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**ALBANY MIDDLE SCHOOLS FLUNK,  
SAY ALBANY PARENTS IN NEW SURVEY**

**PARENTS READY TO SWITCH TO  
KIPP TECH VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL**

An overwhelming majority of Albany's public-school parents give Albany's middle schools low grades, and would transfer out if given the opportunity, according to a new independent survey. A substantial share of Albany's parents would transfer their children to the proposed KIPP Tech Valley Charter School, slated to open in September 2005.

Seventy-one percent of public-school parents in Albany rate the city's middle schools as "mediocre" or "low quality." Among current middle-school parents, an even higher 84 percent are dissatisfied.

In a striking contrast, almost 80 percent of Albany middle-school parents have a favorable opinion of the proposed KIPP Tech Valley Charter School and many would consider switching. A remarkable 73 percent of Albany public-school parents indicated that they will consider sending their child to the proposed KIPP Tech Valley Charter School once their child is old enough, clearly suggesting the charter school will have a long waiting list of potential students. This school, which has drawn favorable comment from Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, is expected to receive state approval to open in September 2005.

"Parents, by wide margins, clearly are looking for alternatives to Albany's middle schools," observed Tom Carroll, project director of the Brighter Choice Public School Choice Project.

According to the survey, 65 percent of Albany parents support the creation of additional charter schools in Albany, with only 25 percent opposed. Support climbs to 72 percent among African-American parents and 74 percent among low-income parents.

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A lower, but still substantial, number of Albany public-school parents think the school district itself should start opening charter schools. Fifty-seven percent of Albany parents think the Albany school district itself should start creating charter schools as a way to expand options available to parents, a step embraced in recent months by the New York City and Buffalo school districts. Locally, Assemblyman Jack McEneny has suggested in the past that the Albany school district convert Giffen Memorial Elementary School into a charter school.

In the survey, Albany parents voiced strong support for allowing parents from throughout the city to send their children to the planned Kelton Court Middle School. Presently, the city is divided generally into two middle-school attendance zones, with students south of Western Avenue assigned to Hackett Middle School and students north of Western Avenue assigned to Livingston Magnet Academy. Seventy-six percent of Albany parents favor allowing students from throughout the city of Albany, including its poorest neighborhoods, to attend the new Kelton Court Middle School, rather than restricting enrollment as a zoned neighborhood school.

Among the school features that Albany parents overwhelmingly favor are: more emphasis on reading skills (99%); zero tolerance of drugs (97%), stronger student discipline (94%); computers in every classroom (94%), foreign language instruction beginning in kindergarten (94%), smaller schools (91%), new school buildings (89%), summer classes (77%); school uniforms (71%); a 9-5 school day (68%); and a longer school year (64%).

The survey was commissioned by the Brighter Choice Public School Choice Project as part of a series of public opinion surveys intended to measure parental views on public school options.

*the polling company, inc.*, based in Washington, D.C. and New York City, surveyed 234 public-school parents in the City of Albany from November 4 to November 26, 2003. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 6.2 percent at the 95.0 percent confidence level. Clients of *the polling company, inc.* include Major League Baseball, *Ladies Home Journal*, Microsoft Corporation, The Limited, Inc., and Court-TV.

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