urban school systems in the nation.

National Reform: The Obama administration committed to pushing for the expansion of charter schools and other innovative programming in urban communities. They used a competitive \$4.35 billion dollar fund called *Race to the Top* to encourage states to, among other things, enact legislation that would "lift" the cap on charter schools.

Massachusetts Reform: The stark reality of college graduation rates, coupled with the success of urban charter schools in MA, became the catalyst for change in Massachusetts. In anticipation of applying for a \$250M *Race to the Top* grant, last January, the state legislature passed a sweeping education reform law which doubled the state charter school cap.

A New Reality: At first, we were in shock. Massachusetts charter schools had been advocating for education reform for over a decade. Today, it is a reality. KAL and several other MA charter schools are taking action, embarking upon expansion efforts surrounded by this "perfect storm." We are honored to have you supporting our students, families, and staff in our efforts to expand our impact, and continue to prove what is possible, in this, our time of change.

With Appreciation,
Josh

The KIPP Difference

Strong results, low attrition, and a “never give up” approach

It has been nearly a year since the state of Massachusetts implemented a new education reform bill that lifted the statewide charter cap from 9% to 18%. The bill opened the doors for widespread charter school expansion, and with it, widespread public scrutiny of charter schools and the ways in which they measure and achieve success.

A charter school can be deemed successful when that school achieves measurable and long-lasting results with a student population that is identical to its public school district. While it is tempting to praise any charter school with a successful alternative model, often, that praise comes from comparing apples to oranges. That is, some charter schools serve fewer Special Education students, fewer English Language Learners, and fewer students living below the poverty line than their public school district counterpart, making the comparison less valid.



5th grade class of 2018

At KAL, we compare apples to apples, and *still* our kids are achieving at remarkable levels year after year. Compared to the Lynn Public Schools, we serve an equal or greater percentage of Special Education students, English Language Learners, and students living at or below the poverty line. And still our kids are drastically outperforming their peers across the state in both urban and suburban districts [see MCAS results, page 5].

Student attrition also plays a key role when evaluating charter school success. Although all charter school admissions are conducted through a random lottery, some schools “counsel out” students with behavioral or academic issues. Even if a charter school does not *purposely* eliminate such students, it may not be doing enough to keep them (i.e. it does not protest when students with difficulties leave). Either way, a high attrition rate distorts school-wide test results towards high achievers, making a comparison with public school results once again like comparing apples to oranges.

At KAL, this is not the case. Last year our attrition rate was 2.8%. That means out of 352 students, only 9 did not return, a majority of whom simply moved out of state. Not one of those students was asked to leave because KIPP was “not the right fit” for them. **We never give up...On anyone.**

Last year’s attrition rate was remarkably low because KAL’s “never give up” mindset motivated us to pay attention. During our first few years, our attrition rate was closer to 10%, comparable to that of other charter schools. This was unacceptable to us. We were not yet reaching every kid, and some of the kids with the greatest challenges were not receiving the support they needed to stay at KAL. We felt it was our moral responsibility as a public school to provide an environment where *all* children could be successful. The leadership team took the following steps:

- 1) Made structural & programmatic changes to make sure every child has a meaningful relationship with a KAL adult
 - Increased the amount of scheduled advisory time from once-weekly to multiple times per week
 - Restructured the advisory system so that students stay with the same advisor for multiple years
 - Ensured that KAL teachers lead electives, allowing for more well-rounded teacher-student relationships
- 2) Promoted success outside the classroom by increasing the variety of electives offered, including new electives that engage our students, such as African dance, sign language, and “flo-etry” (movement and poetry combined).
- 3) Built the adult educational program (English, citizenship, personal finance, single parenting, etc.), promoting more substantial parent engagement, and creating a culture of learning where **parents, teachers, and kids** contribute.

KIPP-sters stay, because every day, we reinforce three messages:

This is hard. You can do it. We won’t give up on you.

Mike Brown



TITLE:

Director of Community and Multicultural Affairs

AT KAL SINCE: 2007

ACTIVITIES HE LEADS AT KAL:

- **Parent & Community Program**
- **Amistad de Caballeros**
A male leadership program
- **Rites of Passage** – manhood and womanhood training for middle school students
- **Girls Step Team**

Teacher / Staff Shout Out

What inspired you to come to KIPP?

I had been teaching middle school history for 6 years at public schools in VA, and my experience there was not what I expected. As a new teacher, I thought that motivating young people to learn would be my hardest job, but I was mistaken. My hardest job was wading through the challenges of the public school system (the kids were the brightest part of my day). I realized that traditional public schooling was not working. So I began to look for other alternatives, and I came across KIPP. I spent 15 minutes in the building and knew this was where I belonged. It was clear that things at KIPP were different.

What has inspired you to stay?

Our leader, Josh Zoia, always says that we are willing to do whatever it takes to help our kids succeed. Those words are thrown around a lot in the education world, but the difference is, at KIPP we mean it. Unlike in traditional public schools, where new ideas take a very long time to be implemented, at KIPP, when we have creative ideas about how to best serve our students, we are encouraged to try them out. It makes all the difference that our decision-maker, Mr. Zoia, is an educator and not a politician. He does what's best for kids, not what's best for adults, and because of that our kids are thriving.

Why did you make the switch from history teacher to your current position?

I taught middle school history for 8 years. It felt good to help students grasp the information I was teaching, but the kids were facing much larger challenges, such as teenage pregnancy and gangs. The way I looked at education had to change. I had to become what my students needed me to become, and it wasn't a history teacher. I made it my goal to teach students how to survive their neighborhoods so college can be a real option. I began to focus more on getting families involved, and helping students navigate the obstacles of growing up in

the inner city. I started teaching the Rites of Passage program at KIPP, a manhood and womanhood training program for middle school students. It was a program that I had completed as a kid myself, and it was a saving grace for me as a teenager growing up in an urban community at the onset of gang growth in the 80s.

Why is community outreach so important at KIPP and in Lynn?

At KIPP, we have found a way to engage our students during school hours, but that is just one piece of the puzzle. It is critical that we reach out to families and connect with them outside of school. As a school, we must recognize that we are inherently considered "visitors" to the community of Lynn; to our families, this community is *home*. We need to integrate ourselves as much as possible so that KIPP, too, becomes part of their home.

Calendar of Events



Phone: 781.592.1937

Email:

wgrace@kipplynn.org

Website:

www.kipplynn.org

Please feel free to drop in to see our KIPP-sters in action any time. Our classrooms are open to visitors, and our kids are in school from 7:20am – 5:00pm, Monday -Thursday, and until 2:30pm on Fridays.

To schedule a visit, call 781-913-6766 or email wgrace@kipplynn.org.

Every Friday throughout the school year

Songfest, 1:30pm – 2:30pm
Open to everyone – Come join us for song, dance & inspiration!

November 5th: No School – Whole Staff PD Day

November 11th: No School – Veteran's Day

November 20th – 28th: Thanksgiving Vacation

December 16th: Winter Performance

December 18th – January 2nd: Winter Vacation

Luis Naranjo



GRADE

Class of 2018 (5th Grade)

(Grades are named for the year they will go to college.)

HOMEROOM

Tulane *(Homerooms are named after specific colleges.)*

FAVORITE CLASSES

Science, technology, writing, sports, and life skills

Student Shout Out

Luis Naranjo has only been at KIPP for just over two months, but already he is talking like a KIPP-ster. He knows what he likes (science, writing, meeting new people), and he knows where he's going (college, to be a lawyer), and already, he says, KIPP feels like family. Originally from Venezuela, he came to the US with his family when he was five months old. He now lives at home with his mom, dad, and baby brother. He says, "we've already decided my brother is coming to KIPP when he gets older." It is clear that Luis has found a place he can thrive, and this is just the beginning.

What do you think about KIPP compared to your old school? At my old school, there were kids beating each other up, spitballs everywhere, people using bad words and being racist. KIPP is so different. I love the techniques they use, and I really like the rules and the structure. I *want* to come to school. Even when I'm sick, I still come.

What did you think about having to come to summer school for the first time? I was really excited. I couldn't wait to start. I thought, "This is my first day at KIPP, I'm going to have the best time of my life."

Do you think you've changed since you came to KIPP? Oh definitely. I act better now. I learn better, and get better grades. I'm learning so much every day.

Last week was the 5th grade's first time wearing "professional dress."

What did you think? I loved it. I want to do it every Friday. I like it because it looks good on you – your pants aren't falling down and you don't look like just any other kid. You look professional.

What advice would you give to kids who are new to KIPP? I would just encourage them, and really try to inspire them to come. I'd give them a lot of details and tell them that they're going to love it and they'll learn a lot.

Event Recap

Waiting for 'Superman' is the newest documentary by Davis Guggenheim ("An Inconvenient Truth"), which examines the challenges facing public education today. In the documentary, Guggenheim explores innovative approaches taken by education reformers that have, in reshaping the culture, refused to leave their students behind. KIPP is featured in the film as a promising part of the overall solution. On September 30, more than 100 donors, volunteers, and friends gathered for a screening of the movie. Seven KIPP-sters attended the event and mingled with guests, representing themselves, and the school, with pride and poise. (www.waitingforsuperman.com.)

Grade Level Potlucks

One of the most important things at KIPP is to spend time with the families of our KIPP-sters. Every year, as both a celebration and a kick-off, the kids and family members of every grade gather for a potluck dinner. Each family brings food that represents their culture, which this year includes 45 different countries. Our newest KIPP-sters, the 5th grade Class of 2018, was proudly represented by over 250 parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings.



KIPP-sters Wildy Duran and Edivan Solano welcome guests to the event



Donor / Volunteer Shout Out

Rick and Sue Settlemeyer have been loyal KIPP volunteers and supporters since 2007. They believe that *all* students, but especially the students of Lynn, need and deserve a high-quality education. Following that belief, the Settlemeyers have committed themselves to ensuring that the kids in Lynn are provided with the educational resources they need to succeed in school and in life. Rick and Sue have remained loyal KAL supporters, from Rick's leadership on KAL's capital campaign to build a new middle and high school building, to Sue's varied volunteer efforts with KIPP-sters, including a new tennis elective she is coaching this fall.

What inspired you to come to KIPP? In 2007, our friend Mary Abramson organized a group of high-energy women to make and donate baskets of cosmetics, skin care products, and related items to KIPP mothers. They called themselves the "Basket Babes" and that year they made and delivered between 350 and 400 baskets. Sue and I volunteered to help deliver the baskets to KIPP, and once we set foot inside the building, we were hooked. We also heard about KIPP through one of our neighbors, Clark Willmott, who was a vocal champion for the school. His message was contagious.

The first time you came to KAL, what was your first impression? Physically, the tight space and limited resources did not reflect the amazing academic success happening at KIPP. Limited, under-resourced facilities are something we've seen in so many a public school, not just in Lynn. We believe all our children deserve better, and that is one reason why we were so involved in helping to build the new Lynch van Otterloo YMCA. In today's world we believe that our communities and our kids need a safe, well-resourced place to learn and grow. That's what the YMCA is, and it's what the new KAL will be—a benchmark for excellence, both in terms of the school itself, and in terms of KIPP's educational program and philosophy.

What has inspired you to stay? We really enjoy being part of an effort that has the potential to make a huge impact. We knew from the start that KIPP was something special, a place that would challenge the status quo in public education and *deliver* on a promise to educate our youth so they can succeed in the future. We both have a great deal of respect for outstanding leaders, and we see in Josh Zoia a true leader who is not a "one man band." One of Josh's greatest strengths is his ability to recruit and inspire other equally committed individuals, from teachers to volunteers. We are proud to be involved with KIPP at this time in its growth.

Rick and Sue Settlemeyer



HOMETOWN: Marblehead, MA

INVOLVED WITH KAL SINCE : 2007

PROFESSION

Rick: Retired from the Boston Company / Mellon Financial; board member at the Lynch van Otterloo YMCA, the North Shore YMCA, and the Marblehead Museum & Historical Society

Sue: Retired from position as Tower School Athletic Director; board member at the Marblehead Counseling Center

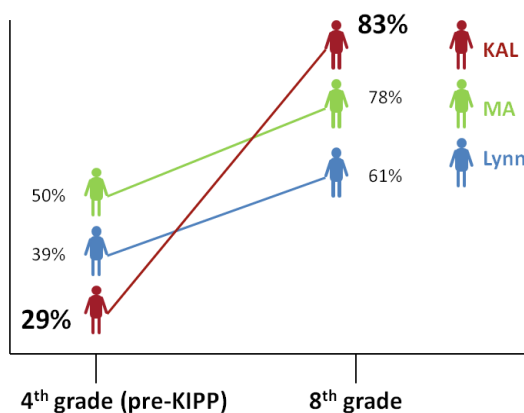
FAMILY

4 children, 11 grandchildren, all still living in Marblehead

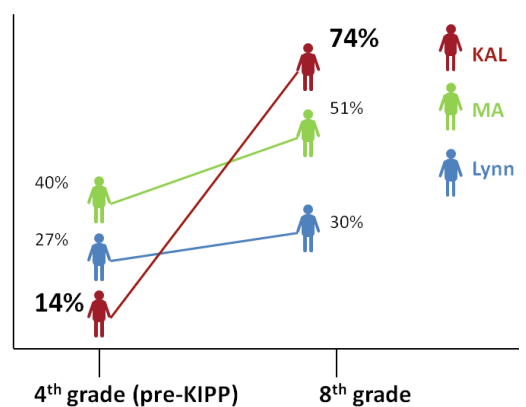
2010 MCAS Results

The 2010 MCAS results are in, and once again our KIPP-sters excelled. As in prior years, our kids showed notable yearly improvement, *and* out-performed their peers in urban and suburban districts of MA. With six years of data since KAL opened in 2004, we know that our kids' success is a deliberate result of the laser focus on excellent teaching, positive reinforcement, hard work by the *teachers, parents, and kids*, and **FUN**. Shown here are the percentages of 8th graders who tested "proficient or advanced" in Math and ELA (compared to 4th grade scores).

MCAS Results (English Language Arts)



MCAS Results (Math)





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