

Mathematica Report about KIPP Schools: June 2010

Key Questions and Answers

(1) What makes this the most rigorous study of KIPP schools to date?

This is the first report from a multi-year study of KIPP schools by [Mathematica Policy Research](#). It is the most expansive report to date on KIPP, as it includes demographic and achievement data from students in 22 KIPP schools in 14 school districts.

This report is also the most rigorous multi-site study of KIPP schools, as researchers collected student-level achievement data in each site, and identified a matched comparison group of students in district schools who had similar achievement levels to the KIPP students in third and fourth grades. Moreover, the set of students that researchers studied included any child that attended a KIPP school, even for just one year. The study also includes data from two KIPP schools from which KIPP Foundation revoked its affiliation, and that subsequently closed.

(2) How were KIPP schools selected for the study?

The 22 KIPP schools in this study were selected based on two criteria: They were middle schools open in fall 2005 or earlier; and they had school districts and/or states that were readily able to share data with Mathematica. The report includes the full list of schools in the study.

(3) Why are the data not identified for each KIPP school in the study?

In part due to data sharing agreements between Mathematica and some of the school districts and states, the report did not identify school names attached to specific results. There are charts and bar graphs that show the data for each school, but without disclosing each individual school name.

(4) How does the report address the fact that KIPP sometimes retains students at a higher rate than other public schools?

Researchers found that KIPP retained students at a higher rate than neighboring public schools. The report noted that, “these differences [in grade retention rates] likely capture KIPP’s philosophy that students should be promoted to the next grade level only after they have demonstrated mastery of the current grade material.”

Scores of retained students could not be used in the analysis because retained students end up in different grades than their matched comparison students. Researchers made the assumption that KIPP students who repeated a grade did neither better nor worse the second time around than they did before retention.

(5) How does the study take into account parental motivation in influencing student outcomes?

Mathematica tried to isolate KIPP’s impact from parent influence by creating matched sets of students in: a) KIPP schools and b) district public schools, and comparing their academic progress over a four-year period. Mathematica matched KIPP students and non-KIPP students based not only on demographic information, but also on their fourth grade achievement levels and growth from third grade. This meant that the KIPP students and matched comparison students had the same growth trajectories prior to entrance in KIPP in fifth or sixth grade. From these baseline data, researchers calculated how much growth KIPP students had on state assessment tests over a four-year period compared to their matched pairs who attended district public schools.

Parental motivation is likely to affect students’ achievement trajectories prior to KIPP entry in a similar way that it affects their achievement during their years at KIPP, so the students with comparable pre-KIPP achievement trajectories are likely to have comparable parent influences.

(6) What does this report conclude about student attrition across a geographically diverse number of KIPP schools?

Researchers looked at student attrition in 22 KIPP schools across 14 school districts, and “did not find systematically higher (or lower) levels of attrition among the KIPP middle schools as compared with other schools within their district.”

Approximately one-third of the KIPP schools studied had lower attrition rates than corresponding district schools; one-third had equivalent levels of attrition; and one-third had higher attrition.

(7) What does the report say about the entering test scores of KIPP students compared to their district peers?

According to the report, “KIPP schools most often enroll students whose average fourth grade achievement scores are lower than the district wide average.” Mathematica also found that the measurable achievement growth described in the study is not the result of KIPP attracting students with a history of academic success, because the comparison group is matched based on prior achievement

(8) What does the report tell us about the demographics of the students that KIPP serves?

Mathematica found that KIPP schools serve a higher percentage of African American and Latino students, and children who qualify for the federal free- or reduced-price meal program. The report also found that the KIPP schools in the study serve a lower percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) students and students identified as needing special education services.

While the data about special education and ELL are important findings for the KIPP network, there are many KIPP schools that have a proven track record of succeeding with these student populations. One example is KIPP Lynn Academy, where special education students make up 19 percent of the student body, and – as highlighted in a recent [NBER study by researchers at Harvard, MIT, and University of Michigan](#) – special education students’ academic gains are even greater than the school-wide average. KIPP Lynn also serves a significantly higher proportion of ELL students than local district schools, and has positive, statistically significant impacts on all of its students.

KIPP has a commitment to continuous improvement. We are pleased to be serving a higher percentage of low income and minority students than neighboring districts, and we also want to make sure KIPP schools are serving all interested students, including special education and ELL students.

(9) The report mentions two schools that closed. Which ones were they and why did they close?

KIPP Achieve Academy in Atlanta and KIPP Youth Village Academy in Chicago both opened in 2003. After attempting for several years to support these schools in meeting KIPP’s standards, the KIPP Foundation decided to revoke their KIPP affiliation in 2006, and both schools eventually closed.

(10) When will the other reports in this study be published? What information will they include?

The second report from Mathematica, expected to be released in 2012, will include data on a larger sample of KIPP schools across the country, and, where possible, will compare the achievement results of KIPP students to those students who tried to enroll in KIPP but did not get a spot through the lottery. Future reports will also incorporate additional student outcomes beyond state test scores and explore aspects of KIPP schools’ operations that may produce larger impacts on students.