

QUALITATIVE SITE REVIEW REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KIPP DC – Heights Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC – Heights PCS) serves 411 students in grades one through four in Ward 8. This campus opened in 2005 and is part of the Douglass facility, which also includes the Discover Academy (grades PK3 – K) and the AIM Academy (grades 5 – 8). The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in January 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 January 12 through January 23, 2015. A team of two PCSB staff members, including a Special Education Consultant and one QSR consultant conducted 14 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 77% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain with Creating and Environment of Respect and Rapport and Establishing a Culture for Learning receiving the highest scores. Overall teachers and students were friendly and respectful to one another. The value of hard work was promoted and celebrated in all classrooms with unique banners, chants and student work displays. Most teachers were passionate about their subjects and shared high expectations for learning for all students.

The QSR team scored 55% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain with Communicating with Students receiving the highest scores. The teachers modeled learning tasks effectively, so that students could complete them independently. At times students were called on to explain content to a peer or the rest of their classmates. The components receiving the lowest scores were Engaging Students in Learning and Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Questions were often low-level requiring one-word answers. In some classrooms there was no student discussion and there was often one instructional grouping used for the entire observation, causing students to lose focus.

As stated in each of the special education questionnaires, KIPP DC believes in a holistic approach when providing case management and special education services for students with disabilities. There were various models of instruction observed - individualized instruction, small groups, and resource room for students depending on their individual needs. Within many of the classrooms designated for special education services, some students were working in small groups while others worked independently using a laptop. Additionally according to the school's questionnaire, students with disabilities have access to related services such as speech, occupational therapy, etc. The review team observed quality instruction for students with disabilities. The teachers were observed using a variety of manipulatives, small group learning activities, as well as a parallel teaching approach in order to engage their students and to ensure that they were learning.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes KIPP DC – Heights 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 QSR team found evidence that the school is working to meet its mission.</p> <p>High quality school system There was an early emphasis on college and higher education throughout the school building. The students and their classrooms were identified by a college or university. There were college pendants and other paraphernalia displayed throughout the school building. Students used laptops to work on the i-Ready program or other enrichment software.</p> <p>There was a focus on independent reading and writing – students were seen reading throughout the day, particularly when they finished assignments early. Students are required to write in all subjects. In one observation students wrote a narrative on “Being a Loyalist vs. Being a Patriot.” There were many messages throughout the building about the importance of reading, for both students and parents. One of the parent newsletters seen around the building had research about why reading at home with your child is the most important thing that parents can do.</p> <p>Knowledge, skills and character to be successful There were positive messages and pictures of students posted throughout the building. Some of the student work displays had titles such as “Famous 4th Graders,” “Proud of Myself,” “Third Graders</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	Produce High Quality Work.” Character development was incorporated into the classroom instructional program through an emphasis on making good choices, working hard and working together. One teacher encouraged a student to speak assertively, but not aggressively to a peer.
Goals:	
Students will demonstrate academic proficiency at a performance level that makes students competitive for outstanding public or private secondary schools of their choice.	There is a school-wide focus on developing literacy skills through home and school activities. One of the incentive programs, “Excellent Readers Live a Millionaire’s Life” tracks the number of words/books read and rewards students for hitting certain targets. There were also pictures posted in the hallways of a student celebration after meeting their NWEA interim assessment growth targets. Teachers encouraged students to choose books that were challenging when selecting books for their independent reading time.
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.	Please see the mission section for evidence connected to this goal.
Students will have high attendance rates (the school will maintain daily attendance of 93% or greater).	Most classrooms had very few empty desks in classrooms.
Students will benefit from enrichment activities.	Although the QSR team did not observe enrichment classes, the students take music, technology, art or PE classes each week. There was extensive artwork display throughout the building. Students also have the opportunity to participate in enrichment opportunities during the before and after school program.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Principals will create an educational program and foster a school environment that facilitates student academic and social improvement.	The school administrators were accessible to support teachers and students in classrooms. Teachers called or texted an administrator for assistance on their cell phones to address students that were misbehaving. An administrative member showed up within minutes to remove students from the classroom and brought them back once they had improved their behavior.
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.	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.	Some classrooms were staffed with a Lead Teacher and Certified Resident Teacher. The daily schedule also indicated that the students are dismissed early every Friday afternoon for Professional Development for teachers.
The school will create an environment in which parents will support and participate in their child's education.	There were newsletters and bulletin boards in the building, with information encouraging parents to read with their children every day. Teacher contact information was posted prominently outside of each classroom door. There was a homework-tracking bulletin board outside of one of the classrooms showing the homework completion rate for the class. There were also a few grandparents in the building who assisted with distributing school snacks and other administrative tasks.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>The school will create a safe environment in which to learn.</p>	<p>There were 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>
<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 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 77% 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 scored 77% of the observations as proficient or distinguished, in Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. Teachers encouraged students to celebrate the success of their classmates. Teachers and students were friendly and respectful to one another. When teachers had to correct students’ behavior or incorrect answers, it was done with dignity. As one of the QSR team members left a classroom, a student said, “You have a good day.”	Distinguished	6%
		Proficient	76%
	The QSR team scored 29% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Creating and Environment of Respect and Rapport. In two classrooms the interactions between the teachers and students were neutral, in which they conveyed neither conflict nor warmth, and no interpersonal connections between students and teachers.	Basic	18%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 86% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in Establishing a Culture for Learning. Each classroom was named after a college or university such as the Elon Stars. There were “hard work” banners displayed throughout the school building and “best work”	Distinguished	0%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	bulletin boards with examples of high quality student work. One teacher shared that they could not wait to read a student’s journal because they knew the student had been working so hard. The community celebrated students for their learning progress with a variety of cheers: rollercoasters, claps, bubble gum bubbles, and high 5s.	Proficient	86%
	The QSR team scored 14% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Establishing a Culture for Learning. A few teachers lacked energy and appeared to simply be going through the motions. One teacher expressed that the students did not know how to do the classwork and gave the students all of the answers without working through the material.	Basic	14%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 79% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in Managing Classroom Procedures. Classroom procedures in most observations were well established and operated smoothly, such as, tracking the speaker, hands in lap/head, using hand signals for permission, silent hands, voice levels and many others. Transitions were timed and well organized. In one observation students had roles such as the “paper passer” to assist with the transitions. Another teacher used equity sticks to call on her students to answer questions. Materials were often ready before students transitioned to activities.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	79%
	The QSR team scored 21% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Managing Classroom Procedures. During one of the observations, there was a loss of instructional time because the materials were not ready for a science experiment. In another observation students refused to	Basic	21%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	comply with directions and the teacher had to continue to repeat expectations for classroom procedures. The QSR team saw that some teacher did not provide fillers for students who completed their assignments early and some students became disruptive.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 64% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in Managing Student Behavior. In most observations the classroom standards for behavior have been established and students followed them. Several teachers monitored behavior very closely and used a plethora of management strategies to refocus the attention of students and redirect inappropriate behaviors, such as “1, 2, eyes on me; spoons are in my bowl.” Another teacher used an online system called, Class DOJO, to track student behavior. Some teachers used a timeout chair or a “Sit and Think” chair when students got off track.	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	57%
	The QSR team scored 36% of the observations as basic, and none unsatisfactory in Managing Classroom Behavior. Several behaviorally challenged students demonstrated a need for support and were pulled out by specialists or administrators. Some students threw classroom materials around the classroom, overturned chairs or did somersaults. Teachers exhibited a range of skill in their ability to manage student behavior. Some teachers completed ignored behaviors, inconsistently addressed misbehaviors, or immediately removed students from the classroom without using other interventions first.	Basic	36%
		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 55% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p>Communicating with Students</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 78% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in Communicating with Students. The teachers were skillful in their communication of lesson content and directions. Most classrooms combined oral presentations with visual reinforcement and interactive experiences. In these observations the instructional purpose was clearly communicated to students and students seemed to understand the presentations.</p>	Distinguished	14%
		Proficient	64%
	<p>The QSR team scored 21% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Communicating with Students. In these observations students appeared to be confused about the lesson, the process, and the expectations.</p>	Basic	21%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
<p>Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 43% of the observations as proficient in Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. There were great questions asked in some classrooms that allowed students to make text-to-self connections. Students were often asked to explain how they solved math problems or to defend their answers. In some observations students did think-pair-share activities to discuss their learning with a partner. Some teachers made good uses of wait time and asked several open-ended questions to their students.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	43%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 57% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Some teachers made little attempt to draw in students who failed to volunteer in group discussions. Questions were often low-level, requiring a single-answer or without stimulating discussion. In one observation the teacher only called on one student to answer the questions. In another observation many of the teachers' questions only had one correct response, and students were reluctant to participate in the lesson.</p>	Basic	57%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 43% of the observations as proficient, in Engaging Students in Learning. In these classrooms, most instruction engaged students in stimulating activities aligned to lesson objectives and students remained on-task and intellectually engaged. In some observations students rotated through a variety of activities: small group instruction, independent reading, or computer time.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	43%
	<p>The QSR team scored 57% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in Engaging Students in Learning. The pacing of some of the lessons was extremely slow and student engagement was correspondingly low. Some lessons provided students with limited choice when completing their assignments. In other observations whole group instruction was the only instructional strategy used and students grew restless.</p>	Basic	50%
		Unsatisfactory	7%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team scored 57% of observations proficient and none as distinguished in Using Assessment in Instruction. Teachers in several classrooms closely monitored student learning/behavior and gave</p>	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	feedback to promote learning. One teacher used a variety of strategies to measure student understanding.	Proficient	57%
	The QSR team scored 43% of observations basic or unsatisfactory in Using Assessment in Instruction. The criteria for measuring success were unclear or general in nature, not specific to individual students or the lesson content. In one observation the teacher never checked the students' work.	Basic	36%
		Unsatisfactory	7%

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>