FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE
GOING THE DISTANCE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES AND REINVENTING SCHOOL WITHOUT A BLUEPRINT.
A DRIVE-THROUGH CELEBRATION

GRADUATING IN THE MIDDLE OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC. It’s not something you’ll soon forget. The KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School Class of 2020 donned their cap and gowns, and marked the beginning of a new chapter with a joyful and socially distanced celebration at our high school.

One of the beauties of our school is how well people could work together to accomplish things they couldn’t have done alone... I hope our graduates never forget the value of teamwork, which they learned at KIPP.”

Aldo Vera-Espinoza | Class of 2020 Valedictorian
FROM THE FOUNDER

DEAR TEAM,

The last year at KIPP Nashville has been unlike any we could’ve imagined. From a devastating tornado to the unfathomable impact of a global pandemic on schools, our team has shown immense resilience, flexibility, heart, team, and growth. In true KIPP fashion, we find a way or make one.

In March when the tornado hit, it impacted many KIPP families and staff members. We were able to raise almost 20 thousand dollars in 48 hours to distribute to our team and families in need. In the first few weeks when the pandemic began sweeping the country and shutting down businesses and schools, we were able to redirect remaining funds from our tornado relief efforts to support college-going alums with financial aid needed to get home from campus, get food, and set up distance learning. Over spring break, our teams worked tirelessly to launch a distance learning program for all our students, which included synchronous learning.

Over the summer, as it became clear we would not be able to open in person in August, we once again doubled down on creating a robust distance learning plan for all our students. In the three weeks leading up to the first day of school, our teams distributed over 2,800 laptops and school supplies needed for our students to succeed. We made hundreds of phone calls to assess needs around internet access and food. Any family who needed a Wi-Fi hotspot received one, and we were able to repurpose our buses to distribute food from our bus stops, in addition to offering meal service at each of our campuses.

We were the first school in our district to announce that we would begin the school year in full distance learning mode. Our teachers and students adapted quickly, and we saw high levels of average daily attendance and engagement in our small groups which focused on reading and interventions. In November, we were able to phase in some kindergartners and first graders, as well as small groups of elementary middle and high school students, for in-person learning. Even though we were only in person for a few weeks before having to go back to virtual learning, these were joyful, safe weeks that further solidified our relationships with students and families.

Amidst the backdrop of the pandemic, we also recommitted ourselves to racial justice. We introduced shared language and goals to facilitate and normalize discussions about the role race plays in our work, our community, and our country. For students and staff, we will aim to eliminate performance gaps between racial groups and are adding a level of transparency and commitment to developing emerging Black leaders through mentoring and leadership preparation programs, which we believe will help emerging leaders of color grow through our internal leadership pipelines.

We are also looking to the future with renewed excitement, as the State Board of Education approved our charter application for a new high school in Antioch. We are moving on real estate plans to support the launch of KIPP Antioch College Prep High School, a 1,200-student school we plan to launch in August 2023.

Through it all, we’ve relied heavily on our teachers to create stability and normalcy for our students. As one of our high school student council members put it, “Teachers are the heroes of the world. Without teachers, students would not have the opportunity to learn, let alone grow.” Truer words have never been spoken, especially now.

The 2020-21 school year is challenging us all, and we will succeed by maintaining a growth mindset, communicating well, and strengthening our culture of teamwork. I am both eager and excited for the work ahead and believe we will come out of this pandemic both with lessons learned, and as a much stronger KIPP Nashville. We are grateful for the continued support of our community and families.

With gratitude,

RANDY DOWELL
Executive Director

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PHOTOGRAPHY Courtney Davidson, Erin Holt and KIPP Nashville schools
INTRODUCING THE NEW KIPP VISION AND MISSION

Over the past year and a half, the KIPP Foundation embarked on a journey together with our families and communities across the United States to reexamine our mission and vision through answering these two questions:

1. What is the change we’re trying to create in the world?

2. What work should we be doing every day to create the change that unifies us in this purpose?

Thousands of students, family, alumni, and staff, including from KIPP Nashville, participated in the yearlong process.

We set out to answer these questions WITH and NOT FOR our communities.

- 5,500 students, families, alumni, and staff responded to our initial survey
- 40 focus groups with students, families, staff, and local board members
- 7 weeks of iteration by a working group of students, families, staff, and local board members
- 400 community members gave feedback on drafts via an online survey

The KIPP Foundation began this work because now, more than ever, it’s critical to speak in one voice about who we are and who we want to be. As we write the next chapter at KIPP, it’s crucial that we’re all aligned on what we’re working to achieve, no matter where we are in the country.

Through the process, KIPP heard a few themes loud and clear from students, families, alumni, and staff. First, that KIPP is and should be about partnering with families and communities. That we ultimately want our students to have real choices bolstered by a great education and exposure to different people, places, and ideas. We also heard that KIPP should be about more than test scores and that, ultimately, our collective goal is to create a better world for everybody.
KIPP Nashville

Our Schools

Grades K-4
Founded in 2017

Grades K-4
Founded in 2015

Grades 5-8
Founded in 2013

Grades 5-8
Founded in 2005

Grades 9-12
Founded in 2014

Grades K-2 and 5-6
Founded in 2018

2,840 Students

Male Students

Female Students

StUDENT RetENTION

The most common reason a student left was due to moving out of district.

93%

Average Daily Student Attendance

95%

A Recipe For Success

October to October Student Retention

The number of students staying with KIPP Nashville from October 1, 2019 to October 1, 2020 increased nearly 10%. This is a huge testament to the incredible work our school teams do to keep families in the loop and engaged, especially during such uncertain times. Our school operations teams devote time each morning to call families of students absent from school and troubleshoot roadblocks, such as access to technology. In March 2020, we began sending regular pulse-check surveys to all families in order to better understand what needs were still unmet and how we could continue improving. All of these phone calls, texts, emails, and surveys create an environment where our families feel like they’re in the loop and supported across their student’s school and our entire region.
COMMITTED TO A MORE JUST WORLD

Over the past year, we’ve witnessed violence against Black men and women that shines a spotlight on the persistent, deep, and systemic racial injustice in our country. These injustices strengthen our commitment to build a more just world, and we believe education can be a path to equity and opportunity so that our students are free to create the future they want for themselves and their communities.

We have committed to three main goals around racial justice for the 2020-2021 school year:

**Talent Retention:** Increase talent retention to 80% with no gap of staff members of color

**Family Engagement:** Reduce gaps for attendance and retention of Black students

**Leadership Development:** At least 50% of open leadership roles (Grade Level Chair and above) filled by internal Black and Latinx candidates

We’ve taken action in pursuit of these goals – making sure we were developing not just ideas, but systems and accountability. In the fall semester of 2020, we set up our foundational systems to meet these goals, and in spring semester and beyond, we built on those foundations.

To prioritize the voices and perspectives of our families and staff to increase equity, we have launched:

- Regular pulse-check surveys for staff
- Bi-weekly/recurring pulse-check surveys for families
- A newly-formed Teacher Advisory Group to get input on distance learning and reopening plans
- Expanded the leadership circle, bringing all Principals and Directors of Operations into weekly input and decision-making meetings with the Regional Leadership Team, which has boosted the racial diversity of our leadership meetings from 20% to over 50% leaders of color
- KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School team audited and recently revised language in their Social Studies department, replacing it with more racially just, conscious, and intentional language
- School-based equity projects lead by our 2nd year Principals in Residence to increase transparency of access to teacher leader roles within schools
- Our principals have been diving deep into the ways in which characteristics of White Supremacy Culture creates unwritten rules and norms in our team, and how to develop antidotes for those characteristics

Racial justice work is not “other work”. This work is core to our mission and must be integrated into everything we do.
BUILDING A DIVERSE LEADER PIPELINE

Our Principal in Residence (PIR) program is a two-year program designed to develop the next generation of leaders in KIPP Nashville. Each PIR embeds as an Assistant Principal at one of our schools and works closely with their colleagues in the cohort throughout the year. We are committed to building a leadership pipeline that reflects our students and families.

83% of our current PIRs are Black women
67% of our cohort were internal candidates

AUDIT, ANALYZE AND IMPLEMENT

As part of KIPP Nashville’s commitment to racial justice, our talent recruitment team has spent the past several months auditing and analyzing our recruitment and selection processes with an eye toward racial justice and equity. We have switched to a competency-based hiring model, using clear and aligned rubrics across all our schools and created and utilized questions to specifically address anti-racism mindsets. The talent recruitment team has made several strategic changes for the 2021-2022 recruitment season:

• Expand strategies and outreach to further diversify our talent pool
• Evolve hiring practices to reduce risk of bias at each phase of the process
• Strengthen talent management systems to support long-term talent retention and development over time

I am excited to work with a community of educators who truly put children first. I want to inspire my students, especially those who look like me. I want the young students of color in my class to see that there are opportunities beyond what is immediately in front of them. There is space for them to lead and do important work in their communities.”

Grant Peavler | KNCPE Kindergarten Teacher

OUR TEAM

We are committed to hiring a diverse group of teachers and staff that reflect our student and family population. In 2020-2021, 12% of our new hires speak a language that is commonly spoken in the homes of KIPP families (Spanish, Arabic, and Kurdish). This represents progress, and we are excited to continue focusing on diversifying our team to reflect our school communities.

188 TOTAL LEAD AND ASSOCIATE TEACHERS
28% MALE
72% FEMALE

70% TEACHER RETENTION (19-20 to 20-21, May–July)
55% PERCENTAGE OF NEW HIRES IDENTIFYING AS PERSONS OF COLOR

MIRRORS AND WINDOWS

We are committed to hiring a diverse group of teachers and staff that reflect our student and family population.
A NEW HIGH SCHOOL

We are looking toward the future in South Nashville with renewed energy and excitement! After two denials from the Metro Nashville Public School Board, the State Board of Education approved our charter appeal for a new high school in Antioch. KIPP Antioch College Prep High School will open in August 2023 and welcome our founding 5th graders as rising 9th graders. The key to this decision was the demand from our families - over 150 current KIPP Antioch families wrote to the State Board asking them to approve this new high school for their students. Our elementary and middle schools continue to garner interest from the community.

BREAKING GROUND

Construction on KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle School’s building is well underway. The middle school is on the same property as KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary School, separated by a large soccer field and outdoor track. The building is 48,661 square feet spread across three floors and will welcome our incoming seventh graders for the 2021-2022 school year.
CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF IMPACT

Fifteen years ago, Chantelle Stoxstill, better known by KIPP Academy Nashville students, families, and staff as Ms. Sha’, took a big risk. She left her job at Vanderbilt, where she had been for ten years, to become KIPP Nashville’s first official employee. Ms. Sha’, who is KAN’s Dean of Students, has been an integral part of the KIPP Nashville Team and Family ever since. Through the years, Ms. Sha’ has loved, counseled, taught, nurtured and supported 3,500 KIPP students and countless staff members in our community. Ms. Sha’ reflects on taking risks, what’s kept her at KIPP for so long, and community impact in this Q&A.

Q: How did you meet Randy?
A: I was looking for a school for my son (DeAndre’) Stoxstill) because he was the typical 10-year-old boy who all the teachers at his previous school thought had ADHD. I heard about a new school coming to Nashville on the radio station. Randy was holding a meeting that night at the East Library at 6 p.m. so my husband and my son went to hear about the school. I wanted to try something new.

Q: How did Randy pitch KIPP Academy and why did you decide to take the job?
A: He sold me honestly on “giving kids in East Nashville the same opportunities as kids in Brentwood” I grew up in East Nashville my entire life and gone to the very schools that were failing at the time. Though I lived in East Nashville at the time he hired me, my kids attended school in West Nashville, because I could not afford to send them to a private school but I wanted a better education for them. I loved my job at Vanderbilt; I had been there for 10 years and really was not looking for a job. I honestly took a pay cut when I started at KAN, but I wanted to see what this school could do for my son, and I was excited about being on the same schedule as him. My husband Michael and I prayed about it and the rest is history.

Q: What did your first few months on the job look like?
A: It was spring 2005, and I remember I didn’t get paid until closer to the end of May. We were working so hard trying to do all the things I think WE forgot… But daycare was due, and they definitely didn’t forget! I bought a laptop and did everything from home staying up until 4 or 5 every morning. Once I am committed to something, I am committed.

Q: What were some of the things you did during the day to support the school, students, families, and staff?
A: I knocked on so many doors recruiting new students and scheduled home visits with families. We gutted and painted the building. At one point, I rented a U-Haul to drive to Atlanta and pick up furniture. While in Atlanta, I visited KIPP South Fulton to see how they ran their front office and operations side of things. At the time, I wore most of the hats – I was the office manager, director of operations, nurse, and counselor. There really wasn’t anything I didn’t do. From coordinating bus routes with MNPS to buying and handing out snacks for our students (we didn’t get out of school until 5 p.m. at the time), to creating Saturday school rotation and lunch schedules, ordering and organizing supplies and shirts, to picking up students and taking them back home. I can keep going...

Q: What was the feeling you had on the first day when students came in?
A: Excited, scared, not knowing what I had just gotten myself into, especially considering I just left my secure job after ten years.

Q: What was that first year like?
A: Overwhelming, exciting, scary, so many things. I had to learn in the moment. Even how to deal with upset parents when we failed in communicating something - I always had to remember I am a parent first and to put myself in their shoes.

Q: How has your role evolved over the years? What's the same and what's different?
A: My role has definitely evolved. What’s the same for me is what we stand for. I was reminded this summer what the shield on our shirt stood for and after reviewing that motto…. We are true to that shield. Many things have changed since that first year, and in my opinion, those changes have been for the good. We get better every second, minute, hour, day, month, and year.

Q: What do you think makes – and continues to make – KIPP Nashville special or different?
A: We try to figure out what works for your student to help them in their educational journey. If one way doesn’t work, we think of other ways until we figure out what works for them and their families, while still holding the bar high.

Q: What do you think keeps families here?
A: Safety and love. People know you care about them and their wellbeing. If we get nothing else right, we show genuinely care to the best of our ability.

Q: What has kept you at KIPP all these years?
A: I love what I do. I love my kids. I love my families, and I love thinking how my voice can make this a better place for all students to get the same opportunities as those students in Brentwood. I was that kid who struggled in reading and math, but I only can really remember two teachers who were outspoken in their belief of me and who inspired me – they happened to both be Black females. I want to make sure I have the same impact on students’ lives that I wish someone had on mine.

Q: What is your favorite part of working at KIPP?
A: The kids! I never set out to want to keep working with kids. At the beginning I was only doing this for my kids, but as I started working with families and I knew my voice mattered, and even if one small word changed the destiny of their lives, I wanted to give that one word.

Q: When you reflect on your time with KIPP, how do you feel like KIPP has impacted the community?
A: Actually showing that we are team and family to those in the community. I still hang out with some of my students and some of their parents. I may invite them to a kickball game at the park or send them a “Happy Holidays” text. I have even gone to Disney with some of them. Just showing them we are more than a school, that we are family and we believe in their child.
During Black History Month, KNCPE students participated in a special unit in Art class. Our Kings and Queens studied African American artists Lois Mailou Jones and Kehinde Wiley and got to explore the creative process, working on projects in those artists’ styles. The idea behind the unit was to introduce students to Black artists and in particular, artists who had successful careers. Lois Mailou Jones is known for her African style masks and Kehinde Wiley is best known for his portrait of President Barack Obama. As part of the art unit, students also learned about museums and museum etiquette and got a chance to experience it firsthand by visiting the Monthaven Arts & Cultural Center in Hendersonville.
ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Making sure kids get to school is one of the most important parts of day-to-day operations. Research shows that students who consistently attend school “feel more connected to their community, develop important social skills and friendships, and are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, setting them up for a strong future.”

In the fall of 2018, 22 percent of KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary School students were chronically absent from school, which is defined as missing ten percent or more of school. KIPP Kirkpatrick tackled this problem head-on, creating a multipronged approach to getting more students to school on time. This approach involved the entire school team, families, students, and the community.

KIPP Kirkpatrick also formalized and continued to refine the structure for Attendance Review Board (ARB) meetings with parents. The ARB meetings happened when a student’s attendance started to creep toward the red. Parents came to school to meet with a leadership team member to discuss attendance challenges and create a plan for progress. This happened prior to truancy being filed, which happens when a student has five or more unexcused absences.

Katie Elam, KIPP Kirkpatrick’s Dean of Student Support, says, “I think the formalized structure for ARBs became predictable for families and they started to understand the process and expectations. This alignment helped increase investment and improve results as we began to work together more closely and parents saw the system as supportive and important for their child’s education.”

In order for attendance efforts to be effective, KIPP Kirkpatrick’s team also worked to strengthen its internal communications systems for sharing information about attendance data and ARB plans. This information needed to go across leadership teams, operations, student support/counseling and especially back to homeroom teachers. The goal was that everyone was aware of attendance efforts with a family and was messaging and reinforcing the same things.

Perhaps the most important piece of the attendance equation was heightened accountability combined with improved communication and relationship building with families.

Neighborhood police officers, led by Officer Clemons, started a “walking club” to help kids get to school regularly and on time. Officers met students at specific points in the neighborhood each morning and walked them to school, which was highly motivating for many students.

KIPP Nashville invested in bus transportation, which was a crucial part of keeping some families connected to the school who had moved out of the zone and would’ve likely been chronically absent or enrolled at a different school without a bus option.

Students with Perfect Attendance were recognized in grade level and school celebrations. Some students also won tickets to a Titans game (in a suite)!

Steve Frederick, KIPP Kirkpatrick Assistant Principal explains, “We know that many families with kids who are chronically absent have very real and multi-layered challenges - work schedules, health issues, transportation, homelessness, kids moving between adult caretakers, etc. Often a strong relationship and trust with families leads to more honest conversations about these challenges, which can help the school work together and problem solve around them to ultimately get the child in school more consistently.”

KIPP Kirkpatrick’s team partnered with families on ways their students could get to school on time, like talking through bedtime routines, setting alarm clocks, and putting out clothes for the morning so that there were no attendance barriers.

Frederick says, “I can think of parents with whom I did ARB meetings and then I would see at arrival or dismissal. I’d be able to check-in on those ARB action steps to see how they were going at home. And in the best case scenarios, celebrate with parents who I knew were trying hard to make improvements and be able to celebrate with them as they dropped kids off on time.”

These efforts paid off and within one year, KIPP Kirkpatrick saw its chronic absenteeism drop ten percentage points.

KIPP Kirkpatrick

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM
YEAR OVER YEAR COMPARISON

2018–2019 QUARTER 1
22%

2019–2020 QUARTER 1
12%
WHEN THE WORK IS PERSONAL

During a recent fifth grade Reading class at KIPP Antioch College Prep, students are having a lively discussion about a passage in the book, “Wonder”.

“Why do you think his Mom said that?” asks their teacher, Mrs. Pryor.

As KIPPsters weigh in, Denon Carr walks around the room, taking notes and checking in one-on-one with students to gauge comprehension of the text.

“My day-to-day includes a variety of lesson plan observations, content co-planning meetings, running point on building and sustaining a positive student culture, and just about anything else that may come up during a typical school day. The beauty is that no two days are truly the same.”

On the first floor below, Robert Wallace is checking kindergarten classrooms to make sure daily attendance is recorded.

“I’m basically the chief problem solver,” says Wallace, as he searches for a new uniform shirt for a student who spilled their drink during breakfast. “My time is in service toward whatever it takes to help our school run smoothly.”

Both Carr and Wallace are founding members of their teams: Carr as Assistant Principal of the middle school, and Wallace as the Director of Operations of the elementary school.

For each of them, the work and the reason to do the work, is deeply personal.

“My mom still lives in the house I grew up in, which is three miles away from school,” says Wallace. “I know the community really well and I’ve seen the community evolve. I think it’s helped me connect more deeply with our families, because we shared the same zip code.”

Carr grew up in Nashville and attended middle and high school in the Antioch community.

“When reflecting on his public education experience, Carr remembers, “My mother had to apply for a special transfer for me before high school so I could attend my school of choice and not my zoned school. The special transfer was granted. The upside: I was able to go to the school of my choice. The downside was that it was on the other side of town and we had to handle transportation. This meant taking the city bus at the crack of dawn to ride downtown, then transfer to another bus which took me as close as it could, and then I walked the rest of the way to school each morning. In the afternoons, I completed the same journey but in reverse and late into the evening. Early on I understood the educational inequity in a very real way.”

Wallace says, “I became aware of the different paths people were taking once my friends began applying to magnet schools. I chose to stay in Antioch, but I think I knew, even at a young age, that I would have to work twice as hard as everyone else to prove myself to get into a good college. I enrolled in every AP and honors class my school offered and put my head down.”

For Carr and Wallace, the opportunity to be on a founding team of educators at KIPP Antioch College Prep was exciting, not only because they believe in KIPP’s mission – providing all students access to a free, high-quality, college-prep education – but because they see themselves in the students and families with big dreams for their child’s future.

“The Antioch community presents a unique opportunity for me to come back and positively impact the community that helped shaped me,” explains Carr. “The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities for truly transformative work.”

As someone focused on educational access and closing the opportunity gap, Carr says, “I enjoy working with students who share similar backgrounds to my own, because those are the students of populations who are typically ignored or wrongly targeted. Often, because of the lack of support in place, these students aren’t fully aware of their potential and can’t comprehend the idea of the world being limitless. My mission is to help students realize that potential, then act upon it for the betterment of themselves and their community. It’s a way of paying it forward and securing their futures.”

By 2023, KIPP Antioch College Prep will be fully grown and educate close to 1,200 students in the Antioch community in kindergarten through 8th grade. Its school teams will have more than tripled in size, and its founding KIPPsters will be heading off to middle and high school – just that much closer to completing their journeys to and through college.

“As someone who grew up in Antioch, imagining the future of our school and all the additional families we will welcome, makes me think about my mom and how she would’ve felt if this had been an option for her and for me. I know she would’ve felt like there was a future here for her son, and she wouldn’t have had to worry about my school. I can’t go back in time for my Mom, but I can focus on all the other parents who won’t have to face those concerns and tough choices.”
The beginning of band practice in Mr. Brown’s classroom is mixed with laughter and the sounds of brass and woodwind instruments as students get set up for rehearsal.

MarVelous Brown is on a mission to introduce KIPP Nashville College Prep students to playing in a band and to create a lasting instrumental program.

Brown, whose primary instrument is trombone – although he can fluently play all brass instruments – says some of his most formative experiences were because of music.

“Music has afforded me so many opportunities,” he says. “Professionally, I’ve played in three different countries in front of crowds of over 100 thousand people. I also had the opportunity to play on the White House South Lawn for President Barack Obama. I don’t believe I would’ve been able to experience these types of events had it not been for the power of music.”

Some students in Mr. Brown’s band have had prior experience with music and instruments, even taking regular private lessons.

Like Nevaeh, a 6th grader at KNCP. She’s been playing violin for six years and is now taking on the flute, a new challenge.

“I like playing music, because it has different tones, different harmonies and melodies,” says Nevaeh. “Music makes you feel something. Like playing the flute reminds me of when my dad used to buy peach soda in glass bottles, and on the way home from visiting our family, we used the bottles to blow into to make sounds.”

For many students, it’s their first experience even holding an instrument, let alone playing with a group.

Brown believes music presents big opportunities, because, “Being exposed to music helps students develop as individuals and as a team. Playing in a band teaches you that you can take a gift and share it with others to make music.”

Shaylin, also in 6th grade, says playing trumpet makes her feel happy. And she has an affinity for, as she puts it, “old school trumpet players” that most middle school students probably do not.

Adds Shaylin, “Sometimes we go to Chicago, and on our way, me and my dad listen to old school trumpet players, like Louis Armstrong and Wynton Marsalis. I love the way it sounds.”

Mr. Brown says he’s building the band program bit by bit. Thanks to donations from Instruments for Music Educators and Hungry for Music, there are now some instruments at school so fewer students have to rent what they play.

“Kids started getting super excited once they saw the instruments and realized they would get to play on them,” explains Brown. “This year, it’s about building the fundamentals, like learning to read music and playing something simple together as an ensemble.”

Brown also has big dreams for the musicians.

“I want KIPP Nashville to be able to compete musically with other schools that have instrumental programs across the country,” he says. “I know our KIPPsters are capable and they’re excited to learn.”

Nevaeh also has big dreams.

“Beethoven and Mozart didn’t have an easy life, but they still pursued what they loved,” explains Nevaeh. “There aren’t any African American string players in the Nashville Symphony, so I want to be the first African American female to be first chair in the symphony. That’s my goal for violin.”

That’s the power of music, says Brown. Seeing students believe in themselves, dream big, and work on something with a group that’s bigger than themselves. If you get goosebumps playing the music along the way, then that’s just extra.
KIPP THROUGH COLLEGE

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI TO AND THROUGH COLLEGE, CAREER, AND BEYOND.

Our KIPP Through College team currently supports 128 KIPP Nashville Collegiate High school alumni across 39 unique colleges, universities, and technical schools around the country.

CLASS OF 2020 AT A GLANCE

ACT

21.6 AVG SCORE

STUDENTS

62

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

550

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

385

GRADUATION RATE*

85%

AVERAGE ACT SCORES:

58% scored a 21+ on the ACT, qualifying them for the Hope Scholarship.

The composite average of the class of 2020 was in the top 10% of all high schools in Tennessee.

For the class of 2020, 56.9% of MNPS students enrolled in college immediately following high school graduation, compared to 76% of KIPP Nashville’s Class of 2020.

COLLEGE MATRICULATION AND PERSISTENCE

CLASS OF 2020

matriculated to college or a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program

76%

CLASS OF 2019

persisted to sophomore year

67%

CLASS OF 2018

persisted to junior year

72%

Estimated College Completion

12% Low-income

42% Class of 2018

41% Class of 2019

31% Class of 2020

*(Note: everyone who started their senior year graduated. This percentage has been adjusted to reflect how KIPP calculates graduation rate, which is based on how many freshmen go on to graduate in four years.)

CLASS OF 2020 IS ON TRACK TO TRIPLE THE COLLEGE GRADUATION RATE OF THEIR PEERS.
THE SAME WORK DONE DIFFERENTLY

When the pandemic began shutting down schools, universities, and businesses in March, our KIPP Through College team jumped into action helping students safely get back home, connecting them to technology, and providing food. Once the fall 2020 semester began, KTC helped students adjust to attending college remotely, continuing to check in with alumni regularly through Zoom calls, texts, emails, and the occasional front lawn visit! While the heart of the work remains the same, the pandemic has significantly changed how our KTC team tackles their persistence and matriculation work. Some members of our KTC team reflect on the challenges, roadblocks, and surprise silver linings.

Q: What has been the biggest adjustment for your work since COVID began?

Brandi: The biggest adjustment has been student access. In a traditional setting, students and counselors have access to each other during passing periods, bathroom breaks, lunch, and, of course after school. In some cases, we were allowed to pull a student from a study hall if a deadline was around the corner. In remote learning, every meeting has to be scheduled, text messages requiring quick responses go unread for days, and to decrease the effects of the opportunity gap they’re already experiencing, we try to refrain from pulling students from other classes.

Chaelsa: I agree, not having them in the building has made getting those little things done much more difficult. Also not being able to visit freshmen on college campuses this year has been sad! It is always so fun to see a student thriving on their college campus after all the work you do to get them there, not having that this year makes it feel less real.

Q: What do you think have been the biggest challenges for students this year since COVID began?

Brandi: Lack of access to students has been one of the biggest challenges so far. We have had students completely fall off the map, older and younger, and that is scary. We can’t help students that we can’t get in contact with.

Chaelsa: It has had a huge impact on both their mental and emotional states, as well as their financial security. Students are now having to think about how much/what to eat, how to help their parents keep the electricity turned on, things like that. And some students are truly suffering in isolation. They are struggling to maintain friendships and meet new people, and are feeling lost and frankly depressed. I am scared for how they will rebound from this.

Q: What is COVID impacting our students the most?

Loretta: I am finding that students are on one end of the spectrum or the other: either they are really struggling missing the interactions with their friends and staying organized and motivated with virtual learning, or they are finding that this has proven to foster their independence and help them be more successful without the distractions of being in-person.

Chaelsa: It has been a huge impact on both their mental and emotional states, as well as their financial security. Students are now having to think about how much/what to eat, and how to help their parents keep the electricity turned on, things like that. And some students are truly suffering in isolation. They are struggling to maintain friendships and meet new people, and are feeling lost and frankly depressed. I am scared for how they will rebound from this.

Q: Do you think the pandemic will affect students this year and going forward? Has this changed students’ plans or thinking about the future?

Chaelsa: I think finances are ever more important. Students are already talking about being more worried about taking on debt and not having anything saved to pay for college out of pocket. I also think that the mental health effects will last for a long time and that will impact how students move through everything they do, including college and career. Students are also talking more about staying close to home. Some want to be close to support their families, others are scared of leaving and getting sick themselves. Many of our seniors are still planning on carrying through with their plans from last year, but I am interested to see how this will change as the year progresses.

Q: Have there been any silver linings coming out of all of this?

Brandi: In a traditional setting my one-on-ones with students take place in a corner of the classroom during College Readiness or in the hallway, as I divide my attention between one student and a classroom full of others. In the remote setting, I give 100% of my attention to students. I’ve learned about what matters to the students, their day-to-day, their family backgrounds. With that, I have improved my counseling relationship with students. Why does this matter? Because I am asking students and their families to trust me with their future and the future of their child. I am asking for financial information, parental dynamics, and sharing very personal anecdotes. This has been, by far, the best outcome of COVID.

Loretta: I have been impressed by our students’ resilience and self-advocacy. I also see several students putting in the work to finish strong this year.

Chaelsa: I think a possible silver lining is that this has taught students how to learn in an alternative way, making them more resilient overall. Students that are able to conquer virtual learning have learned an amazing skill that will serve them well for many years.
ALUMNI VOICE

Hector Tinoco-Herrera is a freshman at Rhodes College planning to major in Computer Science or Biomedical Engineering. Due to COVID-19, Hector has been remote for his first year of college and living with his family in Nashville.

“The KIPP Through College program has helped me significantly overcome the obstacles the pandemic has raised. For example, the pandemic has caused my dad’s job to decrease significantly. As a result, he wasn’t able to pay for my college insurance plan. However, the KIPP Through College program was able to understand my situation and was willing to help me pay off the insurance plan. My parents and I appreciate the major help. There is never a time the KIPP Through College program fails to help those who need it. They are always there to assist their students.”

COLLEGE, CAREER AND AN ALUMNI NETWORK

Together with families and communities, we create joyful, academically excellent schools that prepare students with the skills and confidence to pursue the paths they choose—college, career, and beyond—so they can lead fulfilling lives and build a more just world.

With KIPP’s new mission, KIPP Through College teams across the country continue to find ways to support students who do not choose to go to college and instead choose alternative paths like the military, two-year technical schools, or going straight into a career. One of the ways KIPP is supporting this work is through its newly launched National KIPP Alumni Network. By 2025, KIPP will have approximately 80 thousand alumni doing incredible things across the country. The Alumni Network connects KIPP alumni to career resources, mentors in their respective fields, other alumni, and provides leadership opportunities. Additionally, the Alumni Network supports the creation of local KIPP alumni chapters.

“I love the idea of getting involved with a KIPP Nashville chapter to be able to connect with other alumni and students in our city. A lot of my friends and peers have taken a different pathway than going straight to college, and everyone is succeeding in their own way.

So KIPPsters in Nashville need to know there are pathways, not just one pathway, to success. College is a way to open doors and it might be the well known way, but it’s not the only way. Networking is super important, and I think our alumni group will help with that.”

Silverio Arzate
KIPP Academy Nashville alum

Silverio Arzate is a 2013 KIPP Academy Nashville alum who graduated from Trevecca Nazarene University in December 2020. Silverio recently started his own cleaning business, “Nashville’s Fabulous Cleaners”.

“Silverio Arzate is a 2013 KIPP Academy Nashville alum who graduated from Trevecca Nazarene University in December 2020. Silverio recently started his own cleaning business, “Nashville’s Fabulous Cleaners”. 
### GOING THE DISTANCE

#### MARCH 3
Tornadoes rip through Middle Tennessee and leave significant damage in our school communities.

#### MARCH 16 – MARCH 20
KIPP Nashville staff work through Spring Break to create distance learning plans and create hundreds of packets for students to pick up to continue learning at home. KIPP Through College teammates reach out to our alumni across the country and world, helping coordinate flights home, including an alumna who was studying abroad in Spain.

#### MAY 30
KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School Class of 2020 Drive-Through graduation ceremony.

#### AUGUST 4
First day of school for the 2020 – 2021 school year. Let’s do this!

#### NOVEMBER 23
KIPP Nashville follows MNPS’ lead and closes buildings for in-person learning again due to the spike in COVID-19 cases and increased transmission rate in our city.

#### MARCH 11
All KIPP Nashville schools closed due to COVID-19.

#### MARCH 23
Students welcomed back from Spring Break with virtual learning plans and daily asynchronous work.

#### JULY 22
School teams organize and pack 2,800+ supply bags, including a Chromebook for each student and necessary learning supplies.

#### OCTOBER 19 – NOVEMBER 20
Students in kindergarten and 1st grade, along with small groups of elementary, middle, and high school students, attend in-person school.

#### MARCH 16
KIPP Nashville staff make phone calls to every family across our seven schools to assess needs and begin to develop plans to distribute Chromebooks and HotSpots to families who need technology and internet access. The KIPP Through College team continues reaching out to students, sending grocery gift cards to those who need it.
I think back in March, we knew deep down that this pandemic would drastically alter the way we conduct school, but I don’t think anyone could’ve predicted just how different the 2020 - 2021 school year would look. Our team, and schools across the country, literally had to reinvent school without a blueprint.”

Randy Dowell | KIPP Nashville Founder and Executive Director

On the morning of Tuesday, March 3, KIPP Nashville staff members worked quickly to begin reaching out to all families to make sure everyone was okay in the aftermath of devastating tornadoes that ripped through our city, and particularly impacted the East and North Nashville communities. Our operations team was relieved to confirm that none of our school buildings were damaged. The KIPP Nashville team quickly pivoted to meet the needs of families and raised over 20 thousand dollars within a few days to cover food, rent and help staff members recover. Schools in Nashville were closed from Tuesday, March 3 through Friday, March 6.

Meanwhile, as news of COVID-19 cases spreading across the United States dominated headlines, the NBA announced it was suspending the rest of its 2019-2020 season on March 11. On March 12, KIPP Nashville schools, along with all Metro Nashville Public Schools, closed down school buildings.

During spring break the week of March 16, KIPP Nashville teammates worked around the clock to develop a plan for distance learning that could be rolled out to students when they returned from break on March 23. This involved creating learning packets and lessons plans, creating an online learning hub on our website, and determining a plan for getting students and families to pick up needed materials from our schools.

“We began multiple meetings daily to try and wrap our heads around what school would look like March 23 and beyond. At this point we didn’t know if or when we would be returning for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year,” says Dowell.

By April 16, KIPP Nashville and Metro Schools announced buildings would be shut down for the remainder of the year.

“My first instinct was to check on families,” explains Mary Beth Winston, a kindergarten teacher at KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary School.

“We began multiple meetings daily to try and wrap our heads around what school would look like March 23 and beyond. At this point we didn’t know if or when we would be returning for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year,” says Dowell.

By April 16, KIPP Nashville and Metro Schools announced buildings would be shut down for the remainder of the year.

“Like everybody else, we were moving quickly to figure out how to move school to a remote setting,” says Nancy Livingston, KIPP Nashville Chief of Schools. “At that point, most instruction was asynchronous, and teachers recorded lessons that students would watch on their own time.”

During the last months of Semester 2, schools focused on continuing regular personal touchpoints with families to assess needs and get technology to students who didn’t have a computer or internet access. We also began offering drive-through meal pickup at all our campuses. The KIPP Through College team reached out to all our alumni and helped coordinate with students to get them home, including one alumna who was studying abroad in Spain when COVID began shutting things down around the world.

One thing became clear early on, says Livingston, “We knew this wasn’t going away and we knew we had to be ready for the 2020 - 2021 school year and have a strong plan in place.”
As teachers focused on learning the new technology and readjusting how they were going to teach through a computer screen, school operations teams were executing on all the materials students and families would need to create a seamless transition to virtual school and ensure success.

During July, school operations teams assembled over 2,800 supply bags, which included a Chromebook for each student and necessary supplies like notebooks, pens, pencils, and highlighters.

Since the switch to virtual learning also relied heavily on parent involvement and understanding of the new technology platforms, schools prepared “how-to” tutorial videos, scheduled back-to-school family info sessions on Zoom, and conducted orientation meetings. KIPP teachers and staff made personal contact with every student to offer a personal orientation meeting. During the orientation meetings, families and students got hands-on instructions for how school would work, everything from logging onto the computer, to being able to chat with a teacher in Zoom and how to turn in assignments.

As the 2019-2020 school year ended, KIPP Nashville celebrated the Class of 2020 with a socially distanced and masked drive-through ceremony at the high school. Two days later, planning for the upcoming year began.

“One of our top priorities was making sure we had 100 percent equity with all students having access to a computer and the internet. We placed an order for Chromebooks so that all 2,800 plus KIPPsters would be ready to start virtual learning,” says Dowell.

The big question was what our distance learning model would be and how would we train teachers to deliver that model.

“We started thinking about the tech piece first, and then what are the delivery models for high-quality learning,” says Livingston. “Being a part of the KIPP network, we’re connected to other KIPP schools and charter systems around the country. We talked to and learned from each other to see how people were approaching school design, like using Zoom for instruction and Nearpod for engaging with students and keeping lessons interactive.”

Once KIPP Nashville landed on the technology platforms and basic outline of how instruction would work, our schools began executing on the plan. The plan included six and half hours of instructional time spread out over a combination of live classes and independent work.

“All of us will learn”

“The first real hurdle was ‘Can we learn this in the span of three weeks?’,” says Hada Flores, KIPP Academy Nashville Principal. “From the time all staff came back and when we had to make it live on August 4, there was a lot that needed to happen in three weeks.”

“Educators constantly need to adapt, but no one had ever adapted like this before. Everyone was learning at the same time, everybody,” says Flores. “As we were operating and doing this, we tested all the systems and did our professional development in Zoom, so teachers could start figuring things out by trying them themselves. We knew we had to use Nearpod so teachers played around with it and did mock lessons so we could give feedback. We had a lot of practice time.”

Winston adds, “Every day was a learning experience for me. We did a lot of troubleshooting and figuring out what worked really well, and then planned around what we had learned. We were going to find a way or make one.”

“All Systems Go”

“Kids are resilient and learn fast. A virtual classroom still feels like a classroom,” says Winston. “Kids can unmute and ask a question, just like they could ask a question in an actual classroom setting. We’ve even seen some parents who were there at the beginning for support, kind of step away to let their children figure it out and let us help them.”

Schools launched on August 4th and from day one they began refining systems and doubling down on best practices across the region to maximize virtual learning.

“I think one of the amazing things about KIPP are our teachers and how they believe so deeply in our students,” says Dowell. “Just as we would in a regular year, we focused on finding which strategies were getting the best results and worked to spread those across all of our schools. I have always had a lot of faith in our ability to adapt and improve the quality of our instruction. This has proven true again, even in this remote landscape. Our Principals and Assistant Principals are empowered to coach and lead their teams to ensure teachers are supported and we meet students where they need us.”
KIPP NASHVILLE DURING COVID-19

**BEFORE EVERY DAY**

As schools would be doing during a normal year, teachers continued to take daily attendance and families were notified if students weren’t logging into classes. Front office teams became an extended information technology department trained to troubleshoot the most common tech issues so families and students could quickly fix them and get into their classes.

“I think this virtual learning thing seemed impossible for a lot of people. But it’s working and my families and kids are logging on every day,” says Winston. “Kids are learning and engaged and it’s amazing to see these connections still happening over Zoom. My style, my personality, and what I’m teaching is the same as what it was in the classroom, and it was a sigh of relief to know I can still do this.”

Flores says, “We’re doing our best based on what we know and getting better. That’s one of the things about this, it’s not going to be perfect, but we’re going to make it better every day. We’ll learn from other teammates and other people across the country, and just keep at it.”

**ACROSS THE BOARD, SCHOOLS SAW HIGH LEVELS OF ATTENDANCE, WITH AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE RATES ABOVE 95 PERCENT.**

**FINDING OUR WAY TOGETHER**

While teachers and staff worked tirelessly to recalibrate routines, so did KIPP Nashville students and families. From changing work schedules, to coordinating with relatives and taking advantage of the YMCA childcare partnerships at our Ewing Park and Antioch campuses, many adjustments were made to ensure kids could be in class and focus on learning.

For students like Kingston, a 3rd grader at KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary School, the important part was finding a routine. First thing after he wakes up, he feeds his cat Mittens, then he wakes up his mom, Shae, who works late at night. Then Kingston eats breakfast and logs onto the computer for his class morning meeting. If it weren’t for the fact that Kingston can simply walk from the counter to his couch, instead of getting himself to the actual school, this morning wouldn’t be all that different.

Kingston goes back and forth between some live classes together with his teachers and classmates, and work he is assigned to complete on his own. Mittens likes to hang around and often makes appearances during class. There are legos to help with math and the occasional costume to dress up in when you need a little something to get you through the afternoon.

Not too far from Kingston, Kaleigh, a 3rd grader at KIPP Nashville College Prep Elementary School, works on multiplication and looks forward to her small group reading instruction. Kaleigh’s Mom, Velinda, says she’s been grateful for the opportunity to weigh-in on KIPP Nashville’s in-person reopening planning and the ongoing communication.

While Velinda says getting the hang of virtual school took some time, their family has settled into a routine. Velinda adds, “Kaleigh is enjoying being at home doing virtual learning and having a relaxed setting while being safe during this pandemic. Virtual learning is going absolutely great, and KNCP’s teachers, as well as the Principal, have been awesome in supporting us with any problems that arise.”

The virtual learning environment is working for some students and yet many students are struggling.

It is much harder for teachers to teach over the computer and even harder still for students to get the individualized, one-on-one interventions needed to make sure they are learning grade level material.
LEARNING LOSS

Once school began, we knew there would be academic gaps from the spring quarantine. Teachers built in content from the previous grade that students might need to access new content. Some of the technology KIPP Nashville is using, like Nearpod, has built in structures that allow teachers to assess in real time where students may be struggling with a lesson and content.

Garner explains, “With Nearpod, you can create checkpoints and collaboration points. Required student responses help us determine where learning breakdowns happened and pinpoint what you have to reteach instead of moving ahead before students master a concept. We continuously create structures where we’re in contact with students daily so we can combat learning loss. Learning loss is my biggest worry and also where we (KIPP) have dedicated the most time to figuring out.”

“When we returned this fall, we expected math learning loss to be greater than losses in reading,” says Livingston. “We saw this difference in our initial fall data and it has continued throughout the year. We are making some adjustments to our math approach in the second semester to prioritize essential content for the next grade. We are also beginning to think about the investments we’ll need to make next year.”

“We anticipate it could be years before we are able to adequately address the learning loss that has occurred from hundreds of days of lost in-person instruction time,” says Dowell. “Even though our teachers are going absolutely above and beyond in more ways that I can list, there are still many students struggling to access online learning and master new content.”

Dowell says, “We know getting our students caught up and back up to speed is one of our biggest priorities for the remainder of our current school year, as well as the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. We are committed to investing in whatever it takes to make up for lost instructional time.”

School leadership teams are already planning for strategies to address learning loss in the second semester of this school year and thinking of ways to leverage the summer months to begin this critical work.

Our families have always been critical partners in their students’ education. This year, our schools relied even more on this relationship, especially with our youngest learners who needed help logging into a computer and reading. While communication and relationship building have been priorities since KIPP’s first year, the pandemic required another level of understanding in order for us to be able to effectively plan and meet families’ needs.

In service of that goal, KIPP Nashville parents began receiving regular pulse-check surveys in August so schools could better understand what was working and where families and students needed more support or where changes needed to be made.

Since August, we have sent several surveys asking the question “Are we meeting your child’s needs this week?”

WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING

“My child’s teacher has been very supportive while my child has been adapting to virtual learning. I feel the teacher and I are partners in my child’s development and that is a true blessing during these stressful times.”
-- KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary School parent

“We’re adjusting well! I’m grateful she’s still getting an impeccable KIPP education while safe at home. Thank you!”
-- KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School parent

“I am writing to express my sincere thanks for all you do to improve the school and online learning. Without your impressive organization and incredible passion for the students, our community would not be able to benefit from such excellence. You all are making a great difference in the life of our son Michael and for that my husband and I are forever grateful.”
-- KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle School parent
KIPP NASHVILLE DURING COVID-19

ROADMAP TO REOPENING

Driven by a survey of our kindergarten and first grade families in September that showed almost half of families preferred to send their child to school in person, the KIPP Nashville team began preparing for what in-person school might look like during a pandemic. Learning to read can be difficult, but learning to read remotely is a big challenge.

We also surveyed our KIPP Nashville team members to determine their needs and preferences. We committed to honoring teacher preference so only teachers who opted in to in-person learning would be in our buildings.

As the city’s numbers decreased in early and mid-October, KIPP Nashville announced its plans to phase in kindergarten and first grade families who opted in, and small groups of elementary, middle, and high school students who needed extra support.

“By this point, we had seen a few other KIPP regions, including KIPP Jacksonville, open with in-person learning, and we were encouraged to see they were successful in preventing the transmission of COVID-19. We learned a lot from them and used their reopening plans as a guide to our planning,” says Dowell.

With safety front and center, operations teams once again dove into the work needed to prepare schools to welcome students back if the city’s health data went down. This meant acquiring PPE for all staff who would be in person, purchasing needed cleaning equipment, additional signage, and getting plastic sneeze guards for all desks.

“It took an immense amount of preparation, planning, and effort from our schools to operationalize in-person learning, but once we got kids back in the building, we were able to see how well the safety protocols worked,” explains Adrianna Clemons, KIPP Nashville’s Chief Operating Officer. “While we were able to be open, we did not see any school-based transmission of COVID-19, which was our ultimate goal – to prevent the spread within our buildings.”

A small group of high school students came back on October 19, followed by kindergarteners and a small group of elementary students on November 2, and first graders and a small group of middle school students on November 9.

THE PATH FORWARD

After three weeks of in-person learning, KIPP Nashville followed Metro Nashville Public Schools’ lead and closed buildings down again due to rising case numbers and increased spread.

“We are certainly disappointed that we had to close down our buildings again, but grateful for the time our students and teachers got to spend together,” says Dowell. “Those were joyful weeks for our in-person teammates, and cemented relationships with families while filling some gaps for students. The health and safety of our students, families, and staff is our number one priority and we will continue to work toward a time when we can reopen again.”

Winston, who returned to teach in-person for those three weeks, says, “I think everyone wishes we could be back in school, that’s real. Parents have jobs and lives have had to change and shift with this for a lot of people. I’m just so grateful to our families, because they’re wearing all the hats right now – they’re the parent, the extra teacher, and a provider. We really, really appreciate everything they are doing.”

When, if, and how schools will reopen for the third and fourth quarter of the 2020-2021 school year remains uncertain. The only guarantee is KIPP Nashville’s commitment to making the best of this unprecedented time, and doing our best every day to educate our students and support our families.
FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD AND STAFF
SUPPORT BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

A CONVERSATION WITH MS. PAPINI

Ms. Papini is in her 5th year at KIPP Nashville and her 14th year as an educator and counselor. Ms. Papini leads the Trauma Informed Leadership Committee (TLC) at the high school, which includes 12 high school staff members. The TLC focuses on training teachers on the science and research behind how the brain drives behavior in students, and on learning how to respond to best support students.

Q: How did your team at the high school approach planning for the 2020-2021 school year, knowing this would be a year unlike any we have ever experienced?

A: We immediately took the mindset that this pandemic wouldn’t just be impacting our students, but our staff, too. We trained teachers to recognize signs that a student may be struggling virtually, because it’s harder over a computer than if you can see that student in class or in the hallways every day. As a whole school, we intentionally decided to loosen some of our expectations, so to speak. We knew we couldn’t stick to the same expectations and playbook than if this was a regular year, so we wanted to focus on practicing empathy, patience, understanding, and assuming the best with our students. We’ve also been doing regular home visits, outside, socially distanced and with masks, of course, so we can touch base with students face-to-face. Those meetings have been very helpful in identifying additional needs and for ongoing relationship building. As for our school staff, the Trauma Informed Leadership Committee (TLC) at the high school, which includes 12 high school staff members.

Q: How have you seen the pandemic and the switch to distance learning impact students?

A: I think the constant unknown of when we might go back made the transition to being fully remote much more difficult. A lot of our students are dealing with a chaotic environment, not in a negative way, but, for example, their younger siblings are also home, so our high school student is the oldest playing part time babysitter, caregiver, and also trying to study and attend class. It’s not a classroom environment where it’s structured and calm, and there can be tech issues. On the flip side, we also have some students who are thriving in the home environment, because they do happen to have a quiet place to be where they can focus, and when they’re not distracted by the school environment, they are doing much better. For them, going back into school may be a challenge. And then, from a counseling perspective, a lot of kids who were regulars for me don’t get that same type of support. Because we’re at a distance, kids are just kind of making do, but what I predict overall we’re going to see down the road is a lot of unmet with social and emotional issues.

Q: Are there any things that have surprised you with how students are dealing with this challenging environment?

A: I think in a general sense, I’ve been impressed with how well our students are doing. They get it, they get that it’s not ideal, but they have to do it. In times where they could easily say “forget it,” they haven’t given up, and that’s impressive.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Rovarro Sanders is a sophomore at KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School and the class president. Rovarro reflects on how virtual learning and the use of technology is impacting him.

Since March 2020, the last time that I attended school in person, I’ve been on a computer basically all day, everyday to go to school and make sure I keep my grades up. I’ve also been more active on my computer and phone just for entertainment, because there isn’t much to do since we are trying to stay home as much as possible.

I think phones and technology are a way of escaping reality. Many of us may even have started an entire new life online, talking to new people, finding new games, and having fun on social media. From my experience, being immersed in this way is a double-edged sword.

Let me start with the positives. Technology definitely has a bigger role in my life since switching to virtual school. I’ve become reliant on it in order to attend classes, study, and continue succeeding and progressing in school. Without my computer, I wouldn’t be able to log into school, do homework or take tests. Without my phone, I couldn’t keep in contact with friends and teachers.

But, continued and constant access to technology also has its downsides. Sometimes, I feel like it can destroy people and devour relationships. It’s almost like I have a different attitude, or turn into a different person when I’m on my phone for the hundredth time that day. For example, whenever I’m forced to get off, I’m no longer in a good mood. I noticed that whenever I’m accused of being on my phone too much, I often get mad and offended by it, when it is the truth. The other day when my sister came into my room and asked if we can play a game I said “No, I’m busy” without thinking about it. When asked what I was doing I just said “Nothing, go play or do something other than bother me.”

Immediately after seeing her leave in disappointment, I had to figure out what was wrong. Why am I always in a bad mood? Now don’t get me wrong, my sister can be very annoying, but I don’t have a valid reason to force her out for just asking a simple question.

What I’m starting to realize is that when I’m on my phone, I tend to forget about reality, to lose focus of what’s real, and start to find myself focused on the wrong things and progressing in the wrong way.

This experience of virtual school has given me a lot to think about. It’s made me realize that even though technology is super important and allows me to be able to attend school safely, there are probably a lot of other important things I can — and should! — still be focusing on, like the relationships I have with my sister and family. When I’m constantly staring at a screen for school, it feels like my real life is there, on my phone or my laptop. It’s a hard habit to break. For me, I’ve realized that when it comes to living my life and growing myself mentally and physically, technology does nothing for that. We should learn to balance how we use it and when it’s a good time to use it.

Recently, I had another interaction with my sister, and I have to say, it went a lot better. Instead of getting mad at her for no reason and asking her to leave, I played Uno with her and it was a lot of fun.
A DAY IN THE LIFE

What’s it like to be a teacher and a student during distance learning? Follow along a “day in the life” with Mr. Rivera, who teaches 6th grade History at KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle School, and Kingston, a 3rd grader at KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary School. Mr. Rivera also has three kids learning at home – a kindergartner, a 4th grader, and a 5th grader. His 5th grader attends KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle.

7:00 AM
I try to grab a bite to eat with my family. After breakfast we are all in class for a chunk of the day so this is our chance to connect before “heading off” to school. The kiddos are rather ambitious with their portions.

8:00 AM
It’s time to teach! Today I’m teaching a lesson on the Neolithic Revolution. I really was worried about how I would be able to connect with my students on a personal level while in virtual classrooms, but my students are the best. They work really hard within the lesson, and their insight is pretty amazing as well. Even though this isn’t ideal for most of us, we are making the best of it and are having a great time.

7:45 AM
Time to get ready! I have a three screen setup. My wife thinks it’s ridiculous, but one screen is for Zoom, one for Nearpod, and the iPad is me logged into Nearpod so I can see what my students see. Almost ready to teach!

12:00 PM
Break time! It is much deserved after a long morning of classes. I try to make myself and everyone else something quickly as we are all in between Zoom classes. What I ALWAYS have time for during this short break? My midday cup of coffee. I didn’t realize how exhausting virtual teaching can be, and my afternoon coffee gives me enough of a kick to start my afternoon strong.

1:00 PM
During this time I try to put in final attendance, bonuses and small time logistics. It is also time to get my own children working on their asynchronous work. This is great, however, this is also the time that my wife is teaching. To say my hands are full is an understatement.

2:00 PM
This is the time where I try to connect with my students. Seeing how strong their personalities shine through the Zoom calls makes me so excited for when we can actually meet in person. I also see siblings “joining” our classes, and other distractions, and I know they are working hard to do their best in a not quite ideal set up.

4:00 PM
Family time! At 4 o’clock we shut everything down and we hang out as a family. We try to get out as much as possible. It might be the backyard, might be the front yard with a hose. Other times it’s board games. Either way, we try to ensure that family time is sacred, and log off computers and try to rest up for another day.

4:00 PM
It’s time to teach! Today I’m teaching a lesson on the Neolithic Revolution. I really was worried about how I would be able to connect with my students on a personal level while in virtual classrooms, but my students are the best. They work really hard within the lesson, and their insight is pretty amazing as well. Even though this isn’t ideal for most of us, we are making the best of it and are having a great time.
A DAY IN THE LIFE: KINGSTON

7:15 AM
I wake up on my own. Sometimes I like to sleep in my costume. After I get dressed, I go and feed my kitty, Mittens.

11:30 AM
I’m finally done with my work. Now, it’s time to have some lunch!

7:30 AM
My mom works late so I let her sleep in. Going to wake her up in the morning is her favorite part of the day.

1:30 PM
Sometimes, I use Legos to help me solve math problems. I’m almost done with school for the day.

7:30 PM
Before I go to sleep, mom makes me read. Then it’s lights out.

7:45 AM
I start happily eating my breakfast. Thank you KIPP for giving us food. Then, it’s time for my morning meeting where I say hi to my teachers and classmates.

4:00 PM
After my school is done for the day, my mom lets me play on technology. Sometimes I dress in new costumes. They’re fun!

10:15 AM
I work on my assignments by myself on the computer. Sometimes my kitty comes and helps me with my asynchronous lessons.
TOGETHER WITH FAMILIES

There is no stronger indicator of how well we are meeting the needs of our students and families than parents choosing to continue sending their students to KIPP Nashville. Here are a few of our families’ stories.

“I heard about KIPP through my son. He wasn’t happy at his previous school, so he researched his options and told me he wanted to go here. One day we visited, the next day he was enrolled. KIPP has been a wonderful environment for both my children. Aldo is excited about going to college, and I’ve seen my daughter grow a lot. I would 100 percent recommend KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School to other families.”

Raquel Morales | KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School parent with her son Aldo (Class of 2020 alum) and daughter, Keysi (current 12th grader)

“Since coming to KIPP, I have seen a huge impact on my son. He has shifted from someone who doesn’t read any books to someone who reads every day. I like how his teachers are pushing him to read and encouraging him to take on books that challenge him. He really loves going to school, and he’s more organized and responsible. He’s growing as a person, not just academically, because the team here is beyond dedicated and truly cares about developing the whole student.”

Moreen Thabet | KIPP Antioch College Prep Office Manager, with her son Marcilino, a 6th grader

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Moreen Thabet | KIPP Antioch College Prep Office Manager, with her son Marcilino, a 6th grader

“I love KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary both as a parent and as an employee. My three children go here, and I work here, so I can say on multiple levels how special this place is. You will build so many amazing relationships here that you wouldn’t think of. It’s not just a great place academically, because kids are growing a lot with that, but it’s also a place where kids will grow emotionally. The level of support inside and outside the classroom is incredible. It’s been an amazing experience to grow professionally alongside my children.”

Jenene Phillips | KIPP Kirkpatrick Elementary School teacher and parent, with her three children, Jatavious, Jarvis and Ari’onna

“The first thing I noticed when I took a tour was how peaceful the environment was here - I was honestly blown away. There was structure in how students walked through the halls and participated in class, but at the same time, kids were clearly enjoying learning. I’m so happy my daughter is here, and I know she loves it, because she comes home talking about how much fun she had at school, especially with Art and STEM classes. The whole environment and atmosphere is uplifting, giving students positivity, and teachers are truly passionate about their work.”

Velinda Bransford | KIPP Nashville College Prep Elementary School parent with her daughter Kaleigh, a 3rd grader

KIPP is like a second home to us. Both my kids are thriving, and I feel like the education they’re receiving is tailored to their needs. That is really important to me, because my son has cerebral palsy. Since coming to KIPP, Ryan has grown so much and made new friends, and Cam’Ron has matured a lot. She’s taking on more responsibility and enjoying being involved in extracurricular activities, like choir and step. When the staff knows your family and understands what you’re going through, it makes it feel like a real team effort.”

Shay Lee | KIPP Academy Nashville parent, with her son Ryan (KAN alum and current 9th grader) and Cam’Ron (7th grader)
SPORTS, ARTS, AND EXTRACURRICULARS

Our KIPPsters are proving the possible in and out of the classroom. From choir to art and other clubs, to cross country, basketball, soccer and cheerleading, our students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of enrichment opportunities. These pictures are from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years.

The KIPP Academy Nashville Environmental Club doing their part to take care of our planet.

KIPP Nashville College Prep 6th grader, Nevaeh, playing the flute during band practice after school.

The KIPP Antioch College Prep Debate Team won two rounds and took home three powerhouse speaker awards at their first debate!

Learning from big kids is the best! The KIPP Nashville Collegiate High School Cheerleading Team leading a cheer camp for our KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary school students.

The KIPP Academy Nashville Performance Choir helping spread holiday cheer by singing at the Capitol Tree Lighting Ceremony.

KIPP Nashville College Prep Elementary School students working hard on mask projects during a special Black History Month unit on Lois Mailou Jones.

KIPP Nashville College Prep 6th grader, Nevaeh, playing the flute during band practice after school.
On a normal Thursday morning at 11 o’clock, KIPP Nashville’s buses would not be out driving around the city. They would be parked, and the transportation team would be gearing up for afternoon routes, delivering students from school back home. Instead, with school in distance learning, the buses are now delivering meals.

It’s a team effort, with James Dickerson driving the bus and Dotssi Eldridge, a KIPP Nashville bus monitor, handling the distribution of meals from the back of the bus.

Dickerson, who says the kids call him Mr. Jim, says, “We just try to make sure we get the food out to the particular stops on time and spend some time there waiting for any students that might come late.”

Now, buses are a part of the distribution effort to make sure students and families who may not be able to get to school are still able to receive nutritious meals. The buses are out Monday through Friday and make 56 stops across eight routes that span from East Nashville to Antioch. The bus routes are a supplement to ongoing in-person pickup at each campus.

The breakfast and lunch contain an entrée and, depending on the meal, fresh fruit, vegetables, juice, and milk.

“We want to supply them with wholesome breakfasts and lunch,” says Dickerson, “Hopefully, it’ll help them be able to do what they do, with studying and everything taking place at home.”

Dickerson has been with KIPP since 2007 and helped found the Transportation Department. At the start, Mr. Jim was the only bus driver with just one route. Now, there are 20 buses, 16 routes and 24 people on the transportation team.

“Mr. Jim actually recruited me from church,” says Eldridge, who came out of retirement to become a part-time bus monitor. “I stayed home for awhile, but was tired of that, so when Mr. Jim asked me to come on, I said yes, and I’ve been here ever since 2018.”

Eldridge says while she misses the students on her regular route, distributing food has given her a chance to see some of them and hear how they’re doing.

“It’s nice to see the kids when they come pick up the food, and for us to be able to put our buses to good use,” she says.

Dickerson, whose six children are now grown up, says driving buses has allowed him to create new relationships with students that have had lasting impact.

“I’ve had a lot of great experiences with the kids here at KIPP. I run into children who are grown now, and they say, ‘Hey Mr. Jim, you don’t remember me, do you?’ It makes me feel good that they still remember me, and they say ‘Thank you for getting me to school on time and doing the things you did to inspire me to stay with what we were doing, helping me to be a better person’.”

From March to June, KIPP Nashville offered grab and go meal pick up at each of its four campuses. During that four-month period, we distributed 29,850 meals.
When you can't share a hug, heart in hand is the next best thing. 💛 Our hearts are full of gratitude after another great week of in-person learning with some of our students! #TeamandFamily

We are officially opening a high school in Antioch! We are grateful to the State Board of Education for approving our new high school. We look forward to opening our high school in Antioch for the 2023-2024 school year, welcoming both current KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle School students and new families. #TeamandFamily

Shout out to our #TeamandFamily for going the extra mile, getting everything prepped, and having catch up conversations through car windows about all the important elementary school stuff - like new big kid teeth. 💛

We love seeing these pictures from some of our newest kindergarten KIPPsters! Welcome to the #TeamandFamily, Raigan and Lavie! ❤️ @knpe_royalty @kipp_kirkpatrick

Ms. Smith and Ms. Atkinson putting the finishing touches on our student supply bags at @kippcollegiate! Schools are hosting supply pickups for families this week. A lot of love went into creating these bags, and we can’t WAIT to see everyone! ❤️ #TeamandFamily

Our @ktc_nashville team has adapted in many ways over the past several months, working to ensure @kippcollegiate seniors and alumni are able to matriculate to college and navigate new challenges. #ToandThrough 🙏