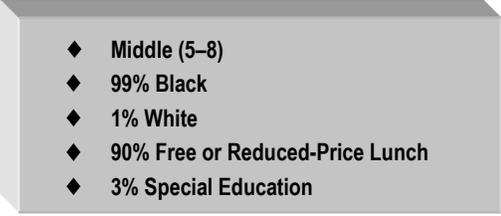


KIPP Delta College Preparatory School

514 Missouri Street
Helena-West Helena, AR 72342
Executive Director: Scott Shirey

One of four KIPP schools operating in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, Delta College Preparatory School opened in 2002 with the goal of offering a choice of educational opportunities for families in the region. To recruit students during the school's first year of operation, the principal went door-to-door informing parents about the new school's

longer school day and year and providing them with enrollment materials. All of the students who enrolled into the initial class have since graduated from high school and earned acceptance into four-year postsecondary programs.

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- ◆ Middle (5–8)
 - ◆ 99% Black
 - ◆ 1% White
 - ◆ 90% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
 - ◆ 3% Special Education

The school uses three primary strategies to help all students succeed:

- **High expectations:** All staff consistently communicate to students that they are capable and expected to be successful.
- **Increased learning time:** A longer school day, Saturday instruction sessions, and mandatory summer school provide students with opportunities for remediation and extracurricular enrichment.
- **Committed staff:** The school recruits talented teachers and provides professional development and leadership opportunities as incentives for retention.

These strategies have helped build a culture in which all students are encouraged to pursue a college education and students and teachers work together as a team to achieve academic goals. Staff members at the school have also worked to develop a sense of family. Teachers and administrators continue to stay in touch with students throughout high school and college.

High Expectations

At Delta College Preparatory, students consistently receive feedback designed to reinforce the idea that there are no “smart” or “dumb” students, but rather, “students who work hard” and “students who have not worked hard yet.” Accordingly, students set and work toward personal academic goals each year. To help students meet their goals and improve their chances for success, the school regularly adjusts instruction to better meet students’ needs. For example, when a survey showed that a large number of students had not mastered decoding skills, the school responded by adding a phonics program to the curriculum and restructuring English language arts classes to center almost entirely on discussion. The discussion-based classes allow students to work together in building meaning from an article, novel, or other text, so even the students who struggled with the text can contribute. In this supportive environment, advanced

students who have no problem understanding the article can still improve their skills, learning to defend their own ideas and address others' opinions.

Increased Learning Time

On average, students enter Delta College Preparatory two grade levels behind in reading and math. The school extended the traditional school day by two hours, to allow for longer blocks of instruction in these core subjects and to provide students with additional enrichment opportunities.

The school day begins at 7:30 a.m., and the principal greets students as they arrive for in-class breakfast and a Morning Work session in which they review the previous day's lessons. This is followed by targeted small-group literacy and math instruction blocks with students divided based on level of mastery or common gaps as determined by monthly assessments. While a traditional school would dismiss students at 2:30 p.m., Delta College Preparatory extends academic instruction by an hour and then releases students to their chosen extracurricular activities. The extracurriculars, which include athletics, drama, music, art, leadership skills, and hands-on science and engineering activities, are meant to provide students with greater exposure to educational opportunities not typically available in the region. The main assumption is that this exposure will raise students' interest in learning and help them discover their talents.

For students that have gaps in core academic subjects, additional targeted study sessions substitute extracurricular enrichment. While the school day ends at 4:00 p.m., many students stay to receive additional tutoring and academic support or participate in sports and recreational activities. To encourage regular attendance at these activities, the school provides transportation for nearly 90% of students. Students are also expected to attend Saturday instruction on a regular basis, as well as participate in a mandatory three-week summer school to receive additional academic support.

Each year, the school conducts eight Field Lessons per grade. According to the principal, these educational field trips are important learning opportunities for students, and help students understand that "the world is our classroom." The last field trip of the year is a weeklong event, with a specific educational purpose. For example, seventh graders visit colleges in Boston, and eighth graders take part in a southern civil rights tour.

Committed Staff

According to KIPP Delta Executive Director, Scott Shirey, rural geography makes human capital the number one issue in building effective schools in the nearby area. In recent years, people have left the Delta region seeking better education for their families and better job opportunities. This shifting population leaves KIPP Delta with the challenge of attracting and retaining high-quality teachers.

The district draws on both veteran teachers from the community and Teach for America teachers who they believe will benefit the school and the community as a whole. KIPP Delta provides professional development and enrichment opportunities for staff and gives staff a voice in decision making. The school has built a culture where all teachers are committed to rigorous instruction and continuous use of (formal and informal) assessments and student data in instructional decision making.

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