

QUALITATIVE SITE REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KIPP DC – Grow Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC – Grow PCS) serves 319 students in grades PK - K in Ward 6. This campus opened in school year 2010-11 and is part of the Shaw facility, which also includes Lead Academy (grades 1 – 4) and Will Academy (grades 5 – 8). The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in February 2015 because KIPP DC PCS 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 February 2 through February 13, 2015. A team of one PCSB staff member and two consultants (including a Special Education Specialist) conducted 13 classroom observations. 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 member may have observed a teacher twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school’s stated mission and goals.

The QSR team scored an impressive 89% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest rated elements within this domain were Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport and Establishing a Culture for Learning with greater than 90% of observations rated as proficient or distinguished. Teachers were friendly and used warm tones of voice with students and parent visitors. Children seemed genuinely excited to learn in many of the observations. The students were eager to share their work with the teachers and were cognitively engaged throughout the lesson in nearly all observations.

The QSR team scored a high 81% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest rated element within this domain was Communicating with Students, with 92% of observations rated as proficient or distinguished where observers noted rich student conversations during centers activities. Students were given opportunities to choose their learning activities and wrote or drew pictures about what they were excited about doing in their centers. Most teachers identified the purpose for the instructional activities and the activities were clear and developmentally appropriate for all students.

The special education staff consists of special education teachers and related service providers who offer instruction to students with disabilities according to their Individualized Education Plans. Services are provided to students using a full-inclusion, co-teaching model and through other more restrictive instructional models as dictated by student need. Special educators schedule pullout instructional periods in small settings equipped with a variety of materials suited to developmental levels. In some cases students are serviced in one-on-one settings to facilitate the need for intensive support. In other cases service providers push into the regular classrooms and work with students with disabilities in ways that modify tasks and accommodate student needs.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes KIPP DC – Grow 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 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 – Grow Academy PCS is working to meet the KIPP DC mission.</p> <p><i>Create and sustain the highest quality school system</i> The quality of the school is demonstrated by its high ratings on the <i>Framework for Teaching rubric</i>. The QSR team rated over 80% of observations as proficient or distinguished in the <i>Classroom Environment</i> domain and the <i>Instructional Delivery</i> domain. There were pictures and word cues posted throughout the classrooms and in the hallways. The school has a lending library in the hallway and students can choose books to borrow every Monday. The school uses the Tools of the Mind program, which is designed to promote the development of self-regulation and executive functions in preschool and kindergarten-aged students. There were common thematic units used in several classrooms, such as restaurants in the neighborhood and learning about the people working in and visiting hospitals. Before students visited these centers, they worked independently or with a teacher to write about what they were excited to do in their centers for the day. The students’ writing was posted in classrooms and throughout the school building. Students worked at their ability and teachers differentiated expectations as noted by some students drawing pictures and other students writing in full sentences.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p><i>Develop knowledge, skills, and character</i> There was a heavy emphasis on the acquisition of math and literacy skills. Each classroom had organized, clearly-labeled libraries with a variety of book choices. Many students used math manipulatives in learning centers to solve math problems. In one of the observations, the students were expected to explain the thought processes behind the solution to a math problem.</p> <p><i>Students become thoughtful, influential, and successful in the competitive world</i> Observers saw KIPP DC- Grow PCS implementing this aspect of the school’s mission through initiatives such as displays with “Class of 2029,” to indicate the year that students would graduate from college, career paths students might want to take, and the school’s values. Displays designed to recognize student excellence were posted throughout the school building, including the 100% Club, Math Fluency Scholars, Mad Money Makers and Freshman MVPs.</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>The QSR team noted that 84% of observations were rated as proficient or distinguished in Engaging Students in Learning, which illustrates the teachers’ ability to challenge students’ thinking and differentiate the learning tasks. The QSR team scored 77% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. This is one of the highest ratings received for this component to date. Teachers used a balance of high and low level questions to promote student thinking and understanding. Students participated in academic discussions with one another, often times with the teacher not present. Some students initiated their own stimulating questions and actively participated in classroom discussions.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>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.</p>	<p>KIPP DC – Grow PCS prepared students to succeed by providing a positive learning environment and by engaging students in learning. The QSR team scored 92% of the observations as proficient in Establishing a Culture for Learning. The classrooms were cognitively busy places and learning was valued and appreciated by the teachers and students. The QSR team scored 77% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in Engaging Students in Learning. Most lessons had a clearly defined structure and students were given choice in many of their learning tasks.</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, indicating that most students were present. Observers did not note any students arriving late.</p>
<p>Students will benefit from enrichment activities.</p>	<p>Students used computer programs to enrich their math and literacy skills in many observations. There was also information posted around the school about Saturday programs for parents and students.</p>
<p>Principals will create an educational program and foster a school environment that facilitates student academic and social improvement.</p>	<p>The school environment was age-appropriate for an early childhood program. There were several playgrounds outside as well as a small play area in the front lobby. All of the classrooms had appropriate size furniture for the age group. There was also technology present in all of the classrooms. There were small teacher student ratios, with two or more adults per classroom. The classrooms were given names such as the Yellow Canaries, Green Grasshoppers and Blue Peacocks. The hallway displays throughout the school building displayed student</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	photographs, work samples and inspirational quotes such as “I am great,” “I am limitless,” and “I am brilliant”.
The Principal will ensure the fiscal and physical sustainability of the school.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
The Board will provide sufficient and effective support to school leaders.	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.
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 QSR team noted several bulletin boards outside of the classroom with parent newsletters, announcements and flyers posted. Several parents brought their children into the classroom and were warmly welcomed by the teachers and other students.
The school will create a safe environment in which to learn.	The QSR team noted that the school appeared to be safe and conducive to learning. Nearly 90% of all observations were proficient or distinguished in the Classroom Environment domain. There were

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>security cameras and monitors in the school building. All visitors adhered to the sign-in procedures and KIPP staff escorted the QSR team as they walked through the building. The security team was visible throughout the building and greeted all students, parents and visitors politely. Classroom behavior standards were also posted in some classrooms.</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 89% 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 94% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Teachers were friendly and used warm tones of voice with parents and students, often referring to students as “friends.” Many of the teachers used positive language, such as “Great job,” and “I love it!” Teachers gave students a high five when they answered a question correctly. Teachers and children were often smiling and giving each other hugs.	Distinguished	19%
		Proficient	75%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic and none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Basic	6%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team rated 92% of the observations as proficient in Establishing a Culture for Learning. In nearly all of the observations, students were highly engaged in the learning activities. Students were eager to share their finished work with the teachers. The students explained their work with smiles on their faces and excited voices. In most of the observations, the teachers had high expectations for student engagement and work completion. The teachers gave students encouragement as they worked with comments such as, “Grow your brain,” or “I know you can do this.”	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	92%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic and none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Basic	8%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team rated 85% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Managing Classroom Procedures. In these observations there was evidence of clearly established routines. Students knew where to get their materials and put them away with little direction from the teacher. Teachers used chants and songs to guide transitions between activities. The students worked in groups and used the computers with self-sufficiency. Teachers reviewed rules with students and used bells to signal it was time to transition to a new activity. Teachers also awarded points for students completing classroom procedures correctly.	Distinguished	23%
		Proficient	62%
	The QSR team rated 15% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In a few of the observations, the transitions between lesson activities did not run smoothly resulting in student misbehavior and a loss of instructional time.	Basic	15%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team rated 85% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Managing Student Behavior, with 31% of the observations found to be distinguished. In most observations the teachers handled individual behavior issues quickly and the students responded immediately by changing their behavior. Teachers used proximity, facial cues and positive language to redirect student behaviors. Student behavior was generally orderly without the need to be addressed by teachers.	Distinguished	31%
		Proficient	54%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated 15% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In these observations some of the attempts to redirect student behavior was unsuccessful. In another observation the teacher ignored a crying student.	Basic	15%
		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 81% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 92% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Communicating with Students. The teachers used age appropriate language to convey the purpose of the lesson to students. It was evident that students could comprehend the content as they successfully completed their lesson activities. The teachers taught and used vocabulary words such as customer, server, patient, etc. to align with the learning centers that students participated in. The thematic units were seen across grade levels and appeared to start and stop at the same time in each classroom. In several distinguished observations teachers repeated directions to students and asked them to restate them in their own words.	Distinguished	23%
		Proficient	69%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic and none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Basic	8%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 77% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. Most teachers asked cognitively challenging, age-appropriate questions to their students. The teachers even used snack time to promote discussions with students about the name of the class pet or students’ Valentine’s Day	Distinguished	8%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	plans. Teachers used effective wait times to allow students to process information and come up with an answer. In most observations students were asked to describe the pictures they had drawn and teachers would scribe their thoughts or the students would attempt to write it themselves. In some observations students initiated challenging questions towards their teachers.	Proficient	69%
	The QSR team rated 23% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. In some observations most questions only required single answer responses. Some of the questions were rapid fire, not requiring any critical thinking. In one observation, there was little to no student discussion encouraged.	Basic	23%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team rated 84% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Engaging Students in Learning. In most of the observations, the students were eager and enthusiastic to participate in the classroom activities. The lessons were also conducive to the students' age group. Students were allowed to roam between the learning centers. The teachers prepared an extensive variety of activities and manipulatives that were aligned to the instructional outcomes of the lesson in the distinguished observations.	Distinguished	38%
		Proficient	46%
	The QSR team rated 16% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory. In one observation the learning consisted primarily of recalling facts and procedures. In another observation, the pacing was rushed, leaving students limited time to engage in the lesson.	Basic	15%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team rated 69% of the observations as proficient. In most of the classrooms, the teachers roamed between learning centers to guide student learning and check for understanding. In several observations the teachers asked questions throughout the lessons to gather evidence of student understanding. The teachers also conferenced with students about their performance tasks. Students were also assessed through quizzes and written assignments. Some teachers made adjustments to the learning tasks based on student misunderstandings.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	69%
	The QSR team rated 31% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory. In one observation it was difficult for the teacher to navigate to the centers to check on student understanding. In another observation the teacher did not consistently determine whether all of the students understood a small group lesson, leaving students a bit confused. In another observation the teachers did not provide specific feedback to students while they circled the classroom and visited learning centers.	Basic	31%
		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>