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Dear KIPP Chicago Community,

I hope that you are safe and well. We have now been back to school for one month and we are witnessing over and over the resilience of our students, families, and teachers. Everyday I see families making it happen for their children at home with customized learning spaces that allow students to immerse themselves in online learning. I see teachers going above and beyond to create dynamic, engaging content for students and meeting with other teachers across the region to brainstorm innovative and creative ways to present lessons. I see the regional staff continue to plan and prepare for every possible learning scenario, adapting and innovating for a quickly changing reality.

The Whole Child initiative was born from a reckoning about what it would truly take to ensure our students had the confidence, skills, and appropriate supportive structures to navigate the many systemic barriers they face throughout their educational and career journey. Our evolution as an organization demanded a more comprehensive approach rooted in amplifying student creativity and expression, collective care, and community mobilization. When we began the process of creating the Whole Child Initiative, we did so with 7 priorities in mind that would continue our progress toward becoming an anti-racist organization.

In this edition of the Whole Child Review, you will read about how we continue to prioritize connecting with families and ensuring those relationships are strong. You’ll see our thoughtful approach to online learning as we took lessons from the spring and implemented a plan that is rigorous, responsive, and still joyful. We are approaching the work from our Children’s Museum of Art and Social Justice in new and exciting ways and we’re working to exhibit more artwork from our past shows in schools. See how you can help make this happen! We’re thrilled to announce more progress toward our Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) goals and we have a number of exciting announcements around our work to cultivate identity development practices, including the story of our own Pete Gooden, accepting an award for his leadership in KIPP Through College (KTC). In this edition, you will see how we are continuing to address food justice through partnerships and how we are continuing to bring experiences of community and joy to our staff through wellness events.

In gratitude, community, and health,

April

These images are some of the many examples of the at-home learning spaces we’re so inspired to see. Also, thank you families for bringing your students to school supply pick-up days! The top left photo are new students and QUADRUPELETs!
Connecting with families this past spring and summer

We value the connections we have with our students and families and we were determined to maintain those connections this past spring and summer. School leaders and teachers didn’t waste any time creating new ways to engage with our students and families. This past spring, KIPP One Academy packed art kits for families to pick up and they hosted a Zoom paint class. KIPP Bloom Primary had a drive-through popsicle party so families could safely come by, one at a time, to say hi and enjoy some treats. Each of our schools has also organized essential item give-aways. We’re so humbled and grateful for the volunteers who made these events happen with safety, efficiency, and care top of mind.

Increasing family and community partnerships

Centering family wellness

As we embrace and adjust to online learning this fall, we are also working to engage with our KIPP Chicago families in new ways. Families were invited to fill out a survey to let us know what workshops and experiences they’d like most. As we continue to grow our family outreach through the Whole Child Initiative, we are looking for external partners to collaborate with, engaging with our families to bring educational, informational, and joy-filled experiences.

Our family wellness survey inquired about their educational desires, personal interests, and KIPPster support. After collecting responses, we learned that financial literacy, pursuing higher education, and entrepreneurship are topics of high interest. We’re looking forward to expanding our family wellness focused initiatives!

Which topics are you interested in learning?
¿Qué temas te interesan aprender?

- Financial Education: 170 (99.4%)
- Literacy: 65 (28.6%)
- Language: 70 (28.6%)
- Advancing Education: 91 (37.1%)
- Technology: 90 (36.7%)
- Health and Nutrition: 80 (32.7%)
- Career Support: 75 (31%)
Embracing an inclusive and challenging curriculum

Remote Learning

As we transitioned into SY20-21 planning, we had plenty of strengths to leverage: we ultimately achieved 93% access to technology despite starting around 60%, we hired nearly 100% of open positions by June 1st, and we established very ambitious remote learning expectations. Our school teams worked tirelessly to distribute some form of technology, whether a hotspot, tablet, chromebook, or some combination of the three, to all of our families as they communicated these technology needs. Due to the incredible teamwork of our staff we were able to do so as proactively as possible by making decisions early, so that leaders and teachers were able to focus on learning to lead and teach with an entirely new set of conditions.

A lot has transpired since spring. We have heard from staff and families via surveys, we have heard from the city about its reopening plans, and our School Leadership teams have been working hard to craft detailed playbooks and plans for each scenario. We have seen that throughout the pandemic, a lot can change in a short amount of time. So while plans are based on the most recent science, research, and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), everything is subject to change at a moment’s notice. You can find our most up-to-date information about remote learning and COVID-19 protocols here.

On August 24th, two weeks before the district start date, we welcomed our students to remote school, which will be more robust and structured than the spring experience. Here are a few key points:

**Access.** KIPP works with every single student to ensure that they can access our technology platforms for online school.

**The best online education programs.** KIPP invests in top online education platforms for every student.

**Communication.** KIPP staff members have weekly individualized check-ins with every student and families will receive weekly progress reports.

**Small group attention.** KIPPsters will engage in small Zoom study groups with their teachers if they are struggling to understand a concept.

**As close to a normal school day as possible.** KIPPsters will be in live Zoom classes every day with their teachers and classmates. In addition, KIPPsters will have meaningful and joyful virtual community building experiences with classmates each week.

Students engage in synchronous and asynchronous learning. Our online education programs and platforms allow for predictable weekly and daily routines to make remote learning as accessible as possible for our families, while optimizing KIPPsters’ learning. Students will receive daily instruction in core content, utilizing familiar online tools and programs like SeeSaw, Zoom video conferencing, amongst others.

Between mid August and September 4th nearly all of KIPP Chicago families had 1:1 conferences with their teachers or leaders. These conferences ensured that families had the devices they needed and that they could practice accessing their google classrooms and the instructional programs they would be using. This allowed students to really “hit the ground running” even with a new way of learning and building community with their peers. Regarding attendance, KIPP Chicago holds a high bar for engagement and as a result focused the first two weeks of school supporting families in getting logged on and feeling connected to their teachers, their peers and their remote classrooms while also teaching academic routines and expectations. We know that learning requires more time engaged and we aspire to have 90% of our students logged on to all their live sessions each day - for our students this is at least 2-3 times a day.

At the same time, we understand that sometimes families will need to make up missed content and have provided methods for them to do so. Lastly, KIPP Chicago families are our partners and for our youngest students they are really our co-teachers. Consequently, staff members will meet weekly with families to truly embody this partnership. We are truly in this together.

Other innovations and priorities include:

1. **Resources for safety.** We are adapting all current school operational procedures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Despite the fact that we do not know when on-site schooling will resume, KIPP Chicago has already purchased 4 months worth of PPE for staff and students to ensure everyone’s safety and health should such a situation arise. We are working urgently to secure funding for expanded and dedicated on-site nursing consultation at each of our 8 schools.

2. **Resources ensuring equitable access.** We will close the digital divide by loaning devices to all students in need, including new enrollees, while also maintaining a near 1:1 ratio on-site, thereby ensuring agility and guaranteeing learning every single day of next year. We are investing in instructional platforms to enhance the remote teaching and learning experience.

3. **Resources for addressing social emotional needs and trauma.** We will focus on creating emotionally and physically safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments in both the remote and on-site settings, thereby ensuring KIPP’s commitment to the whole child upon return to school. We will start our school year with one social worker at every K-8 campus. Teams from across KIPP Chicago are being trained on the SEL RULER curriculum to ensure that students have space to learn to identify their feelings and strategies for addressing those feelings. Implementing the curriculum also allows teachers to be constantly monitoring the health and wellness of our students so they can respond urgently in situations that require additional attention.

**Resources**

Check out our new [web page](#) with all of our updates on remote learning!
Sharing resources from our Children’s Museum of Art and Social Justice

Installing CMASJ artwork in schools

It isn’t yet clear when we will physically be back in schools so we are using this time inside empty buildings to install artwork made by students for CMASJ art exhibits. We believe student-created work should always be on display so we will be installing our Activist Soup portraits, along with the bios of each person, creating a beautiful, meaningful permanent fixture at every one of our 8 schools. We set up a Go Fund Me to help with our efforts.

Mural collaboration at KIPP Bloom

Jennifer Hodges, Director of the Whole Child Initiative and Joslyn Villalpando, Director of Arts Programming collaborated this summer to design and paint a mural at KIPP Bloom, centering an interactive experience with butterfly wings and a Jean-Michele Basquiat inspired crown so students feel welcome to become part of the artwork.

Regional t-shirt design

Our nation is divided racially, politically, economically and socially. There is an uprising and demand for a reckoning of past and current oppression. Simultaneously, Black people are fighting for equality and equity. Latinx people are fighting for citizenship and reunion. LGBTQ+ are fighting for protection and there is a plethora of intersectional needs and demands that are interchangeable for BIPOC.

At the crux of our work in taking a deeper position in becoming an antiracist organization and the intent of our Whole Child Initiative, the children we serve, we teach and we love are at the center of our daily work and our goals. With this year’s regional t-shirt, we worked to center the strength and unity of our children. Our intent is to elevate the dynamic character of our students, positively affirm and reflect their identity and individuality, while wholeheartedly, solely focusing the design on children.

Pictured below is the team that led the efforts behind the t-shirt design including: Director of Arts Programming, Joslyn Villalpando, Director, Brand Strategy & Communications, Brittany Jones, Director of Whole Child Initiative, Jennifer Hodges, and Head of Talent, Ellen Sale. After setting the intention and goals of the design, the team used photos of KIPP students to draw the image on the front while the back of the shirt features a quote from Pablo Casals, “Children must know that they are miracles, that since the beginning of the world there hasn’t been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like them.”
Highlight of past CMASJ exhibit

We will continue our Children’s Museum of Art and Social Justice work to celebrate and promote Black and Latinx centered themes, like one of our favorites from 2018, *Springtime on Neptune*. This exhibition explored themes of Afrofuturism to celebrate a reimagining of our earth with Black people at the center. Springtime on Neptune also coincided with Chicago’s 1st annual Wakandacon, which filmed some of its promotional material in our museum, and the release of Black Panther, the Marvel movie featuring an Afrofuturistic theme. We would be remiss if we did not mention the August 28th passing of Chadwick Boseman, who played King T’Challa in Black Panther among other notable characters in movies. Black Panther just came out when we were creating the artwork for Springtime on Neptune and it was incredibly inspiring to see a Black superhero in a major Marvel film. Wakanda forever!

As we adjust to creating content for online viewing and interaction, we are excited to offer ideas for kids to engage in art and social justice.

Resources

Check out our CMASJ lesson plans [page].

Check out the YouTube [page] of KIPP One Primary art teacher, Ms. Weldon, who shows us how to make art from household objects.

Integrating social and emotional learning (SEL)

RULER training

As we head into this school year, the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) we offer our students is imperative. Two groups of educators from KIPP Academy Chicago Primary and KIPP Bloom Primary have completed Yale’s *Ruler Program*. The rest of our schools will send a wellness team to training in December. RULER is a systemic approach to SEL developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER aims to embed the principles of emotional intelligence in preK to 12 schools, informing how leaders lead, teachers teach, students learn, and families support students. RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating. As these cohorts of trained teachers implement the learning in their own schools and classrooms, they will also receive remote coaching and online resources to lead RULER implementation in their school community.

In addition to receiving training and beginning to implement the RULER approach to social emotional learning, many teachers and leaders across KIPP Chicago bring impactful SEL learning strategies and expertise to our classrooms each and every day. Doing so allows staff to identify student needs while also teaching students how to identify, process, and regulate their feelings on their own or with the support of a caring adult or peer.

Offering a platform for developing emotional awareness

Kindergarten and first grade teachers at KIPP Academy Chicago Primary use four faces along with a list of feelings words to begin virtual learning with their class each day. After being given the list of words and matching images, students enter class letting her know how they are currently feeling. Acknowledging and allowing for the feelings students’ have is a great way to normalize talking about feelings and their temporary states. This also allows Ms. Marshall to gauge the needs of individual students as they move through the day.
More social workers

We are keeping our promise of adding more social workers to schools and we’re thrilled to say that we have more than doubled the access to social workers for students from last school year! With one social worker at every KIPP Chicago K-8 school, social workers will work in collaboration with teachers, leaders and families to ensure that all students feel a strong sense of belonging and have support to address the unique needs of each student and family.

Resources

One tool the Yale Institute’s RULER program uses in their emotional intelligence practice is Mood Meter, an app helps you identify your emotions throughout the day and supports you when you’d like to shift to a different emotion. Using the Mood Meter helps you expand your emotional vocabulary and discover emotional nuances.

Cultivating identity development practices

Equity Training

Over 50 staff members, including School Leaders, senior leadership team members, Assistant Principals, and all direct managers, will participate in ongoing antiracist training this school year with Dr. Blanca Ruiz, who was one of the original Leading for Equity trainers, working with Executive Directors and the KIPP Foundation. When School Leaders and managers engage in personal reflection on internalized bias, they are better prepared to develop and implement actionable steps that move us toward becoming an antiracist organization.

The training description from Dr. Ruiz reads: Our focus will be on reflecting on how the standards and systems we have created have been internalized and are centered on whiteness. This internalization results in a community of individuals who feel the need to contort to fit in a crooked room, never fully experiencing what it is to be whole selves. Through building content knowledge, engaging in small group reflection and dialogue, large group reflection and dialogue, and application through case studies and/or role plays, we will focus on addressing our own biases, experiences and beliefs so that we can move towards action and supporting the dialogue with one another and the youth we serve.

The McNair Fellowship

About

The McNair Fellowship, named after Ronald Erwin McNair, an astronaut & physicist, is KIPP Chicago initiative that will increase the development & mentorship opportunities for emerging leaders of color, who identify as Black/African-American or Latinx/Hispanic. In development for two plus years, we are thrilled to share more about The McNair Fellowship with you. We will be announcing the fellowship members in the next Whole Child Review, so stay tuned!

Through a one year leadership development program, KIPP Chicago will assist leaders in leveraging their unique perspectives to affect broader change within our organization. The McNair Fellows, who have each been with KIPP Chicago for three or more years and have held a leadership position, will be given financial support to utilize for their own leadership acceleration. Individual pathways will include professional development, coaching/mentoring, and the development of school-based impact projects. Each path will be differentiated to meet the needs of The McNair Fellow. The fellowship is designed to elevate leaders to thrive in their roles and amplify the impact of their leadership in the evolution of our organization.
Why the fellowship is named after Ronald E. McNair

On January 28, 1986, McNair was one of seven astronauts killed in the tragic Challenger space shuttle launch. Prior to his death, McNair accumulated many accolades and educational degrees, including a Ph.D. in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1976 and four honorary doctorates.

Following McNair’s death, members of Congress provided funding for The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. The program encouraged low-income and first-generation college students and students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups to expand their educational opportunities by enrolling in a Ph.D. program, ultimately pursuing an academic career. Our McNair Fellowship program is dedicated to the high standards of achievement inspired by Dr. McNair’s life.

Increase in Staff Members who identify as BIPOC

The Talent Team, led by Jonathan Russom, Managing Director of Talent, now comprised of 3 members, including Branden Bufford, Talent Recruiter, and Ellen Sale, Head of Talent. When Jonathan began 7 years ago, 33% of the KIPP Chicago staff members were people of color. There was a general belief among us that our students and families would be best served by a much larger percentage than that. However, we also believed there weren’t enough licensed teachers of color available to fill our vacancies. Only 20% of teachers nationwide are people of color and over the last 30 years, the number of students of color has increased at a greater rate than the number of teachers of color. Still, we examined our data and hiring practices and identified what was within our control to change. We committed ourselves to an equitable selectivity rate across races/ethnicities and designed practices to ensure our desirable outcomes.

The result was an incremental increase each year in hiring teachers of color. After 7 years of increases, we’re proud to share that this year, 65% of our staff members are people of color, almost double the percentage from 7 years ago. More specifically, this year our teaching staff became majority Black, with 53% of our teachers identifying as Black, compared to the local average of 21%. We’re also in the midst of a severe national teacher shortage, with 50% fewer teachers graduating college each year compared to 15 years ago. Our success in hiring against these local, national, and historical trends is outstanding and is evidence of our fierce commitment to our mission and families, the value of reflection in our staff culture, the talent of our leaders, and the strength of our data-based approach to all our work.

Pete Gooden, award winner and new role with KIPP Chicago

On July 30, our former Director of the KIPP Through College Program, Pete Gooden was awarded the 2020 KTC Excellence in Leadership Award by the national KIPP Through College team! We are grateful for Pete’s leadership within KIPP Chicago & across the KIPP network. Introducing Pete’s award, April Montgomery Goble said the following:

He brings his own experience as a first generation high school and college graduate as he leads his team and supports our alumni. Under his leadership, he has garnered exceptional results...Because of his vision and leadership, 4 times the number of students (as compared to the number before his leadership) will attend the best public high schools in our city. Under his leadership, his team has become one of the highest performing in the network across regions without a high school. This year he will be taking on additional leadership responsibilities beyond KTC. He will be expanding his impact by leading our DEI efforts as our Vice President for Equity & Inclusion.

We are thrilled for Pete to earn the recognition he deserves for his work with KIPP Through College and we look forward to his vision, leading KIPP Chicago to a more equitable, inclusive, and progressive organization.

Resources

Together for Justice is a tool you can use to build knowledge and self-awareness, and take steps to make a difference. This resource center highlights the work KIPP is doing to fight racism and injustice within our own community and includes articles, books, podcasts, and more that provide background on race and racism in America. It houses materials educators can use to prepare for discussions about race and equity with students and it outlines steps we all can take to support the movement for racial and social justice.

Voting Matters!

KIPP has partnered with When We All Vote, Michelle Obama’s voter registration initiative, to make sure students, staff, and communities are prepared to cast their ballots this fall. Watch this video and sign up here to support the “My School Votes” Program partnership with KIPP.
Addressing food justice

Gourmet Gorilla

From the time school buildings closed in March and through the summer, KIPP Chicago partnered with Gourmet Gorilla, a food distribution company that strives to obtain 70% of its ingredients from local, sustainable, and organic purveyors, to provide meals for all students across the region. Over that period of time, families received 10 days of breakfast and lunch per each school age child in the household every 2 weeks. In total, 2,000 healthy meals were delivered to KIPP Chicago families. The delivery process was safe and efficient and we’re so grateful for the continued support and service from Gourmet Gorilla. As CPS will continue food distribution for students and families this fall, our partnership with Gourmet Gorilla will not continue.

Native Tongue + KIPP Academy Chicago

Native Tongue Magazine is a free food magazine that promotes food literacy through tailored recipes, cooking techniques, and educational content (more on Native Tongue below under ‘Resources’). We were excited to see the duo behind Native Tongue, Karen and Archie Reyes, team up with KIPP Academy Chicago (KAC) and Girls are p.e.a.r.l.s., an organization run by KAC 7th grade teacher, Sameka Gates, to host a Back-to-School Giveaway on September 2nd and September 5th. The outdoor event featured voter registration, a produce giveaway, free COVID testing, free tacos from Taco Sublime, and more. We are continuing our partnership with Native Tongue and we look forward to the myriad ways we can work together to support food education, literacy, and access for our students and families.

Resources

Native Tongue Magazine is a free food magazine that promotes food literacy through tailored recipes, cooking techniques, and educational content. Native Tongue helps educate the community by providing valuable information about healthy eating, showcasing delicious recipes that feature affordable and accessible foods, and spotlighting community heroes and organizations making a difference through food.

Embracing teacher wellbeing

Teacher/Staff Wellness survey

As we move into fall and back-to-school, our wellness team is committed to finding new, fun, and creative ways to bring wellness events to KIPP Chicago! During a recent survey, we saw a 62% increase in responses from our 2019 survey and we’re excited to keep learning more about our teachers’ needs. Our partner offerings from last year include Core Power Yoga, Chill Meditation and Massage Studio, Asutra, Holberg, Lyric Opera, LA Fitness, Chicago Ideas, Pure Edge, and Unmeasured Barre classes. Based on the most current teacher wellness survey, we are working on aligning all of our partnerships and wellness offerings with what teachers want and need.

Wellness champions

We are dedicated to the mission of bringing our community of teachers and leaders opportunities to decompress, relax, and come together in joyful ways. This past spring, as we reassessed staff wellbeing needs, we developed a team of peer-nominated wellness champions. The team set a goal of offering weekly remote wellness events for KIPP Staff, elevating our existing wellness-oriented resources for kids and families on our digital platforms. Last school year, staff engaged in yoga, watercolors, candle-making, game nights (like the one shown here with host Miguel Rodriguez), dance, and meditation. After reviewing the teacher wellness survey, we’re thrilled to unveil our 2020/2021 wellness events calendar soon to continue our work of bringing teachers together in wellness, joy, and community.