

KIPP Charter School Raises the Bar | MyFoxMemphis | Fox 13 News

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Memphis, Tn - From the moment you enter a KIPP Collegiate School, it's clear that this is something different. The kids are fully engaged. There's a sense of discipline, even in walking to your next class.

"We're committed that all students can learn and we're committed to doing whatever it takes."

Jamal McCall is Executive Director of KIPP Memphis, one of the most successful charter school systems in the city and nation.

KIPP has a middle school and just started a high school. Tuesday, the school board approved applications for two new schools.

"There's definitely a huge need for providing quality options for all kids, and last year at this time we didn't have a waiting list, but right now we sit at 160 students on our waiting list, which speaks volumes," said McCall.

KIPP now holds a lottery to choose its students.

KIPP was the only system to have charters approved. 20 others were denied.

McCall says it's the results that set them apart. 93% of KIPP students graduate high school. 68% go on to college.

The plan is to have 10 KIPP schools by 2016, a cluster in North and South Memphis.

The governor is encouraging charter school growth, and lifted restrictions, so now all children can attend.

But, McCall says the School Board's tough standards for issuing charters is a good thing, "I've been in states where there's a lack of accountability of charter schools and then you have a sea of failing charter schools. We don't want to see that in Tennessee and we don't want to see that in Memphis."

While charter schools receive tax dollars for educating students, they get no money for buildings.

KIPP is located in a building it rents from the Memphis City Schools. The new elementary school will go in an unused wing. There's still no location for the new middle school.

McCall thinks consolidation may help them with finding a new building, "I'm taking a close listen to what schools they are talking about closing and keeping my eyes and ears open for schools for consolidation."

McCall says he will find a building and the middle school will be ready to open by July.

KIPP starts in July, the day is 7:30 am until 5pm, and students attend class at least 15 Saturdays a year.

Students are prepared for college and prepared for life.

The motto is simple, "Work hard. Be nice."

"We're going to come here and do whatever it takes each day. We're going to work hard, but we're going to have fun, be nice."