

# INVESTING IN EARLY LITERACY

**KIPP:FOR LIFE**  
Funding Our Future



# KIPP® FOR LIFE

## Funding Our Future

# Investing in Early Literacy

At KIPP, we believe that creating a more just, equitable world starts with our students becoming strong readers. Literacy builds confidence, inspires self-discovery, fosters curiosity about others and the broader world, and empowers our students to express themselves and craft their own futures.

That's why we've embarked on a multi-year focus on early literacy across the KIPP network of schools. Our goal is to strengthen instruction in Grades K-2 through intentional, comprehensive, research-based instruction in foundational skills. Supporting our youngest readers has always been essential for promoting educational equity for our students; now we're focused on aligning research-backed practices across our communities and sharing the lessons we've learned across the network.

Research tells us that third grade marks the completion of "learning to read" and the pivot to "reading to learn." While we have supported our regions as they transitioned to the Common Core Standards over the past five years, we have also noticed that the reading results for KIPPsters exiting fourth grade have remained static and in some cases even declined.

We know that we must increase the percentage of KIPP third graders achieving on pace to enter college when they graduate high school, and it is our goal that every KIPPster will have the support and resources they need to be skilled, joyful readers by the end of third grade.

“After just one year in the Early Literacy cohort, we are making big strides in Atlanta – building a reading ecosystem in which both our teachers and youngest learners can thrive as we redesign our practice and habits. And, as part of a national cohort, we're also learning from other KIPP schools and regions across the country.”

**Ebony Daniels**

*Achievement Director for Primary Literacy, KIPP Metro Atlanta Public Schools*



# Training Joyful Teachers

Learning to read is incredibly challenging, and teachers require specific skills to teach it to every single student. At KIPP, 50+% of our teachers are early in their careers, and we know we must help them grow their foundational knowledge of the science of reading. KIPP will be a nationwide leader in this effort, as The National Council on Teacher Quality found that only 18% of teacher preparations programs address the key components essential to reading success.

## Early Literacy Cohorts

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We are piloting an approach that will help all of KIPP improve early literacy systems. A subset of our regions will develop new, regional strategic plans that will close early literacy achievement gaps. After their first year in the program, participating regions will focus on executing these plans over the following years with the support of intensive professional development along with coaching. At the end of the process, we will have an Early Literacy Blueprint that will help us scale the success of these programs to a nationwide effort. Key elements of this program include:



### TEACHING ROOTED IN SCIENCE

Based on the Science of Reading, we know that learning to read requires strong word recognition--which includes things like phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition of familiar words--alongside linguistic comprehension, or understanding the meaning of words and sentences. A strong reader won't develop if one of these is missing, and teachers literally help their students develop new neural pathways when they teach reading.



### TRAINING AND COACHING

Specialized training and coaching is central to our efforts. Teachers need to have a deep knowledge of how young children learn to read, for example that R makes the /rrrrr/ sound, which is different from the /er/ sound. They should also know that the word 'might' has only three sounds, /m/ /i/ and /t/, even though it has five letters. For teachers to learn knowledge like this and put it in action in the classroom, they need intensive and ongoing training and coaching.



### DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION

Each KIPPster deserves personalized support as they learn to read. To make this happen, we are developing data collection and tracking methods to know where students are and how to intervene when they need help.



### CENTERING JOY

Since our founding, we've believed that learning is joyful. As we scale our early literacy training, we are also making sure that we find ways to keep our classrooms joyful, from the books we choose to the songs we sing and the ways we celebrate and learn with one another.

*Because we know how important this work is, KIPP is scaling quickly, and has plans to reach at least 20 KIPP regions in the next 2 years. We recognize this to be a long-term play—the results of which will take years to truly see. This isn't just about adopting a new curriculum or assessment. This is about investing in the people we put in our classrooms.*



## • Better long-term outcomes for KIPPsters

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The impact being able to read has on a person's life is monumental--no single investment will last longer or pay more dividends than teaching a young child to read well. Reading has a wide ranging set of effects:

- We know that a child's reading and writing ability has a significant impact on their performance in all subject areas, and that this improvement in performance persists in the future.
- There is a direct correlation between literacy rates and per capita income, and adults who struggle to write and read are significantly more likely to live in poverty.
- If we fulfill our responsibilities as educators to teach all of our students to reach and write proficiently, we are actively promoting educational equity among Black and Latinx children.

While we won't see the effects of early literacy for years to come, we nonetheless know that investing in early literacy for our KIPPsters will help them achieve their lifelong goals and dreams.

*Learning to read is about more than academic excellence; it is an act of social justice.*

## • A critical moment

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Early literacy has always been important, but we are at a critical moment now as classroom teachers address the unfinished learning that COVID left for our KIPPsters.

We have a tremendous opportunity to ensure that these students receive the tools they need to become strong readers with the ability to chart their own futures. We hope that you will help us ensure that our early readers gain the skills they need for lifelong success and emerge from this time stronger than before.