

**BALTIMORE'S "NEW" MIDDLE SCHOOLS:  
Do KIPP and Crossroads schools offer solutions  
to the City's poorly-performing middle schools?**

**The Abell Foundation**  
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One of the most intractable problems facing urban schools is the low performance of middle school-aged children. This is particularly true for the 13,360 students who attend the Baltimore City Public School System's (BCPSS) traditional middle schools, which serve only 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Not one of these 21 middle schools met adequate yearly progress in 2006; seven were targeted for State takeover in May. The System has responded largely by expanding the number of K-8 schools and closing some middle schools.<sup>1</sup> Yet, due to the configuration of City school facilities, not all middle school students can be accommodated in K-8 schools. BCPSS must fully address the question: What does it take to make middle schools places where children in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades can succeed?

Two anomalies in the disappointing landscape of City middle schools, KIPP Ujima Village and The Crossroads School, are obvious case studies. Opened as Baltimore City "New Schools Initiative"<sup>2</sup> schools in fall 2002, both schools had highly-motivated founding principals and operating organizations. KIPP is under the auspices of the non-profit KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) national network of schools and Crossroads is affiliated with The Living Classrooms Foundation. The schools used a phase-in model, expanding by one grade level each year. In fall 2005, both schools converted to Charter School status, partly due to the promise of increased per pupil funding. To date, performance of KIPP students exceeds that of all City middle and K-8 schools; KIPP's students are among the top performers in the State. Similarly Crossroads' students have higher levels of performance than students in the City's middle schools and most K-8 schools. One could argue that two other new and charter middle schools, The Stadium School and Connexions, also deserve further investigation.

The success of KIPP and Crossroads raises two questions. First, can the models used by KIPP and Crossroads be used to educate all or a significant number of the Baltimore's remaining middle school population? If not, are there practices used by these two schools that could successfully be replicated in other City middle schools and K-8 schools?

### **What makes these schools successful?**

Student achievement at KIPP and Crossroads is superior to results at other Baltimore City public schools; at KIPP, outcomes are dramatically better than at other middle schools. A number of practices and characteristics of KIPP and Crossroads appear to contribute to the extraordinary success of children in the middle grades:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BCPSS also unveiled a new Middle School Reform plan in Spring 2006 with new curricula, intervention teachers, sports, instructional subject area coaches, and Student Support Deans.

<sup>2</sup> A precursor of charter schools, BCPSS formed The New Schools Initiative in May 1996 to grant new start-up schools and their operators authority in staffing, budget, curriculum, and governance.

<sup>3</sup> To reiterate, we did not examine Connexions school and The Stadium School in this study, but they may share some of these attributes.

- 1) Children (and their families) choose these schools.
- 2) They are operated by a third party.
- 3) They spend more money on a per pupil basis and raise additional private funding.
- 4) The overall size of the school and of each grade level is significantly smaller.
- 5) There is a longer school day, week and/or year.
- 6) The school principal is a highly competent leader who has the autonomy and support necessary to direct the school.
- 7) There are fewer special education children, with less severe disabilities.
- 8) There are slightly fewer male students.
- 9) There is less mobility. Students are less likely to enter or leave.
- 10) No children suspended from other schools are transferred in.
- 11) Teachers have higher attendance rates.
- 12) All children are transported to and from school by school bus.

Are schools like KIPP and Crossroads an answer to the problems plaguing Baltimore City public middle schools? Certainly not all. Many of these factors are not replicable in every middle school: some families would reject the longer school day or year, or the responsibility of choosing a school and committing to its expectations. At least two-thirds of students eligible for KIPP and Crossroads chose not to apply. In addition, it is highly improbable that organizations would step forward to operate the number of small schools (with an average of 250 students) needed to accommodate the current middle school population. Given the additional demands on principals and teachers in these two schools, it is also highly unlikely that motivated, competent leaders and educators could be recruited for this large number of schools. Finally the additional cost is estimated conservatively at \$1,550 per child.

In spite of these limitations, the number of schools like KIPP and Crossroads should be increased as much as possible: they are dramatically improving the education of challenging middle school adolescents in Baltimore City, who are presently ill-served by traditional middle schools. Some of the practices of Crossroads and KIPP involve additional expenses; others are cost-free. There is no evidence on the effectiveness of any individual practice; all that is known is the positive effect of their implementation as a package in two very different schools. These practices, all of which seem desirable on their face, are enumerated below.

## The status of middle grades education in Baltimore City

### Eliminating middle schools, expanding the K-8 model

Traditional middle schools - those with students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades only - have been troublesome for Baltimore City (and for urban school districts throughout the country) for at least the past two decades. The 21 middle schools are large and underperforming: not one met the 2006 standards for *No Child Left Behind*.<sup>4</sup> Over the past fifteen years, the Baltimore City School Public System (BCPSS) has increasingly replaced these schools with K-8 schools. After controlling for family income variables, a 2001 BCPSS study of the K-8 schools found positive outcomes (including increased achievement) for students in grades 6-8 at K-8 schools rather than in middle schools.<sup>5</sup> These findings were corroborated using 2005 MSA data.<sup>6</sup> The 2006 Facilities Solutions plan calls for the continued expansion of K-8 schools.

#### **Baltimore City Public Schools**

##### **School configuration for middle grades**

	<b>K-8 schools</b>	<b>Middle schools (no alter. schools)</b>	<b>New/Charter middle schools</b>
<b>1996</b>	7	24	1
<b>2001</b>	16	23	1
<b>2005</b>	32	21	4
<b>2010 projected*</b>	65	10	na

\*BCPSS 2006 Facilities Solutions plan

Despite a continued conversion of middle schools to K-8 schools, approximately 6,500 students will still attend traditional Baltimore City middle schools in 2010 creating a situation that cannot be ignored.

### **Demographics/Data:**

#### **Are KIPP and Crossroads “creaming” the better students?**

##### More poor children; fewer special education students

On average, KIPP and Crossroads serve a slightly higher percentage of poor children and African American children than either the City middle schools or the K-8 schools. A 2005 BCPSS study of KIPP found no pattern for selecting or excluding incoming fifth grade students or “creaming.”<sup>7</sup> In 2005/06, KIPP’s free and reduced lunch rate of 85.9% was higher than the mean (83.8%) for KIPP’s 8 feeder elementary schools.

<b>KIPP incoming 5<sup>th</sup> grade students vs. KIPP Feeder schools 2005/06</b>		
	<b>Free Lunch</b>	<b>Total Free and Reduced Lunch</b>
KIPP 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students	74.8%	85.9%
8 feeder elementary schools	74.7%	83.8%

<sup>4</sup> The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* was enacted in 2001 with the goal of raising standards and levels of accountability throughout the nation’s schools districts.

<sup>5</sup> Baltimore City Public School System. Division of Research Evaluation, Assessment and Accountability. *An Examination of K-5, 6-8 versus K-8 grade Configurations*. November 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Baltimore City Public Schools System. Division of Research Evaluation, Assessment and Accountability. *Senior Staff/School Stat 2005 AYP*. June 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Baltimore City Public School System. Division of Research Evaluation, Assessment and Accountability. “Characteristics of Matriculating KIPP Students.” September 2005.

Since the city no longer administers norm-referenced tests in elementary grades, data are not available to compare reading and math standardized test scores for incoming KIPP and Crossroads students with scores of eligible students who did not attend these schools. There are a number of other demographic differences between students in KIPP and Crossroads and the City's other 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade schools. Forty-five percent of the students attending these two schools are male, as opposed to 50% in middle schools. There are significantly fewer special education students attending KIPP/Crossroads (9%) as compared with the City's middle schools (19%) or K-8 schools (16%), although it should be noted that the percentage of special education students is increasing each year at the two charter schools. KIPP notes that it transfers an average of three special education students to regular student status each year.

**2005/06 demographic data**

<u>School</u>	<u>Grade levels</u>	<u>FARMS</u>	<u>% special ed</u>	<u>% African American</u>	<u>% male</u>	<u>Avrg 6-8th enrollment</u>
KIPP	5-8	88.0%	6.7	99.3	46%	210
Crossroads	6-8	85.0%	10.9	83.1	44%	148
<b>KIPP/Cross average</b>		<b>86.5%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>BCPSS middle schools overall</b>	6-8	<b>82.4%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>87.3</b>		<b>653</b>
<b>K-8 schools (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades only)</b>	6-8	<b>74.9%</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>215</b>

*MSDE Report Card, 2006*

Significantly smaller schools; fewer students per grade

Students at KIPP and Crossroads attend schools that are one-third the size of the traditional middle schools. This translates to an average of 66 students in a grade versus 220 students - a critical distinction, and comparable to the smaller middle grades enrollment at K-8 schools.

In summary, KIPP and Crossroads have slightly poorer students, smaller enrollments, more females, fewer and less severe special education students, and a greater percentage of African-American students than other City public schools educating 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade children. Most importantly, the students (or their families) have chosen KIPP and Crossroads, while most middle school students do not have that option.

**Performance Data**

**How does student performance at KIPP and Crossroads compare to the other middle schools and K-8 schools?**

KIPP, Crossroads, Stadium School, and Connexions were the only middle schools to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

KIPP and Crossroads were two of only four Baltimore City Middle Schools to make Annual Yearly Progress under the Federal *No Child Left Behind* Act in 2006. The other two middle schools are Stadium School (a “new schools initiative” serving grades 4-8) and Connexions, a charter middle school.

Similarly, students at KIPP and Crossroads were two to three times more likely to score proficient or above on the 2006 MSA reading and math tests than those in middle schools. K-8 schools posted higher levels of achievement than middle schools but not as high as KIPP/Crossroads. KIPP's 8<sup>th</sup> grade math score, at 100% proficient and 70% advanced, was the highest in Maryland. With the exception of reading at KIPP, grade level performance on MSA appears to increase as students move from 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade at KIPP and Crossroads – the opposite of the trend in middle and K-8 schools.

**Attendance, MSA scores, and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) 2005/06**

School	2005/06 attendance	2006 MSA Reading % Proficient/Above			2006 MSA Math % Proficient/Above			2006 Met AYP
		6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>KIPP</b>	96.4%	91.9	86.5	74.5	89.2	100.0	100.0	met
<b>Crossroads</b>	95.4%	47.0	68.1	69.6	36.8	51.0	54.3	met
<b>All middle schools</b>	85.6%	35.6*	38.2*	32.8*	19.4*	17.5*	15.6*	0 of 21 schools met
<b>K-8 schools</b>	93.5%	54.2*	56.5*	50.9*	43.7*	27.9*	29.1*	12 of 30 schools met
<b>Citywide K-8</b> (Roland Park, Mt. Royal and F.S.Key)		78.1*	78.2*	74.5*	68.2*	61.3*	54.6*	2 of 3 schools met

*\*BCPSS: Division of Research Evaluation, Assessment and Accountability. Preliminary MSA Spring 2006. June 26, 2006. MSDE Report Card, 2006*

On average, attendance at the new charter middle schools was 96% versus 85.6% in the traditional middle schools; overall 2006 attendance for City students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades was 88.2% according to the MSDE Report Card.

**Other Indicators**

**Suspensions/Expulsions**

*Negligible at KIPP, none at Crossroads*

In City schools, the number of suspensions and expulsions peaks in the middle school grades; 50% of the student suspensions system-wide occur in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2006, relatively few students were suspended at KIPP while Crossroads had none; the overall rate of comparable BCPSS suspensions/expulsions in middle schools was 18.9% (2004/05).

	Enrollment	# students suspended/expelled	# of sus/expul	% of student sus/expul
<b>KIPP (2006)</b>	285	7	12	2.5%
<b>Crossroads (2006)</b>	140	0	0	0
<b>BCPSS Middle Grades (2005)</b>	21,997	4,175	n/a	18.9%
<b>BCPSS overall (2005)*</b>	85,022	9,945	16,625	11.7%

*BCPSS, Department of New and Charter Schools. "Charter Schools 2006 Enrollment and Demographics," 2006.*

*\*Maryland State Department of Education. "Suspensions, Expulsions and Health Related Exclusions Maryland Public Schools." 2004-2005.*

**Student Mobility**

*KIPP/Crossroads population three times more stable*

Nearly one-quarter of the student population enters and withdraws from a typical Baltimore City middle school each year. On average, less than 8% of students at KIPP and Crossroads move in or out of the school over the course of the year.

**2006 Student Mobility**

	<b>Entrants</b>	<b>Withdrawals</b>
<b>KIPP</b>	7.4%	9.4%
<b>Crossroads</b>	2.9%	10.2%
<b>BCPSS middle schools average</b>	22.6%	23.0%

*MSDE Report Card, 2006*

**Teachers**

*KIPP/Crossroads teachers more apt to be highly qualified; 50% fewer conditional teachers*

The majority of Baltimore City 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers do not meet the state’s definition of “highly-qualified;” this is true at KIPP and Crossroads as well.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of highly-qualified teachers is highest in K-8 schools. Whereas 43% of City middle school teachers and 23% of K-8 teachers are conditionally certified,<sup>9</sup> on average only 17% of KIPP and Crossroads are hired on a conditional certificate.

**Percentage of highly qualified and conditionally teachers  
2005/06**

	<b>% highly qualified</b>	<b>% conditionally certified</b>
<b>KIPP</b>	34.4%	22.2%
<b>Crossroads</b>	41.7%	12.5%
<b>BCPSS middle schools average</b>	27.5%	43.1%
<b>BCPSS K-8 average</b>	45.4%	23.3%

*KIPP and Crossroads teachers more likely to be in classrooms on a daily basis*

Teacher attendance, although rarely reported, is an important factor in a school’s success. While a teacher in KIPP or Crossroads is absent for 5 days during the school year, teachers in middle schools are not present in classrooms 17.5 days on average.

**Teacher attendance, Fall 2005**

<b>KIPP</b>	97.7%
<b>Crossroads</b>	97.0%
<b>BCPSS middle schools average</b>	91.9%

*BCPSS, Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, First Semester 2005/06*

As demonstrated by a broad range of indicators, KIPP and Crossroads have higher levels of performance than Baltimore City’s middle schools, and also appear to outperform many of the middle grades at K-8 schools.

<sup>8</sup> The No Child Left Behind Act requires “highly-qualified” teachers to have a bachelor’s degree, possess full state certification, and demonstrate knowledge in the subjects they teach.

<sup>9</sup> Teachers are issued conditional certificates when they do not meet all the requirements for certification.

## **What do KIPP and Crossroads do differently?**

### **Vision and Mission**

**Clear and powerful vision that translates to a distinct school culture - this mission is a compass that guides instruction and all other school practices.**

KIPP's mission is "to prepare students with the academic and interpersonal skills, intellectual habits and character traits necessary to succeed in the most rigorous high school and college programs and to contribute to social improvement in their own communities and society at large." The Crossroads School looks to create "a community of learners committed to opening minds, opening worlds and opening possibilities through discovery and diversity,"...a school "that draws students, teachers, and parents together in the pursuit of high standards of academic achievement, character, conduct, and service to the community."

What transforms these mission statements from mere platitudes (like Paul L. Dunbar Middle School's tagline: "The School on the Move towards Excellence") is their execution. KIPP and Crossroads claim that the vision directs decisions about school instruction and operation; they have used it to design what the school actually looks, sounds, and feels like. In their words, the vision has become, in effect, a set of shared promises that staff, students and parents "buy into."

KIPP bases all policy decisions in the school on the five "pillars:"

1. High expectations;
2. Choice and commitment;
3. More time;
4. Power to lead; and
5. Focus on results.

For instance, "more time" is exemplified by the longer school day and year. These principles are institutionalized in daily language for students with phrases like "No shortcuts" and "We're climbing the mountain to college," which remind students of the goals.

Crossroads similarly believes that a common language used consistently in instruction and behavior management is critical to success. The Crossroads School is directed by Five Promises:

1. Commitment to quality;
2. Perseverance;
3. No excuses;
4. Contribution; and
5. Honor and integrity.

A walk through KIPP or Crossroads is telling: there is a palpable distinction in culture between a middle school with a powerful, clear, and shared vision that is translated in day-to-day actions and a school with a catchy slogan on a banner and no collective underpinning.

### **Communicate high academic and conduct expectations for staff, students, and parents**

KIPP and Crossroads strive to clearly communicate what it means to attain "intellectual habits" or "high standards of academic achievement" to both families and staff members. This translates to concrete practices such as "KIPP students will have approximately 2 hours of homework each night" and "KIPP teachers will always make themselves available (by cell phone 24 hours a day) to parents and students regarding any concerns they may have." Both schools are intentional



about how these values are communicated. Crossroads holds a mandatory small group summer enrollment conference for incoming students and families to review expectations, and visits each new family at home before the school year begins. KIPP also meets individually with each incoming family – dispatching staff to the homes of families who cannot meet at the school.

### **Choice**

#### **Students, families, and teachers choose to participate in these schools and commit to certain principles.**

Unlike some charter schools, both KIPP and Crossroads have elected to have a geographic enrollment area or zone. There are no entrance criteria used for fifth-grade students, and a lottery is held in the event of over-subscription. Students at these schools reflect students from the feeder elementary schools, except that there are fewer, and less severely disabled, special education students. Although there is generally a waiting list, both schools aggressively market to their communities; KIPP recruited its inaugural class by going door-to-door. In addition, KIPP sends a letter to every 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in the eight feeder elementary schools. It follows up with home visits, often targeting boys who are less likely to apply than girls. Crossroads recruits from six local elementary schools (representing 85% of its enrollment); fifth-grade teachers ask students to complete the Crossroads application as a homework assignment. Some of these feeder elementary schools are converting to K-8 schools, so there were fewer applicants at Crossroads this year (200 applicants for 50 spaces).

Families who choose these schools agree to certain standards, signing a *Commitment to Excellence* at KIPP and a *Parent/Student/Teacher Compact* at Crossroads. These commitments detail for parents the importance of extended-day school attendance, on-time arrival, and homework assistance. Both schools expect teachers and staff members to sign these agreements as well. Teachers are recruited and hired, in part, based on their willingness to adhere to these principles, including the commitment to working longer hours with additional compensation.

#### **There is strong demand for these schools.**

Based on the number of students in KIPP and Crossroads' feeder schools, it is estimated that 36% of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students applied to KIPP and 32% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students applied to Crossroads in spring 2006. Crossroads has a waiting list of 150 students and KIPP had 95 on its list at the start of the 2006/07 school year. Two-thirds of the children eligible for these schools did not apply despite strong recruitment efforts, a fact that may reflect higher levels of motivation and support by the families whose children did enroll in these schools.

### **Governance**

#### **Both schools are run by a non-profit local operator; the operator is a facilitator, not a micromanager.**

The operators advocate for the school with BCPSS and the broader community and provide a support system with resources for the school leader. In concert with BCPSS, the operator selects and evaluates the principal. KIPP National provides technical support and quality control in implementation of the KIPP model. The local KIPP Board is the operator, however, and works to raise funds, promote the school, and resolve issues with the school system. At Crossroads, the Living Classrooms Foundation supplies a support system for the school director to focus on

teaching and learning, assisting with fundraising and operational concerns and filling needs not met by the school system.

### **Year-long training program for school leader with planning time**

KIPP National sponsors the Fisher Fellowship Year, an intense development program that includes a summer Leadership institute, semester-long school residency, 10-day planning boot camp, and school start-up period to select and prepare principals to open and lead new KIPP schools. KIPP also assists with leadership replacement should a KIPP principal leave.

While the Crossroads principal had no formal training program, he and the team spent concentrated time developing the plan before submitting a proposal to BCPSS.

### **Principal Autonomy**

**At both KIPP and Crossroads, the principal spearheaded the planning, design, and opening of the school.**

KIPP's director Jason Botel was selected for and participated in the competitive one-year KIPP Fisher Fellows program required for all KIPP principals to open and lead a KIPP school. Similarly, Mark Conrad at Crossroads was one of the founding members of the Crossroads School, and wrote the initial plan for the middle school submitted to BCPSS as part of the "New Schools Initiative."

### **The school principal has broad autonomy in operating the school.**

The principal hires all teachers and staff members, designs the administrative management structure at the school, and chooses curricula. Both schools' administrations differ from those at a typical middle school: Rather than using Assistant Principals, KIPP has a Dean of Instruction, a Dean of Students, a Dean of Operations, and a high school placement counselor for its 320 students – more administrative staff than is allocated to a typical middle school of that size. Crossroads has a lean administrative staff for its 150 students, with a Director and Dean of Students and Families. A school counselor position is funded by a three-year grant.

### **Recruitment, hiring, training, and evaluation of teachers and staff are viewed as the highest priority by principals.**

The principals of KIPP and Crossroads see teacher quality as the greatest variable in their success. Rather than waiting for candidates to be identified by the school system, they recruit teachers and staff year-round and nation-wide with their own online marketing campaigns and personal networks. They have found that teachers who are considered above-average in BCPSS schools often do not meet their standards, nor are these teachers always willing to work as hard and long as they require. KIPP has counseled non-performing teachers to leave, mid-year if necessary, preferring a vacancy to inadequate instruction. As a result of higher expectations for teachers, both schools have encountered some difficulty finding teachers – an issue for replication of these models.

### **Instructional Practices**

#### **Smaller schools with fewer students per grade**

KIPP and Crossroads are intentionally smaller than traditional middle schools. With 75 students per grade at KIPP and 50 per grade at Crossroads, these schools have no more than 225 middle

grade children. In contrast, enrollment at traditional middle schools ranges from 350 to 1,250 students, averaging 650 students per school. Baltimore's K-8 schools also have small 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade populations, averaging 215 total students, or 70 students per grade.

**More time in school: longer school day and school year**

At KIPP, students attend school for 9 hours and 15 minutes each weekday during the school year and three hours on several Saturdays per month. The school year is extended to include a three-week summer session, resulting in approximately 60% more time in school. Similarly, the Crossroads school day is one hour longer two days per week and 2.5 hours longer (7:30am-4:30pm) two days a week. On Wednesday afternoons, the school closes early for professional development, resulting in a net increase of six hours per week - or 20% - additional instructional time.

**Class sizes are only slightly smaller.**

The success of KIPP and Crossroads is not a matter of smaller classes. Baltimore City middle schools are staffed on a 1:28 teacher student ratio; both KIPP and Crossroads have class sizes of approximately 25 students.

**Both schools use Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum as a foundation, but target strategic standards by grade and quarter.**

Although charter schools have autonomy over curriculum, KIPP and Crossroads use the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum as a basis for their schools' curricula. At KIPP, teachers and administrators meet at the start of each year to decide which Maryland State standards will be addressed in each grade and for each quarter. Monthly meetings track the progress in achieving these standards. The Crossroads team selects 25 key standards (which they call "power standards") per discipline per grade, and focus on 6-8 of these in any given quarter. As Crossroads Director Mark Conrad reports, "We have shifted our focus from what is being taught to what students are learning." While all Baltimore City schools administer Quarterly Assessments tests, the approach of KIPP and Crossroads differs in the amount and specificity of pre-planning and the monthly analysis that drives instructional decisions for the following month.

**In addition to a contracted operator, both schools have an educational partner that provides technical assistance and training and access to an active network of similar schools.**

KIPP National convenes its school leaders annually to share their best educational practices. Although KIPP schools do not use one standard curricula, there is probably the most consistency in math. Building from Harriet Ball's Fearless Math approach, KIPP uses 5<sup>th</sup> grade as a catch-up year to ensure that each student reaches mastery in basic arithmetic functions, particularly multiplication.<sup>10</sup> Sixth grade is devoted to Pre-Algebra skills and Algebra I is taught in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. KIPP's first cohort of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students did not take the Algebra HSA in 8<sup>th</sup> grade – but the upcoming class will do so in spring 2007.

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<sup>10</sup> Harriet Ball's approach uses multi-sensory, mnemonic teaching strategies that blend math objectives with rhythm, rhyme, chants, verbalizations, body movement, and students' experiences.

The Crossroads School has adopted the nationally recognized Expeditionary Learning curricula sponsored by Outward Bound. Aligned with the Crossroads vision of active, hands-on learning, Expeditionary Learning features in-depth investigations of subjects that engage students using projects, fieldwork, and service learning. This collaboration offers Crossroads teacher training and access to a network of participating schools with similar missions.

### **The use of instructional time is flexible and related to the vision**

Rather than use a standard seven-period day of equal-length classes, both KIPP and Crossroads have crafted schedules to meet their missions. Academic rigor at KIPP means more time on task, beginning the minute students enter the classroom, and a highly structured routine that insures that every minute is productive. Math classes, for example, often begin with a timed warm-up activity reviewing fundamental skills. Time for independent reading and homework are built into the school day.

Crossroads uses three two-hour instructional blocks - in fundamental reading, writing, and math skills, interdisciplinary humanities, and interdisciplinary math/science - to allow teachers and students the greatest amount of support and flexibility. This flexibility allows students to work on one of four major projects they must complete each year. There is a daily one-hour remediation/enrichment session for children in 6<sup>th</sup> grade who enter with below grade-level skills. Crossroads' waterfront setting lends itself to project-based outdoor field work, particularly in science and social studies.

### **Professional development for teachers is site-based and usually led by teachers within the school**

Beyond training provided by KIPP National and Expeditionary Learning, most of the professional development is school-based. KIPP's grade-level teams are afforded common planning time during the school day to discuss specific implementation and revisions needed to meet state standards. Furthermore, KIPP has its teachers do peer observations every two weeks with follow-up feedback.

Crossroads closes early on Wednesdays for professional development, using a professional learning community model in which teams of teachers come together to solve problems and create action plans. This model relies almost exclusively on Crossroads teachers and is seen as a way to build teachers' leadership skills.

### **“Extra-curricular” enrichment is offered during the school day**

One advantage of the longer school day is the opportunity to integrate what are traditionally optional after-school activities. KIPP has a School Band, instrumental music lessons, boys' basketball team, tennis, step team, Girls on the Run, National Academic League, and other activities. Crossroads offers an extended-day art program and Urban Debate League. Both schools rely on community partnerships to assist in running these programs.

### **Offsite enrichment field lessons and trips**

In addition to building extracurricular activities into the longer school day, KIPP uses Saturday school for enrichment events. Each school year ends with academically oriented field lessons to major cultural hubs, historically rich areas, and college campuses. This year, for example,

KIPP's 8<sup>th</sup> grade students spent five days in the South on a College and Civil Rights Tour. Crossroads takes advantage of its unique urban harbor-front locale as a laboratory for science and other project work and uses the larger City landscape for its fieldwork.

### **Academic “Looping”**

In an effort to better support student's academic and socio-emotional growth, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at Crossroads remain with their students through 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Although not as uniformly-implemented, KIPP teachers frequently move with their students to the next grade.

### **Increased access to teachers outside school hours**

KIPP teachers are given cell phones so they can be accessible to students for homework and other assistance on evenings and weekends.

### **Students who enter with very low skills or who do not make adequate progress during the year required to repeat the grade**

In both schools, transfer students and others with low performance levels may be asked to repeat a grade. Promotion rates are generally high. Mark Conrad estimates that at Crossroads, only two or three students each year are asked to repeat a grade.

### **Student Support and School Climate**

#### **A clear and consistently applied behavior management plan, including an in-school suspension alternative**

The emphasis at KIPP is on positive reinforcement rather than punishment; KIPP student can earn weekly paychecks that are redeemable for incentives (such as school supplies and field trips) if school work and conduct meet expectation. At KIPP, the consequence for poor conduct or work habits is called “The Den,” a strategy that keeps students in classrooms but isolates them from other students by a designated shirt, special seating, and revocation of privileges. A child's period in The Den depends on severity of incident, but the goal is to keep students engaged in learning.

Crossroads also emphasizes students' rights and responsibilities in its behavior management plan. Unlike at KIPP, consequences are not uniform but are tailored to individual students; Crossroads does not generally suspend students, sending them to the student support center with the Dean of Students. Once there, a student is asked to do reflective writing and then meet with the Dean and School Director. The school has a time-out consequence called The Bench.

#### **Increased staff to provide student support/advising/college access**

Both schools have dedicated more staff to student support who are charged with greater accountability than a typical school guidance counselor. The Crossroads School believes adolescents need close relationships with adults. Accordingly, there is a Dean of Students and Families who, among other student-focused duties, coordinates admissions, the advisory program and high school placement, and works closely with families. A grant-funded school counselor supports her in running the Student Support Center - the hub for students and their families.

KIPP also has a Dean of Students and a full-time High School Placement counselor. Due in part to the efforts of this placement counselor, 79% of KIPP's 8<sup>th</sup> grade class in 2006 will attend private schools or citywide academic high schools; as a group, they have received more than \$1 million in high school scholarships. This is a significant accomplishment as the City's magnet high schools with academic criteria have capacity for only one-third of all incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in Baltimore City. Crossroads' Dean of Students coordinates high school placement and choice for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students; a similar percentage of its students will attend a selective high school.

BCPSS is creating a Student Support Dean position in middle schools. In general, however, this role has not been well-conceived, appropriately recruited for, or supported by training, so that it may easily devolve to the traditional Assistant Principal position which focuses on school discipline and operations.

Through a multi-year grant, Crossroads sponsors four "Turning the Corner Achievement Program" Teaching fellows, college graduates who support teachers during the school day and oversee extracurricular activities after school.

### **Teacher-led advisory program with clear goals**

The Crossroads advisory program is coordinated by the Dean of Students. Advisories with 12-15 students meet four days a week for 30 minutes or one hour twice a week. In addition to implementing an advisory curriculum, teachers are expected to provide academic coaching, discuss report cards, teach study skills, monitor independent reading assignments for the year, and assist students with portfolio development. KIPP has an extended homeroom period with a similar function; among other things, teachers check to see that all homework in all subjects is completed.

### **Frequent school-wide or grade-level meetings**

KIPP administrators and teachers meet daily with students by grade level, often in the hallway. Crossroads holds a weekly community meeting with students to celebrate successes and resolve issues. These meetings reinforce the missions of the schools.

### **Facilities/Operations**

#### **Bus transportation for all students**

Due to the longer school day, beginning for some at 7:15 a.m. and ending for some as late as 6:00 p.m., KIPP provides bus transportation to all students from its eight-school zone. Crossroads also provides transportation. In contrast, BCPSS middle school students receive MTA bus passes only if they live more than one mile from the school. KIPP's and Crossroads' transportation services have allayed parental concerns about safety in school arrival and departure and reduced tardiness and absenteeism.

#### **Crossroads is located on the grounds of an attractive non-profit rather than in a school building. KIPP, however, shares an inadequate school building with two other schools.**

Crossroads Director Mark Conrad believes that the physical environment of the school sends a powerful message to kids about their importance. The school's informal and non-traditional setting at the Living Classrooms Foundation on the harbor also facilitates the hands-on, project-

based learning orientation of the school. The lack of a gym and cafeteria and the limited classroom and administrative space have little impact on the programming. KIPP shares a large Baltimore City school in extremely poor condition with two system-run schools with seemingly little effect on KIPP's achievement.

### **Results Orientation**

#### **Greater focus on student outcomes and frequent assessment**

Both schools focus not on what is being taught but on what is being learned. At KIPP, entering fifth-grade students are assessed using the Stanford 9 on reading and math levels with a post-test in June. These students are retested at the beginning and end of each of the following years to analyze each student's progress from year to year. The outcomes are also analyzed by teachers and used to improve their instruction. There is currently no consistent pre- and post-testing done in BCPSS middle schools.

Crossroads uses integrated performance-based assessments that are developed and administered quarterly, as well as a portfolio approach. Three times per year, students are expected to present their work to parents and community members as "presentations of learning."

#### **Practices that vary from BCPSS middle schools**

In two critical areas, KIPP and Crossroads are exempted from practices that greatly impact other BCPSS middle grades schools and are worthy of a BCPSS effort to isolate the impact of these factors in all schools.

**These schools do not accept new incoming students after the first two grades, nor do they automatically accept transfers or students from the Department of Juvenile Justice.**

KIPP accepts students only in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and Crossroads only admits students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.

**KIPP and Crossroads accept only students with disabilities if they agree to instruction in a full inclusion model. By comparison, City middle schools have the highest percentage of special education enrollment in self-contained settings.**

Baltimore City middle schools have a higher overall percentage of special education students (19%) than either city elementary schools (13%) or high schools (16%). In 2004/05, middle schools also had the highest percentage of special education students in self-contained classrooms (8%, vs. 4% in elementary school and 3% in high school).<sup>11</sup> Neither KIPP nor Crossroads serves lower-functioning special education students who require a self-contained setting, but both have had success with students transitioning from self-contained elementary classrooms to full inclusion in their schools.

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<sup>11</sup> Education Resource Strategies. "Where does the Money Go? BCPSS Per Pupil Cost Analysis 2004-05." June, 2005.

**How much money do they spend?**

**KIPP and Crossroads spend more than comparable BCPSS schools to educate students – but at no additional expense to the school system.**

Teasing out school-based funding to system-led middle schools is difficult and ultimately a disadvantage for determining the equitable contribution on a per pupil basis to charter schools. It is clear that KIPP and Crossroads spend more than the \$5,300 per pupil allocation that charter schools received in 2005/06 to educate students in these schools.

**Cost per pupil:**

	<b>Total 2006 operating budget</b>	<b># students</b>	<b>Cost per pupil</b>	<b>BCPSS 2006 funding per pupil</b>	<b>Other grants/ fundraising p/pupil</b>
KIPP	\$2,009,000	290	\$6,930 (does not include Title 1/special ed services)	\$5,385	\$1,545
Crossroads	\$1,150,000	150	\$7,600 (does not include Title 1/special ed)	\$5,385	\$2,000

Note that KIPP and Crossroads must (and do) cover any costs above the \$5,385 per pupil public contribution by private fundraising – at no expense to the Baltimore school system.

**How do they spend it differently?**

**KIPP**

A large percentage of KIPP’s additional spending is an 18% salary stipend for teachers to compensate for the longer school day and school year. KIPP also provides school bus transportation for all students rather than MTA transit passes for students who live more than one mile from the school. Other major expenditures are an annual multi-day field study trip for each grade; occupancy costs (cleaning, repairs and maintenance, insurance); additional special education teacher salary to supplement ineffective BCPSS special ed instructional service; and administrative support: Deans of Operations, Instruction, and Student Support in lieu of an Assistant Principal.

**Crossroads:**

Crossroads pays a 10% stipend to staff to compensate for the longer school day. It also pays to lease and maintain a portion of the Living Classrooms campus (approximately \$1,000 per pupil). Other major costs include Expeditionary Learning and community partnerships that provide enrichment programming during and after the school day.

**Any additional funding to cover per pupil costs is raised privately by KIPP and Crossroads**

Both KIPP and Crossroads have recently become charter schools, enabling them to access up to \$50,000 in planning and design grants and up to \$300,000 in two-year implementation grants through federal charter school funding. These federal funds are not available after the first two years. KIPP also benefits from US Department of Education funding procured through KIPP National.



Generally, KIPP must raise \$1,550 per child and Crossroads must raise \$2,000. The local KIPP board raises \$100,000 to \$300,000 annually from local foundations, and sponsors annual fund drives from individual donors. Crossroads is supported in its fundraising by operator Living Classrooms Foundation in attracting individual and foundation giving, and has been the beneficiary of a local “Turning the Corner Achievement Program” grant.

## **What are the lessons for BCPSS middle schools?**

Principals at KIPP and Crossroads consistently highlight the need for high expectations coupled with high levels of support for middle grades students and their teachers. Strong school leadership, strong educational models, special ed/high risk student exemptions, and increased funding are the most important determinants of KIPP's and Crossroads' success; without these, it is unclear how much BCPSS could gain from importing individual features of these schools to its middle schools. These successful strategies might well need to work in concert to be effective. Given that, BCPSS could choose to:

### **1. Encourage successful current operators such as KIPP and Crossroads to open more schools; add other operator-led schools targeting middle school students.**

Rather than picking and choosing successful practices from KIPP and Crossroads to replicate in traditional middle schools, BCPSS could decide to increase the number of independently run schools. KIPP has approached the BCPSS interim CEO with an interest in increasing the number of KIPP schools in Baltimore, provided there is adequate funding. Similarly, Crossroads, Connexions, and the Stadium School may also be interested in opening additional middle schools. Furthermore, there are other operators of middle schools not currently operating in Baltimore, such as Amistad/Achievement First (New Haven, CT), and local organizations with the capacity to lead a middle school that could be solicited with an RFP process or via chartering.

### **2. Invest in developing visionary leadership for middle grades students, providing planning time for these leaders, and ultimately granting greater autonomy.**

KIPP and Crossroads provide evidence that it is important for a middle school to have a clear and compelling mission for serving adolescent students that drives the structure of the school, the expectations of its staff, student and families, and its practices. Middle school principal candidates must possess a set of skills from previous experience or receive training; they also would benefit from paid time, before they take the helm, to analyze the situation, develop plans, and assemble a leadership team. Leadership development continues to be a challenge for BCPSS: it has relied heavily on a process that places "qualified" principal and assistant principal candidates in a "pool" that is theoretically able to supply any school with a qualified leader. The New Leaders for New Schools program is designed to serve the need, but to date, has not been strategically directed toward middle schools. Other avenues for training middle school leaders can also be tapped: KIPP National is expanding its Fisher Fellows principal training program, and local universities, such as The Johns Hopkins University, have the capacity and interest to develop leadership programming specifically for middle schools.

Several of the fellows from the first cohort of New Leaders will be placed in BCPSS middle schools in 2006/07, BCPSS has promised them greater autonomy.<sup>12</sup> While New Leaders may provide a pipeline of highly competitive candidates who have graduated from a rigorous year-long residency and training program, there is no assurance that this strategy alone can successfully transform dysfunctional middle schools. It may be a better strategy to allow these

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<sup>12</sup> These autonomies include the ability to hire Assistant principals, teachers, and support staff (including the option to transfer all staff within the first year) upon the approval of the CEO, budget flexibility similar to that of charter schools, exemption from BCPSS staff development, and freedom with the pacing, implementation, and assessment of curriculum.

and similarly qualified and supported candidates to plan and phase in new middle schools to replace the failing schools.

At a minimum, qualified principals in the middle schools in corrective action need the autonomy to hire all staff members, and need far more discretion around curriculum implementation, professional development, and budget allocation.

**3. More time, provided there is adequate instruction and programming, may be critical to success at the middle school level.**

The extension of the school day and year to provide more time for both remediation and acceleration is a key to the success of KIPP and Crossroads. This additional time can also create a safety net for transitioning to adolescence, and allow time for extra-curricular, enrichment, and project work that further engages students in schools and their futures while keeping youth off the street.

**4. Continue to press for data about the performance of City middle schools, K-8 schools, and charter schools serving 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students**

Certain data about the performance of KIPP/Crossroads and other schools serving middle grades students would further inform System decision-making around middle schools. First, it is critical to understand how the reading and math scores, attendance patterns, and suspensions of those who enter KIPP and Crossroads compare to those of students in feeder schools who remain in traditional City schools. There has been no longitudinal study comparing the success of KIPP and Crossroads students after middle school: How do these students perform in high school compared to students who did not attend the charter schools? Second, it would be useful to isolate the impact of the large number of self-contained special education students and high-risk student transfers in Baltimore's middle schools. To what extent are KIPP and Crossroads successful because they exclude these students? Finally, a financial analysis of what it costs to attain KIPP and Crossroads results as compared to what middle schools receive seems critical. It is not clear how much is currently being spent in BCPSS middle schools, but at least one recent study suggested that it was lower by at least \$500 per pupil than elementary and \$200 per pupil less than high schools.<sup>13</sup>

**5. On a smaller scale, some practices used by KIPP and Crossroads bear further investigation by middle school and K-8 principals:**

**A. Design interventions that ease the transition into middle school, and communicate increased expectations.**

While it may be difficult to meet with families of all incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students individually, middle schools can provide small group orientations for students and families at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, prior to school opening, or in the first month of school. Whether or not schools choose to have students, teachers, and parents sign a statement of expectations similar to the KIPP and Crossroads "contracts," they should clearly communicate the roles of each of these parties.

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<sup>13</sup> Education Resource Strategies. "Where does the Money Go? BCPSS Per Pupil Cost Analysis 2004-05." June, 2005.

A mandatory summer session for all incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students of at least three weeks to prepare academically and behaviorally for the transition to middle school is important; this is the time to develop relationships between 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and students. BCPSS sponsored a two-week summer bridge program for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2006. If successful, this strategy should be extended to incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

In the first few weeks of September, schools and teachers should focus on reviewing and practicing procedures for being successful in school – both study skills and conduct.

## **B. Rigorous instruction and engaged learning in the middle grades**

### **Start early**

KIPP data suggest that starting the transition to middle school in 5<sup>th</sup> grade with a “ramp-up” instructional program to remediate reading and math skills appears to pay off. KIPP’s current 8<sup>th</sup> grade cohort, for example, started 5<sup>th</sup> grade with Stanford 9 National Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores of 34.5 in reading and 37.4 in math. By the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, scores had increased to 44.1 in reading and 65.3 in math. This academic growth continued: by the end of 7<sup>th</sup> grade, these KIPP students scored a 47.6 NCE in reading and a 76.6 NCE in math.

**Provide an accelerated three-year curriculum in reading and math that allows for remediation and acceleration to occur simultaneously. This will necessitate more instructional time in each of the four academic subjects.** KIPP, for example, begins with remediation in 5<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics, but accelerates the learning so that students complete Algebra I by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

- BCPSS would be wise to investigate KIPP’s approach to math. KIPP ensures mastery in key skill areas, like multiplication, before teaching the next level in mathematics. Practice of skills is key; KIPP uses kinesthetic, visual, and auditory activities to invest all students in learning math concepts at the mastery level. KIPP starts each class with a timed worksheet of math computational problems, but also devotes time to critical thinking and logic skills. KIPP teaches problem-solving using different approaches and types of questions – BCPSS could use questions from other state and private school tests to explore this.
- Homeroom or advisory can be a time to reinforce skills for success. For example, teachers can check for students’ homework completion in all classes.

## **C. Get smaller: create structures for knowing middle grades students well**

While smaller schools may not necessarily be better, a middle school with fewer students per grade or a structure by which to create smaller units within the school (and integrate students from all three grades) appears to be advantageous. Baltimore City middle schools have attempted to subdivide using a “house” structure in the past, but often these smaller units have been organized by grade level (i.e., a 7<sup>th</sup> grade house), and so have not reduced the number of students on the same grade level. Groupings of 150 students or fewer appear to work well socially and instructionally.

**D. Increase or redeploy school staff to work individually or in small groups with students; this may include establishing a Dean of Student Support position as at KIPP and Crossroads to coordinate all student and family support activities.** BCPSS has begun to implement a Dean of Student Support position in its middle school reform; to date, this role has not been well-developed based on successful models.

- **Re-position the role of the middle school guidance counselor to align with the Dean of Student Support.** The roles of middle school guidance counselors in particular become more integral to the school and may expand or shift in this environment. In addition to student/family outreach, high school choice and college/career awareness are critical areas of focus.
- **Student advisories with one or more adults that meet at least weekly.** It is important that there is an effective curriculum, clear expectations and outcomes, and training for teachers in using an advisory model. Typically one adult works with no more than 15 students.
- **Create a Student Support Center that acts as a one-stop shop for students and families to access services (particularly social work and mental health) and information.** This Center may be an expanded version of the guidance counselor's office.

**E. Establish a school-wide behavior management system** that creates incentives (such as a weekly paycheck to students who meet all academic and conduct criteria that can be used for supplies, field trip, "free homework pass," or other incentive) as well as consequences. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Program (PBIS) has had success in this arena. This plan should include in-school alternatives to suspension that allow the child continued access to instruction.

**F. College-Ready: Focus on and consistently communicate the rewards of doing well in middle school – ultimately college, but also high school placement.**

Communicate the concept of college visually and instructionally throughout the school and to parents. The increasing level of high school choice in Baltimore City is both an opportunity and a responsibility for middle grades schools. Schools can carve out staff time to provide guidance and support for high school choice and placement beginning in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. A dedicated and informed staff person should be responsible for coordinating the high school choice process for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their families.

**G. Boost School Engagement with enrichment activities for every student.**

Baltimore City has increased the number of extracurricular offerings this year with basketball and track programs in middle schools. While to be applauded, this is not sufficient. Ideally, schools would be able to ensure that every student participates in at least one "extra-curricular" activity. These activities should be built into the actual school day when possible.

## What is Replicable from KIPP and Crossroads?

Given the school facilities limitations in Baltimore City, BCPSS will have at least 10-15 traditional middle schools for the foreseeable future – it must act. Schools like KIPP and Crossroads demonstrate that, granted certain conditions and funding, middle schools can work. Many of these practices are applicable to middle grades children in K-8 schools as well. KIPP and Crossroads have the clear advantages that students and families have chosen the schools, that their special education enrollments are limited, and that they have access to a higher level of per pupil funding. Critical to the success of these schools is the high caliber of school leadership, the planning and phase-in of the school, the operator support, and the framework and network supplied by the educational partner. BCPSS would be wise to replicate these variables whenever possible as it contemplates middle grades reform.

While it is unknown whether extracting certain components from the total education model at these schools will produce improved outcomes, some are practices that can be replicated.

<b>Replicable with cost implications</b>	<b>Replicable with minimal/no additional cost</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended school day, week and year</li> <li>• Structure middle grades environments with no more than 75 students in each grade</li> <li>• 2-3 week summer bridge program for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students: study skills, reading and math skills</li> <li>• Assign all staff to meet individually or in small groups with all incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students or families to review mutual expectations</li> <li>• Provide dedicated planning time to newly hired principals before they assume leadership of schools</li> <li>• Turn to successful operators who can offer proven models, technical assistance, and access to networks of similar schools</li> <li>• Build extra-curricular activities with student choice into a longer school day</li> <li>• Increase student and family access to teachers by email or telephone after school hours.</li> <li>• Increase the number of full-time student support staff - most critically, a Dean of Students and possibly additional guidance counselors.</li> <li>• Provide dedicated time for teachers to plan and produce together daily or weekly; support teacher leaders in building this community.</li> <li>• Assess students in reading and math at the beginning and end of every school year to track 3-year progress</li> <li>• Offer bus transportation to every student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a mission that focuses staff and action in school</li> <li>• Communicate high expectations for academics and conduct to students, staff, and families - ask all to commit to excellence in some demonstrable way</li> <li>• Target New Leaders for New Schools initiative to middle schools</li> <li>• Allow principals to make final decisions on all staff</li> <li>• Allow principals to hire administrative team and replace teachers over a period of one year</li> <li>• Transfer one Assistant Principal position to Dean of Student Support and recruit for individuals with these skills--must be more than a title change for current Assistant Principals</li> <li>• Align Expectations of Guidance Counselor to include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student support, high school placement, and college access</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expand the role of middle school guidance counselors to support the Dean of Students and high school choice.</li> <li>• Implement a school-wide conduct plan with tangible rewards (such as “paychecks”) and consequences</li> <li>• Create an in-house alternative to suspension that does not disengage students from the learning process (such as The Den)</li> <li>• Provide teacher-led advisory program with clear goals and curricula led by Student Support Dean/administrator</li> </ul>

	<p><b><u>Replicable with minimal/no additional cost</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a plan that ensures that every 8<sup>th</sup> grade student makes an informed choice for high school</li> <li>• Track and publish teacher attendance</li> <li>• Provide principals with greater flexibility and support in designing instructional time during the school day</li> <li>• Use “looping” of teachers for two or more grades</li> <li>• Daily or weekly community “hallway” meetings with students by grade level to emphasize goals, successes, and issues</li> <li>• Analyze student achievement data at the teacher level</li> <li>• Use site-based professional development led by staff whenever possible</li> <li>• Create a Student Support office that houses the Dean of Students, Guidance, special ed, etc.</li> <li>• Begin college awareness and college access activities in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.</li> </ul>
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The most relevant lessons for Baltimore City middle schools are extended learning time, increased levels of student support, smaller environments, a rigorous curriculum that combines remediation and acceleration with frequent assessment, high expectations for academics and behavior, more demanding principal recruitment and training, increased school autonomy, focus on college-prep high school and college attendance, improved student transportation, and opportunities for non-academic enrichment. Only 6,500 students will remain in our traditional middle schools four years from now; an additional per pupil allocation of \$1,550-\$2,000 to adopt practices similar to those at KIPP and Crossroads may be both necessary and possible. At the same time, it will be increasingly important for K-8 schools to design new environments for the middle grades using these principles, rather than assuming that what worked in the elementary grades will work for middle school students.

Today, schools like KIPP and Crossroads are aberrations among Baltimore’s poorly performing middle schools. The Baltimore City Public School System can draw on diverse strategies - expanding the number of 6-8 grade schools run by current charter school operators (such as KIPP), recruiting new start-up middle grades school operators, and reformulating grades 6 to 8 in our K-8 schools to integrate best practices – to vastly improve its middle school reform.