

Blytheville Courier News

February 4, 2010

KIPP set to open doors July 12

75-90 fifth-graders to be admitted to new school

By Donna Loyd Hilton

BLYTHERVILLE, AR — Work has already begun to get ready for the first academic session of KIPP Blytheville College Preparatory Program, said Maisie Wright, school director.

KIPP stands for Knowledge is Power Program, a nationwide school system that focuses on five basic principles: high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead and focus on results. There are now 82 KIPP schools with more than 21,000 students.

Beginning with four classrooms at Franklin School, KIPP Blytheville will begin classes on July 12 for 75 to 90 fifth-grade students. Other locations were considered, Wright said, but the facilities at Franklin School required the least amount of renovations and offered a better location for prospective students.

The mission of KIPP Blytheville is to empower students to develop the essential knowledge, skills and character traits to pursue a college education and a life of value, joy and integrity.

KIPP schools are different from traditional public schools because each faculty and staff member is dedicated to doing “whatever it takes” to help students be successful, Wright said. “We want to create a safe space for kids to be comfortable enough to learn,” she said.

Students at KIPP schools have a longer school day, and hold classes two Saturdays per month and for three weeks in the summer. By spacing out the school year, students require less “review” work. Students are also given “homework packets” of assignments to complete while school is not in session to keep their minds focused on school work, Wright said.

Students frequently stay after school and contact their teachers by phone at night. In fact, teachers’ names and cell phone numbers are listed on the school’s Web site to encourage parents and students to contact teachers and staff.

For their hard work, students may earn the privilege of participating in extracurricular activities, and the schools frequently reward student performance with special events and field lessons.

KIPP Delta is a growing network of KIPP charter schools offering a free, college-preparatory education to children in the Arkansas Delta.

Many students come to KIPP performing below grade-level, but with hard work are soon excelling in advanced curriculum. The common thread uniting every student at KIPP is the dedication to “Work hard” and “Be nice.”

KIPP Delta is held to high standards for academic results and financial discipline by its Board of Directors, KIPP National, and the State of Arkansas.

KIPP Blytheville will offer the students of northeast Arkansas another option for education – one that focuses on both character and academics. At each grade-level, students will learn specific values such as hard work, kindness, responsibility and integrity.

Students at KIPP Blytheville will both strengthen their foundation in reading, math and science and develop their skills in subjects beyond the core curriculum, such as art, music, physical education, and archaeology, according to its Web site.

Through the arts, extra-curricular activities, sports and monthly field lessons, students will be exposed to more experiences that will empower them to attend the college or university of their choice and find success there and beyond.

The curriculum at KIPP Blytheville will be the same as required of all Arkansas schools. Extra time and focus are placed on literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science. KIPP Blytheville students will also be able to study archaeology and research, Wright said.

More information about KIPP Blytheville will be forthcoming, Wright said. “I’ll be speaking at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Feb. 22,” she said. Wright will also speak to several other audiences, such as civic clubs and churches in the next few weeks, so more people can learn about KIPP Blytheville.

Parents may submit applications to attend KIPP Blytheville through May 31, by applying online at www.kippdelta.org or by calling Wright at 714-0262. To apply online, go to kippdelta.org and click on “schools.” If more applications are received than the number of classroom slots, a lottery of June 1 will determine enrollment, she added.