



Search for the Chief Schools Officer
KIPP Columbus
Columbus, Ohio

KIPP Columbus, the only set of KIPP schools in Ohio, seeks a seasoned and innovative Chief Schools Officer (CSO). This role reports to the Executive Director and serves as a member of the Executive Leadership Team. The CSO's most important roles are driving student performance results by executing the academic strategy and plan, building a cohesive, joyful, and academically rigorous K-12 school culture, and driving the progress of all KIPP Columbus Schools.

The CSO will collaborate with the leaders across KIPP Columbus to ensure its five schools are places where students thrive and succeed. With school leaders serving as critical agents in accomplishing the organization's mission and vision, the CSO ensures the Executive Director and School Support Team is well positioned to support, develop, and evaluate school leaders in leading joyful and academically excellent schools. The CSO will be the primary owner of the academic vision and responsible for delivering outcomes that meet and, over time, exceed the best public schools in the country. The CSO will have the freedom to think big and reimagine what excellent schools look like through a deeper lens of antiracism, excellence, and joy. Together, KIPP Columbus leaders will ensure students have the skills and confidence they need to be successful in college, career, and beyond.

KIPP Columbus is in a growth phase with sights set on growing from 2,000 students to serving nearly 4,000 students. In the coming years, KIPP Columbus will continue to advance student learning, expand partnerships, enable superior programming, and serve as a teaching and leadership lab for schools nationwide. With this context, the CSO role requires a systems-level strategic thinker and builder ready to support growth. The CSO will bring experience managing school leaders to achieve outstanding academic results for students from economically disadvantaged communities. They will approach all issues with an explicit values-based lens and bring a skill set that includes getting to the root of adaptive challenges and tackling equity issues manifested at the systemic level. The CSO will seek opportunities to grow in their understanding of transformative pedagogy and culture; most importantly, they will share their power and value diverse perspectives from those they serve.

Isaacson, Miller, a national search firm, is assisting KIPP Columbus in this recruitment. All

inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

PAST AND PRESENT

KIPP

KIPP, the Knowledge Is Power Program, is a national network of 278 tuition-free public schools educating 120,000 students in grades Prek-12 across 21 states and Washington, DC. The network includes 16,500 educators and 190,000 students and alumni across the country.

Following the instability and prolonged remote learning of the pandemic, which impacted schools and school systems across the country, KIPP is now focused on returning to the academic success it achieved pre-pandemic, including providing additional learning support to address the learning loss during the COVID years. KIPP leadership has created a strategy, One KIPP, to center its model on academic excellence grounded in joy and identity affirmation to become the best K-12 system in the country. One KIPP encourages the network to move together with shared ownership, measuring outcomes that matter most, and accountability to deliver on progress.

KIPP Columbus

KIPP Columbus, the only KIPP district in Ohio, opened in 2008 with 50 students in the 5th grade in a leased building from the local school district – Columbus City Schools. Driven by a desire to enroll students at a younger age and expand to serve additional grades, in 2014, KIPP Columbus built a campus reflective of students' potential and aspirations on the 150 acres of a former golf course in Northeast Columbus. KIPP Columbus now educates nearly 2,000 students in grades K-12 across six buildings: Early Learning Center, Primary, Elementary, Middle, and High School, with an expanded addition of the Battelle Environmental Center that supports hands-on STEM education.

During its growth, KIPP has remained committed to creating joyful and academically excellent schools. For three years, KIPP earned the Ohio Department of Education Momentum Award for surpassing student academic growth goals. Every student in their first four classes of seniors (class of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023) was accepted to college and/or military service and earned significant scholarships. KIPP Columbus has seen incredible growth in early literacy (K-2) programming, with 84% of kindergarten, 82% of first grade, and 72% of second-grade students ending the 2022-2023 school year on grade level — the highest results in KIPP Columbus history.

In addition to academic excellence, KIPP Columbus partners with more than 100 community organizations to provide extracurricular activities, programming, mental health services, an on-site Nationwide Children's Hospital health clinic, free summer camps, and programming. KIPP is also a member of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, offering more than ten varsity sports.

THE HEART OF KIPP COLUMBUS

KIPP Columbus was founded together with families and communities to prepare students with the skills and confidence to pursue the paths they choose to lead fulfilling lives and create a more just world. At the heart of this mission are 2,000 students, 100% of whom receive free breakfast and lunch, 16% who are identified as having special needs, 4% English Language Learners, and 95% who identify as students of color. Students are accepted by lottery, regardless of where they live or which school they currently attend.

For the 2024-25 academic year, 240 staff have committed to developing students' knowledge, skills, and character in rigorous, safe, joyful, and personalized learning environments. KIPP Columbus provides ongoing developmental support for teachers and staff through comprehensive professional development, including dedicating Friday afternoons to instructional training and support.

KIPP Columbus is sponsored by the [Thomas B. Fordham Foundation](#) and supported by an independent, dedicated, and well-versed ten-member board of directors. The board provides fiduciary oversight for the schools and collaborates closely with the Executive Director. Regular board meetings are public. The board is proud to report strong financial stewardship, including no debt for constructing the KIPP Columbus campus, which affords the school ample resources and a healthy budget.

Ciji Pittman, Executive Director

With nearly twenty years of experience as an educator, Ciji joined KIPP Columbus in 2020 and is in her third year as executive director, having previously served as the Head of Schools. Ciji's leadership at KIPP Columbus is marked by exponential growth, with the opening of the Primary School in 2023 and the Elementary School in 2024.

Ciji began her career as a history and civics teacher in Atlanta Public Schools through Teach For America. Selected for the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship, Ciji went on to found and serve as the Head of School of a charter elementary school in Memphis, Tennessee. From then on, she continuously sought opportunities to increase her impact across diverse settings from Wisconsin to St. Louis. Before joining the KIPP Columbus team,

Ciji served as the founding President of Schools for a national network of schools where she oversaw a network of 15 primary and secondary schools across three states.

Ciji holds a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Affairs and African American Studies from the University of Virginia and a JD from the University of Chicago Law School. She was a founding participant in the Relay National Principals Academy and the Relay Principal Supervisors Academy, and a 2017-18 Leverage Leadership Institute Fellow. She also serves as a Relay National Principals Academy Fellow Advisor, supporting the growth and development of leaders nationwide.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE CHIEF SCHOOLS OFFICER

The Role

This is an exciting and consequential moment for a new leader to join KIPP Columbus. The CSO will be responsible for setting the academic vision, driving student performance, and championing systems and a culture grounded in equity. The CSO will be an energetic, accessible, and supportive advisor to colleagues, including the executive team, which includes the executive director, chief of staff, chief operating officer, and chief people officer. The CSO will model accountability and steady, transparent, and responsive leadership that supports a high-performing work culture and outstanding results.

Direct reports to the CSO include the managing director of K-5 education; the director of curriculum, data, and assessment; the senior director of student services; and each school leader for the Sixth-Grade Academy, Middle, and High schools.

It is expected that the CSO will have the ability to address a set of opportunities and challenges that include, but are not limited to:

Define and execute on a forward-thinking academic vision that is bold and lasting.

As an innovative academic leader with deep expertise in education, the CSO will develop and implement a groundbreaking academic strategy and programs across all KIPP Columbus schools to achieve exceptional academic outcomes, high-quality teaching, and educational equity. Collaborating with KIPP Columbus colleagues, the CSO will craft a lasting and replicable academic vision that will have a broad impact on future generations of students. They will design forward-thinking approaches to teaching and learning while remaining adaptable to external changes. This role includes managing change to align teachers, instructional staff, and leaders with the instructional vision, as well as providing coaching, training, and tools to ensure effective implementation of curriculum and instructional programs. To drive success, the CSO will

leverage data to refine strategies and stay at the forefront of innovative practices in education and school design.

Build school culture and systems grounded in equity.

The CSO will join a committed team of colleagues dedicated to fostering a joyful, equitable, and academically focused learning environment for students. Following the challenges of remote teaching during COVID and the addition of new teachers and leaders over the past year, there is an opportunity to strengthen and reaffirm a positive, inclusive culture across KIPP Columbus schools. The CSO will be a visible presence in the schools, actively listening and learning to understand each school's unique culture, approaches, and priorities while driving improvement and innovation. They will clarify roles and responsibilities, empower decision-making that prioritizes academic excellence, and implement strong performance management practices. Engaging directly with families, students, and teachers, the CSO will stay informed on innovative strategies to enhance school culture and support continuous improvement.

Build equitable systems for instructional leadership development and support.

Aligned with the ethos of "One KIPP," the CSO will develop and refine systems for professional development and performance management, grounded in clear accountability measures. These systems will cultivate a shared responsibility for students' academic success across KIPP Columbus and promote the retention of high-performing teachers and staff. Serving as an active coach for principals, the CSO will align resources, tailor training, and provide timely feedback to school leaders and instructional support staff, ensuring teachers receive the support they need. The CSO will celebrate achievements and prioritize meeting the needs of instructional leaders working with multilingual learners and students with special needs, fostering growth and excellence across the organization.

QUALIFICATIONS

While no individual will possess all qualifications in equal measure, the successful candidate will bring many of the following experiences and values to the role:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year institution, plus 3-5 years of proven teaching excellence.
- Minimum 5 years of experience in a school leader/principal role with a record of achieving outstanding academic results for students from traditionally under-resourced communities or populations.
- Minimum 5 years of experience managing and/or coaching school

leaders/principals to drive student academic results.

- An unwavering commitment to academic excellence.
- A track record of systematically and successfully transforming schools as an executive-level leader in a school system or institution dedicated to innovative teaching and learning.
- Deep knowledge and experience in the design, integration, implementation, and management of school systems, including knowledge of teaching and learning, instructional practices, school culture, school operations and management, and teacher and leader development.
- Ability to set a clear vision and aligned priorities, develop strategic plans, and empower others to achieve them.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in exceptional people leadership and management, including selection and hiring, coaching and development, managing and improving performance, building an inclusive and effective culture, and retention and promotion of top performers.
- Drives to action, delivers results—ensures work is getting done; proactively recognizes and addresses hurdles; thinks beyond just “the work today” and incorporates that perspective into the planning and execution.
- Adept at giving and receiving feedback, managing conflict, goal setting, decision-making, and holding others accountable.
- Strong organization and planning skills, with the ability to work urgently and independently in a fast-paced and results-oriented environment.
- Excellent communicator who is highly prized for transparency.
- Demonstrated track record of leading with a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusivity, and anti-racism.
- A joyful, can-do attitude that inspires others into action.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

KIPP Columbus offers a competitive salary and comprehensive benefits plan that includes medical and dental insurance, group term life insurance, a retirement plan, and paid time off.

The Chief Schools Officer is a full-time role based in Columbus, Ohio. This individual is expected to be available to work outside traditional hours and travel occasionally regionally and nationally.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover

letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search:
<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/kipp-columbus/chief-schools-officer>

Amy Segal, Partner
Berlinda Mojica, Senior Associate
Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

KIPP Columbus is committed to equal treatment for all individuals applying to the school for consideration of any position (admission, employment, etc.). KIPP Columbus does not discriminate on the basis of disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 4112.02 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Isaacson, Miller and KIPP Columbus are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.