

## Charter Schools Possess No Magic Formula: Opposing View

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*More money gives KIPP schools an edge.*

Studies of charter schools have usually shown they provide no benefits. But studies of schools run by KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) have shown strong performance. A new study suggests that KIPP middle schools may boost test-score growth by as much as eight months to eleven months over three years.

What sets KIPP apart from other middle schools? The core of the formula is clear: Students learn when they have opportunities to learn. So we would expect to see that the opportunities to learn are different at KIPP.

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They are. But I doubt it's because of teaching methods or some magic charter formula. The true secret is more money, something public schools are starving to get. In 11 districts in the 2007 school year, KIPP received, on average, as much as [\\$5,760 more per pupil](#) than local school districts, according to a recent study. KIPP leverages this generous supplemental private funding in a straightforward way: giving students more time in schools while placing a reasonable limit on class sizes.

According to a 2012 Mathematica report, KIPP schools provided [192 days of school each year](#), nine hours a day. That's 45% more learning time than conventional schools provide – the equivalent of four added months of schooling.

We should not be surprised when four extra months results in several additional months of test-score growth.

Given the additional money, public schools can certainly emulate this approach. In Houston, the "Apollo 20" school project [cost about \\$2,000 extra per student](#), 25% more than Houston spent on its other middle schools. Whether a school is a charter or a neighborhood school, resources matter.

But beyond this obvious "resources matter" lesson, there are few practical KIPP

lessons that are clearly transferable to public schools. While KIPP schools, for instance, [don't replace many students who leave during grades seventh or eighth](#), it's difficult to see how conventional public schools could do this. The additional stability is undoubtedly helpful to KIPP, but if the neighborhood schools won't take in mobile students, who will?

KIPP provides a good service for students who choose to enroll and to stay. But let's be honest: It does not matter for our children whether their school is called KIPP or PS 101. What does matter is that we see positive results when we make concentrated and sustained investments in our children.

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