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Building for the future

By Paul Halloran

Groundbreaking has often been used to describe the outstanding results achieved by the middle school students of KIPP Academy Lynn (KAL). This fall, *groundbreaking* will describe the biggest development at KAL since its inception in 2004 – the building of a new 68,000-square-foot middle and high school campus. The new school will be built on a 5.5 acre site on High Rock Street in the Highlands neighborhood of Lynn.

More important than the structure itself will be what it represents: an integrated community, an exceptional education for students in grades 5-12, and increased educational resources for the children and families of Lynn.

“We believe our kids and our community deserve a first-class building,” KAL Principal Josh Zoia said. “And we want to become active in the neighborhood where many of our kids live so that everyone can benefit.”

The new facility will give KIPP more than three times as much space as it currently has on the grounds of Holy Family Church on Bessom Street. It will enable the school to expand from grades 5-8 to grades 5-12.

KIPP now has 352 students and 47 staff, including teachers. A ninth grade will be added in 2011 and one grade per year after that. The new building is expected to open in August 2012. When it reaches full capacity in the fall of 2014 it will have 750 students and 80 staff.





The new “green” building will have two separate wings – one for the 450 middle school students and one for the 300 high school students, joined by an administration building. It will house 32 classrooms as compared to KAL’s current 12. It will also have all the necessary elements (many of which the current facility lacks) to better support the proven KIPP education model. These include: five science labs, a media

center, computer labs, and break-out rooms for tutoring and parent-teacher meetings. A full size gymnasium will enable KAL to welcome visiting teams to play against the school’s championship boys and girls basketball teams and will also provide ample space for school assemblies and community gatherings.

“This building will allow us to enhance and expand the work we have been doing,” Zoia said. “The building will be a great improvement, but will remain modest, focusing on education and efficiencies, not bells and whistles.”

Since opening six years ago with 72 students, KIPP Academy Lynn has posted impressive results. When students arrive at KAL as fifth-graders, only 33 percent of them are reading at or above grade level. After three years at KAL, that number jumps to 85 percent. The school also ranked 12th out of 465 Massachusetts middle schools in 2009 seventh-grade math MCAS scores.

Nationally, 92 percent of KIPP students graduate from high school and 85 percent attend college. By expanding to include a high school, KAL can provide its students with increased opportunities to attend and graduate from college.

While financing and potential new market tax credits will partially fund the building, a portion of the \$26 million project will be funded by private donations from an ongoing capital campaign. Substantial initial seed investments to kick off the campaign have been made by the Lynch Foundation, and the Amelia Peabody Foundation, as well as local philanthropists, including Old Neighborhood Foods President Tom Demakes of Swampscott, Barbara Goldman of Marblehead (KAL board member and capital campaign committee member), John Kane (KAL volunteer) and Joel Abramson of Swampscott (capital campaign committee member).

Other capital campaign committee members include: Danielle Boudreau of Newton, Frances McLaughlin of Amesbury, Rick Settlemeyer of Marblehead, KIPP Lynn Director of Development Jennifer Parkos and Zoia. □