

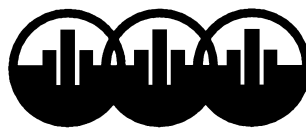


ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL SITE VISITS SUMMARY REPORT

**2004 FALL MEETING
MAYORS' EDUCATION POLICY ADVISORS NETWORK
(EPAN)**

**NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 1, 2004
THE OMNI SEVERIN HOTEL
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA**

**A PEER NETWORK OF THE INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**



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I. Indianapolis Metropolitan Career Academy (Met #1 and #2)

EPAN members saw the Big Picture model in action. Met #1 and #2 were the vision of Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana (Goodwill). It became obvious to Goodwill staff that many of the adults receiving assistance were lacking strong education skills, and so the organization began to explore what more could be done to help young people who were not headed in a positive direction. “We thought that if we could help increase the high school graduation rate and post-secondary participation rate of this large group of young people, they would probably not need Goodwill’s services as adults, and the entire community would benefit as a result,” stated James M. McClelland, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana.

To that end, a major strategic direction was adopted by Goodwill’s Board of Directors in June 2003, which was to substantially expand the number of alternative education opportunities available to young people who are at high risk of dropping out of school. After learning about The Big Picture Company, meeting with them, and visiting their schools, Goodwill became convinced that the Big Picture model could be very helpful to a lot of students in Indianapolis. In September 2003, following an extensive review by an ad hoc committee of Goodwill’s Board, the Board of Directors voted to submit an application to the Mayor of Indianapolis’ Charter Schools Initiative, with the goal of opening two Big Picture high schools in the Fall of 2004.

That vision became reality when the charter schools application was approved by the Indianapolis Charter Schools Board and Mayor Peterson. The charters for Indianapolis Metropolitan #1 and #2 were signed on March 10, 2004, and the schools opened on August 23, 2004. In addition, Goodwill has formed a new 501(c)(3) entity—Goodwill Education Initiative, Inc. (GEI)—to hold the charters and operate the schools. GEI is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of nine individuals, five of whom are appointed by Goodwill’s Board.

A Day at Indianapolis Metropolitan #1 and #2

The students who attend Indianapolis Metropolitan #1 and #2 come from all over the city; student enrollment is not confined to a particular geographic area. The students also come from varied backgrounds; many exemplify character and courage, having overcome great odds and difficult family circumstances. Students interested in attending the schools are registered on a first-come, first-serve basis. If there are more applicants than places in the school, enrollees are determined by using a lottery.

A college preparatory public high school, Indianapolis Met emphasizes the following:

- Individualized learning plans;
- Focus on real-world learning, with two days a week in an internship with community professionals;
- Small school setting with only 120 students in the school and 15 students to every teacher;
- College level courses and college preparation as part of the curriculum; and
- Family involvement throughout the student’s education.

This Big Picture-based model has proven to significantly increase the high school graduation rate and the enrollment of high school graduates in college degree programs. At Indianapolis Met,

each student works with an advisor, a parent or guardian, and a workplace mentor to design a personalized curriculum based on a student's interests. Students work at non-paid internships in community businesses and organizations two days each week, learning academic skills through real-world problem solving. The goal is to empower students to take charge of their learning, so that they gain the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve success beyond high school and become life-long learners.

EPAN members experienced a small taste of a typical day at Met #1 and #2:

- **Pick Me Up:** This student-led activity takes place at every Big Picture School. It is a 15-25 minute whole school introduction to the day that is meant to be inspirational, informative, and engaging for students. For example, during the site visit, the task was for all participants to line up in order of age, by birth date, and to do so without speaking.
- **Morning Advisory:** In an effort to build deep, caring relationships between advisors and students, as well as among the students themselves, each Big Picture schools divides students into advisories—groups of 15-18 students—who remain together with the same advisor for 2 to 4 years. In this model, the advisor is the manager and facilitator of the students' learning plans and internships, as well as a facilitator for the group's development. A number of activities can take place during advisory time, including: group lessons, exposure to new avenues of investigation, critiques of the students' work, lessons in time management, and reflections on internship experiences.
- **Independent Work Time (IWT):** Each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after advisory, students are given time to work independently on the projects and work outlines in the individual learning plans. Advisors meet with students individually during this time to help them structure investigations, monitor timelines, locate resources, and find internship opportunities to begin their LTI (Learning Through Internship).

II. KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) Indianapolis

Participants were able to visit the KIPP Academy located in Haughville. The school was the vision of local business and community leaders who saw the success of KIPP schools across the country and wanted to bring the model to Indianapolis. The school was forged through a partnership with both the Indianapolis Housing Agency and two low-income housing authorities. The goal of the school is to break the cycle of poverty. Parent, teachers, staff, board members and community supporters believe that the KIPP program provides an academic foundation to all of its students that ensures their ability to graduate from college and to never have to rely on public housing again, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

Currently in their first year of operation, approximately 75 fifth graders are enrolled. Each year the school will add another grade and will eventually have a maximum capacity of 320 students in grades 5-8. The school is currently located in a community center between two housing projects. The board, however, is raising funds to build a new school building on land next to its current location. Enrollment is not limited to a specific neighborhood in Indianapolis, but recruitment has focused on the adjacent housing projects and homeless shelters throughout the city.

EPAN members had an opportunity to view a piece by *60 Minutes* on the KIPP model and were able to meet with the president of the school's board, the principal, the school counselor, a teacher, and a parent. The principal explained the recruitment process and professional development of school staff, shared the orientation process for the opening of the new school, and detailed the very calculated growth of the program. The board president discussed fundraising strategies and details of the charter authorization. Both the teacher and the parent discussed why they chose the KIPP Academy and their academic expectations for the individual students.

A Day at KIPP Academy

At this school, educationally underserved students develop the knowledge, skills, and character needed to succeed in top-quality high schools, colleges, and the competitive world beyond. KIPP's motto, "there are no shortcuts," is best exemplified by its longer school day (7:30 am – 5 pm) and year (approximately 220 days), 4-hour sessions every Saturday, mandatory summer school (one month), access to teachers during non-school hours, and home visits by school staff.

In addition, KIPP Indianapolis had a walking line in their hallway. The line emphasized the “no short cuts” motto by encouraging students to walk the longest possible route to the bathroom or their next class. KIPP students spend more time in core academic classes while still reserving time for enrichment courses, including the arts and physical education. Teachers, parents and students all sign “Commitment to Excellence” contracts, which outline specific ways each of these groups is directly responsible for each student's success.

Students attend core academic classes with the same cohort of approximately 25 students. Each cohort is identified by a college or university and eventually all students will refer to their graduation class by the year they will graduate from college (not high school). Classes are extremely disciplined and demand constant participation. Curriculum is structured around drills,

songs/chants to aid in memorization skills, hands on experimentation and extensive writing assignments. In addition, curriculum was made relevant to students' lives and communities. The school was 99 % African American and Latino, and reading selections and course text books had strong representations and positive images from both communities.

EPAN members were given a brief look into the typical day-in-the-life of a KIPP student by attending each of the four core academic classes. Following the classroom visits, participants were provided another opportunity for questions before completion of the site visit.

III. Reflection and Discussion: Alternative Options for High School

EPAN members reflected on the site visits to two of Indianapolis’ alternative high schools. The members compared the characteristics and attributes of both schools, as well as their overall impressions of the students and program. Highlights of their observations are depicted in the box below:

<u>KIPP Indianapolis</u>	<u>MET #1 and #2</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boot-camp like ▪ Orderly and regimented ▪ Teachers/students engaged ▪ High energy (too high maybe for teachers) ▪ Structured and disciplined ▪ No extra-curricular activities ▪ No community involvement ▪ Unclear connection between Housing Authority and KIPP ▪ Passion ▪ 1:28 teacher/student ratio ▪ Good leadership (teachers, principal, board members) ▪ As observer, concerned about sustainability, funding, energy, and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open and free-flowing; unstructured ▪ Individualized instruction ▪ 15:1 student ration for advisories ▪ Long-lasting mentors and follow-through ▪ Group dynamics prevalent ▪ Youth opening up and sharing life stories ▪ Self-aware students ▪ Young, new school (only 4 months old – WOW!) ▪ Increased engagement ▪ As observer, concerned about sustainability of rigor