

**Testimony to the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education**

Scott Hamilton, CEO, KIPP Foundation

March 16, 2004

Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address your House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education on the topic of school leadership. I am especially honored to represent both the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Foundation and the 31 KIPP public middle schools across America.

Established four years ago, the non-profit KIPP Foundation recruits, trains, and supports outstanding teachers to open college-prep public schools in high need communities across the country. KIPP helps arrange for facilities and operating contracts while training school leaders through a year-long program that includes coursework at the University of California at Berkeley's Haas School of Business, "residencies" at other KIPP Schools, and support from expert KIPP staff.

KIPP Schools are college-preparatory public middle schools for underserved students in rural and urban communities. Students usually come to KIPP from schools where expectations of them are very low, where academic achievement is often ridiculed, and where the achievement gap is large. More than 95% of KIPP students are African American or Latino, and more 85% are eligible for the federal free- or reduced-meal program. Their academic success at KIPP, and continued success at some of the nation's most prestigious college preparatory high schools, demonstrates that students in high-need areas can excel academically. Through great teaching, longer hours, and a focus on college, KIPP is proving that the achievement gap can be closed in public education.

KIPP began in 1994 when Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin completed their commitment with Teach For America and launched a program for 50 5th graders at Garcia Elementary, a public school in inner-city Houston. Their students' accelerated academic achievement fueled the program's expansion; KIPP Academy New York launched in the South Bronx in 1995, and KIPP Academy Houston became one of Houston's first charter schools. The schools are open-enrollment public schools that accept students regardless of previous academic achievement and socioeconomic background. Both are now top performing middle schools in their respective regions.

KIPP's founders chose to work with underserved 5th – 8th grade students because they believed that middle school was an area of tremendous and urgent need. It is a turbulent time of physical, mental, and emotional growth, and when seemingly harmless decisions often carry long-term life consequences. These young people need safe and academically challenging schools to keep them focused on a brighter future, and caring yet diligent educators who are dedicated to their personal and academic development. Most KIPP

schools are located in Empowerment Zones and similar neighborhoods that face enormous obstacles like high mobility rates, high unemployment rates, drug use, adolescent pregnancy, street gangs, and violent crime. In spite of such circumstances, KIPP students have achieved remarkable academic success:

- The New York State Senate has recognized KIPP Academy New York as the highest performing public middle school in the Bronx in reading, math, and attendance each year since the 1997-1998 school year.
- In 2003, KIPP Academy Houston was named a No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education and has been a Texas Exemplary School every year since its inception.

I became aware of KIPP about the same time *60 Minutes* profiled the original KIPP schools in September of 1999. While serving as director the Pisces Foundation, the education-focused philanthropy created by Gap, Inc. co-founders Doris and Donald Fisher, my task was to find a program in public education that, with financial support, could be reproduced on a large scale. In the spring of 2000, the Fishers and I proposed a unique partnership to Feinberg and Levin to replicate the success of their two original KIPP schools. The partnership would draw on the Fishers' experience in taking Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy stores to immense scale, on Feinberg and Levin's experience in creating such successful schools, and on my experience overseeing the launch of charter schools in Massachusetts.

The original KIPP Academies had five characteristics, or 'five pillars,' in common that we believed could be replicated in communities across America.

1. High Expectations. KIPP Schools have clearly defined and measurable high expectations for academic achievement and conduct that make no excuses based on the background of students. Students, parents, teachers, and staff create and reinforce a culture of achievement and support through a range of formal and informal rewards and consequences for academic performance and behavior.

2. Choice & Commitment. Students, their parents, and the faculty of each KIPP School choose to participate in the program. No one is assigned or forced to attend these schools. Everyone must make and uphold a commitment to the school and to each other to put in the time and effort required to achieve success.

3. More Time. KIPP Schools know that there are no shortcuts when it comes to success in academics and life. With an extended school day, week, and year, students have more time in the classroom to acquire the academic knowledge and skills that will prepare them for competitive high schools and colleges, as well as more opportunities to engage in diverse extracurricular experiences.

4. Power to Lead. The principals of KIPP Schools are effective academic and organizational leaders who understand that great schools require great school leaders. They have control over their school budget and personnel. They are free to move dollars

swiftly or make staffing changes, allowing them maximum effectiveness in helping students learn.

5. Focus on Results. KIPP Schools relentlessly focus on high student performance on standardized tests and other objective measures. Just as there are no shortcuts, there are no excuses. Students are expected to achieve a level of academic performance that will enable them to succeed at the nation's best high schools and colleges.

The non-profit KIPP Foundation was established to provide would-be school founders with training and support in creating and leading KIPP public schools in communities across the country. The KIPP School Leadership Program was born and has emerged to fill a critical void. At a time when schools operating independently from school districts (whether through a charter or through a contract negotiated with the district) have performed, on average, only slightly better than district schools, the KIPP School Leadership Program offers an innovative and prestigious entry point for outstanding classroom teachers to receive rigorous preparation for becoming school leaders.

The majority of charter schools are “mom and pop” schools, developed and run by individuals who strive to create a single school of their dreams. Even in the best cases, these school founders must secure a charter, identify a facility, design their school, hire teachers and recruit students on their own. In most cases, all preparation leading up to the launch of the school occurs while the individual has another full time job. Few founders have the combination of knowledge, skills, experience, leadership training, and planning time to launch and lead a successful school. Even those with prior administrative experience are often not fully prepared to manage a budget, work with a board of trustees, handle public relations, and keep their customers happy. In contrast, the KIPP School Leadership Program provides outstanding teachers with the training and support necessary to create their own high-performing autonomous schools.

In the summer of 2001, three talented educators completed the first year of the KIPP School Leadership Program, and each opened new KIPP campuses of about 80 5th graders – KIPP 3-D Academy in Houston, Texas; KIPP DC: KEY Academy in Southeast Washington, D.C.; and KIPP Gaston College Preparatory in Gaston, North Carolina. Nine more of KIPP’s current schools opened in the summer of 2002 in high-need school districts: Helena, Arkansas; Oakland, California; Denver, Colorado; Baltimore, Maryland; Asheville, North Carolina; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Newark, New Jersey; Memphis, Tennessee; and Austin, Texas. Seventeen additional schools were founded in 2003, including seven in California [Los Angeles (2), Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, (2) and San Lorenzo], three in Georgia [Atlanta (2), and Fulton County] two in Texas [Dallas, and San Antonio], two in New York State [Buffalo, and Harlem], two in Illinois [Chicago (2)], and one in Pennsylvania [Philadelphia]. In one short decade, KIPP has grown from a program serving fifty students in Houston, Texas, to a dynamic network of 31 schools in 13 states and the District of Columbia. We expect to open seven more schools this summer, including a preschool and high school in Houston.

Principals trained through the KIPP School Leadership Program have replicated the initial success of the original KIPP Academies in Houston and New York City. According to a 2002 independent report by New American Schools, the three KIPP schools opened in 2001 each recorded statistically significant gains in student achievement. Below are test results from two schools featured in the report:

- In 2001-2002, the grade five gains in reading and mathematics KIPP DC: KEY Academy (Washington, D.C.) were larger than those reported for any other middle or junior high school within the D.C. Public Schools.
- In 2002, 93 percent of the fifth graders at KIPP Gaston College Preparatory (Gaston, NC) passed the North Carolina end-of-year exam in reading, while only 53 percent had passed the state reading test before entering KIPP as fourth graders.

In November 2003, KIPP released a report card presenting test results from 13 schools, including eight new KIPP schools that opened in 2002. For the KIPP schools open since 2001 that administered norm-referenced tests, students' average score increased by 51% in mathematics and 27% in reading during their time with KIPP. Here are results from two schools that opened in the summer of 2002:

- At KIPP Delta College Preparatory (Helena, AR) student achievement in math increased 53% and reading increased 31% between the fall and spring of their first year at KIPP.
- TEAM Academy (Newark, NJ) student increased their math scores by 99% between the fall and spring of their first year at TEAM. These students also achieved a 61% increase in reading during the same time period.

With additional federal resources, we will be able to grow the number of KIPP students and schools. Due in great part to your leadership, Congress awarded KIPP \$4,000,000 in FY2004 through the Fund for Improvement in Education (FIE) for new school development and support at existing KIPP Schools. KIPP will use this additional federal funding to fuel KIPP's expansion throughout the United States.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for your time today and your continued support of KIPP.