

**FORREST CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
625 IRVING STREET
FORREST CITY, AR 72335**

September 4, 2014

Sky Bledsoe
Charter School Program Advisor
Arkansas Dept. of Education Division of Learning Services
Charter & Home Schools Office
Four Capitol Mall
Mail Slot 3
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Kipp Forrest City Charter School Application dated July 21, 2014

Dear Mr. Bledsoe:

We are writing on behalf of the Forrest City School District in opposition to the Kipp Forrest City Charter School Application.

While specific objections will follow, let us state at the outset that granting such a charter school application in combination with the substantial loss of students the Forrest City School District experienced particularly during the last two months because of various Arkansas legislative acts, including the Arkansas School Choice Opportunity Act of 2004, has worked and will continue to result in an intolerable loss of enrollment for the Forrest City School District.

As regards Kipp in particular, the way it proposes to operate, and the waivers it has requested, simply will place it in a superior competitive position to a traditional school district such as the Forrest City School District. Simply stated, the state will have created a totally unlevel playing field favoring Kipp to the detriment of Forrest City.

In particular, the following waivers are emblematic of this phenomenon:

Kipp proposes not to have a guidance counselor or guidance program. See section 8a.

As regards health services, Kipp states it might have its school nurse split her time between Helena and Forrest City but then added that:

“The school will trains (sic) its office management and special education staff to administer over the counter medication.”

Instead of a media center, Kipp proposes to use the local public library system until it can develop a library and media center of its own. See Section 8c. The “local public library system” is actually a single limited facility that is financed by a small millage and has not historically been able to provide for the needs of the public schools but rather has worked

in conjunction with the Forrest City School District. To the knowledge of the District no agreement has been reached with the Board of the FC Public Library for such a dedicated usage of the FCPL's limited media and library resources. Additionally, those resources are subject to fees for non-Forrest City residents.

Kipp proposes not to require teacher certification for classroom teachers.

Altogether, the approval of a charter such as Kipp in combination with the loss of students to surrounding districts such as Palestine Wheatley and Wynne threaten not only to return Forrest City to the status of a fiscally distressed district, but represents a threat to its very existence.

We note historically, by reference to testimony in 1970 in the ongoing Forrest City School desegregation litigation, that the time is not so far removed when Forrest City was the eighth largest school district in Arkansas. Since that time, Forrest City has lost fully one half of its enrollment. The choice transfer statutes and the prospects of competitors such as Kipp make the future existence of the district one of uncertainty at best.

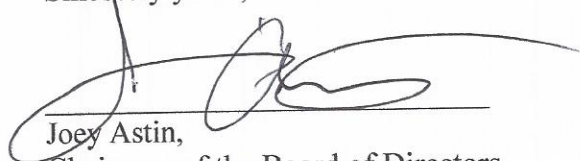
Also, it has been reported anecdotally that Kipp "benefits" from its contracts with parents and students in terms of its ultimate statistical outcomes. What is often whispered is that Kipp does not hesitate to remove students from enrollment if they prove to be discipline problems or otherwise do not adhere to the contracts that are required upon enrollment.

Does ADE possess an analysis which, among other things, compares first grade enrollment to cohort survival over time? Stated another way, does ADE possess data or can it acquire data which would compare the percentage of those who enroll as first graders at Kipp Helena to the numbers of those first graders who ultimately graduate from Kipp Helena? The reasons for seeking such information, we believe, are obvious.

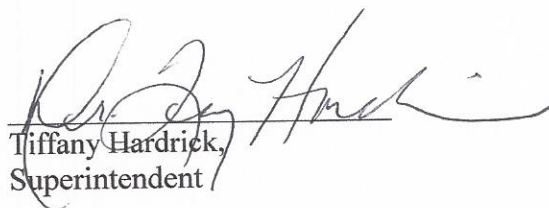
Please consider this letter in your deliberations. We further respectfully request that it be included not only in the record before the charter authorizing panel but as part of the record for any appeal or consideration by the Arkansas State Board of Education.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,



Joey Astin,
Chairman of the Board of Directors
of the Forrest School District and



Tiffany Hardrick,
Superintendent