



April 28, 2011

Dear Friends of KIPP:

Today, we released the first KIPP College Completion Report. The report details the college completion rates from the first two KIPP middle schools, which have been open long enough for their early classes of students to have graduated from college.

When we look at the health of a KIPP school, we ask ourselves six essential questions:

1. Are we serving the children who need us?
2. Are our students staying with us?
3. Are our students progressing and achieving academically?
4. Are our alumni climbing the mountain to and through college?
5. Are we building a sustainable people model?
6. Are we building a sustainable financial model?

This report is a significant step forward in helping us answer the 4th essential question: are our alumni climbing the mountain to and through college?

Today, only **30.6 percent of Americans aged 25 to 29 have earned a bachelor's degree**. Just **8.3 percent** of students from **low-income families** complete college by their mid-20's.

As of Fall 2010, **33 percent of students who completed 8th grade at a KIPP middle school** ten or more years ago have graduated from a four-year-college. **This rate is above the national average** and **four times the rate for students from low-income families**. In addition, 5 percent of the earliest KIPP students have completed a two-year college degree and 19 percent are still persisting in college.

For all of us who work at KIPP today, this is certainly a moment to recognize that we stand on the shoulders of giants. It is a testament to all KIPPsters big and small – our pioneering students and families from our first years; our founding teachers and support staff; volunteers, funders and friends; and finally, our founders, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin.

While this college graduation rate is a significant achievement, all of us at KIPP recognize that our ultimate goal still eludes us. Over 80 percent of Americans from the highest economic quartile have earned a bachelor's degree by age 29. We believe, as do millions of Americans across our country, that demography need not dictate destiny. Our north star is to see our KIPPsters graduate from college at the same rates as children growing up in more privileged communities. Achieving this goal is both a moral and economic imperative.

Over time, we have learned a good deal about the challenges students from low-income backgrounds face when pursuing higher education, as well as the factors that help them succeed. We elaborate on these factors in the report, and we humbly make recommendations for how higher education leaders, elected officials, policymakers, and others can address this challenge.

It is our hope that by sharing our results we can contribute to a national dialogue about why the opportunity to earn a college degree is a necessity for all, rather than a luxury for a privileged few.

Sincerely,

Richard Barth
CEO, KIPP Foundation