

# QUALITATIVE SITE REVIEW REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KIPP DC – Connect Academy PCS (KIPP DC – Connect PCS) serves 323 students in grades prekindergarten-3 (PK3) through kindergarten in Ward 5. This campus opened in SY2013-14 at the Webb facility. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in November 2014 because KIPP DC is eligible to petition for 15-year Charter Renewal during the 2015-16 school year.

The QSR team conducted observations over the course of a two-week window, from November 10 through November 21, 2014. A team of two PCSB staff members and two consultants (including one special education consultant) conducted 17 observations. A PCSB staff member also attended a Board of Trustees meeting on September 17, 2014. The QSR team used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching Rubric* throughout the observations and observed classrooms in mornings and afternoons. In some instances a QSR team may have observed a teacher twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school's stated mission and goals.

The QSR team scored 74% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain with Creating an Environment of Respect and Establishing a Culture for Learning receiving the highest scores. In the distinguished and proficient observations, teachers and students had positive interactions characterized by warmth and politeness. Teachers had expectations for all students to participate in lessons in many observations. In a few observations teacher had difficulty managing behavior problems that arose during whole group lessons and small group work.

The QSR team scored 71% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain with Communication with Students and Using Assessment in Instruction receiving the highest scores. Teachers explained directions, expectations, and content in an accessible way to the students. Teachers also checked for understanding throughout whole group lessons and monitored the progress of small group activities in the distinguished and proficient observations.

The learning culture in each classroom demonstrated high expectations for all learners. Students worked together in groupings of mixed configurations: small groups with teachers, pairs for shared reading, and independently in centers. Two or more teachers assigned to each classroom helped to ensure that all students received close monitoring and individualized support as needed. Students with special needs were integrated with other students and supported in completing learning tasks assigned. A special education resource teacher assisted one student with special needs using the push-in, full inclusion model. Students used manipulatives and a variety of hands-on, developmentally appropriate materials to build conceptual knowledge and develop skills. Close supervision and support from teachers facilitated successful outcomes for all students.

**CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS**

This table summarizes KIPP DC: Connect Academy PCS’s goals and academic achievement expectations as detailed in its charter and subsequent Accountability Plans, and the evidence that the Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team observed during the Qualitative Site Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission:</p> <p>KIPP DC’s mission is to create and sustain the highest quality school system for the most underserved communities in Washington, DC. KIPP DC students will develop the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to become thoughtful, influential, and successful citizens in the competitive world.</p>	<p>The evidence gathered during this qualitative site review shows that Connect Academy is working to meet the KIPP DC mission.</p> <p><b><i>Create and sustain the highest quality school system</i></b></p> <p>KIPP DC – Connect PCS serves 323 students in grades prekindergarten-3 (PK3) through kindergarten and is housed in the same building as KIPP DC – Spring PCS. KIPP DC – Spring PCS currently serves grade 1 and will expand to serve through grade 4.</p> <p><b><i>Develop knowledge, skills, and character</i></b></p> <p>The QSR team saw that students were working to achieve academic and character goals throughout the school day. Classroom rules encouraged positive behavior such as being “kind and helpful to friends.” There was a school-wide emphasis on high academic expectations with the ultimate goal of going to college.</p> <p><b><i>Students become thoughtful, influential, and successful in the competitive world</i></b></p> <p>Students helped to lead the classrooms. One student led the transitions in his class without being prompted by a teacher. The principal continually had the pulse on every classroom through frequent check ins and rewards for students who were showing KIPP values: Love, Team, Grow, Joy.</p>
Goals	

<b>Mission and Goals</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Students will demonstrate academic proficiency at a performance level that makes students competitive for outstanding public or private secondary schools of their choice.	Teachers facilitated literacy groups for all student levels. Students participated in writing letters, sounding out words, and exploring stories. Teacher also monitored student understanding by taking notes during small group work. Small group work focusing on math concepts included hands on materials to explain the parts of a whole. The degree of rigor varied among classrooms and small groups within classrooms.
Students promoted from KIPP DC elementary schools are prepared to succeed in KIPP DC middle and high schools, as well as other competitive schools of their choice.	Students are encouraged to do their best. Signs reading, “This is important, You can do it, We believe in you!” hung in most classrooms and teachers reminded students that hard work can help you succeed. Teachers were also observed leading discussions on focus and commitment and positively narrated students demonstrating these traits.
Students will have high attendance rates (the school will maintain daily attendance of 93% or greater).	While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to attendance rate, most classrooms had very few empty seats.
Students will benefit from enrichment activities.	The QSR team did not observe any evidence related to this goal however leadership shared information with one consultant about a monthly Saturday Academy where students sign up for a topic they would like to study each semester.
Principals will create an educational program and foster a school environment that facilitates student academic and social improvement.	The principal instituted a creative workshop class for all of the grade levels. In the creative workshop class, students explore based on themes in the classroom. Classroom work focused on reading, writing, and math in small group and whole group instruction.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	The QSR team observed teachers issue blue/yellow tickets to students for good deeds that could be redeemed for school-wide rewards (e.g., take a picture with the principal, the principal makes phone call to family, and a student's name is written on the school values Wall of Fame). When students received a blue ticket they were allowed to visit the office to receive a reward.
The Principal will ensure the fiscal and physical sustainability of the school.	While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed any explicit evidence related to this goal there are expansion areas available for anticipated grade-level additions.
The Board will provide sufficient and effective support to school leaders.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
The school leader will create a culture among staff that facilitates professional growth.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
The school will create an environment in which parents will support and participate in their child's education.	School leadership shared information about parental engagement with one of the consultants. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend Saturday academy. There is a KIPP Parent Organization with a bulletin board in the main hallway of the school highlighting upcoming events and the school calendar. A few classrooms had parent boards and newsletters posted in the hallway. Parents were invited to volunteer in the classroom as room parents although the QSR team only observed parents during morning drop-off.
The school will create a safe environment in which to learn.	

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>Security guards for the Webb facility greeted each visitor at the main door, maintained a visitor log and monitored hallways. The school was welcoming and orderly with students and staff maintaining quiet and safe hallways. Expectations for student behavior were posted in the classrooms. Staff members reminded students what it looks like to have a “safe body.” Teachers fostered a warm and welcoming environment with hugs and high-fives for students.</p>
<p>Governance:</p>	<p>A PCSB staff member attended the KIPP DC Board of Trustees meeting on September 17, 2014. A quorum was present. The attendees included members of the KIPP DC Board of Trustees and a representative from Bain Consulting who would be working with the school on strategic planning. KIPP representatives gave presentations on various aspects of the school’s performance. The presentations focused on a discipline report, a finance committee report, a management report, a school performance report, and a real estate update.</p>

**THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</sup>**

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environments domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 74% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p><b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 76% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Interactions between students and between teachers and students were positive and respectful. Students worked together cooperatively and shared responsibilities. Teachers showed interest in the learning interests of students and sat down on their level for conversation. In one observation students hugged each other when prompted to apologize. Teachers referred to students as “friends” and encouraged students to give each other “shine” or positive feedback.</p>	Distinguished	6%
		Proficient	70%
	<p>The QSR team scored 24% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In these observations observers saw isolated incidents of students putting their hands on each other, taking books out of each other’s hands, and pushing each other without being corrected by a teacher.</p>	Basic	24%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
<p><b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 76% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. In these observations, students were cognitively busy and engaged in their learning. Teachers were energetic and diligent in guiding the learning environment. Students focused on work as soon as they transitioned. Teachers held high expectations for all students. One teacher made personal connections to a neighborhood unit by telling personal stories about her neighborhood. The students followed suit by sharing their own stories.</p>	Distinguished	12%
		Proficient	64%

<sup>1</sup> Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 24% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory. In a few observations the teachers’ energy was focused on dealing with behavioral problems rather than learning. In another observation students were fighting or talking to each other instead of reading during reader’s workshop. The teachers in this classroom did not redirect students and the students continued to remain off task for the remainder of the period.</p>	Basic	18%
		Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 70% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Managing Classroom Procedures. Routines were well established, evidenced by students following teacher cues and moving independently and quietly from one activity to another. These routines included echo clapping and moving to and from the carpet by rows.</p>	Distinguished	35%
	<p>In one distinguished observation a student led the classroom transition. When one minute was left in group-work, the student went to the board with a pointer and led the class through the transitions song without teacher prompting.</p>	Proficient	35%
	<p>The QSR team scored 30% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory. In these observations classroom routines functioned unevenly, transition songs had to be repeated several times because students were not paying attention.</p>	Basic	24%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>In one observation a few students refused to participate in the whole group activity. Despite aides trying to engage them in the task. One student was directed to the “chill” chair but s/he made loud noises while sitting there and eventually threw the chair into the middle of the rug. Teachers and aides worked to redirect this student but were unable to continue the lesson. Students lost instructional time, and the teacher had difficulty getting the class back on task.</p>	Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 71% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished. Behavior was appropriate and easily corrected when monitored by teachers. Students had cues for sitting: “crisscross applesauce” and to be quiet: “catch a bubble in your mouth.” Teachers frequently used a quiet chair or rest stop. In these observations, clear standards were in place for behavior and teachers reminded students of standards consistently through out.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	71%
	<p>The QSR team scored 29% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In these observations some of the activity was chaotic with attempts at bringing order. However many students did not pay attention to the chants or cues used to gain order. In some observations teachers shouted over students to give directions, but students just got louder. The “quiet song” was sung multiple times, but only some students participated, others continued to play loudly with materials and shout to friends. Teachers monitored behavior but from across the room by yelling. In a few observations students fought with each other for a while before a teacher or aide intervened.</p>	Basic	29%
		Unsatisfactory	0%



**INSTRUCTION**

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Instruction domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 71% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p><b>Communicating with Students</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 76% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Communicating with Students. Teachers presented lessons with clear purpose and manner. Teachers modeled expectations using projection screens for visual reinforcement and were error-free.</p>	Distinguished	6%
	<p>In one distinguished observation the teacher stated the purpose of the group work and let students know the expected outcome of the work. The teacher also modeled the task for students so they were clear before they transitioned to writing on their own in Writers Workshop.</p>	Proficient	70%
	<p>The QSR team scored 24% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In these observations, students did not have direction or guidance in how to work in their centers. This resulted in off-task behavior, unless a teacher was in close vicinity.</p>	Basic	24%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
<p><b>Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 59% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Most teachers effectively executed wait time to support students as they organized their thoughts. Teachers asked open-ended questions and invited all students to respond. During one read aloud the teacher asked the students how the character felt when certain things happened. Students participated in the discussion and actively listened to each other’s responses.</p>	Distinguished	12%
		Proficient	47%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 41% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory. In these observations, the questioning techniques failed to challenge the critical thinking abilities of students. Most questions required literal, single- answer responses. In the unsatisfactory observations question/answer sessions were exclusively led by teachers and failed to engage students in discussion.</p>	Basic	35%
		Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 71% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Teachers used a variety of chants requiring unison responses from students to maintain focus, e.g., “Are you ready?” and “You bet!” In these observations most students diligently persisted on completing tasks. Teachers used a variety of age-appropriate learning materials and resources to engage students in learning.</p>	Distinguished	6%
	<p>In some distinguished observations all of the students were highly engaged in the group work. No off-task behavior was observed. Students also had extensive choice in how work was completed and were able to seek help from one-another.</p>	Proficient	65%
	<p>The QSR team scored 29% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In these observations not all students were engaged in an activity during choice time. Some students threw blocks at each other or tossed books against the wall in the library corner. The teachers rotated the groups, but in a few observations, students were so loud that the small group was only partially successful in asking and answering questions.</p>	Basic	29%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	The QSR team scored 76% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Using Assessments in Instruction. Teachers used a variety of tactics to assess student learning, including questioning and follow-up activities. Teachers closely monitored student learning and provided appropriate feedback. In the distinguished observations students assessed their own progress and feedback from the teachers was specific and timely. The teacher guided the group through specific question.	Distinguished	6%
		Proficient	70%
	The QSR team scored 24% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory. In these observations feedback to students was not specific and the teachers only requested global responses to assess student understanding. In the unsatisfactory observations observers did not witness teachers assessing students.	Basic	18%
		Unsatisfactory	6%

**APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC**

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	Classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are negative or inappropriate and characterized by sarcasm, putdowns, or conflict.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict but may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring, and are respectful of the cultural and developmental differences among groups of students.	Classroom interactions are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and caring toward individuals. Students themselves ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among member of the class.
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	The classroom does not represent a culture for learning and is characterized by low teacher commitment to the subject, low expectations for student achievement, and little student pride in work.	The classroom environment reflects only a minimal culture for learning, with only modest or inconsistent expectations for student achievement, little teacher commitment to the subject, and little student pride in work. Both teacher and students are performing at the minimal level to “get by.”	The classroom environment represents a genuine culture for learning, with commitment to the subject on the part of both teacher and students, high expectations for student achievement, and student pride in work.	Students assumes much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning in the classroom by taking pride in their work, initiating improvements to their products, and holding the work to the highest standard. Teacher demonstrates as passionate commitment to the subject.
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	Classroom routines and procedures are either nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function unevenly or inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and function smoothly for the most part, with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are seamless in their operation, and students assume considerable responsibility for their smooth functioning.

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	Student behavior is poor, with no clear expectations, no monitoring of student behavior, and inappropriate response to student misbehavior.	Teacher makes an effort to establish standards of conduct for students, monitor student behavior, and respond to student misbehavior, but these efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is aware of student behavior, has established clear standards of conduct, and responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Student behavior is entirely appropriate, with evidence of student participation in setting expectations and monitoring behavior. Teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive, and teachers' response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs.

**APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC**

<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	Teacher’s oral and written communication contains errors or is unclear or inappropriate to students. Teacher’s purpose in a lesson or unit is unclear to students. Teacher’s explanation of the content is unclear or confusing or uses inappropriate language.	Teacher’s oral and written communication contains no errors, but may not be completely appropriate or may require further explanations to avoid confusion. Teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success. Teacher’s explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	Teacher communicates clearly and accurately to students both orally and in writing. Teacher’s purpose for the lesson or unit is clear, including where it is situated within broader learning. Teacher’s explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students’ knowledge and experience.	Teacher’s oral and written communication is clear and expressive, anticipating possible student misconceptions. Makes the purpose of the lesson or unit clear, including where it is situated within broader learning, linking purpose to student interests. Explanation of content is imaginative, and connects with students’ knowledge and experience. Students contribute to explaining concepts to their peers.
<b>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</b>	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low-level questions, limited student participation, and little true discussion.	Teacher’s use of questioning and discussion techniques is uneven with some high-level question; attempts at true discussion; moderate student participation.	Teacher’s use of questioning and discussion techniques reflects high-level questions, true discussion, and full participation by all students.	Students formulate many of the high-level questions and assume responsibility for the participation of all students in the discussion.
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning, as a result of inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure.	Students are intellectually engaged only partially, resulting from activities or materials or uneven quality, inconsistent representation of content or uneven structure of pacing.	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson, with appropriate activities and materials, instructive representations of content, and suitable structure and pacing of the lesson.	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson and make material contribution to the representation of content, the activities, and the materials. The structure and pacing of the lesson allow for student reflection and closure.

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p><b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b></p>	<p>Students are unaware of criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and do not engage in self-assessment or monitoring. Teacher does not monitor student learning in the curriculum, and feedback to students is of poor quality and in an untimely manner.</p>	<p>Students know some of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and occasionally assess the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of the class as a whole but elicits no diagnostic information; feedback to students is uneven and inconsistent in its timeliness.</p>	<p>Students are fully aware of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of groups of students in the curriculum, making limited use of diagnostic prompts to elicit information; feedback is timely, consistent, and of high quality.</p>	<p>Students are fully aware of the criteria and standards by which their work will be evaluated, have contributed to the development of the criteria, frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards, and make active use of that information in their learning. Teacher actively and systematically elicits diagnostic information from individual students regarding understanding and monitors progress of individual students; feedback is timely, high quality, and students use feedback in their learning.</p>