



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	51	61	112
<b>1</b>	47	66	113
<b>2</b>	43	54	97
<b>3</b>	55	39	94
<b>4</b>	54	45	99
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	250	265	515

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 98 % Black or African American
  - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0 % White
  - 0 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	528
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%  
7 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %  
Total number students who qualify: 515

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
52 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.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism                   | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>11</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability  | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	6
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	94%	93%	96%	95%	95%
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 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

To prepare students for college by providing them with the tools to become critical thinkers who are curious about the world and confident in their ability to shape it.

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

Students are offered a seat at KIPP DC Promise Academy through Washington, D.C.'s My School DC common lottery system.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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KIPP DC Promise Academy was founded in 2009 and is KIPP DC's oldest and highest-performing elementary school. Promise Academy is located in KIPP DC's Benning Campus in D.C.'s Marshall Heights neighborhood. Promise Academy is housed with KIPP DC LEAP Academy (PreK3-PreK4) and KIPP DC KEY Academy (5th – 8th grade).

Our shared vision for the school is that:

Promise Academy is a welcoming, joyful, positive and productive school. Great instruction is the key to our success. We are intentional and urgent every day, in every classroom. All of our children can and will learn. Together, we all can and will learn. Every child is known, loved, and celebrated as a reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being. Our classrooms are beautiful, challenging, and engaging.

We partner with our families.

Everyone owns everything.

We can always be better.

The promises we make to our children and families are sacred.

In the 2016-17 school year, the cumulative PARCC assessment scores of Promise Academy students were the highest cumulative scores among all charter elementary schools in the District of Columbia.

Many traditions and milestones serve as the cornerstone of students' lives at Promise Academy. Each day we play the morning song, "When I Make A Promise," and students rush into their classroom to sing the song. Joy is central to our school's culture and each day is grounded in this joyful tradition.

In addition, we have Friday Celebrations to celebrate students' progress and the new knowledge they've gained that week. This weekly milestone helps students understand the improvements they are making and grounds them in work yet to be done.

Throughout the year, we also host a number of family-centered traditions. We annually host a fall Culture Fair, which exposes students to the rich cultural history of our staff, families, and communities around the world. We also have robust programming for Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month. These events draw a large number of families to see student performances and presentations, and have become a part of our collective efforts to affirm our students' identities.

The milestone and traditions our students participate in would not be possible without intentional traditions and milestones for our staff. Each summer, we gather for two weeks before students' first day of school to cement and internalize our school's vision. This vision is not just a document or statement— it's what we believe about children and our role with them and their families, and we anchor everything around that. Everything we do starts and ends with our vision statement. At Promise Academy, it is tradition for staff to gather every morning at 7:35 am, before students arrive, as a whole team to set the tone for the day and highlight a part of our shared vision for student success.

To realize our vision, and help our students develop academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally, we have created a comprehensive plan for student success. We set rigorous and highly ambitious goals for students, with the knowledge that being "proficient" or "on grade level" is often not enough to prepare students for success in college and careers. Moreover, to ensure high quality, our network instructional leadership team continually meets with experts in education quality and selects curricula that push students to high levels. Instruction at KIPP DC Promise Academy is grounded in strong core subject teachers, complemented by electives, including the arts and additional courses that enrich the student experience. We support our teachers with robust development and collaboration opportunities, ensuring they

have the time and tools needed to grow as professionals and create meaningful learning opportunities for their students each day.

We believe that excellent academics, safe and structured schools, empowered teachers, an emphasis on a sense of belonging, and support through college are the foundation for student success, and we strive to provide this for every student. We know that every student is different and we personalize learning based on a student's needs, skills, and interests. We empower our students to advocate for themselves and others, and help them foster social and emotional strengths that are essential for their own success. Relationships underpin all of this. We strive to develop strong relationships and truly know each of our students and families, as we help them realize their full potential.



## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Promise Academy's curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In literacy, we take a balanced literacy approach, using Core Knowledge Language Skills and Reading and Writing Workshops in Kindergarten through second grade. In third and fourth grades, we use the Reading and Writing Workshop approach alongside a Close Reading model. Students have access to and learn through a variety of text types, levels, and genres. We teach students to develop their proficiency and power as writers, readers, speakers, listeners, and problem-solvers.

Over the past three years, we've worked to align our early childhood literacy curriculum at KIPP DC LEAP Academy to our elementary literacy curriculum at KIPP DC Promise Academy, ensuring instructional continuity and mastery of skills as students grow in age. KIPP DC Promise Academy chose these English Language Arts curricula for their ability to educate students in foundational literacy skills and their flexibility to be infused through all parts of the school day, not just the literacy block. Furthermore, KIPP DC prides itself on implementing only researched-based curricula at the elementary level. We provide teachers with daily lesson plans, daily and summative assessments, and learning tools to help maximize the effectiveness of each lesson. We believe our teachers are best able to fuel student achievement when they are focusing on lesson delivery and not the complexities of developing a balanced literacy program. This approach to literacy instruction ensures there are not islands of literary excellence during a student's career at Promise Academy, but rather a comprehensive system of excellence aligned across a student's experience in elementary and beyond.

Our math curriculum, MyMath, is also aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In addition, students build their skills in conceptual mathematics through CGI (Cognitively Guided Instruction) in grades K through 2. As with our literacy curriculum, we provide teachers with daily lesson plans, daily and summative assessments, and learning tools to help maximize the effectiveness of each mathematics lesson. This approach allows teachers to focus on student learning and lesson implementation. Our network-wide mathematics team takes best practices from across KIPP DC's five elementary schools and quickly implements them at each school. Our ample planning and collaboration time allows for quick adoption by lead classroom teachers.

Students in grades K through 4 explore the historic and natural world through social studies and science at Promise Academy. In science, our kindergarten students use the Core Knowledge Language Arts Listening and Learning curriculum, and complete units about the five senses, plants, and healthy vegetables. The year culminates in a final ten-week long science unit inspired by Next Generation Science Standards. In this "All About Insects" unit, our students become junior entomologists as they study the physical components of an insect, the life cycle of an insect, as well as the various ways that humans and insects interact. Our first through fourth grade students at Promise complete Core Knowledge units about animals and habitats, animal classifications, the human body, astronomy, geology, oceans, and nutrition. Students learn content in class by participating in interactive lessons. Students then participate in hands on experiences that serve as culminating activities.

In social studies, we also follow the Core Knowledge curriculum infused with Writers and Readers Workshop components. Our units of student include influential leaders throughout history, social movements, and technological innovations throughout time, ancient civilizations, and periods of conflict. In addition, each class spends an intensive period of social studies instruction during Black History Month educating students on important civil rights leaders, with an emphasis on leaders from the Washington D.C. area. We are blessed to be a short trip away from numerous cultural institutions that help reinforce social studies and science instruction. Past field trips, to supplement our units of study, have included trips to the National Zoo, Air & Space Museum, Anacostia Community Museum, Fredrick Douglass National Historic Site, National Gallery of Art, National Museum of American History, and National Museum of African American History & Culture.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

We believe that exposing students to a broad range of curricula sets them up to be successful in middle school and beyond. Through Promise Academy’s extended-day school model we infuse both our standard curriculum with more arts and technology instruction and offer daily stand-alone specials classes to all our students.

Each day, our Kindergarten students participate in forty-five-minutes of interdisciplinary specials class that builds on the literacy and math instruction they receive from their lead teacher. Components of the class include Spanish, art instruction, dance, physical education, and team-building.

Our first through fourth grade students participate in one hour of other curricular classes daily. Each week they attend physical education, art, music, and Spanish classes. Our physical education class is designed to further our school's social-emotional curriculum and help students develop perseverance, teamwork skills, while exposing them to a variety of sports and physical endeavors. Our art class is designed to hone fine motor skills, expose students to a variety of art techniques and theory, and promote self-expression. Music class prepares students with the foundation of music theory and practice and sets students up to participate in orchestra and band in middle and high school. Spanish class exposes students to Hispanic culture and enhances their literacy skills through instruction in basic Spanish.

Technology instruction is infused throughout Promise Academy’s math and literacy blocks. Each student has access to a Chromebook laptop for use throughout the day for personalized learning instruction. Chromebooks are 1:2 in Kindergarten and first grade and 1:1 in second, third, and fourth grades. While not the primary tool for instruction, personalized learning and exposure to technology is a core strategy for student success. Time spent on a Chromebook gradually increases in each successive year at Promise. Students in Kindergarten through second grade use Reading A-Z and Lexia Core 5 as a component of English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. Students in second through fourth grade also use iReady Reading and Accelerated Reader for a portion of their ELA block. In mathematics, students use ST Math, ST Fluency, and Khan Academy across all grades at Promise Academy.

## **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Promise Academy educates a wide range of students– from those who are high above their age-appropriate level to those who are several years behind grade level. Our model allows our excellent teachers to dedicate more time to individualized and personalized instruction to meet every child’s unique needs.

We use the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework to ensure that we are identifying and meeting the needs of all students. RtI is a monitoring and specific intervention tool to identify students not making adequate progress. Based on this data, we prescribe specific interventions for support and monitor students’ gradual release back into independent learning. Our extended schedule ensures that students can get the extra support they need without sacrificing important experiences such as physical education, art, or music classes.

We have a robust Student Support Team and use specific literacy programs such as READ 180 and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) to address proficiency gaps and give necessary support to all learners. These programs enable us to pair each student with the right intervention program for his or her proficiency level.

For high achievers, we supplement students’ learning by grouping them together in enrichment blocks so that teachers can divide students into ability groups. These opportunities are woven into the school day to make it accessible for all students. Our goal is to utilize learning and education to ignite passions within students.

Students take the NWEA MAP assessment three times per year, in fall, winter, and spring. Third and fourth grade students take the Common Core-aligned PARCC assessment each spring. Reading level is monitored using the Fountas and Pinnell system, and is re-assessed at least four times a year. We continually measure students’ progress with formal and informal classroom checks. We use these tests to make whole school

goals, curriculum decisions, and instructional design adjustments, and school leaders work with teachers on instructional next steps based on their students' assessment data. Promise Academy has a Data Manager who is responsible for pulling reports that help teachers understand student progress. Staff meetings are often used to review and analyze student data, and we share updates with families frequently.

Currently, an achievement gap exists between Promise's students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and the average of all students. This year, we've hired additional special educators at Promise Academy to decrease student-to-teacher ratios for students with special needs. We have also hired a senior-level Campus Director of Student Support to coordinate related service providers, monitor progress toward students' IEP goals, and ensure that we are maximizing each moment of instructional time for students with special needs. We hope that this dedicated attention will increase the speed at which we can bring students with IEPs into alignment with their on-grade-level peers.

As KIPP DC's highest performing elementary school and the highest performing charter elementary school in Washington, D.C., Promise Academy is laser-focused on maintaining high levels of student achievement. This starts with the vision we have for Promise Academy.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The core to our students' academic and personal success is our strong, caring, and joyful culture. In our school's vision, we say: Every child is known, loved, and celebrated as a reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being. These are more than words on a paper; they are a philosophy we as adults in the building try and model in every interaction with a child. In turn, we see our students recognizing and valuing each other as peers and fellow learners.

We believe that when presented with appropriate, rigorous, and relevant academic content, students will be engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, when they have a trusting and caring relationship with their teachers, they are ready and prepared to receive information and be engaged in their education. Coupled with routine celebrations, sharing academic progress with students and families, and having conversations about where a strong education can take you, we create a drive in students to succeed and excel in life and academics.

Promise Academy teachers transform students' lives, setting the bar for what others see as possible. Together they tackle complex challenges and become more than just colleagues. We create a strong environment for staff to feel valued and supported in three ways: first, we seek to deliver unparalleled development and opportunities for them to grow as professionals; second, we seek to create a culture at our school that is successful, ambitious, intentional, and full of joy. We are intentional about hiring great people and fostering an environment to celebrate and recognize the incredible work they do. Finally, we strive to increase sustainability and communication wherever possible, and valuing our team for the leaders and professionals they are. We've found this trifecta has created a culture of collaboration and excellence that has fueled our school's success.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

We believe that our parents are our students' first teachers. At KIPP DC Promise Academy, we use a two-generation approach to support our children and families. We recognize that no two families are alike and their needs often vary. Our goal is to create opportunities for and address the needs of both children and the adults in their lives.

We expect teachers to keep an open line of communication with families. Formally, we meet with parents at least twice a year during parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's academic achievements and challenges. In practice, our staff connects with families on a weekly, if not a daily, basis to update them on their child's progress. Teachers send home family newsletters; they are available before and after school to meet in person, and also provide all families with their cell phone numbers to text or call. Our communication with parents focuses on ensuring that they understand our vision for their child's education and learning more about their goals and dreams for their child. Our school's leaders are also regularly available to families in person, via email, and by phone to further support their child's success.

While the nature of our work is predominately centered on child-parent approaches such as partnering with parents to help support student learning at home, we also place significant emphasis on building internal structures to implement parent-child approaches. For example, families have access to school social workers, we provide fresh meals for families through Martha's Table's Joyful Food Markets, and we host a series of food and clothing drives for families in need. We partner with the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Books & Basketball, and other D.C. non-profits to connect our families with after-school and summer programming opportunities. In addition, we partner with external stakeholders such as social work agencies to help provide families with the resources necessary to combat poverty, housing instability, and mental anguish.

### **3. Professional Development:**

KIPP DC Promise Academy is committed to its teachers, ensuring that they have the resources and support they need to excel. We seek to deliver unparalleled coaching and development to our teachers so that they can maximize their impact on student achievement.

Professional development is a vital practice for our staff members and for the growth of our school. All teachers participate in at least two weeks of development each summer before the start of the school year, including all-school, grade-level, and content-specific sessions. Throughout the year, teachers receive one-on-one coaching for both personal leadership and instructional development from the principal, at least one of the vice principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders within our school.

KIPP DC is committed to personalizing development and seeking teachers' input about content and delivery. We also ensure that teachers have enough time during the school day for planning, as well as time for collaboration with their peers. At Promise Academy, teachers meet at least twice a week with their subject-area and grade-level peers to maximize their impact and capacity.

A specific example of development is our multi-year partnership with Turnaround for Children, an organization committed to helping schools develop a trauma-informed approach to behavior management and student support. Our school leaders convene for monthly sessions related to embedding stronger behavior and support systems at our school. The primary goal is to ensure that the systems and practices within our school are informed by the experiences of the students that we educate, many of whom have faced one or more traumatic life events.

Another example of development is our network's Fellowship in Special Education. This is a yearlong teacher development program housed within KIPP DC's Capital Teaching Residency program. Fellows who complete the program gain licensure in Special Education: General Knowledge K-12 and also gain intensive professional development in working with students with exceptionalities. The components include regular coursework, assignments, observations, and feedback.

Teachers are empowered to have a voice and a role in shaping their own development throughout their journey at KIPP DC. This focus on developing instructional excellence extends beyond teachers to include social workers, student support staff, and school leaders.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The leadership philosophy of KIPP DC Promise Academy's principal is best viewed as an embodiment of the school's vision. The principal cares deeply about being positive and productive in each interaction and relationship and leads by example. To best support each reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being at the school, the principal focuses daily on being intentional about how she spends her time and strives to build meaningful relationships with students, families, and staff.

Promise Academy has three vice principals who support the principal. The vice principals focus predominately on instruction by spending much of their day in classrooms. They coach teachers, lead content teams, and foster student achievement. They keep a close eye on student data and overall academic progress. The first vice principal works primarily with Kindergarten and first grade teachers, and supports the school's Capital Teaching Residents (individuals training to be teachers at Promise Academy). The second vice principal works with second grade and supports science, social studies, and specials teachers. Third and fourth grade teachers are supported by the third vice principal. The leadership team also includes a literacy coach whose focus is Kindergarten through second grade literacy instruction.

Each morning, our leadership team meets before the all-staff huddle to talk about the day ahead, check in on staff, students, and events happening in the building. During this daily meeting, each team member shares their instructional focus for the day. This meeting, regular one-on-one check-ins, data deep dives, and coaching conversations between the principal and the team ensures that Promise Academy's days are always predictable, joyful, positive, and intentional.

In addition to the school-based staff described above, KIPP DC Promise Academy’s teacher and school leaders are supported by KIPP DC’s chief academic officer, a network-wide student support team, and literacy and math instructional coaches. A central schools operation and compliance team and various other “back office” leaders facilitate the principal, her leadership team, and teachers maximizing their focus on student achievement.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The core of KIPP DC Promise Academy's success has been creating a staff culture of collaboration and excellence. Building this culture has allowed our staff to grow as professionals, maximized instructional time, and enabled staff to develop deep and meaningful relationships with our students. Everything our students have achieved is based on a rock-solid foundation of teacher excellence. When our staff is at its best, our students are set up for success.

The foundation to our success as a school is to create spaces for teachers to push each other, plan together, learn from instructional coaches, and reflect on their practice. It has allowed our team to grow and be their best selves every moment they are with their students. Our team's culture of collaboration and excellence propels our teachers to take advantage of every opportunity to grow as leaders, and equip them to support students as they overcome complex challenges in life and in learning. This culture also creates a sense of belonging among the adults in the building, which in turn becomes pervasive in each classroom. When adults are unified around excellence, students follow suit.

This culture promotes strong, caring relationships between staff members and between teachers and their students. These relationships help make students available for learning. In a community where many students face complex challenges and daily trauma outside of school, the caring relationships they have with the staff of Promise Academy set them up to focus on their future and their potential.

Creating this culture has not been easy, nor is it a silver bullet to student success; however, it's the accelerator and foundation of our success as a school. It allows us to keep our focus on what is important and purposefully and quickly tackle challenges as they arrive. Without top talent and this culture, our school would not be lucky enough to be nominated for this honor.