

QUALITATIVE SITE REVIEW REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KIPP DC – Discover Academy Public Charter School (KIPP – Discover PCS) is part of the KIPP DC PCS network. This campus opened in school year 2009-10 at the Douglass facility which also includes Heights Academy (grades 1-4) and AIM Academy (grades 5-8). KIPP DC – Discover PCS serves 337 students in grades pre-kindergarten 3 (PK3) through kindergarten in Ward 8. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) at this campus in January 2015 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 January 12, 2015 through January 23, 2015. A team of two PCSB staff members (including PCSB’s Special Education Specialist) and one consultant conducted observations of 14 classrooms. A PCSB staff member also attended a Board of Trustees meeting. 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 classroom twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school’s stated mission and goals.

The QSR team scored both domains of the Framework for Teaching exceptionally high for Discover PCS with the Classroom Environment domain receiving 88% and Instruction domain receiving 84% of the scores as distinguished or proficient. Managing Classroom Procedures, Communicating with Students, and Engaging Students in learning were the highest rated components with less than 10% of observations scoring basic. Additionally the QSR team did not score any observation as unsatisfactory in any component during the QSR visit.

In addition to the overall high ratings of the observations, the observations of the special education models (e.g., pullout, resource room, etc.) provided at KIPP DC – Discover PCS were very positive. The special education teachers were supportive of the students with disabilities and students appeared comfortable in the learning environment. The special education teachers were observed to be providing quality services for their students with disabilities.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes KIPP DC’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 of the school meeting those goals during the Qualitative Site Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission: 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 QSR shows that KIPP DC – Discover Academy PCS (Discover PCS) meeting the KIPP DC mission.</p> <p><i>Create and sustain the highest quality school system</i> Discovery PCS serves over 300 students in grades PK3 through kindergarten and is housed in the same building as KIPP DC – Heights Academy PCS (grades 1 through 4) and KIPP DC – AIM Academy PCS (grades 5 through 8). Discover PCS earned very high ratings on the Framework for Teaching, particularly in the Instruction Domain. The school earned over 90% proficient and distinguished in the components of Communicating with Students and Engaging Students in Learning.</p> <p><i>Develop knowledge, skills, and character</i> The high scores in the Instruction Domain (84% distinguished and proficient), indicate that students are learning knowledge and skills needed to succeed. Teachers clearly communicated the purposes of lessons to students, who appeared highly engaged in their learning. Teachers also integrated character topics such as sharing, safety, and self-control into the lessons in addition to "Discovery" time where students received specific character education in addition to art and music.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p><i>Students become thoughtful, influential, and successful citizens in the competitive world</i></p> <p>The words: Try, Imagine, Lead, Give, and Honor are mentioned in many lessons and posted in every classroom. Teachers and students focused on these concepts while interacting with others. Students worked on age-appropriate skills to lead them to becoming successful citizens such as being encouraged to share ideas and to show encouragement and compassion of their classmates by supporting their classmates through clapping and agreement hand gestures.</p>
Goals:	
<p>Students will demonstrate academic proficiency at a performance level that makes students competitive for outstanding public or private secondary schools of their choice.</p>	<p>Teachers focused on specific reading and math skills that are the foundations of learning that prepare students to be competitive for secondary schools of their choice. The curriculum is vertically aligned to build the independent readers. In PK3 classrooms students practiced writing letters with their fingers on zip lock bags filled with shaving cream and in a discovery table filled with rice. In PK4 classrooms students learned to read left to right and top to bottom. In kindergarten classrooms, students wrote “How To” books with the topic of their choice and students used specific vocabulary building and reading strategies during independent reading.</p> <p>Math classes observed worked on skip counting and addition and subtraction problems on a math map. During math centers with the teacher, students had manipulatives to help demonstrate the answers to the subtraction problems.</p>
<p>Students promotes 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.</p>	<p>In addition to the strong academic program discussed in goal #1, the teachers at KIPP DC – Discover PCS also focus on character education to help the PK3 through kindergarten students prepare for</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>elementary school at KIPP DC – Heights PCS or another school of their choice. In PK4 classrooms students worked on calming techniques to tell a friend to use when frustrated. When a student in a kindergarten classroom became frustrated with the learning task, another friend asked the teacher if she could help. The two went to the classroom library where the friend read a book and talked with the upset classmate. The two successfully returned to their groups within a few minutes.</p>
<p>Students will have high attendance rates (The school will maintain daily attendance of 93% or greater).</p>	<p>Most classrooms had very few empty seats.</p>
<p>Students will benefit from enrichment activities.</p>	<p>Each classroom has a Discovery block daily, which offer classes in music, art, science, physical education, and character education.</p>
<p>Principals will create an educational program and foster a school environment that facilitates student academic and social improvement.</p>	<p>As evidenced by the high percentages of proficient and distinguished observations in both Classroom Environment and Instruction Domains, it is clear that the principal has created an educational environment that fosters learning. The principal also spent most of her day working at a student desk in the hall of the kindergarten classrooms to monitor the environment and keep a pulse on the school environment. The assistant principal was observed doing the same in the PK hallway.</p>
<p>The Principal will ensure the fiscal and physical sustainability of the school.</p>	<p>The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
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.	The school staff welcomed parents and encouraged them to participate in their child’s education. Family bulletin boards were displayed in hallways giving school updates (field trip to the Building Museum for the family on Saturday), homework trackers, and strategies to use at home to help students (e.g., read nightly). Staff members also have a personal connection with parents. During the QSR window a teacher and student were on the phone in the hallway with the student’s mother discussing how the student could earn television time at home by behaving well at school.
The school will create a safe environment in which to learn.	Teachers encouraged students to be safe in the classrooms and hallways. In multiple observations the teachers reminded students to move safely to the circle or while dancing during a movement break. The hallways had two blue stripes, one on each side for a class to follow single file when moving between classrooms. The campus is also safe with a large fence securing the property as well as security guards monitoring the building.
Governance:	A PCSB staff member attended the KIPP DC Board of Trustees meeting on September 17, 2014. A quorum was present. The

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>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 ENVIRONMENT¹

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 88% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team rated 86% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport with almost 30% of these observations rated distinguished. Teachers and students exuded characteristics such as warmth, caring, and encouragement to all students in these classrooms. In the distinguished observations classmates cheered and clapped for students who attempted an answer or answered a question correctly.	Distinguished	29%
		Proficient	57%
	In 14% of the observations, the interactions between the teacher and specific students were uneven, with occasional disrespect and harsh tones used towards students. In one observation two students were treated more harshly than the rest of the class when they did not follow directions.	Basic	14%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team rated 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Establishing a Culture for Learning. The classroom culture was a cognitively busy environment with high expectations for all students. The teachers demonstrated a high regard for students’ abilities while encouraging and celebrating hard work, such as “kissing your brains.” One teacher celebrated when students included the “bonus” words in the reports they were writing. In many observations the teachers and students celebrated student success with cheers, shout-outs, and popular gestures.	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	72%

¹ Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	In just over 20% of the observations, teachers did not hold every student to high expectations, in particular for students who struggled with following the directions. One teacher's interactions with these students focused primarily on behavior and did not assist struggling learners.	Basic	21%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team rated 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Classroom Procedures. Across all observations the teachers had consistent procedures in place for students to transition between groups and to prepare the materials for the next lesson. Teachers gave a two-minute warning during activities and students started to clean up and put away their materials. Some classrooms sang a song to signal transition time while other classrooms put music on using the interactive white board. When the materials were cleaned up by the students and put away, the students moved to the carpet and danced for a few minutes. There was little loss of instructional time due to the effective classroom routines and procedures.	Distinguished	14%
		Proficient	86%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Basic	0%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team rated 86% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Student Behavior. Student behavior was generally appropriate in most of the classrooms observed. Standards of conduct were established and both teachers in the room were consistent in	Distinguished	7%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	implementing the behavior standards. Teachers constantly monitored student behavior and celebrated students who were following directions. Students also earned rewards for good behavior, the younger students earned the classroom teddy bear to borrow for naptime and older students earned stickers or points towards a dance party.	Proficient	79%
	In 14% of the observations, the teachers did not consistently or effectively manage student behavior. In one observation the teacher was lenient with one student and harsher with another student that committed the same infraction. In another observation the teacher attempted to maintain order by shouting over the students to get them to lower their voices and sit down, but the students ignored their requests.	Basic	14%
		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 84% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 93% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Communicating with Students with almost 30% of teachers receiving a distinguished rating. In these observations the instructional purpose of the lesson was clear and free of content errors. In some classrooms the teacher clearly connected the instructional purpose to students interests. The teachers also demonstrated helpful aids to the classroom. One teacher held up pattern parrot, skipping frog and other animals as the class went over the hints to remember when stuck on reading a word or sentence.	Distinguished	29%
		Proficient	64%
	The QSR Team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic and none scored unsatisfactory.	Basic	7%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 71% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. In these observations teachers asked a mix of single-answer and open-ended questions to promote student thinking.	Distinguished	7%
	The teachers also created discussions in the classes, which engaged most students. Teachers also asked students to explain their answers. In one classroom the teacher had students group items depending if they were a “Who, what, where or why?”	Proficient	64%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>Almost 30% of the observations scored basic in this component and none scored unsatisfactory. In some observations the questions were low-level and did not require critical thinking. Many were yes/no questions for the students to answer. In one observation only a few students responded to the questions asked. In another observation the teachers asked limited questions during center time. When a student was stuck on how to proceed with a task, the teacher told her the answer without engaging the student in questioning.</p>	Basic	29%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team rated 93% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Engaging Students in Learning. Most students were intellectually engaged in the lessons with learning tasks having multiple correct approaches. Students were allowed to work on projects that integrated their own interests into their work. Teachers encouraged multiple groupings to allow students time to share with each other, work in small groups, or by themselves throughout the day.</p>	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	86%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic and none scored unsatisfactory.</p>	Basic	7%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team rated 79% of the observations as proficient with none scoring distinguished in the component of Using Assessment in Instruction. In these classrooms the teachers gave specific and timely feedback for students to improve their performance. Teachers took notes during small group work to track student understanding on reading and</p>	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	math lessons. Rubrics in the form of checklists were available for students to use to check if they covered the critical components for a reading or writing lesson such as, “Write your name,” and “Use two shapes.”	Proficient	79%
	The QSR team scored just over 20% of the observations as basic in this component and none scored unsatisfactory. In some small groups the teachers did not provide any feedback to students. At other times feedback was global to the entire class, “Good job!” and “Nice!” which was not specific or oriented to the task.	Basic	21%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	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.
Establishing a Culture for Learning	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.
Managing Classroom Procedures	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.

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Managing Student Behavior	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

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Communicating with Students	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.
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	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.
Engaging Students in Learning	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>Using Assessment in Instruction</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>