

## **KIPP Houston Public Schools – Statement on Optional School Fees**

July 7, 2017 – As allowed by Texas state law, KIPP Houston collects optional fees for items such as reward field trips, after-school sports, and novels that students are able to keep. These fees are correctly identified as optional in the KIPP Houston Student Handbook. Each year, parents must sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understood the handbook.

At the end of the 2014-15 school year, an office staff member at the KIPP Sunnyside campus sent home a letter to parents mistakenly identifying some of these student fees as mandatory. This was an error in language, and did not reflect our policies, which have always been aligned with Texas Education Agency (TEA) rules and state law.

In May of 2015, a KIPP Sunnyside High School parent filed a complaint with TEA regarding the language in this letter. TEA opened an investigation in April 2016, and presented their findings and recommendations to KIPP Houston in December 2016. TEA found that the fees KIPP collected from parents were allowable under state law and worked with KIPP to ensure the communication to parents clearly matched the policy already in place in the KIPP Houston Student Handbook. We corrected the KIPP Sunnyside campus letter as soon as TEA brought it to our attention.

As part of their review, TEA looked at other practices related to fees, and found that the way in which KIPP Houston was buying school uniforms up front and offering them to families was unallowable. Since its inception as a Houston ISD public charter school, KIPP Houston has sold uniforms directly to families, as a way of providing more affordable and even free uniforms as needed by our families. TEA informed us that if we wanted to continue this practice, we must also explicitly offer families the option to purchase uniforms directly from a vendor of the family's choosing. We have amended our policies and practices to allow for this option.

On June 29, 2017, the Houston Chronicle published an article about the TEA investigation. The headline and article initially reported that KIPP Houston had collected millions of dollars in unallowable fees. This was an incorrect interpretation of the TEA's findings. On July 5, the Houston Chronicle posted a corrected version of the [article](#) online retracting the inaccurate statement about millions of dollars in unallowable fees.

Prior to the 2016-17 school year, KIPP Houston put new protocols in place to ensure that all school communication with parents is aligned with the KIPP Houston Student Handbook. Beginning in the summer of 2016, a member of KIPP Houston's executive team has reviewed all letters regarding student fees distributed to parents at our 28 KIPP Houston schools, to ensure that the language is aligned with our handbook and clearly communicates that student fees for the above and beyond items and services are optional.

KIPP is committed to open and effective communication with our students and families. We always strive to improve and will continue to address communication issues as swiftly and respectfully as possible.