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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 5, 2011

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The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

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**KIPP ASPIRE ACADEMY HONORED AS 'SCHOOLS TO WATCH'**

*Middle School to be Honored Tomorrow Friday by The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform*

**San Antonio, TX** – KIPP Aspire Academy has been named as one of eleven schools in Texas as “Schools to Watch” as part of a recognition program developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. In partnership with education leaders in Texas, the Forum will recognize KIPP Aspire Academy tomorrow Friday for meeting its strict criteria.

Media and community members are invited to attend the recognition ceremony and presentation of Schools To Watch banner to School Director, Joyce Boubel. The ceremony will take place at KIPP Aspire Academy’s gymnasium, **735 Fredericksburg Rd. (78201) at 3:00 p.m., Friday, May 6, 2011.**

KIPP Aspire Academy was selected by state leaders for its academic excellence, its responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents, and its commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels. In addition, KIPP Aspire Academy has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement.

Linda Hopping, Chair of the National Forum’s Schools to Watch Oversight Committee stated, “These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools have a clear focus on academic growth and achievement. They also recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensuring that each and every child has access to a rigorous, high-quality education. We are proud to have these schools serve as models from which others can learn.”

Selection is based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the Forum. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by state teams who observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and looked at achievement data, suspension rates, quality of lessons, and student work. Schools are recognized for a three-year period, and at the end of three years must repeat the process in order to be re-designated.

"We are pleased that our Schools to Watch program has shown that schools can meet high academic expectations while preserving a commitment to healthy development and equity for all students," said Dr. Deborah Kasak, Forum executive director. "These Schools to Watch are indeed special; they make education so exciting that students and teachers don't want to miss a day. These schools have proven that it is possible to overcome barriers to achieving excellence, and any middle-grades school in any state can truly learn from their examples," Kasak said.

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle-grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 criteria developed by the Forum. The Forum web site (<http://www.schoolstowatch.org>) features detailed information about the selection criteria. The STW process provided the framework for the successful Investing in Innovation (i3) Development grant received in October 2010 from the U. S. Department of Education. The National Forum's "The Schools to Watch: School Transformation Network" concentrates on assisting 18 persistently low performing middle grades schools in CA, IL and NC.

In 2002, the Forum began working with states to replicate the Schools to Watch program as a way to introduce the Forum's criteria for high-performance and identify middle grades schools that meet or exceed that criteria. Different education organizations have taken the lead in each state, but all have received training and support from the Forum to implement their Schools to Watch programs. All together, nineteen states are currently involved in the program and the addition of KIPP Aspire Academy raises the total number of Schools to Watch to 287 nationwide.

The National Forum sponsors the Schools to Watch state program with the support of its members and the State Schools to Watch programs. Schools will convene at the Schools to Watch Conference in the Washington, DC area June 23-25, 2011. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform is an alliance of 50 educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle grades.

KIPP San Antonio is a network of college preparatory public schools serving students inside Loop 410. KIPP Aspire Academy is KIPP San Antonio's flagship school that opened in 2003. It is a Recognized campus (TEA) and has received "Exemplar" recognition from the Texas High School Project and the Texas Center for Student Success (UT-Austin). The founding class of "KIPPsters" are graduating from high school this May 2011 and have been accepted into colleges ranging from Claremont-McKenna (CA) to Vassar College (NY) and UTSA to Northwestern University (IL). For more information, please visit [www.kippsa.org](http://www.kippsa.org).

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**National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform**  
**"Schools to Watch"**

**TEXAS**

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New

Alexander Middle School, Pearland

Bradley Middle School, San Antonio

Bush Middle School, San Antonio

Chapa Middle School, Kyle

Chisholm Trail Middle School, Rhome

Dawson Middle School, Southlake

Eastwood Middle School, El Paso

**KIPP Aspire Academy, San Antonio**

Lone Oak Middle School, Lone Oak

Pershing Middle School, Houston

Wester Middle School, Frisco