

LYNN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
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Catherine C. Latham, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

To the Commissioner and Members of the Board of Education:

I write in opposition to the K-4 expansion request of the KIPP Academy Charter School in Lynn. My opposition is not based on political or philosophical reasons but rather on the simple fact that any expansion by KIPP in Lynn would put a serious strain on the Lynn Public Schools' efforts to find adequate space to house its rapidly expanding enrollment and would create an unbalanced competition for the very limited building and land space available in Lynn.

Since October 2010, the Lynn Public Schools' enrollment has increased by approximately 13%, an increase that averages 355 new students each and every year. The KIPP expansion plans involve adding 120 students per year and will provide little if any relief for the Lynn Public Schools. As a result of our unforeseen and relentless expansion, schools are experiencing a severe shortage of classroom space. Two years ago three of our nineteen elementary schools were overcrowded to the point that all ten kindergarten classrooms in those schools had to be moved to space in the Lynn Vocational Technical Institute (LVTI) displacing school administrative offices. This year, four substantially separate special education classrooms in yet another elementary school were moved to the same LVTI space. Our school buildings are unable to house our ever increasing enrollment with no relief in sight.

Next year our situation will be dire, and we expect overcrowded conditions to seriously increase classroom size. We are desperately looking for land to build schools and rental properties that are adaptable for school use. Although we have one middle school currently under construction, and we continue to apply to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), our current focus has been on middle schools to prevent the possibility of double sessions, a possibility that is more and more threatening with time.

KIPP is fortunate to be able to control their enrollment and, with their considerable financial backing, to be able to purchase, lease and expand school sites without the burden of municipal procurement laws and financial limitations and dependence on the MSBA.

To support their planned expansion, KIPP will be using what precious little building and land space is available in Lynn. Their expansion calls for 120 kindergarten students in 2016, however they will, no doubt, be purchasing space that will be able to support their proposed 600 student expansion. Allowing KIPP to purchase space that the Lynn Public Schools desperately needs puts our students in at risk. Unlike KIPP the Lynn Public School system does not have a waitlist from which to fill empty slots. We must accept and find a seat for everyone who enrolls.

I implore you to put the KIPP Academy Charter School expansion request temporarily on hold until the Lynn Public School district shows considerable reduction in their expansion rate and has had time to explore classroom space options without unfair and uneven competition.

Very truly yours,

Catherine C. Latham, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools