

Schools Matter

"A child's learning is the function more of the characteristics of his classmates than those of the teacher." James Coleman, 1972

Saturday, September 08, 2012

A Former KIPP Teacher Shares Her Story

A Former KIPP Teacher Shares Her Story
Jim Horn

Ever since KIPP students were recruited to do a skit at the National Republican Convention in 2000, KIPP has been the darling of venture philanthropists, Wall Street hedge funds, corporate donors like the Fisher family (of Gap fame), and corporate foundations, including the Gates and Walton Foundations. Hundreds of millions of dollars have poured in to the KIPP home office in San Francisco, and tens of millions more are raised each year to support a charter chain that claims to have found the solution to urban schooling, a solution that entirely ignores the exploded lives and oppressive conditions of the people living in communities ravaged by poverty and the attendant problems of poverty.

KIPP does its work by accepting no excuses, not even poverty, and if the unwavering public relations script is to be believed, KIPP will close the achievement gaps and send poor kids to college regardless of conditions. This misleading message over the past decade has quickly taken on mythic proportions, and it continues now to drive KIPP expansion in particular and charter growth in general.

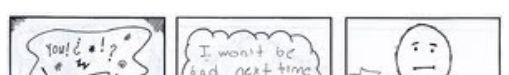
KIPP's biggest hurdle as a viable organization is keeping enough teachers in its intensely segregated classrooms. Without the malleable corps of white middle class Teach for America recruits, KIPP could not keep its doors open. The constant churn created by teacher and staff turnover, then, reinforces and emboldens a strict corporate code of behavior that applies to all teachers and students, alike. Indoctrination into the KIPP code must be quick, thorough, and constantly monitored and reinforced.

KIPP teachers normally work from 60 to 90 hours a week in a total compliance organizational setting that constantly reminds teachers and students, alike, that they are not trying as hard as they can in either their work or in their behavior/attitudes. For many teachers and students, alike, who cannot survive the KIPP total compliance gauntlet, their eventual burnout leaves them with self blame for not working hard enough or being nice enough to make it at KIPP. Some teachers tell of nightmares and flashbacks that are consistent with post-traumatic stress.

Teachers and students, too, are taught to internalize criticism and harsh discipline, regardless of context or fault. Below is one of the cartoons used by KIPP in building what they term "grit" among students. Students are indoctrinated to feel okay when they are berated or screamed at, which is a common occurrence at KIPP schools.

According to Dr. Martin Seligman's team of psychologists who helped co-founder David Levin develop these "character-building" lessons, the results among students and staff should be total compliance and a consistent demonstration of learned optimism--which is the behavioral foundation for the positive psychology movement that has taken corporate America by storm, thanks to Dr. Seligman. Together, these traits of total compliance and learned optimism signal the acquisition of the most important element of character, which is "grit."

Some KIPPs are now issuing character report cards that quantify how well students internalize and demonstrate these lessons. The graphic below is used in KIPP classrooms to build character, i. e., to help middle school children learn how to respond when they are screamed at by adults:



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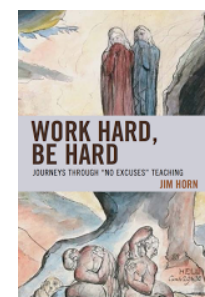
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There was an error in this



Of course, the correct response for KIPPsters is the top choice, with the arrow indicating as much, in case any of the children might forget. Doing better next time will surely win the coach's praise. What KIPPsters learn, however, is that better should always be, well, better. Work hard, be nice. And if that is not hard enough or nice enough, well, it is no one's fault except your own. This is the psychological control mechanism behind "no excuses."

I am in the process of writing a long piece that recounts the experiences of former KIPP teachers. The following represents some of the data from just one interview, with minimal contextualizing and no analysis. Names have been changed to protect the identities of participants.

A new KIPP high school, grade 9 only, gets ready to open. For the next three years, a grade will be added each year until the new school all four grades, 9-12. Teachers gather in early July for two weeks of induction training, and for some, including Kathryn, it is the first time ever for any teacher training instruction at all. Terms like "special education" are new to some, and "IEPs" are even more alien. From 8 to 5 for these two weeks, these soon-to-be teachers plan lessons and learn, as Kathryn says, "an alphabet soup of teacher acronyms."

Kathryn has been hired by the school leader (principal), Ashton, after he flew several hundred miles to watch her teach a college class at a small Midwestern college. Ashton is eager to sign Kathryn, and offers to have KIPP pay Kathryn's expenses to fly her to the city she will teach in to find an apartment. Kathryn is impressed and says yes. She is hired as a language foreign language teacher, and she will be bringing home around 42K her first year, with no K12 experience and no teacher preparation. As a result of being misled on the salary issue by Ashton, who promised \$3,000 more than Kathryn ends up getting paid, she is a bit disappointed from the beginning.

I ask Kathryn how many teachers the new school has, in a building that is still being completed as school opens for approximately 130 9th graders: "There were seven teachers and then an athletic director, a counselor, a dean of students and then like a learning specialist or something. And then Ashton [the school leader] and we had a business manager."

Kathryn and her small group of colleagues work through the two-week induction in late June of 2010, with each day bringing a new level of anxiety: "We did two weeks of in-service and that was a frustrating two weeks because my learning curve was sort of on crack, like it was insane. . . . I had no idea what I was doing."

At the end of the induction period, Kathryn and every other KIPP teacher in the nation are flown off to Las Vegas for 4 nights and 3 days at the Annual KIPP Summit, which is part convention, part revival meeting, part sales meeting, and all of it aimed at having teachers and school leaders "inundated in the culture," as Kathryn described it.

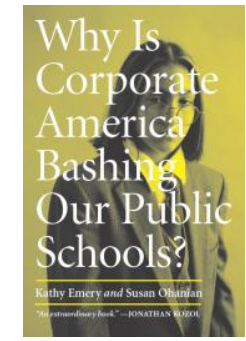
Upon her return from the Summit, Kathryn and her colleagues are eager to get started teaching, but they find that a 3-day trip to a state college about an hour away has been planned. Sort of planned, she finds out. Ashton has put his new Princeton sophomore intern in charge of planning this initial residential orientation session for students and teachers. It involved dorm living among about 130 9th graders who do not know the teachers and teachers who do not know the students. In Kathryn's words, "it was a disaster on every level," and for Kathryn and her colleagues, it was an experience that carried forward into the year, with new teachers starting a new school from scratch with an administration making policy and rules and regulations on the fly. There is no time, however, to look backward or to reflect. As Kathryn said, "I started work July 19 and did not physically stop working until Christmas." Two of the seven teachers quit before the

gadget

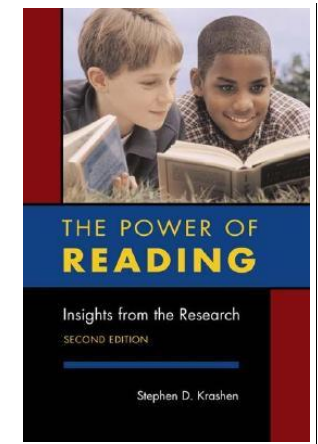
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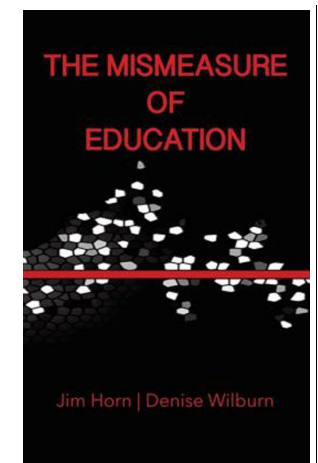
Emery and Ohanian



Stephen Krashen (2004)



Horn & Wilburn (2013)



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by Doug Martin



work July 17 and did not physically stop working until Christmas. Two of the seven teachers quit before the first year ends.

For all the former KIPP teachers I have interviewed so far, there is one unwavering agreement on one key issue: the workload and expectations for KIPP teachers is unsustainable over a normal career span for anyone.

Kathryn: I mean the experience for me I would get to work . . . in general I'd leave my apartment about 6:20. I'd get up at 5:00, leave my apartment about 6:20. Get to work in about 13 minutes. I would strive to get there earlier so I could have time to make my coffee because everybody made their coffee in the morning and it was this mad dash. And I wanted to make sure I was in the cafeteria by 7:00 or 7:20, which is when we were supposed to be in the cafeteria as a staff. I would get there about 6:40, I'd print off my deliverables, I'd make my coffee, I'd get my board ready with my key objectives my board configuration. I'd get my PowerPoint set up. I'd make sure the class is clean and things are in their place. All my stuff is on the table when the kids come in so they can pick up their worksheets and take them in. I got everything created in ready for that day.

During the morning, Kathryn taught one 90-minute classes and her plan period, and then came lunch. She says,

. . . I brought my lunch every day and I just ate it standing up or I ate it with kids. It was usually standing up. And we would rotate to make sure, like I would usually come in first because the other teachers a lot of times I didn't have class because I was on my planning and I'd get there first and make sure everything was okay and the kids were in line and they were standing up against the wall. And then I'd make sure they were okay and then the other teachers would get their lunch and then I'd go get mine and bring it back down to the cafeteria.

I asked about learning the rules like standing up against the wall and the imposed silence in many KIPP lunchrooms. She said the rules were communicated during in-services, as part of the Big List. Big list? I asked.

. . . The big list is basically anything and everything because in low income schools . . . [it's] sort of the methodology behind teaching in low income schools. . . The big list is every system or procedure that we have in place so that basically it's controlling every variable in an environment, which is generally uncontrollable. For example, where teachers are in the morning. Where teachers are when they greet students in their classroom. What time you need to have all your copies and everything done and ready. What students should dress like when they come into the building. And some of it we just went all off those and we created this big list. And that was something we did during in service and then we did also while we were at KIPP summit. You set an expectation and the kids have to meet that expectation every day all day without prompters.

INT: Without fail.

R: Without fail. And that's the KIPP culture that's supposed to be the KIPP culture. Now it varies from school to school because you have different school leaders and KIPP sort of does this let the stallions run things, where it's like let the principal run the school how they see fit.

[Other former KIPP teachers talked about children learning to ride the bus the KIPP way, getting off the bus, going to the bathroom the KIPP way, sitting in a desk the KIPP way, and walking in the hall all according to KIPP, how to act when visitors were in the building, and how to accept punishment.]

Two more 90-minute classes came after lunch for Kathryn, and then came homeroom or advisory with 17 African-American female 9th graders. Then from 3:45 to 5 PM came the co-curricular period (CCP), or when electives were offered such as art or music or sports or debate, depending on availability of staff to teach direct these activities.

Kathryn said most students left at 5, but she would usually stay until 6, sometimes visiting with other teachers in their rooms (by design, there was no teacher room or lounge). She would get home around 6:30, "have about an hour for myself," and then grade papers and plan until 9 or 9:30. Kathryn was also on call during this time for parents and students.

I asked Kathryn about the time she put into her work at KIPP.

. . . Yeah. I was working about 90 hours a week.

INT: Ninety hours.



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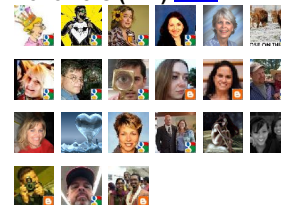
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INT: Did you have a significant other? Were you married?

R: No, I was married to my job. I didn't even have a social life.

One of my standard questions is "what makes a good KIPP teacher?" Kathryn's response:

...The KIPP teachers that do well I think are the ones who taught for a while or have been in KIPP for a long time. I honestly don't know because I didn't meet those teachers. I didn't see those teachers. We lost 70 percent of our staff—either they were fired or they quit by the end of this past year. And the teachers that stayed, one of them is my close friend and she will not be there this year probably. She's like, I can do this last year and this year but I can't do it for another year.

Kathryn pointed out that most of her colleagues did not thrive, and some did not survive the first year:

...We lost our athletic director in October. . . and then our biology teacher quit in the third quarter. And then by the end of the school year our dean resigned the last three or four weeks of the school year. I lost my job because [her subject] got cut. Our writing teacher was fired and one of our math teachers was fired. And our business manager quit.

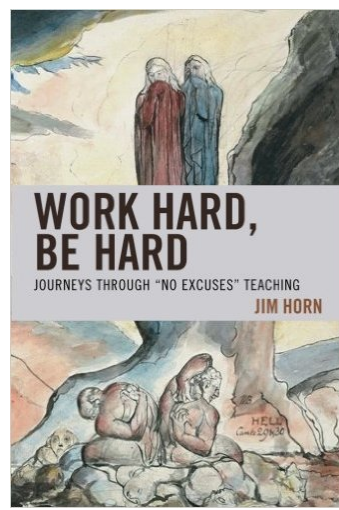
In discussing the students at this brand new KIPP, Kathryn points out that about 40 of the 130 students come from two local KIPP middle schools, which she describes as "dysfunctional."

And those two KIPP middle schools had virtually no rules. They had incredibly high teacher turnover. They were more like what you would consider like a comprehensive public middle school would be. . . . One of my friends called it this KIPP combination of like just one of those traditional sort of urban stereotypes of urban schools but then combined it with this really strange sense of entitlement that KIPP created. And you had this very strange hybrid of students. And so classroom management across all, and some teachers had more success than others. More experienced teachers had more success than others and some classes were more successful than others. But in general all the teachers had classroom management—all of them had classroom management issues.

This interview is one of more than a dozen interviews that I have completed with former KIPP teachers in a study aimed to understand why teachers leave KIPP. If you know someone who is a former KIPP teacher and wants to share his/her story for research purposes, please ask her or him to email me: james.horn@cambridgecollege.edu

Last Update March 22, 2016:

My book on "No Excuses" teaching was published in February 2016. Orders may be made here or at any online bookstore for paperback, hardback, or eBook, and you may access an advance review of the book here.



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at 10:28 AM



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Labels: KIPP, KIPP teachers, No Excuses, total compliance

69 comments:



Anonymous 10:02 AM

I have a hard time believing that Seligman's goal was "Total Compliance." It may have been dreamed up by a KIPP administrator, but that goal goes against everything that Positive Psychology stands for.

From your description Kipp sounds like a perversion of education and I would guess it is a perversion of Positive Psychology as well.

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 10:52 PM

Positive psychology has self-control and self-monitoring as primary goals. The goal is have compliance from within, which I would argue constitutes the most successful form of control. Look at Seligman's early work on learned helplessness, and then look at KIPP schools with adolescents where you can hear a pin drop. For hegemony to prevail in any social situation, self-correction and self-blame and self-correction are essential. You may also be interested in Seligman's work for military in its bullshit PP non-treatment of returning vets.

Reply



Jim Horn 12:52 PM

Your response to criticism of positive psychology sound absolutely, uh, positive. I suggest some reading on the uses of learned helplessness, a Seligman discovery that he has described in briefing CIA interrogators. Learned optimism is the flip side of that, and both are used at KIPP for control purposes. I encourage you to read this piece on Seligman's scam that he has sold to the U. S.

military as a cheap remedy for PTSD and other traumas from war.
<http://schoolfunding.info/litigation/overview.php3>

Hey GI, stop crying about that missing leg: Be Happy! Show some true "grit."

Reply



Jim Horn 12:54 PM

oops, sorry about that wrong link on "comprehensive soldier fitness:"
<http://www.psyr.org/blog/2011/04/05/the-dark-side-of-comprehensive-soldier-fitness/>

Reply



Pam 9:08 PM

I was a KIPP teacher in San Antonio, and it was shocking to see the double standard so blatantly used. Drunk teachers, money embezzled, kids left unattended during field trips, special education services denied...the list goes on and on. If a traditional public school behaved this way it would be cleaned out or closed....yet the school continues under the management of Mr. Larson. It is shameful!

Reply

Replies



Anonymous 11:28 PM

Hi Pam, i just got called for an interview with kipp aspire in san antonio, should i run like hell? I've been researching kipp as a whole and my finds arent that great. On paper its sounds great but it seems like the pay isnt much in comparison to responsibilities and the overall culture is bad? Any advice since youve worked at a san antonio location?



Anonymous 11:06 AM

RUN LIKE HELL!!

Reply



Jim Horn 9:37 AM

Pam,

Please contact me if you would like to share your story. JH
ontogenyx@gmail.com

Reply



Jennifer Bardsley 12:09 PM

Keep up the interviews Jim! This is an important story to share.

Reply



Anonymous 12:34 PM

This seems to be a culture of charter schools....I spent 3 years in one and got out as soon as I could. Now I'm moving to another state I find that I'm more likely to get a job in a charter school..I really dont' want to but a job is better than another. So here I go again going through hell.

Reply



Shannon 4:55 PM

I am graduating in May and I just applied to teach at KIPP schools.. and then I saw this blog post :/
thanks for the information

Reply



Anonymous 2:56 PM

As a teacher who has taught in both public and charter schools, I'm beginning to wonder if the problem is charter schools. I currently teach at a prominent charter school in Las Vegas, NV, and it has been nothing short of a nightmare. The school speaks highly of its extended school day, but fails to mention how the additional school hours are spent. Students typically are placed in random electives that have little to do with academics, such as kick ball. In addition, the school leadership is extremely inconsistent. This year alone, the school has had three different principals. The school is a mess and yet students continue to attend everyday hoping that things will change. My guess is that they won't.

Reply



Rachel 1:20 PM

Wow. I second everyone's thanks and encouragement to keep up this investigatory journalism (is that what it's called?).

Reply



Anonymous 1:02 AM

My gosh, thank you sooo much for this article. Please keep them coming. I am in a similar situation. I have been a public school teacher but heard how great KIPP schools are. I went through their

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extensive application and interview process and got offered an "apprentice" position at \$42,000 plus medical benefits. I have been teaching for over a decade and the best they offered me was entry pay. Really? No thanks! I also believed that the time and amount of workload was unsustainable long term, but really needed to hear or read it from someone that has worked in a KIPP school.

Reply



Alex M 10:01 PM

As the wife of a current KIPP teacher I am pleased, yet saddened to read this as I've watched my husband, a 10 year social studies teacher who previously taught at a school ranked as one of the top in the country by US News & World Report, struggle mightily in his first year. He came to KIPP with such optimism and a strong desire to make a difference in urban ed. All he's been met with is constant criticism, but zero resources and actual lies from his admin. He teaches two grade levels, 7th and 8th, and even though the school has been open 8 years, there was no curriculum. Literally no materials to work with. He has created everything from lesson plans to assessments to state test questions on his own. His 8th graders only have text books, because he secured a donation from his prior school district. Even after all this, he has been told he doesn't seem vested and that his teaching style isn't a fit for succeeding on the rubric. We now completely understand why they've never had a social studies teacher last longer than a year and the last 2 were gone in the middle of the year. I definitely believe there are students benefiting greatly from KIPP's work, but there must be some way to actually support teachers and build a work place suitable for a career. Currently it seems they only want to deal with fresh grads who are easily manipulated. They can suck the life out of them for a couple of years and start over again.

Reply



Anonymous 7:00 PM

Most teachers work incredibly long hours and, unfortunately, eat their lunches while supervising students. The teacher in the above interview sounds like she's just bitter that her job was cut. I've been teaching for 15 years, and while I have never worked at a KIPP school, most of the things she is complaining about come with the territory of teaching.

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 10:57 PM

KIPP represents the traditional school experience on steroids. The teachers I talked with were sad, depressed, disenchanted, angry, enlightened, but almost never bitter about losing their job. Most came to view their job loss as blessing, in disguise at first, in some cases. But in the end, always a blessing.

The book will be out in 2014. Hope you will have a look.



Anonymous 2:56 PM

That's EXACTLY what I thought but then I remember she had no prior teaching experience which for new inexperienced teachers can be overwhelming! However, the salary part is where in confused and KIPP is great with not posting their salary schedules!



Anonymous 2:24 AM

Regular public schools don't require the teachers to be on call to parents until 9:00pm every night nor are they required to stay on campus until 5pm (even though many do). In addition REAL public schools service All children including those with special needs (unlike charter schools). True public schools have a faculty with a wide range of experience levels not just new non credentialed young recent college graduates from the Teach for America factory.

Reply



Mike Walster 10:10 AM

Really great blog keep it up.

Reply

Everywhere...
and Under...

It's Not the Teachers
Stupid

A Letter from an Art
Teacher You Won't
Forget

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Have Evidence
Problem

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More Than Money or
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Children Better
Prepared for...

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Online Bedbugs Want
to Hitch...

A Child-Centered Nation
(Hint: Not the U.S.)

Orlando Sentinel
reporter responds to a
letter I s...

Rehire Professor
Mandeloni

Stop treating 4 and 5
year olds like children



Anonymous 6:31 PM

As an educator hoping to return to NYC from NJ, I looked into KIPP as a possible alternative to "raise the bar". After reading your blog and comments, I doubt the KIPP program is the place for me. Thank you so much for posting.

Reply



Anonymous 6:40 PM

Thanks so much for posting this. I just had an interview with a KIPP school and really did not get a good feeling. Seems like they try to quantify things that aren't always quantifiable, character and student growth for example. Did you find this to be the case? I currently teach at an independent school and LOVE teaching. I am afraid that if I teach at a KIPP school I will burn out, which is the last thing I want to have happen. Do you suggest avoiding KIPP opportunities?

Reply



Anonymous 12:41 PM

Just saw an advertisement for a KIPP posting in my area, but after reading your blog, and even though I need a job, I think I'll pass on the KIPP experience, and I have 28 years of experience K-12 and college. Thanks for the heads-up! You may have saved me a lot of aggravation.

Reply



Anonymous 11:56 AM

I don't personally know any KIPP teachers, but I am a mother of a KIPP student and WOW he has been denied to have any kind of feelings whatsoever! He is not allowed to have a personality of his own and has been emotionally broken down on a daily basis. I really feel bad as a mother for not figuring this out sooner and putting him through this abuse for a whole school year being bullied by these teachers. Finding this article makes me feel better and that I'm not so CRAZY after all.

Reply

Replies



Anonymous 2:49 PM

this is true my daughter has been at KIPP in Houston for 3 weeks and has already told me how the teachers make the kids stand in front of the class and have the students shout out whats wrong with their uniform or why did you forget your homework, on so on, my daughter said that 3 grade girls began crying. The stories she has told me go on and on. I pulled her out today; I hope I did the right thing?



Jim Horn 8:39 PM

As you obviously love your daughter, yes, you did the right thing. Never doubt it.



Anonymous 8:21 PM

I have 35 years of experience in education, mostly special education. I have taught early childhood through post grad with excellent evals in all teaching environments. Asked to accept a spec. ed aide position on a temporary basis last week at a Kipp school (since I'm retired). In 3 days I am stunned to find such violent negative verbal behavior by teachers, that I cried driving home. These kindergartners and first graders deserve much better. I will be writing an editorial about my limited experience.



Jim Horn 9:48 PM

I hope you will send us your editorial, published or unpublished:
ontogenyx@gmail.com

JH

Reply

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Articles and Reviews

[2.0 The Paul Wellstone Memorial Family and Students Testing Protection Act](#)

[20 Reasons to Eliminate No Child Left Behind](#)

[Caught Between Hope and Despair: An Essay Review. Review of Grant, Gerald. \(2009\). Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh.](#)

[Jay Mathews and His History of Testing for Dummies](#)

[LEAP-ing Toward Accountability. . .\(pdf\)](#)



Anonymous 1:19 PM

Thank you so much for posting. I withdrew my child from KIPP today and there are only 7 days of school left for the year, but I could not allow my child to go through this abusiveness any longer. Here's something crazy, they would not allow me to go through with the withdrawal process (like filling out the proper paperwork) until I spoke with the Dean. I politely told them I don't need to speak to anyone or have anything to say to anyone I just want to fill out the proper documents and go to work. So she told me okay just to make myself comfortable and have a seat until 4:45 p.m. until they are able to meet with me. I was there at 9 a.m. and I was not about to sit and wait until 4:45 in the afternoon, that's insane.

Please continue to share these KIPP stories they have been a big help. I no longer think I'm just being a crazy protective mother.

Reply



Anonymous 9:14 AM

I just stumbled upon this blog. Thank you fiur work. Are you still looking for stories? I taught at a KIPP in the Atlanta area. It was insanity. My children also attended so I can give you 2 or more prospectives.

Reply

Anonymous 12:13 AM



90 hour weeks = the life of charter school teacher. Having taught for one year in a public, inner-city school, and making the transitioning to a charter school for the next year was the biggest mistake I've ever made in my life. My charter school administrator told us on the first day of orientation: "look to your left, and look to your right...one of these teachers won't be here by Christmas because they have failed the kids, failed the benchmarks, and don't deserve to teach dogs..." I plan on working as hard as I can to shut down every charter school in America. They are a monumental waste. Parents of special education students had best beware - your child will receive no services, even if they have and IEP or a 504. My administrator's wife yelled at me constantly and called me "a cracker in training." That's a charter school.

Reply



Anonymous 9:45 PM

this entire movement exists to deunionize teachers and chain them to poverty wages while private administrators profit. it's vital to go beyond the nuts and bolts insanity of the charter itself and to understand the very dark political forces at work here.

Reply



vero86 8:07 PM

My son has been accepted to a Kipp school in NYC, should I run?

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 8:42 AM

Yes.

Reply



Lg-b 2:09 PM

Thank you for your comments. My niece has the potential to attend KIPP middle school in Columbus, Ohio.

I really appreciate you guys' honesty. These comments have been a huge help in my decision making. Public school doesn't seem that bad after all. As long as we're paying attention our kids will do fine in public schools. MANY THANKS.

Reply

National Math Panel and Modern Day Eugenics

National Security Requires Corporate Welfare?

NCLB Testing Hysteria at Full Maturity: Ideological Blindness, Color Blindness, or No Blindness At All? (ppt)

NCLB, Highly-Qualified Teachers, and

Ignorance as Knowledge

Personal Renewal and Professional Growth for Teachers

Protecting the Rights of Racists to Become Teachers

Review of "Reading the naked truth: Literacy, legislation, and lies"

Teacher Education Is Out of Touch, and I Am Proud of It

The Education Reformation of NCLB and the Crusade to Kill the Public Schools

The KULT of KIPP: An Essay Review

To What Question is More Testing the Correct Answer?

What Is Left Behind



Anonymous 3:02 AM

Glad I read this before finishing my application.

[Reply](#)



Melissa 1:38 PM

I am always shocked to hear about the horror stories inside of KIPP. To think that this same charter has been given authorization to run in Memphis with Achievement Schools District. I have heard about the nonsense that goes on at KIPP from former teachers. It has always been amazing to me that individuals who say they care about the kids, our local leaders, school board, etc. are allowed to run an operation that is not conducive to student learning or growth. This is when I have to just say, "It is all about the dollars, not providing our children with a quality education".

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 4:17 AM

I currently teach for a KIPP school. After 3 years, I want out. I plan to stay one more year to save up a little more money before going back for my doctorate. This year has been the worst. I have students with behaviors that make me crazy but no real support, a coteacher who refuses to engage with me beyond talking about the students, and just feeling overwhelmed and overworked.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 10:23 PM

I was going to proceed with the KIPP process for Austin, TX. hiring, but after finding this blog that will not be happening. I came into the teaching profession two years ago. Both last and this year, I was told: "resign or be non-renewed." Being non-renewed is a black mark whereby no school district will hire you. I am 62 years young and I do not need this BS. My 10th grade students performed well on the STAAR exam last year and I think my freshmen will this year as well. Administrators and the School Board are always looking for a Scapegoat to blame for the low test scores, but, in my case, the scores were satisfactory. Go figure.....it leaves a foul taste in my mouth for the profession that I came into late in life, but I am completely disenchanted now. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts and feelings.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 11:35 PM

Thank you so much for writing about this and revealing the unrealistic expectations placed on urban educators. I had a VERY similar experience with Memphis Teacher Residency. I ended up leaving after only 6 months because I was suffering from depression and anxiety from the process. The school I worked in was simultaneously militant and chaotic. I hated who I had to be in order to be a "good teacher." I woke up every day thinking, "I want to do ANYTHING but this." And that is no way to live. But the brainwash (similar to the cultural indoctrination you speak of with KIPP) was powerful. A speaker at our MTR class one day literally said that if we quit it was because we were only doing the program for selfish reasons and we were not truly there for God.

The worst part about MTR is that you are trapped financially. If you choose to end your residency year, you must repay the monthly living and housing stipend they provide. Even though you go through an intensive selection process to be chosen for the program and work nonstop while you're there, somehow you still owe them. I am now in debt at 23 years old. This financial burden doesn't seem to fit their Christian grace ideology too well.

Take caution when looking at these programs. Im glad to see a dialogue about these issues. Thank you for the platform to share.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 4:13 PM

Thank you for this post. I am in the middle of the extensive interviewing process with a KIPP school for an office position, and while I was initially excited, my in-person interview was probably one of the worst I've ever had. One of the leaders that interviewed me came across as such a jerk, especially when I casually asked what the hours were. "We don't really worry about hours here." What? I've had a job before, I know how it works. If I need to come in early/stay late to get the job done, I get

that. Was he implying I was lazy because I inquired about the basics of the position? After reading this, I feel better knowing my first impressions of the school were spot on.

Reply



Anonymous 4:57 PM

My daughter was accepted to Kipp Los Angeles and will be entering Kindergarten. She has a very strong personality and now I'm worried on how she will be treated. I just came from a parent meeting and everyone seems so happy and peppy
I'm confused on what to do ?

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 2:10 PM

I can only say what I would do with my own child, based on the research that I have done: I would never enroll my child at the dehumanizing KIPP schools or any of the other "no excuses" schools based on the KIPP Model.

Reply



Anonymous 11:26 PM

I was considering attending an interview day for a KIPP school. I'm a second year part time public school teacher hopeful for a full time position. I read great things about KIPP but I'm glad I came across this blog before I went to the interview. I have heard the interview process is extensive. With multiple lesson demonstrations and steps. Not worth it after I have read more about the program. Thanks for the info!

Reply



Anonymous 11:26 PM

A friend of the family has interviewed and has accepted a job at a KIPP school in Brooklyn. Anybody know of NYC KIPP? Or are they across the board this abusive?

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 11:14 AM

I have just finished a book based largely on interviews with 2 dozen former KIPP teachers. This kind of total compliance pressure cooker environment is universal at KIPP schools and other "no excuses" schools. The book will be published later this year. Title is Work Hard, Be Hard: Journeys Through No Excuses Teaching.



Anonymous 11:04 AM

The horror stories related here are just an extension of what is going on in many public schools throughout the country. Take Detroit Public Schools, for example, which had a budget surplus, was taken over by Gov. Rick Snyder who has installed 3 emergency financial managers none of whom have delivered anything in the way of service to the kids & community, taken away the community's right to elect their own school board, established an additional school system "EAA" which has done nothing more than siphon students/funds away from traditional public schools leaving them wanting. Recently, Gov. Snyder had to admit that "EAA" schools were disastrous, but this is who was elected. The term "underserved" so often used by Charter school/choice advocates means nothing more than take "advantage". Michigan's current governor has proven this with his failed educational policies. In the meantime, the children continue to suffer.

Reply



Anonymous 5:58 AM

My son will be starting kindergarten in two weeks. He has been in summer school for two weeks. When i asked what he learns, he tells me chants and how to act. When i attended the parents meeting i felt uneasy. On the first day of summer school no parent was let onto the campus. Car riders were dropped off and cars kept moving. So my instinct told me to look for reviews. Thanks everyone. I feel better for knowing in my heart to find my son another school and your validations.

Reply

Anonymous 4:44 PM

Hi

I am actually thinking to apply for a office/accounting position. I am getting scare of this place,, its the same doctrine to all employees?

Reply

Unknown 8:50 PM

I am a retired educator with several years of experience both as a teacher and as an administrator. I recently started working at a KIPP Middle school. This place can not be called a school. I am planning to leave as soon as possible after only three weeks. I feel sorry for the children who are subjected to such none sense.

Reply

Delilah Laney 11:03 PM

Awesome story. i already shared it. PTSD

Reply

Unknown 7:06 AM

Sounds EXACTLY like my experience and I have a spouse and kids and I'm at my wits end as a 1st year teacher there.

Reply

Anonymous 2:47 PM

I worked at KIPP for a year and your article is spot on! I wasn't a teacher but I found every day so hard and unforgiving. I do hope the students come out of their KIPP experience with something to look forward towards; however, I doubt that few, who actually graduate, have bright futures. I'd love to give you my perspective on my year with KIPP. If you reading this comment and considering working for KIPP please, for your own sanity, don't do it!

Reply

Anonymous 1:10 PM

I am greatly appreciated with the questions/comments concerning this topic. My children were recently enrolled at a KIPP school and experienced some very traumatic issues. They were berated, bullied by students and staff, deprived of educational academics, restricted from recess interventions and so on. I made the decision to remove my children from the school to direct them towards an educational system that will assist in catapulting a convalesce and ebullient state of mind.

Reply

Anonymous 1:41 PM

I have two kids enrolled at Kipp. The school is so petty and I can relate to what is being said by the other commenters. I have already been looking for others schools to send my babies to.

Reply

Anonymous 1:06 PM

I just received an email asking me to setup a phone interview in San Antonio. Don't think I will be doing it now!

Reply

Reply



Judith Robinson 1:49 PM

Damn! Philadelphia 's School Reform Commission(\$RC) has just voted to give away our Children of the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood!!! Politician think parents are so desperate they will accept anything!!! K-12 !!

Reply



Chris P. Bacon 9:19 AM

I am a teacher for a different chain charter school and it seems to me that the bigger picture is the direction that education is going as a whole. I've worked in public , private and charter schools. In my experience, Teachers are constantly being bullied by administration to perform virtually impossible tasks (or do something completely out of their job description) there is no money for resources and there is a high teacher turnover rate due to the pressures of teaching.

These are not just KIPP issues but education issues. No matter where teachers teach, no matter where parents put their children, no matter the sector teachers teach in, there will be these issues. Until we get to the bottom of this shift in education culture and call for change, the issues that are mentioned in this article will continue to happen in all of our schools.

I'd love Jim Horn to delve more into the true issues of all schools and why they are failing especially in the inner city.

Note to Parents: There aren't many schools left that are ran efficiently and in your child's best interest. Search ferociously for the ones that put education first and aren't ran entirely like corporations. I'm considering home school for my son because of my overwhelming disgust for the way Education is being handled by administration, school districts and state governments.

Reply

Replies



Jim Horn 3:48 PM

The issues you describe are not at all present in the best public schools and the private schools that most Washington politicians and economic elites send their children to. I think the Obamas are very happy with their urban education experience for their children at Sidwell Friends, and I think you will find teachers and students, alike, love teaching in schools where there's lots of social and economic capital to go around.

Lack of resources, high turnover, and bullying administrators are manifestations of inequality and poverty. Sadly, our society still uses standardized testing to determine the value of schools and children and teachers; sadder still is the reality that where poverty is high, scores are low. And even sadder than that, the no excuses charters respond to this unjust system by imposing inhumane methods and dehumanizing practices to create testing factories that focus on nothing else but testing.

Meanwhile, the children at Sidwell Friends remain happily engaged in their education.



Anonymous 8:19 AM

I have just moved down the street from the Kipp school in Columbus. I've been drooling while passing it by everyday wanting my 1st, 3rd and 9th grader to attend. I'm so happy I've found everything I have about the school. With 2 of my kids having an IEP and my youngest not knowing if he will need one.... (My boys all have late bdays...May, September and October) they would have never fit in and it would have been too demanding for me.... Thanks to everyone, teachers, students and everyone else's input. I will no longer care about this school!

Reply



Mom_26 5:21 PM

Does anyone know about the KIPP in Houston?? My husband is hellbent that it is a "better" school curriculum for our daughter and everything that I have been reading lately tells me we need to keep our daughter AS FAR AWAY from this school as possible. No adult supervision, different people

everyday, teachers that are being overworked and treated like garbage and in return kids are not being taught as they should... These must be the "schools" you hear about on the news where kids

(preteens) again KIDS were allowed to sleep with boys in school several kids at one time, or being raped in school during school hours being that there is no steady adult supervision, and what supervision there is present is overworked, tired, underpaid, taken advantage of and exhausted and quite frankly doesn't seem to give a crap. I WOULD NEVER RECOMMEND THIS SCHOOL TO ANYONE WHOM HAS A CHILD OF ANY AGE.... Seriously disappointing that this is even still open... HOW CORRUPT. My husband will get over his self, because our child is NOT going here....

[Reply](#)



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[Reply](#)



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[Reply](#)



Jim Horn 3:16 PM

Buy your husband this book: "Work Hard, Be Hard: Journeys through 'No Excuses' Teaching."

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 1:18 PM

My 6 year old has been hurt in kipp leadership Austin Texas bus, and I went straight to school and when I talked to Assistant Principal she had the nerve to reply with "Well your son chose to sit by him" really I mean where is her Profession, and then came across this blog, it's a Wake up Call!

[Reply](#)



schools 1:02 PM

Glad I read this before finishing my application.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 4:45 PM

KIPP San Antonio - it's a beautiful on paper but the reality is completely different. Teachers that thrive here are divorced, single and very young. Teachers believe they will be making a good sum of

money as their base pay is \$50K (not much more for years of experience) but they are worked to the bone!! Countless hours are dedicated to KIPP with no work/life balance. Your life is your work at

KIPP.

I agree with others....run like hell.

Reply



Speakerboxx 9:48 AM

This is our recent incident with KIPP Zenith in Houston. They have to be stopped.
<http://cw39.com/2016/11/04/kipp-driver-refuses-to-let-students-off-bus-father-blocks-it-from-leaving-neighborhood/>

Reply



charlie puth 3:59 AM

thanks for post

Reply

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