Charter schools in Missouri have demonstrated the ability to outperform traditional public schools, and yet it is nearly impossible to open a charter school in most parts of the state. This comes at the cost of potentially higher academic achievement and college attendance for Missouri students. A new study on Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)—a charter school network that starts KIPP schools across the country—found that students enrolled in KIPP middle schools are more likely to eventually attend college than those who don't.

The study examined 13 KIPP middle schools that had more applicants than seats available, so researchers were able to track the kids who got into the KIPP schools and those that didn't. The groups of students are comparable because they all applied to KIPP schools, and thus have similar qualities like motivation and parental support. The results show that students enrolled in KIPP middle schools were 13 percent more likely to enroll in a 4-year college than students who did not. The study states that “. . . the impact of attending a KIPP school would be almost large enough to erase the nationwide racial disparity in college enrollment rates.”

Nationally, KIPP has 242 schools and serves more than 100,000 students. St. Louis currently has six KIPP schools, including two middle schools and a high school. Kansas City has just two,
including one middle school. There are so many more disadvantaged students outside of St. Louis and Kansas City who could benefit from a high-performing charter school like a KIPP school. With Missouri’s current charter school laws, only the three percent of Missouri students in the St. Louis City or Kansas City school districts even have the option to apply for lottery admissions to KIPP schools. Charter school expansion could bring effective schools to students all over the state, giving students in urban and rural areas access to quality education.

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Abigail Burrola graduated from Azusa Pacific University with a bachelor’s degree in political science in 2018.

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