

KIPP New Orleans Schools

PK-8 Transformation School Executive Summary

About KIPP New Orleans Schools

Great education transforms lives.

In a world where opportunities are not distributed equally, an excellent education equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and helps them build an identity that both honors their past and prepares them for the future. All students deserve schools where educators focus on students' individual needs while leading them to meet ambitious expectations.

The proposed KIPP PK-8 Transformation school is built on the belief that each life adds meaning and worth to the lives around it. Through rigorous standards-based instruction, students are empowered with knowledge about themselves and others and with empathy for other people. As our students develop as friends, leaders, creators, learners and change-agents, they contribute proudly to their communities and will impact our world with exceptional achievement through college and throughout life. Notably, some KIPP alumni are now teachers at KIPP New Orleans Schools.

Since 2005, KIPP New Orleans Schools (KNOS) has worked to build schools that deliver on the promise of an excellent education for all students. KIPP has educated thousands of students in New Orleans over the past thirteen years; today those students are graduating from college and building careers on a path to choice-filled lives. KIPP alumni are the leaders who are making New Orleans and the world a better place.

KIPP New Orleans, Inc, commonly known as KIPP New Orleans Schools (KNOS) is a Louisiana non-profit organization with a local board of directors. As an affiliate of the national Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) network of schools, KNOS is dedicated to partnering with families and communities to help students build a path to and through college and career. In the 2018-2019 school year, the KNOS network includes seven charters, organized as 11 schools (five elementary schools (K-4), four middle school (5-8), and two high schools) educating over 5,000 students. KNOS has a long-term vision of college-readiness, matriculation, and persistence for all of its students and all aspects of our planning and programming are linked to this ultimate outcome.

From the founding of the very first KNOS school just prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we have dedicated ourselves to providing students and families with high-quality public education options and to seeing students to and through college. Since then, our organization has grown and our practices have evolved, but we remain committed to that mission. We have learned many lessons, and the last decade has helped prepare us for a new challenge: the transformation of a full PK-8 school.

About the Knowledge Is Power Program

KIPP New Orleans Schools is affiliated with KIPP, the Knowledge is Power Program. KIPP is a non-profit network of college-preparatory, public charter schools educating elementary, middle, and high school students. We have a 20-year track record of preparing students in educationally underserved communities for success in college and life. Today the 224 schools in the KIPP network educate nearly 100,000 students and supports 27,000 alumni in college and careers.

At KIPP, teachers, students, and families are all united around the same goal: college and a choice-filled life. We believe that an excellent college-preparatory education will set students up for success in whatever life path they choose. Through collective hard work and commitment, KIPP students complete college at a rate that is above the national average for all students and four times higher than that of students from similar economic backgrounds. Our success is driven by:

- **High Expectations:** We set clearly defined and measurable high expectations for academic achievement and conduct in order to create and reinforce a culture of achievement and support. We know that every student is different and we personalize learning based on a student's needs, skills, and interests.
- **Strength of Character:** Success in life depends on both academics and character. We help students foster character strengths that are essential for their own success and well-being. And we empower them to express their own voice with power and to improve the world around them.
- **Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders:** Great schools require great teachers and school leaders. We empower our educators to lead school teams, and we invest in training to help them grow as professionals.

- **Safe, Structured, and Nurturing Environments:** Students need physical and emotional safety in order to take risks and learn from their successes and their mistakes. Our schools provide a safe, structured, and nurturing environment with minimal distractions and more time for both academics and extracurricular activities so that students love school and maximize their learning.
- **KIPP Through College:** Our counselors and advisors support students as they prepare for and select the right college and career for their needs and interests. After high school, we help KIPP alumni navigate the social, academic, and financial challenges they might encounter while in college.

In addition to the Five Pillars, KIPP schools are guided by six questions that help us judge how well we are fulfilling our mission. Those six questions are:

- Are we serving the children who need us?
- Are our students staying with us?
- Are our students progressing and achieving academically?
- Are our alumni climbing the mountain to and through college?
- Are we building a sustainable people model?
- Are we building a sustainable financial model?

These six questions guide our reflection and planning process as we work to improve how well we fulfill our mission of preparing all students for success in college and the world beyond.

Mission and Vision

The mission of the proposed KIPP PK-8 transformation school is to empower all students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful to and through college and the world beyond. This work will be performed in the context of a strong school community that brings students, families, community members and educators together in service of our long term vision for student success: that all students have the opportunity to live self-determined lives. For most students, college completion is a necessary step on the path to success. Our program is geared toward preparing students for college and then supporting them through their college experience. As a PK-8 school, we will build an academic foundation that prepares students to succeed in excellent high schools.

The proposed PK-8 transformation school will rely on the strength of the KIPP New Orleans Schools network to transform a previously academically unsuccessful school into a place that prepares students for the rigors of college and beyond. These student-centered outcomes will be achieved within the context of another important purpose: transforming a school that had previously been deemed academically unacceptable. This presents a significant task that KNOS does not approach lightly. For parents and community members who have experienced a school closure, the change of school operators may be difficult. KIPP is committed to providing the continuity that is required for a smooth transition from one operator to the next. Every school community – even those that are deemed academically unacceptable – has unique strengths and assets. Whether it is strong school traditions or school pride expressed through extra-curricular programming, it will be essential for KNOS to identify and build upon that success.

Student Success

Students who attend the proposed KIPP PK-8 Transformation school will complete the eighth grade with:

- The academic preparation needed to succeed in rigorous high schools – as judged both by state standardized test and by their ability to exhibit the types of higher order skills that are not measured well by standardized testing.
- The habits of character that will propel them forward in high school and beyond; these habits include a strong work ethic, social intelligence, persistence in the face of challenges, and empathy towards others.
- Demonstrated excellence in a skill outside of core-academics, such as playing a musical instrument, mastering athletic skills, learning how to express themselves artistically, or developing leadership skills.
- A set of strong relationships with their peers and teachers.

Alignment With Authorizing Priorities

OPSB's process for identifying school authorizing priorities identified several areas of focus for newly authorized schools. The proposed KIPP PK-8 Transformation school aligns closely with several of these priorities identified by students:

The priorities identified by students in the OPSB process include:	The KIPP New Orleans Schools approach
- Highest quality teachers who personalize instruction and create rigorous learning	- KNOS employs a rigorous recruitment and screening process designed to yield the best educators from diverse backgrounds. Regional curriculum planning and professional development give teachers the ability to plan differentiated lessons that meet all students' needs.
- Rich and varied extra-curricular activities	- Students at KIPP schools enjoy a wide variety of extracurricular activities including band and auxiliaries, a wide variety of team sports, speech and debate, LEGO robotics, gardening, poetry, service, student government, and STEM clubs to name a few. Students and teachers have the resources and ability to form new activities based on students' interests.
- Staff to support social/emotional needs	- KIPP professional development focuses on helping teachers create classrooms that are responsive to students' social and emotional needs. KIPP schools have helped lead the movement to introduce trauma-informed practices in schools. Each school employs two social workers and typically partners with partner agencies to support students.
- Fair and firm school culture and discipline	- The KIPP New Orleans approach to discipline has evolved over time, and today schools employ behavior systems that focus on restorative practices, positive behavior supports, and individualized approaches.
- Platforms for student voice	- A stated focus for KIPP teachers is that students will 'make meaning' on their own. This requires students to learn how to express themselves in a variety of ways. The skills of self-expression learned in the classroom translate into all aspects of life at school, and school leaders often convene students for listening sessions to better understand students' needs and perspectives.

In addition, the proposed school addresses priorities named in the 2018-2020 OPSB School and Program Development Priorities document:

Priority 1: School programs and services addressing the unique needs of diverse learners in inclusive settings.	KNOS has developed strong programming for English language learners and is well-equipped to meet students' needs in this area.
Priority 4: Schools, programs, and services that seek to interrupt and/or address the school-to-prison pipeline.	KNOS integrates academic experiences and socio-emotional supports for students. KIPP schools have developed a variety of trauma-informed approaches and favor restorative approaches to addressing conflict.
Priority 5: Schools programs and services addressing early childhood education	As a school offering Pre-K programming, the proposed school will expand the availability of early education seats for four-year-old students.

In addition, the School and Program Development Priorities document states that "in addition to these priorities, we also anticipate a continuing needs for transformation school operators to replace chronically poor-performing schools, including a number of schools that may be at risk for non-renewal in the next two cycles." The proposed PK-8 transformation school directly meets this priority.

Meeting the Needs of Target Student Population

Demographically, we expect that the student population of the proposed KIPP PK-8 Transformation school will mirror the students currently enrolled at KIPP schools in New Orleans. Students will likely begin the school year with a wide variety of academic and social/emotional needs, similar to those presented by students at schools across the KIPP network. Our entire program is geared toward helping students who are behind academically to catch up and excel. Our approach to this academic work is discussed in depth later in this document. In addition, students will need classroom teachers who approach interactions with knowledge of trauma-informed approaches and culturally responsive teaching practices. Likewise, KIPP teachers employ this knowledge in coordination with the school mental health professional who will provide additional support.

Despite all of the similarities to students in other KIPP schools, there is one important difference that will become a focus of our work at the KIPP PK-8 Transformation school: all of the students will have experienced the stress associated with attending a school that is

undergoing the transformation process. This means having experienced a loss of trust in the educators who failed to meet expectations and the further disruption of having their school experience significant change during the transformation process. This places an additional responsibility on KIPP educators to develop a school that honors their experiences while leading the school community to build an excellent, successful school.

Collaboration and Community Support

KIPP New Orleans Schools is applying to transform a yet-to-named charter school that is losing its charter. The location of the school is to be determined pending the Orleans Parish School Board's transformation process in the Spring of 2020. At this time, the details of the school community and geographic location are unknown, but the experiences of currently open KIPP schools help inform the approach to developing community collaboration and support. The proposed KIPP PK-8 Transformation school will become an important member of the community in which it is located.

One of the most important steps in building connections with the community is in the development of the new school's identity. In New Orleans, we take exceptional pride in our schools, and at KIPP we know that schools are first and foremost communities. Regardless of academic outcomes, schools consist of relationships between people and shared experiences over time. As with other schools in the KIPP network, we will work closely with the community to develop a school name that appropriately reflects the history of the school, the neighborhood context and the school's connection to the KIPP network.

Recently KIPP New Orleans conducted a renaming process when KIPP McDonogh 15 moved from the original McDonogh 15 building in the French Quarter to the newly built Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial building. We worked closely with members of the Morial family, elected officials, neighborhood representatives, families and students to rename the school KIPP Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial. Similarly, we have worked closely with the Booker T. Washington High School alumni association throughout the development of KIPP Booker T. Washington to ensure that school traditions and emblems honor the exceptional history of the Booker T. Washington school community. We also have ongoing plans for the Booker T. Washington Alumni Association to play a significant role in the school and have already begun to partner on and co-sponsor several initiatives and events as we prepare for the build-out and move to the permanent facility.

We fully expect that the existing charter school currently has community partners, and we will build a connection with those existing partners as we transition in as new school operators. In addition, the school will collaborate with many of KIPP's existing partners, including partners dedicated to identifying and recruiting excellent teachers; organizations that provide additional mental health supports to students; arts and enrichment organizations that share KIPP's belief in providing excellent extra-curricular opportunities to student; and neighborhood / community organizations that represent the local neighborhood.

The proposed school will work to build upon the leadership capacity that already exists in the school to be transformed. We will identify parent leaders who may have been active in a parent teacher organization at the existing school, and we will work closely with the representatives of the neighborhood association and similar organizations. The school will be open to the public and we will host tours so that community members and elected officials can learn more about our approach to school transformation.