

**Appeal Statement: KIPP Southeast Nashville College Prep Elementary School and
KIPP Southeast Nashville College Prep Middle School**

Executive Director Stovall, Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, and Review Committee:

Thank you for the time and effort you will be devoting to the appeals of the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education's denial of KIPP Nashville's amended applications to establish a new charter elementary school and a new charter middle school. I am confident you will find that each application meets or exceeds the metrics outlined in the application-scoring rubrics and that the MNPS Board's denial of the applications is contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community.

KIPP Nashville. KIPP is part of a national network of 270 "Knowledge is Power Program" schools that provide college preparatory education to more than 120,000 students around the country. KIPP's mission is to create public schools that help students from underserved communities develop the knowledge, skills, character, and habits needed to succeed in college and the world beyond. KIPP believes that all students can learn and achieve and deserve an excellent college-preparatory education, regardless of their zip code or demographics.

For 17 years, KIPP has partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools and the State of Tennessee to provide high-quality educational opportunities to disadvantaged Nashville students. Our mission is to build schools in the highest-needs neighborhoods of Davidson County and ensure that all students are educated and able to pursue the paths they choose—toward college, career or beyond. KIPP currently operates seven schools: a high school, three elementary schools, and three middle schools. They are **fully enrolled, financially secure,** and, most importantly, **educating their students exceedingly well.** KIPP schools are consistently rated among the highest-performing schools in Tennessee, and KIPP students regularly achieve at high levels on tests like the ACT. And, true to its mission, 80% of KIPP students were economically disadvantaged, and more than 89% of students identified as African American or Hispanic/Latino as of the 2021-22 school year.

Our vision is to build a K-12 model in distinct high-needs neighborhoods feeding into two high schools, thus creating K-12 pipelines for students throughout Davidson County. In the north and east, students are served by two KIPP elementary schools, two KIPP middle schools, and KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School. These schools have delivered tremendous growth and achievement, with each school being named a Reward School.

KIPP's Antioch Schools. We are working to expand the same opportunities for students in southeast Davidson County. Seven years ago, KIPP planned to open a new elementary school and middle school in north and east Davidson County. The MNPS Board, however, asked KIPP to commit to placing the schools in the Antioch area because it was the fastest growing part of the county and was in the greatest need of additional schools. KIPP agreed, but the MNPS Board denied the charters anyway. On appeal, the State Board overturned these decisions and approved the applications. KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary opened in 2018, and KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle opened in 2019. In 2023, we will be opening KIPP Antioch College Prep High School, which, together with the elementary and middle schools, will provide a complete K-12 pathway for area students. MNPS denied KIPP's high school application, but this decision too was overturned by the State Board. The Commission is the authorizer for these schools, and this partnership has already delivered benefits to students in southeast Davidson County.

The Need for a New KIPP Elementary School and Middle School in Southeast Davidson County. The success of the existing elementary and middle schools in Antioch and the high demand for seats at these schools convinced us that additional KIPP schools are needed to provide parents and students seeking a KIPP education with that option. KIPP has seen incredible demand for seats at both the elementary and middle schools in Antioch. By the end of February 2020, **over 900 students had applied for 250 open seats** at these schools for the 2020-21 school year, with most applicants living in Antioch. KIPP has also seen very strong

commitment from our students to KIPP's Antioch schools. Of the more than 925 students at these schools at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, **99% will be returning** for 2022-23. While this high retention rate is a significant strength, it limits the opportunity for new students seeking a KIPP education to obtain a seat. Since demand for KIPP seats is nearly **four times the number of existing open seats** in Antioch and few seats become available each year because of strong student retention, it is clear that a second elementary and middle school are needed and will quickly become fully enrolled.

Further, some of the circumstances that led MNPS to ask KIPP to focus on the Antioch area in 2015 persist today. While MNPS believes that the severity of school overcrowding has lessened, MNPS's projections continue to show projected overcrowding at a number of elementary schools in Antioch and Cane Ridge in the coming years. The proposed schools will only aid in ensuring that overcrowding truly is no longer a problem.

Approval of the Applications Will Serve the Best Interests of Nashville Students. KIPP's existing elementary and middle schools in Antioch are in high demand, and new schools are needed to meet that demand. This high demand is driven by KIPP's intense commitment to—and demonstrated success at—preparing historically underserved students for college and careers. Approval of the new schools will provide additional opportunities for students to access KIPP's rigorous, college-prep curriculum that culminates with access to the KIPP Forward program, which includes partnerships with dozens of universities around the country.

Simply stated, KIPP has a proven record of success. In 2020-21, of students who started 9th grade at KIPP's high school, 93% graduated, compared with a state-wide graduation rate of 89% and a district-wide rate of 85%. KIPP's college matriculation rate is 58%, compared with a district rate of 44%. In fact, KIPP schools are consistently rated among the highest-performing schools in Tennessee. Since 2013, KIPP schools have been eligible to receive school-wide TVAAS ratings 14 times prior to the Pandemic. In 12 of those instances, KIPP schools received a Level 5. KIPP schools also have consistently been named Reward Schools.

At the elementary level, KIPP's schools have achieved dramatic improvement in student achievement. In 2015-16, we opened the doors of KIPP Kirkpatrick, our first primary school, after MNPS asked KIPP to convert a chronically under-performing school serving students living in and near the James Cayce public housing neighborhood. The year prior to KIPP's intervention, fewer than 5% of Kirkpatrick students passed the TCAP exam in reading or math and Kirkpatrick was designated a Priority School. KIPP has transformed Kirkpatrick from a Priority School to a Reward School in just a few years. By 2018-19, KIPP Kirkpatrick earned the top level of TVAAS score, a Level 5. The Department of Education's annual report card shows that students of color and economically disadvantaged students demonstrated "high absolute achievement" and earned the highest growth rating of 4.0. And, KIPP Kirkpatrick was named a Reward School in 2019. The transformation can also be seen in KIPP Kirkpatrick's TN Ready results, which, by 2019, surpassed the district-wide average in math and outpaced nearby district schools in ELA. We have also seen strong NWEA MAP assessment results at our elementary school in Antioch, with results that exceed district-wide results.

Likewise, KIPP's middle schools have a track record of high student achievement and growth. As the MNPS review committee recognized when it concluded that the middle school application meets or exceeds standards in Past Performance, "KIPP Nashville middle schools have documented recognition including being designated Reward Schools."

Approval of the proposed schools is in the best interests of students because they will provide alternatives to district schools where student achievement is lagging. At the elementary school level, the percentage of students on grade level in 2019-20 in area MNPS elementary schools in ELA ranges from 25.6% (Thomas A. Edison ES) to 33% (A.Z. Kelley ES). In Math, the percentage of students on grade level in area MNPS schools ranges from 12.2% (Eagle View ES) to 31.8% (Cane Ridge ES). At the middle school level, the percentage of students on grade level in 2019-20 in area MNPS middle schools in ELA ranges from 11.6% (Apollo MS) to

12.2% (Antioch MS). In Math, the percentage of students on grade level in area MNPS middle schools ranges from 8.9% (Apollo MS) to 16.9% (Thurgood Marshall MS).

The proposed schools will also benefit students by placing them on track to attend KIPP Antioch College Prep High School, which will be opening in 2023. Again, KIPP has a strong track record of success at the high school level. Seniors at KIPP's existing high school earn among the highest ACT averages and college-ready (ACT score of 21+) rates of any public high school in the city, exceeded only by the magnet schools with academic selection requirements. In 2019, 60% of KIPP high school students had an ACT score of 21+ compared to 30% in MNPS as a whole, 21% at Antioch High School, and 19% at Cane Ridge High School. For Black and Hispanic students, the benefits of attending a KIPP high school were even greater. These students were more than **four times more likely to score a 21+** on the ACT compared with peer students at Cane Ridge.

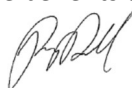
KIPP strongly believes that approval of the elementary and middle school applications will fundamentally improve the lives of disadvantaged students by providing high-performing alternatives to traditional schools.

Approval of the Applications Will Serve the Best Interests of the LEA and the Community. According to its most recent Strategic Framework, MNPS has articulated its priorities, which include improving student achievement, improving student academic growth, closing achievement gaps, ensuring college and career readiness, and increasing graduation rates. These priorities are fully aligned with KIPP's mission, and KIPP has a 17-year track record of achieving these goals. Establishing additional high-performing schools in an area that needs them will serve the interests of the LEA and the community. And, as noted above, the schools can help relieve projected overcrowding in one of the fastest growing areas of the county, particularly if any issues arise with the funding or development of planned district facilities. Further, the proposed schools do not threaten the district financially, and the MNPS Board did not deny the applications because of negative fiscal impact.

These schools will also benefit the community by drawing more families into public schools and by providing a public school choice to parents dissatisfied with existing educational opportunities, but who lack the means to move or afford private school. The high volume of applications for KIPP's existing Antioch schools shows that the community will be well served by making additional seats available. And, it is self-evident that providing disadvantaged students a better opportunity to succeed brings incalculable benefits to the community.

The Applications Meet or Exceed the Applicable Metrics. Based on a narrow set of issues, MNPS believed that the applications did not meet or exceed standards, and the MNPS Board denied the applications on that basis. We strongly disagree. In some cases, the issues identified by MNPS—like the absence of cluster-wide overcrowding or the fact that a specific plot of land for the new buildings was not listed—are not appropriate bases to deny the applications. In other cases, MNPS simply reached the wrong conclusions. The cover letter we submitted with the amended applications describes how we addressed these issues and notes areas where we disagree with MNPS's analysis. We are confident that after performing a *de novo* review, the Commission will readily conclude that the applications meet or exceed the metrics outlined in the application-scoring rubric, and we look forward to meeting with the Commission Review Team to discuss the applications.

Conclusion. Approval of the applications for KIPP Southeast Nashville College Prep Elementary School and KIPP Southeast Nashville College Prep Middle School are clearly in the best interests of the students, the LEA, and the community, and the MNPS Board was wrong to conclude otherwise. Tellingly, the Antioch area's board member, Fran Bush, voted against denying the applications. KIPP hopes the Commission will similarly view the applications favorably in light of KIPP's past performance and the benefits these schools will bring.



Randy Dowell
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