

KIPP still has openings

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By Aaron FitzPatrick | Courier News



Sixth-grade students at KIPP Blytheville College Preparatory school participate in a science experiment Friday morning. The school just finished the second week of a three-week summer school program.

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The KIPP Blytheville College Preparatory school still has openings for the upcoming 2011-12 school year, according to school director Maisie Wright.

"We still have a few spots open in fifth grade," said Wright. "We'd love to fill those before August."

The school added a sixth grade to this year's enrollment after completing its first year in 2010-11 with just one fifth-grade class.

"As we're able to grow, we're able to specialize more this year," Wright said. "Last year we had a teaching staff of three. This year we have seven."

The school will have a full-time math teacher and science teacher, two full-time English/language arts teachers, a full-time special education teacher, music teacher and physical education teacher.

The staff is made up of teachers from all across the country from Arizona to Massachusetts.

"We try to recruit the best from all over the country," said Wright. Wright said KIPP works with an organization called Teach For America, which specializes in preparing and placing teachers in low-income areas across the country. "It's a very competitive program to get into that's based on the idea that the top students in our graduating college classes should be the people going back and teaching our students. They may not come with years of teaching experience, but they come with the mindset that we're going to do whatever it takes to make sure our students are successful. They have lots of energy and are willing to be developed."

Wright added that the teachers take part in three to four weeks of professional development every year.

The additional staff will allow the school to expand its after-school activities.

"We're going to have a band and a choir and a piano keyboarding club," Wright said.

In addition, the school will incorporate the Arts Infusion into the classroom.

Arts Infusion is a teaching method that attempts to actively engage students in the learning process through the arts.

"You might walk into a math class and see them counting aloud while their singing along to a song," said Wright. "Or you might go into a science class and see students drawing out the experiment they just did or acting out the 'States of Matter.' We're making a big push in this direction that wasn't there last year."

KIPP just finished its second week of a three-week summer school program that Wright says has multiple benefits for the students.

"Summer school helps prepare the students for the following year," Wright said. "We start them not only on the routines and procedures, but they jump right into math and they've started working on nature science material as well as start their first novel or continue working on phonics for those who need that."

It's also used to set the culture of the school, so we spend a lot of time with the students on the expectations of the school.

For students coming to KIPP there is always an adjustment period so the summer provides a good time for that."

Wright said that for the school's "end of summer" field lesson next Friday, students will go to Dixon Gallery and Garden in Memphis as well as the Pink Palace to watch a Magic of Science presentation.

For information on enrolling in KIPP call 870-780-6333 or visit the school's website at www.kippdelta.org.

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