

Excerpt from Kindezi Schools – School Turnaround Partnerships RFQ

Organization Governance & Structure

The Kindezi School is comprised of two campuses and a school support center. The Executive Director of the school support center oversees the performance of all campuses and is ultimately accountable to the Kindezi Board of Directors for the success of The Kindezi School. The Executive Director coaches, evaluates, and develops the campus principals and provides the vision and leadership for the organization as a whole (resume included as Appendix 1A).

The school support center staff provides leadership and support services to each campus, including financial and operational oversight, curriculum development, leadership coaching, resource development and outreach, and overall organizational support. Additional capacity for this team and each campus is provided as needed through contracts with service providers.

The Kindezi School is governed by the Kindezi Board of Directors, to whom the Executive Director reports. The board is a local, autonomous entity comprised of community and parent representatives who represent an array of affiliations and areas of expertise including finance, non-profit management, charter operation, education, law and related skills sets. The board provides financial and organizational oversight, as well as evaluation and support for the Executive Director.

The board is currently comprised of 10 members and capped at 15. Directors engage in outreach to recruit and vet director candidates when vacancies and/or gaps arise (which would include representation from the community for a new campus if one were to be added to the school). The executive director is a nonvoting member who participates largely as primary liaison to the school.

Core Values & Mission

Through academic rigor and student-centered approaches to learning, Kindezi will optimally develop the leader, scholar, and artist in all students while instilling in each a love of learning and a sense of pride. Inspired by the principles and practice of the Bantu people of Kongo, Africa, the Kindezi model is a commitment to the collective responsibility for the cognitive, social/emotional, and physical development modeled by the Bantu in principles and practices that have been demonstrated to be successful throughout the school's first five years.

The Kindezi model Pillars are:

I. Holistic mission

If we want our children to succeed, we must focus on more than test scores. We also focus on character, socio-emotional development, physical health, creativity, and general happiness. We believe that all of these are critical elements to becoming truly free adults who can achieve their dreams.

II. Family-sized classes of six to eight students

This principle allows for maximum differentiation, Socratic tutorial, and close, positive relationships between students, teachers, families and administrators.

III. Investing in teachers

In order to ensure high quality teaching, we engage in a highly selective hiring process, summer teacher training, four hours per week of professional development, weekly teacher coaching, and a competitive promotion/salary structure designed to retain determined and talented teachers.

IV. Challenge and support

Our culture partners rigorous expectations with caring, individualized support. Research shows that one without the other is not optimal. We love our students while always pushing them to be their very best selves.

V. Extra learning time

After school tutorial and summer learning camp are required for students who perform below grade level. Our studios also provide students with extra time to begin to master a non-academic skill such as computer coding or music. There are no short cuts. Excellence in any field requires an investment of time.

VI. Promotion of racial and socioeconomic diversity

Atlanta is a diverse city but many of its schools are not. We believe our model is one where all children can thrive together and learn from one another that the differences that divide us are only superficial. We seek to promote a more integrated city with each of our schools.

These practices have allowed Kindezi to provide urban Atlanta students with access to an educational framework that has consistently delivered superior results.

Gideons Elementary's 2014 CCRPI was 48.2, and the 2015 Milestones scores were in the bottom fifth percentile for the state. The school is currently under-enrolled for the capacity of the facility, and there is a larger population in the attendance zone that opts to send students to private schools or out of zone due to Gideons Elementary's low performance. Gideons Elementary is the first choice as a partner for Kindezi turnaround because of the potential for Kindezi's model at the school, the relationships established within that community by the Kindezi Executive Director, and the interest of some parents in the Gideons Elementary attendance zone in the Kindezi model.

Qualifications & Capacity

Kindezi has proven its capacity to achieve its goals as one of the highest performing schools on the 2015 Georgia Milestones and in previous years' CCRPI. The elementary school was recognized as one of the 12 APS schools with 80 percent or more students scoring above the "Developing" designation, and the middle school was among seven APS schools with over 80 percent. Kindezi's 2014 CCRPI was 82.7 and its School Climate Star Rating was a 5. Both the percentage of students who passed the CRCT and the average score increased from 2013 to 2014. Kindezi's 2013 CCRPI score of 87.2 was one of the highest in APS, with Kindezi students out-performing their peers in the district and state in every grade level and content area tested. Kindezi has earned the GADOE's "beating the odds" designation for each year such designation has been made available.

These results align both with the Atlanta Public Schools strategic plan and the community served by Gideons Elementary School. The strong, positive culture at The Kindezi School, as demonstrated by the School Climate Star rating and stakeholder survey data, exemplifies the school culture Atlanta Public Schools describes as a goal for all schools in its strategic plan. The academic program at Kindezi has been demonstrated to effect significant growth and superlative assessment outcomes with a student population that is under-performing in peer schools, as demonstrated by high CCRPI scores in each year of operation and a population that, at 70 percent FRL, is similar to APS's population as a whole. The community engagement principle of Kindezi and the potential for increased enrollment from the attendance zone also align with the APS culture strategy.

Track Record

The Kindezi School has grown from a single campus serving 212 students in 2014-2015 to a two-campus school with more than 660 total students and over 700 more on the waiting list. The Old Fourth Ward

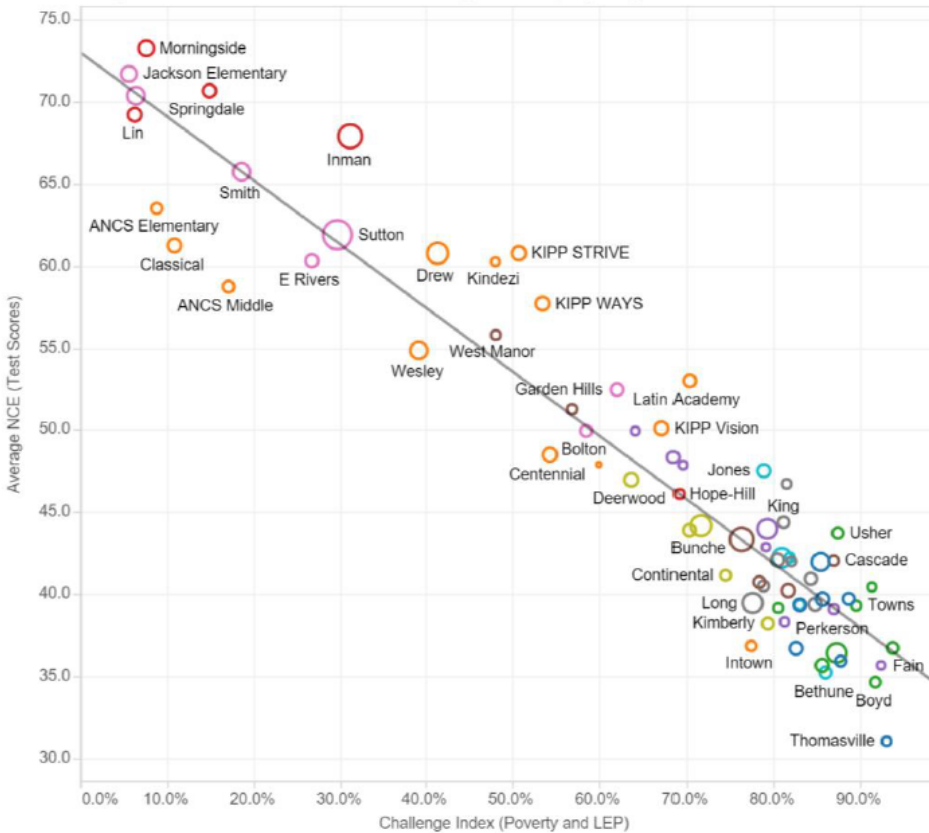
campus is the result of an agreement to provide preference to the students who attended the Intown Academy Charter, which was previously the occupant of the facility before its closure due to low performance at the end of 2015. Of the 220 eligible Intown Charter students, 131 opted to enroll at the Kindezi following the closure. Although this isn't a turnaround model, the opportunity to serve a cohort of students from a previously struggling school in the facility they previously attended presents some of the same challenges a turnaround will.

Already, data from the Old Fourth Ward campus indicates these strategies are successful. Despite a new school, the challenge of changing stakeholder expectations for more than half of the students who were previously enrolled under the prior charter, new curriculum, and new teachers, student performance already exceeds the goals set. After just 16 weeks of instruction, former Intown Academy Charter students had increased their reading and math scores by an average of .62 grade levels according to or internal NWEA MAP assessments. This indicates that not only have we ended their long decline to further and further behind, but we have also begun to help them to catch up to their on-grade-level peers. That was accomplished by 48 new teachers who are just now learning the Kindezi approach to instruction. As they become stronger and as our positive student culture becomes more established, the academic growth will accelerate until these students are all proficient or distinguished learners.

Added capacity to the school support team and resources like the school-wide curriculum ensure fidelity to the model that has achieved such high results even in a new setting. The refinement of a strong professional development and support program that is in process will be complete by the summer of 2016 to ensure that the school is ready to add a new campus. Most importantly, the growth of the flagship school and professional development approach has afforded a leadership pipeline that provides strong teacher leaders and school leaders who are poised to deliver on the promise of Kindezi at a turnaround site at Gideons Elementary.

According to the 2014 CCRPI, Kindezi School met the Subgroup Performance Targets and State Performance Targets for Black students in all five subject areas and for economically disadvantaged students in all subject areas except for ELA. As a means of comparison, the state met subgroup performance targets for African Americans in only two of the five subject areas. Georgia only met the Subgroup Performance Targets for ED students in reading and social studies and did not meet the State Performance Targets for economically disadvantaged students in any subject area. Gideons Elementary did not meet any of their Subgroup Performance Targets or State Performance Targets for Black students or economically disadvantaged students. In 2014, Kindezi elementary earned 7.7 of 10 possible Performance Points for economically disadvantaged/English Learner/Students With Disabilities, compared to the Georgia average of 3.7. In 2013, Kindezi Elementary earned a 7.6 of 10 possible Performance Points for economically disadvantaged/English Learner/Students With Disabilities, compared to the state average of 4.8. Gideons Elementary earned 0 of 10 possible Performance Points both years.

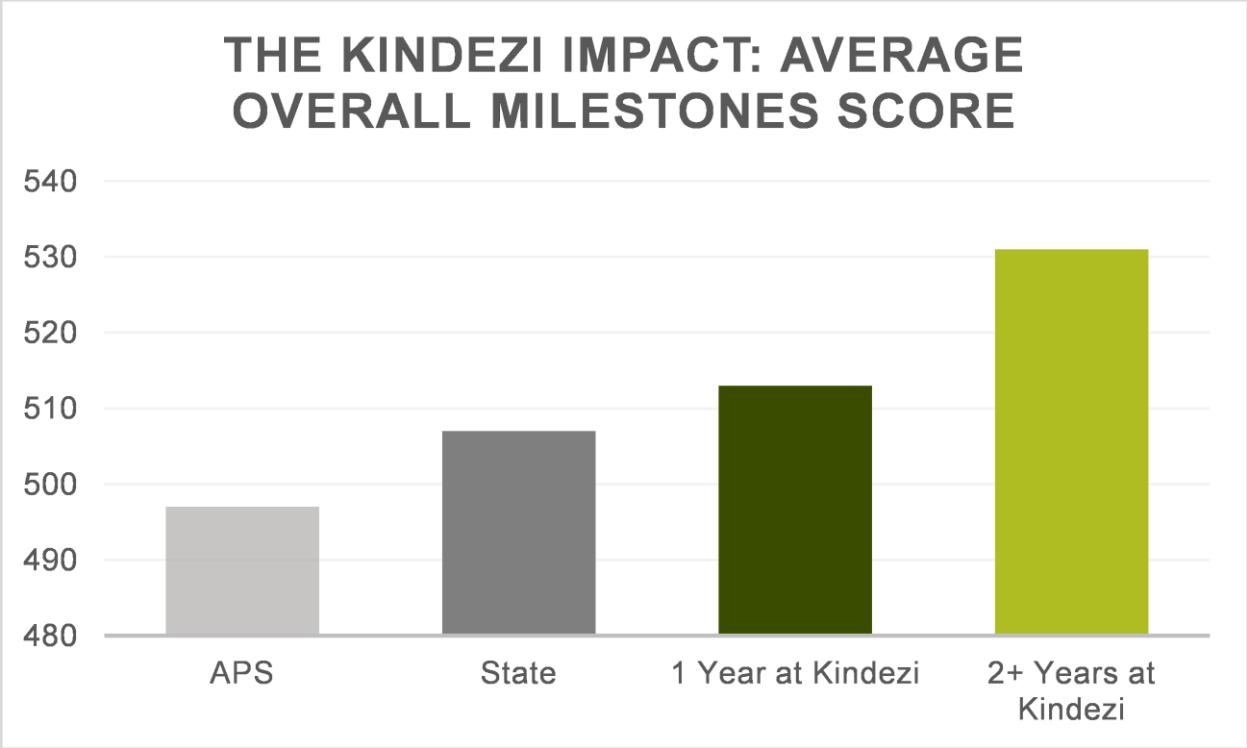
APS Average Milestones Scores vs Challenge Index, Spring 2015



As described in the responses to questions 2 and 4, Kindezi has a track record of more than five years of superlative student performance in state mandated assessments. The scatter diagram above indicates that Kindezi is out-performing similar district schools and is amongst the highest performing. In addition to out-performing the projection as based on the challenge index, Kindezi performs better than excellent charter schools with a lower challenge index, Atlanta Classical Academy or Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School. Furthermore, over 10 percent of the Kindezi student body has IEPs, which is not considered in this challenge index. Given that this percentage is higher than that of many other charters, Kindezi’s performance demonstrates the capacity to exceed expectations based on the challenge index, outperform similar schools, and effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.

All of these achievements translate to capacity to improve the performance at a school that enrolls a similar population.

The effect of the Kindezi model on student achievement is immediately demonstrable, and average gains for Kindezi students increase over their tenure at the school. Most students who enroll at Kindezi at any point after kindergarten enroll significantly below grade level. In fact, most parents of Kindezi students who enroll after kindergarten report that their interest in the program was initiated by their child’s lack of success in another public school. However, as demonstrated in the chart below, after just one year Kindezi students are already performing above the APS and Georgia state average. Once students have been at Kindezi for two years or more, student outcomes increase at a faster rate, achieving performance levels significantly above the APS and Georgia averages. This proves that the value-add of Kindezi’s program is immediate and continues to grow throughout students’ enrollment.



Ensuring Staff Effectiveness

With more than 120 staff members across the school’s two high-performing campuses and 5.5 years in operation, Kindezi has established indicators of effectiveness for teachers that have yielded strong student performance. Staff members are recruited through the school’s presence in job fairs and online job sites, as well as through the recommendation of staff. Offers are made based on mission alignment and demonstrated success in a similar school or with a similar population.

All staff members participate in an intensive five-week summer professional development session, during which curriculum and lesson plans are reviewed, instructional best practices are demonstrated and refined, and all staff work together to perfect the culture and instructional model of The Kindezi School.

Once school begins, every teacher has three hours of professional development weekly, wherein the assistant principal coaches teachers through review of student work and data and planning for the subsequent week.

Weekly observations are guided by the Observation Rubric (Appendix 1C), which outlines the five questions used to assess and develop teachers. The questions and indicators under each were developed by The New Teacher Project and supplemented by The Kindezi School to reflect its vision and approach to whole child development. The Kindezi Observation Rubric supplements the TKES teacher evaluation system to provide a comprehensive teacher assessment framework that informs professional development and coaching for every teacher to develop excellent teaching practice. Data considered in each teacher’s annual evaluation portfolio include the TKES artifacts, student performance data, 360 evaluation results, and survey data from parents and students. Feedback from peers, students, and parents is an important consideration in evaluating and developing the practice of every Kindezi teacher

because a strong teacher at Kindezi is both facilitating high student performance and modeling the eleven pillars.

The Kindezi School is also developing a teacher leadership pipeline designed to recognize teaching excellence and provide incentive for strong teachers to stay in the classroom. The five steps of The Kindezi School's Teacher Performance System consider a teacher's overall performance and evaluation across the year in order to recognize and reward high-performing teachers. All teachers, regardless of their experience prior to Kindezi, begin as New Teachers. Once a teacher has demonstrated the capacity to achieve the vision of the school, s/he is promoted to Teacher of Distinction, which includes a move into a higher salary bracket. Each subsequent level thereafter—Teacher Leader, Master Teacher, and Managing Partner—includes additional leadership responsibilities and a higher salary bracket. However, the goal of these designations is to keep a high-performing teacher in the classroom and as such, these leadership responsibilities will not supplant the role of classroom teacher.

Implementation

The Kindezi School recognizes that a turnaround at Gideons will present challenges of a higher magnitude in the first years of operation than that experienced at the current two campuses. Although some of the best practices in place at the current campuses are expected to mitigate some of these challenges, there are additional considerations the Gideons campus model would address in its opening years. Foundational elements of the Kindezi model, like the school-wide core curriculum adopted by each classroom, weekly professional development and collaborative planning for each teacher, family-sized classrooms that afford individual and small group instruction, and frequent use of assessments and data to inform intervention would all be the same. Because these foundational model elements have achieved the results as described herein, Kindezi School will supplement this model with additional strategies and supports, rather than supplant the model with a different approach.

Likewise, the Old Fourth Ward campus opened with some supplementary resources and supports to address the challenges of a new school within a facility that was previously low performing. Although this campus was officially a new school, more than half of the students from the prior charter enrolled at the new Kindezi site. In order to successfully serve that cohort, the model was supplemented in ways that would be adopted to the Gideons turnaround, including:

- Home visits for all new students
- Recruitment of community representation to vacancies on the board
- Frequent open houses and community meetings to share information and answer questions
- Tours and parent meeting groups for prospective parents to see the model in operation and ask questions of families currently enrolled

Support services will be rooted in the school's Differentiated Learning Plan or DLP, which is an annual plan individualized for every student. This plan is a collaboration among the student, his/her family, and teachers to ensure every student has the support systems in place necessary to realize annual goals. Supports may include everything from small groups for a target content area to regularly scheduled check-ins with the social worker. Additional partnerships with community entities and wrap-around service providers and the afterschool programming for academic and socio-emotional development featured in the Gideons turnaround model will also be considered in the development of each student's DLP.

Working With the School Community, Parents and Students

The Kindezi School would use the 2016-17 school year to recruit and develop the turnaround staff, build relationships with the community, and engage partners specific to the turnaround site. The principal and social worker responsible for engagement and outreach would begin their work in the planning year and begin offering innovations for engagement of prospective parents. This would include informational meetings and open houses at the existing campuses, afterschool and summer programming for current Gideons Elementary students, volunteer opportunities for prospective families, and professional development opportunities for prospective staff. The principal and social worker would also spend this year participating in community events, home visits, and collaborating with the current Gideons Elementary staff to begin to build the relationships that will be critical for successful turnaround. The original Kindezi petition was the vision of the community that campus serves, and the school will partner with the Gideons community for the planning year in alignment with the Kindezi principles in the same way.

The Kindezi School model is rooted in community and parent engagement. Relationships are an integral component of the six Kindezi Pillars and a primary focus for the approach to turnaround. Once the school is open, the small size of the classes and school as a whole easily facilitate close relationships between staff and students, their family, and their community. Students regularly work with community members and parents in service learning projects, tutorials, and experiential learning opportunities that fulfill the vision of a community responsibility for the development of Kindezi students. Through this partnership, parents and community members have continually been engaged not just in the founding of the school, but its ongoing growth. The board, which has initiated the growth of the school, is comprised of parents and community residents. Parents are also involved through their participation in the Differentiated Learning Plan (DLP) process (see Appendix 2A for a sample DLP), wherein teachers and families come together to create an instructional plan and goals for each student each year, as well as in weekly communication with teachers, regularly scheduled parental involvement programming (including workshops, family recreation, and outings), and co-leadership/hosting of community events.