

JB Blood building will house KIPP kindergarten

By Thor Jourgensen / The Daily Item | Posted: Wednesday, May 27, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — The Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP Academy) will open a 120-student kindergarten in a Wheeler Street building in August as part of the charter school's long-term plan to offer K-12 education in Lynn.

KIPP signed a lease for the JB Blood building's fourth floor, and part of the third floor with plans for the space to include five classrooms, offices and a "cafegymnasium."

"It's a great location in the heart of Lynn. We are really pleased with it," said KIPP Executive Director Caleb Dolan.

A nationwide charter school program, KIPP began educating Lynn children in 2004 and currently educates 850 students in grades 5-12 in a \$22 million school opened in the Highlands in 2011.

It received state Board of Education approval earlier this year to add a 736-student elementary school, beginning with a kindergarten this fall, and adding first through fourth grades over the next four years.

Although it is initially leasing, Dolan said KIPP has long-term plans to acquire elementary school space.

The city Economic Development and Industrial Corporation owns the JB Blood building on Wheeler Street and Director James Cowdell said KIPP's one-year lease calls for EDIC to renovate space for the school's needs with the expense associated with the build-out recouped through lease payments.

Cowdell said the Lynn School Department has been a prior Blood Building tenant and said the space KIPP picked to lease was previously considered for use but rejected by the School Department.

School Superintendent Catherine Latham opposed KIPP's expansion proposal, claiming it forced the public schools to compete with KIPP to obtain space to ease school overcrowding. She confirmed school officials looked at space in the Blood Building, but said "it is not conducive to the needs of the Lynn Public Schools at this time."

Dolan said KIPP opened its first Massachusetts kindergarten program in Boston this year and said the Lynn program will focus on "joyful" learning.

"There will be a literary emphasis — it's the leverage for everything else," Dolan said.

He said classes will include music and science-oriented programs with a school day starting at 7:30 a.m. and lasting past 2 p.m. Dolan said the extended school day for kindergartners has paid dividends

in Boston KIPP with 93 percent of kindergartners “testing above the national average in reading.”

“They will be as academically proficient as kids anywhere,” he said.