

# Dynamic duo

## KIPP grads are on a path to and through college

Principal Josh Zoia and the rest of the dedicated staff at KIPP Academy Lynn know their school will ultimately be judged by the quality of the graduates it produces.

So far, so good.

Meet Wildy Duran and Leandro Diaz, two of the original KIPP students, who are thriving in high school and well on their way of “climbing the mountain to college” a promise made by all KIPP students, parents and teachers.

Duran, a sophomore honor roll student at St. Mary’s High School, remembers Zoia and another teacher visiting her home when she was in the fourth grade at Ingalls Elementary School. She had heard about KIPP at St. Joseph’s Church and the Lynn YMCA and expressed interest in the school.

Next thing she knew, they were all signing the KIPP Commitment to Excellence promising to do everything in their power to help her succeed and go to college.

Diaz, a native of the Dominican Republic, had only been in the U.S. for a year when he first heard about KIPP. Unable to speak, write or understand English, Diaz was nonetheless set to be promoted to middle school. After a visit from Zoia, Diaz knew KIPP was for him.

“I had a feeling this school was going to help me get where I am,” said Diaz, a freshman at Malden Catholic.

Both Duran and Diaz said KIPP’s 9½-hour school day and two hours of homework (and, the first few years, going to school on Saturday – it is now optional) took some getting used to. Both said they were made fun of by their friends, who had already been outside playing for a few hours by the time they got home from school.

“That was getting to me,” Diaz admitted, “but I would tell them I am getting more time to get educated and taking advantage of school more than them.”

Despite the peer pressure, Duran stuck with KIPP because “I knew it was going to help me in the future,” she said.

“Academics at KIPP is not just about taking notes,” Duran added. “It’s hands-on. The teachers bend over backwards to help you. You can

always go for extra help. Some days I did not get home until 6:30 or 7 at night.”

Diaz said he appreciated the discipline instilled in KIPP students, citing as an example the SLANT philosophy, by which students are prompted to Sit up, Listen to the person speaking, Ask and answer questions, Nod their heads, and Track the speaker.

“At KIPP, they teach you at a young age how to act,” he said.

Both students are thrilled with their choice of high school.

“Freshman year was a little bumpy. I had to adjust to having so much free time,” said Duran, who is involved with softball, track, community service and step dance. “KIPP prepared me so well for St. Mary’s.”

Diaz, a standout basketball player who drew the attention of several schools, said he chose MC because the people there talked about academics first and basketball second.

“Everything is going very well,” said Diaz, who was one of six winners of the 2009 Doris Fisher KIPPster of the Year Award, a \$10,000 scholarship open to more than 1,000 KIPP eighth-graders nationwide. “Working hard can take you anywhere if you put your mind to it.”

Both Duran, who has a brother in the seventh grade at KIPP, and Diaz frequently return to help out in a variety of ways – tutoring, office work, coaching – as do all KIPP students who go to private high schools and receive scholarships. (Students who attend public high schools can actually get paid for coming back to KIPP to do homework and get tutored.)

College is definitely on the horizon for both students. Duran is interested in studying law and is thinking about Boston University as a possible choice, while Williams and Harvard are on Diaz’ radar screen.

The top of the mountain to college is in sight and no one will stop them from reaching the summit.

For more information about KIPP visit [www.kipplynn.org](http://www.kipplynn.org) or call 781-598-1609.



Wildy Duran, left, and Leandro Diaz, two of the original KIPP Lynn students, are thriving in high school.

### Remarkable results

Despite having been open for only five years, KIPP Academy Lynn has posted some remarkable results.

When the current eighth-graders came in, only 14 percent of the class had scored advanced or proficient on the MCAS math exam. Three years later, 82 percent scored advanced or proficient, ranking KIPP in the top two percent of

all middle schools in the state in that category.

In English Language Arts, only 29 percent of current eighth-graders had scored advanced or proficient prior to arriving at KIPP. Last year, that number had improved to 79 percent.

While many people attribute subpar standardized testing results to demographics, KIPP has made this progress despite 87 percent of its students being at or below the poverty line.

2009 MCAS Advanced or Proficient	KIPP		State		
	Grade	ELA	MATH	ELA	MATH
	4th*	29%	14%	50%	40%
	5th	51%	39%	63%	51%
	6th	58%	75%	67%	56%
	7th	79%	82%	70%	49%

\* Fourth-grade scores reflect students' performance prior to arriving at KIPP.