

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Hadley Huberman

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name KIPP Comienza Community Prep

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6410 Rita Avenue

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Huntington Park State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 90255-4126

County California

Telephone (323) 589-1450 Fax (323) 589-1716

Web site/URL http://www.kippla.org/comienza/ E-mail hhuberman@kippla.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Ms. Hadley Huberman E-mail hhuberman@kippla.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name KIPP Comienza Community Prep School District Tel. (323) 589-1450

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Frank Reddick
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	71	47	118
1	76	44	120
2	62	58	120
3	53	58	111
4	53	49	102
5	71	47	118
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	386	303	689

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 98 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 5%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	23
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	552
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.049
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 42 %
287 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Hindi

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 91 %
Total number students who qualify: 626

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
59 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 1 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 7 Other Health Impaired
- 20 Specific Learning Disability
- 28 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	31
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	98%	95%	97%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

KIPP Comienza teaches the academic skills, cultivates the character traits, provides the learning experiences, and forges the community relationships needed for our students to thrive.

16. For public schools only, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

The following describes our enrollment process for the current year. Year after year, the process remains the same but dates may change.

Open enrollment for the 2016-17 school year opened on Monday, November 2, 2016 and closed on Friday, January 29, 2017. During the interest period if the number of interest forms exceeds the capacity of a grade level, a date is set to hold a random selection process (lottery) to assure all applicants an equal chance of gaining admission. Preference in the lottery will be given to the following categories of students: First, to sibling of students whose address of residence lies within the published boundaries of the district. Second, to siblings of currently enrolled students, defined as one of two or more individuals having one or both parents in common; a brother or sister. Sibling status does not accord preference across KIPP LA schools. Third, children of KIPP LA Employees living within LAUSD boundaries. This means that applicants who are children of KIPP LA employees (at any of our schools) and live outside of LAUSD boundaries get fourth preference. Fifth, all other applicants living within LAUSD boundaries. This means that all applicants (who are not siblings of current students or children of KIPP LA employees) who live outside of LAUSD boundaries get sixth preference.

For the 16-17 school year if by the last school day in January, more interest forms are received than there are spaces available in a particular grade level, a date will be set after the interest period closed to hold the lottery. The lottery will take place at KIPP Comienza Community Prep to ensure all interested parties may observe the lottery. Families who submit interest forms will receive information about the date, time, and location of the lottery from the school office. The lottery will be conducted using an automated online system to ensure that the process is fair and equitable for all participants. After initial enrollment, a waiting list will be created and maintained and, should vacancies occur, admission will be offered to applicants selected from the waiting list in the order that students' names were drawn in the lottery. Students who attended the school the previous year that neither withdrew nor were dismissed from the school will be guaranteed a seat the following year. The above process will also be followed to fill vacant seats each year as seats become available due to student attrition at the discretion of the school leader.

PART III – SUMMARY

KIPP Comienza Community Prep is a high performing, tuition free, public charter school in Huntington Park, California. We serve 678 students in grades kindergarten through fifth. Our school was founded in 2010 with just kindergarten, and we added one grade level each year until we were serving students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade in 2014-15. Last year, we expanded our charter to serve students up to eighth grade. Our fifth grade was founded this year (2016-17), and we will add a sixth grade next year.

The vision of our school is that all students will become rising leaders who take pride in their community and have access to choice and opportunity in order to ignite transformative change. We realize our vision through our mission: we provide students with rigorous academics, character building, learning experiences, and we forge community relationships needed for our students to become well-rounded individuals that thrive in middle school, high school, college, and life.

Our instructional program is based on high expectations. We believe that every student can learn and be successful, and that every child in the building is ours. This means that we collaborate with each other to ensure success in every classroom. We have a longer school day, which allows us to provide a strong academic program as well as enrichment. All instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Teachers are coached weekly on their instruction and developed through one on one meetings with their manager. Daily, teachers analyze progress towards the standards and create plans for re-teach and differentiation. A blended learning program allows us to group flexibly and differentiate for our students. We believe that authentic and rigorous instruction is the basis of a college-preparatory curriculum, and consistently use data to analyze what can be done to excel in those areas.

Our students also need to build character in order to make it to and through college. Our four values, courage, *ganas* (persisting with grit and zest), honor, and reflection drive our character building. We teach these values at the beginning of kindergarten, and reinforce them each year. Values and character lessons are taught on Mondays and are integrated into regular instruction. When a student makes a poor choice, we discuss the choice in the context of the values, and parents instill the values at home. We also teach the seven character strengths of highly successful students; grit, zest, curiosity, self-control, gratitude, optimism, and social intelligence. Students who show the values or character strengths are rewarded monthly at an assembly with a Rising Leader award. This character development ensures that we develop the whole child and our students become independent problem solvers who are self-motivated, confident, and ambitious.

We believe that our students should have access to rich learning experiences in order to learn from and be critical of the world. In specials classes and in core content, students engage with hands-on learning experiences and freedom of expression. To supplement our curriculum, students in each grade level go on a number of field trips each year. Every year, our students visit a college campus in order to increase their exposure to different colleges. In fourth grade, our students go on an overnight field trip to Catalina Island. Students have also participated in service-learning experiences like community clean-ups, tree-planting events, and running in 5Ks to support charitable causes.

We view our school as a true community school and do everything that we can to engage families and the community. Huntington Park is a lively and bustling neighborhood located southeast of Downtown Los Angeles. Blocks from the school is busy Pacific Boulevard, where families can be seen on weekends shopping for quinceañera dresses or eating at local restaurants. In the city, 5.8% of adults are college graduates and the median income is \$19,000 a year. On average, 70% of our incoming kindergarten classes are English Language Learners (ELLs). Despite these statistics, we are proving what is possible when schools and families work together and view the culture of the community as an asset. Our families are extremely involved, from volunteering to organizing family events and fundraising, to reading to students in Spanish for our *Los Dichos* program. Teachers and administrators conduct home visits at the start of each year and the school has an open door policy-- parents walk students into the classroom and pick them up from the classroom, so they have many touch-points with teachers and administrators. Families help students during the first fifteen minutes of the day with reading, sight words, and math facts and we have monthly Family Nights where families learn more about literacy, math, and how to prepare for college. To

support our families, we have brought in members of the community to provide legal workshops, technology workshops, and English classes.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our approach to English Language Arts (ELA) begins with an implementation of the ELA CCSS and our promise to foster a love of reading. Through small group phonics instruction, guided reading and reading and writing workshop, our balanced literacy program works to build flexible, resilient and invested readers. In phonics, we leverage Core Knowledge Curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness and sets the foundation for reading. During phonics, each classroom has a co-teacher, which allows for differentiated instruction; teachers meet students where they are academically and provide scaffolds and acceleration.

Phonics flows into guided reading, where students are taught in small groups of 4-6 students based on their instructional STEP and Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) level. During guided reading, we work to encourage the development of civic skills. Students are active citizens of a vibrant learning community, where they engage in rich comprehension conversations and participate in meaningful dialogue related to the world around them. You might see a group of second grade students working on central message, engaging in debate with one another, using evidence to support their points. The teacher serves as the facilitator rather than the leader of these discussions.

During the reading and writing workshop block, teachers deliver a mini-lesson where they model a skill that students practice during active engagement. In independent reading and writing time, students apply all the skills they have learned during the mini-lesson, while teachers pull small groups and confer with students. Through our balanced literacy program, our students successfully master the CCSS while building a true love of reading.

Our math program is guided by the belief that cultivating real world problem solvers will foster curiosity and critical thinking that will encourage the development of core civic skills within our students. Our CCSS aligned math curriculum is largely teacher created and builds in core components of mathematical practices. This is supplemented with Eureka Math and supported with the principles of cognitively guided instruction (CGI). Our math planners work together to ensure there is vertical alignment and rigor that builds year after year.

As students begin their mathematical journey at KIPP Comienza, we focus on building strong number sense, teaching multiple strategies to problem solve, and creating connections to real life. During our math block, students are posed with real-world problems and are encouraged to use a variety of tools and strategies to solve. Our focus is on the process rather than the product. Students spend time debriefing and sharing the varying tools and approaches, and are expected to explain their thinking. In order to differentiate, teachers group students based on need and adjust lessons accordingly. While one group is with the teacher the other groups alternate between hands on centers and blended learning. For blended learning, students work on a computer or tablet on the ST Math program, which focuses on building conceptual understanding of math concepts.

Our approach to science is grounded in inquiry and is aligned to Next Generation Science Standards. The science curriculum is teacher created and guided by real-world application and relevance. Students work in small groups using the scientific method and learn content through direct instruction, videos, texts, and guided investigations. We hold a Science Fair in which students have the opportunity to explore a driving question of their choice. Field lessons such as trips to the California Science Center, Long Beach Aquarium, and a three-day trip to the Catalina Island Marine Institute help students connect new learning in science to the world around them.

We use Studies Weekly as a foundational program to structure our curriculum around the California History-Social Science content standards. Teachers supplement the curriculum to push students to critically assess a variety of perspectives about historical and current events. Students discuss current local, national, and international issues that they view as important to their lives. This civic engagement promotes diversity

in thought and helps our students appreciate others' perspectives. Students engage with primary sources, interactive media and project-based learning to explore their identity and community. Through field trips and service learning opportunities, such as tree planting and community clean ups, students apply their knowledge of social issues to advocate for future change in their community.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At KIPP Comienza, we offer visual arts, physical education, character development and blended learning to all students as supplements to our core curriculum. The Visual Arts Program begins in kindergarten by introducing students to a range of canonical modern and contemporary artists as they build their own artistic identities. Kindergarten students experience creating art as Jackson Pollock by dripping and splattering paint with a variety of tools and showing emotion in their artwork by choosing cool or warm colors. In first grade they explore functional art by designing cars and visit the Petersen Automotive Museum. In second through fifth grades, the art program shifts to a more inquiry-based approach, responding to their innate curiosities about art by leveraging Studio Habits of Mind to build skills and independence. Students study art in our community through field trips to Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The Broad, The Getty and the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), as well as permanent installations such as The Watts Towers. Our second graders study street art and create a piece of community artwork each year with Mobile Mural Lab. Our Ambitious Artists are able to confidently state why art is important and will be able to use a variety of techniques to express a feeling or communicate an idea through a personal work. Technology is embedded into the art program, as students use tablets to research artists, create digital portfolios, record artist statements and learn animation.

The Physical Education Program at KIPP Comienza aims to teach our kindergarten through 5th grade students how fun physical activity can be and how important being healthy is for our bodies. Younger students hone in on their basic locomotor movements and manipulative skills by catching, throwing, jumping, skipping, dancing, and by playing cooperative games with their friends. Older students develop specific sports based skills such as balancing on a gymnastics beam, rock-climbing, soccer, football and running among many others; as well as learning aspects of human anatomy and the functioning of their muscular and circulatory systems. Families are encouraged to participate with their students in activities such as the annual Fun Run at a local park, or by taking Zumba and Circuit Training classes together during Family Wellness Night.

Our Character Education Program is centered around KIPP Comienza's core values: courage, ganas, honor and reflection. In kindergarten, students focus on how to show the values in their new classroom and at home with their families. They use values language to describe the choices they are making throughout the day. A student might say "I showed courage when I tried to sound out a new word in front of my class!" or "I showed honor when I helped a friend who was sad." In first grade, students begin to develop a deeper understanding of the values and are able to relate them to others and name when they see their classmates exemplifying a value. In second through fifth grade, Comienza students begin to learn about the seven character strengths as developed by the Character Lab: grit, zest, self-control, optimism, social intelligence and curiosity. These lessons are anchored in growing self-awareness and developing the capacity to be resilient in the face of challenges and thrive in life.

KIPP Comienza's Blended Learning Program, anchored in Common Core's 21st Century Skills, is a cornerstone of our educational practice at KIPP Comienza. Beginning in kindergarten, students build their technology proficiency while simultaneously practicing foundational math and literacy skills using adaptive, research-based programs like Lexia and ST Math. The use of blended learning during daily phonics and math lessons enables our teachers to run small-group instruction in the lower grades, a research-based practice that supports English Language Learners. As students grow in independence and skill, their use of technology grows with them. In second through fifth grades, all students have their own Chromebook and use Accelerated Reader, Achieve3000, Typing Club, Zeal and Google Classroom to enhance their learning. By the time they are in 5th grade, they are adept at using both tablets and computers to conduct research, type essays, and create math models. Teachers follow recommended usage guidelines for programming and create intentional plans with their grade levels to monitor usage and data.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

KIPP Comienza is committed to providing our students with a rigorous and well-rounded instructional program that meets the individual needs of students, while working to support families. Since opening our doors, we have been consistently high performing as evidenced by the California Standards Test (CST), Northwest Evaluation Association: Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) results, and most recently the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). As a school, we maintain high achievement due to our strong planning and data analysis structures, differentiated instruction, and constant willingness to adapt and learn as educators in order to best serve our students and families.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We proactively maintain strong school culture to reinforce that we are one team, one family. We create a welcoming and warm environment that is grounded in our school values and builds pride among community members. Every morning a staff member shakes each student's hand as students enter the building. Every Monday students, parents, and staff get excited for the week and make commitments of how to use our values to strengthen our school community at our Comienza Ignite assembly. Students take a weekly character education class because we believe in educating the whole child and know that our students need strong character to succeed in college and life. Community celebrations build joy and school pride: 100th day of school, Read Across America, a school dance, a spelling bee, a talent show, and Fun Fridays, where students engage in various projects from bridge building to egg drops.

We also respond to students' social and emotional needs. Each classroom has a clip chart behavior system. Students move their clips along that chart to represent how they are showing our values and reflecting on mistakes. The system ensures a calm, structured, and warm classroom environment where students can thrive. As a school, we engage in restorative practices. Students, staff, and families participate in community circles to address conflicts in a productive manner and decide on actions that repair and strengthen our community. Students, families, and staff members also engage in Collaborative Problem Solving and Student Support Teams when all other proactive and reactive means of student support are not successful. Teachers create individualized behavior support plans for tier three students with the student, their family, and former teachers.

In addition, we prioritize maintaining a staff culture where staff members feel valued and supported. We believe that staff sustainability leads to school stability, which equates to student growth and achievement. Professional development sessions start with teachers sharing stories of what lead them to education and our school to build trust and normalize vulnerability. Teachers give their coaches feedback in periodical surveys and weekly coaching meetings. Once a month, we hold team-building sessions in lieu of professional development sessions to foster personal relationships. Operations aides help teachers with copies and cover recess so that teachers have extra prep time. Teacher-led committees plan school wide events such as our Fun Run and Family Nights, which allows teachers to bring their passions to our school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

KIPP Comienza's partnerships with families and community-based organizations are crucial to the success of our students. We intentionally incorporate systems within our school to ensure that families and community members have avenues for engagement, empowerment, and decision-making.

Throughout the year, we engage families in their students' success through home visits, family literacy, monthly Family Nights, conferences, and consistent communication. Home visits help teachers and families form strong relationships and offer insight for teachers around how to best support each student in their class. Each teacher, parent, and student signs a Commitment to Excellence and revisits this commitment during home visits annually. During Family Literacy each morning, families run literacy centers with students, conduct read alouds and support with class projects. We hold monthly Family Nights on topics ranging from college preparation, health and wellness, to learning ways to support students academically. Additionally, families stay informed through a weekly school newsletter, biweekly assessment progress reports, parent conferences, and access to teachers by phone, email, and in person each day. All school communication is available in the family's home language and translation is provided during conferences and meetings to eliminate barriers in communication.

Our Family Leadership Council (FLC) and School Site Council (SSC) give families an opportunity to plan, lead and participate in various school events and initiatives. The FLC makes decisions around school-wide celebrations, fundraising projects, and community issues. The SSC reviews the school's Local Education Agency (LEA) plan and stays informed about the school's programmatic and funding requirements. These

two organizations work to collaborate with community partners to provide education and services ranging from voter education, legal advice, dental hygiene, community cleanups, English language courses, and technological literacy. Four family members participate in a Regional Family Ambassador's program with KIPP, in which they work as liaisons between the school and the region to advocate for student needs.

In the spirit of collaboration, we continuously seek feedback from our families to ensure that the work we are doing is meeting the needs of all our stakeholders, primarily our students. A portion of the monthly FLC meeting is dedicated to listening to parent concerns and feedback. Family surveys are also utilized throughout the year to inform decision making around school policies and our instructional program. At KIPP Comienza, we hear the voices of families and the community and partner with them to improve outcomes for all our students.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development at KIPP Comienza is multi-faceted, responsive to data, and grounded in what is best for students. Through feedback from teachers, formal reflection, and analysis, the leadership team identifies clear priorities for development that then drive our work during the school year. This year we have identified increasing rigor and authenticity in reading instruction as one of our key priorities. Teachers have attended weekly structured professional development sessions focused on building content knowledge around habits of readers, reading strategies, and planning and executing effective mini lessons and conferences in reader's workshop. We have enlisted the support of a literacy consultant who has worked collaboratively with the leadership team to provide sessions for teachers that are immediately applicable to their classroom practice. She has trained our leadership team to provide real-time coaching, targeted observations and feedback to teachers on their reading instruction. We spend time with each grade level bi-weekly either co-teaching, coaching, or observing and providing feedback on reading instruction. As a result of honing in on our priority, we are able to drive results in a targeted way. Student reading level and investment data has shown marked improvement since we introduced this priority in the fall. In addition, teachers have expressed increased satisfaction and confidence with teaching reading.

The impact of this type of development is that leaders are becoming more effective instructional coaches for our teaching staff. Every member of our leadership team has applied to the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University's Teacher's College in the hopes of collectively building our own knowledge of reader's workshop. This new learning will not only increase our own knowledge, but improve the instruction of 40+ teachers and exponentially improve the reading lives of the students on our campus. This model of growing our own content knowledge in order to provide more effective instructional leadership for our teachers has worked well for us in the previous years when we have tackled other priorities such as CCSS alignment, problem solving, and rigor in math. In addition to our focus on reading instruction, we have systems for a variety of other professional development opportunities including an Apprentice Teacher program for first year teachers, collaboration and observations of high performing schools, content team participation, and leadership development. These various opportunities for development ensure that both teachers and administrators are continuously learning and growing in order to greatly improve student outcomes.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership team at KIPP Comienza believes that school leaders should spend seventy five percent of their time driving student achievement. This includes developing teachers to provide high quality instruction, building content knowledge, hiring qualified staff and working to retain current staff, proactively building school culture, developing themselves as leaders, planning and prioritizing, and setting school-wide vision and goals. Each leader has a strategic management load that includes the grade levels and content areas that they support, as well as the projects and priorities that they own. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, so that there is never confusion as to who should be leading a given initiative. The business operations manager owns all daily operations and compliance-related tasks, which supports the leadership team in focusing on instruction. The school leader works to develop the rest of the leadership team in these areas as well as individualized areas. This coaching happens through weekly one-on-one meetings and on the ground support with observations and feedback.

In order to drive student achievement, the leadership team believes that staff must feel valued and appreciated. We feel that this is key to staff retention, and staff retention drives student achievement. The leadership team works to build strong relationships with teachers by getting to know them on a personal level, understanding their motivations and aspirations, and providing them with experiences that can help them reach their goals. In addition, leaders believe in transparency and honesty. We provide frequent opportunities for staff to give feedback, such as internal surveys, informal check-ins, and staff meetings, and we are transparent with staff around decision-making. We are open to feedback, and staff can be seen coming to us with their concerns so that we can work together to problem solve. The same philosophies apply to family relationships as well.

A unique aspect of the leadership team structure is that all of our leadership team members come from within KIPP Comienza. We develop our leadership pipeline consistently, so that if there is a need there is someone ready to take the position. Teachers are given leadership roles as teachers that help them to develop their leadership skills, such as grade level lead, regional math planner, or committee leader. For this reason, our leadership team is cohesive and truly understands the culture and way of being at KIPP Comienza. Additionally, team members already have existing relationships with staff and families.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The biggest lever to our academic success has been the way that we strategically use data to analyze progress towards goals, in all aspects of the school. Since founding, we have had systems and structures that allow us to measure student progress. These systems and structures have been replicated in KIPP schools across the country. Grade levels meet weekly to analyze assessment and exit ticket data, and create strategic groupings of students and re-teach plans. The leadership team meets every two weeks for an academic progress-monitoring meeting, where we analyze data to determine progress towards goals and create plans for teacher support. At the end of each quarter, teams meet again to do a data step-back and plan for the next quarter so that standards that were not mastered will be re-taught. The leadership team uses data from school and classroom walkthroughs and observations to determine what to focus on through coaching and professional development. The systemic nature of these structures ensures that the school's success is replicated year after year, regardless of who is in the building. A focus on data driven instruction has ensured that even novice teachers are successful in meeting school wide goals.

The school is driven by data in other ways. In determining priorities for the upcoming year, the leadership team uses both qualitative and quantitative data from the year and prior years to inform decision making. The data used ranges from student achievement data, to staff survey data, to data collected in conversations with stakeholders. Using such data to drive our priorities builds investment from stakeholders because they are a part of the decision-making process. We also use data from families to inform our decision making around school practices. For example, when families were finding it difficult to make the time for Family Nights, we sent out a family survey to get their opinion about a time that would work better, and then changed to the preferred time.

At KIPP Comienza, all decisions are driven by data. If we feel that we do not have enough data to make a decision, we will work to collect the data in order to make an informed decision. When it comes to reaching goals, achievement, and innovation that will positively impact our students, we truly believe in working smarter, not harder, and using data strategically in all areas is how we've been able to do this.