

www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/k12/bal-md.ci.kipp01jul01,0,6358316.story

baltimoresun.com

KIPP seeks elementary

New pupils unready for middle school

By Sara Neufeld

Sun reporter

July 1, 2008

The Knowledge is Power Program, which operates the highest-performing middle school in Baltimore, is seeking approval to open a new charter elementary school in the city next year, officials announced yesterday.

The city school board has approved the creation of a second KIPP middle school for 2009. But KIPP is revising its proposal and asking to open an elementary school instead because of concerns that many students are unprepared for middle school. The program will have to submit a new application.

KIPP Ujima Village Academy, the charter middle school in Baltimore, serves 335 students in grades five through eight. It has seen the preparedness of its incoming fifth-graders declining over the past four years.

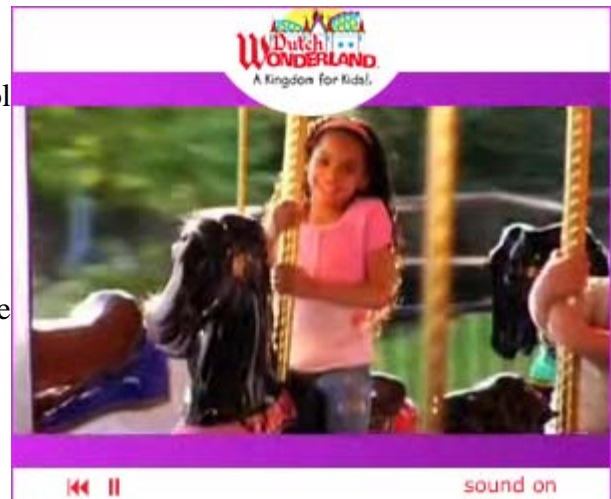
The school administers a national standardized test, the Stanford 9, to students at the beginning of fifth grade. In 2003, incoming fifth-graders scored in the 30th percentile in reading, the 38th percentile in math and the 32nd percentile in language. For children entering fifth grade in 2007, the percentiles fell to the 16th percentile in reading, the 19th percentile in math and the 15th percentile in language.

"It's been consistently going down a couple of points each year," said Jason Botel, executive director of KIPP Baltimore.

The new school would start with a class of 110 prekindergartners and add a grade each year until it includes prekindergarten through fourth grade. Children would then move on to KIPP Ujima Village Academy.

The middle school operates in the old Roland N. Patterson middle school building in West Baltimore, alongside a charter high school. A new combined middle/high school is opening in the building this summer.

Botel said KIPP wants to open the elementary school on the site, adding a wing with facilities suitable for younger children. He said the 18-acre site could accommodate all of the schools.



KIPP is a national network of 65 public schools that has been widely recognized for its success in educating low-income minority students. Its schools feature an extended academic day, week and year, with students typically in school from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, with additional classes on Saturdays. The schools have a three-week summer session, and require parents, students and teachers to sign contracts committing to high expectations.

KIPP has selected Natalia Walter, a former Baltimore teacher and a director with Teach for America in Philadelphia, to run the new elementary school. She is one of 18 educators selected as KIPP's Fisher Fellows. The yearlong fellowship prepares aspiring principals to open and run KIPP schools.

sara.neufeld@baltsun.com

Copyright © 2008, [The Baltimore Sun](#)