



January 10, 2020

Terry Golden, Board Chair
KIPP DC Quest Academy Public Charter School
5300 Blaine St NE
Washington, DC 20019

Dear Mr. Golden,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews (QSR) to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, DC PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. KIPP DC Quest Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS) was selected to undergo a QSR during the 2019-20 school year for the following reason(s):

- School eligible for 20-year Charter Review during 2020-21 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A QSR team conducted on-site reviews of KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS between October 21, 2019 – November 1, 2019. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the QSR Report focuses primarily on the following areas: classroom environment and instruction.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the QSR at KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young
Chief School Performance Officer

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: January 10, 2020

Campus Information

Campus Name: KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS

Ward: 7

Grade levels: First through fourth

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for Visit: School eligible for 20-year Charter review during 2020-21 school year

Two-week Window: October 21, 2019 – November 1, 2019

QSR Team Members: Two DC PCSB staff including one special education (SPED) specialist, and two consultants

Number of Observations: 16

Total Enrollment: 401

Students with Disabilities Enrollment: 44

English Learners Enrollment: 3

In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:

Visit 1: September 23 – 94.5%

Visit 2: October 24 – 95.3%

Visit 3: October 30 – 97.0%

Visit 4:

Summary

According to the school's mission, KIPP DC is

a non-profit network of high-performing, college-preparatory public charter schools in Washington, D.C. All KIPP DC schools are tuition-free, open-enrollment schools, and actively recruit and serve students in the city's most educationally underserved communities. At KIPP DC, there are no shortcuts. Highly skilled teachers and leaders, more time in school, a rigorous college preparatory-curriculum, and a strong culture of high expectations and support help our students make significant academic gains and continue to excel in high school and college.

The QSR team observed mixed evidence that KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS is fulfilling its mission. DC PCSB observed students in some observations engaged in content-related discussions and academically rigorous work. Teachers often asked higher-order thinking questions and used a variety of methods to keep students engaged. However, in some observations, student misbehavior interrupted academic instruction.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendix I and II). The QSR team scored 58% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport (2a)*, with 67% of observations scored as proficient or

distinguished and none as unsatisfactory. Observers noted that most teachers had positive interactions with students and families. Teachers showed interest in students' lives beyond school and often asked students about their home life. Students generally showed respect for each other and their teachers. However, in some observations a small number of students presented challenging behaviors that resulted in lost instructional time as they required ongoing mediation from the teacher. The QSR team scored 61% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Engaging Students in Learning (3c)* with 67% of observations scored as proficient and none as distinguished. Students had access to materials and resources that supported intellectual engagement. Students had choice in how they completed activities and teachers used various methods to keep students engaged, including "turn and talks" and flexible instructional groupings.

Governance

Terry Golden chairs the KIPP DC PCS Board of Trustees. The School Reform Act requires all DC public charter schools to have a majority of DC residents and two parents, which the school has been compliant with for the past five years.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Before the two-week window, KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities, and reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. Overall, DC PCSB observed four of five SPED classroom environments on the school's roster, of which staff did not score pullout observations. Per the school's SPED questionnaire, KIPP DC Quest Academy PCS offers a combination of co-teaching and inclusion, individual and small-group placement, resource room placement, fulltime SPED settings, and related services (e.g., speech, behavior support) for students with disabilities. However, during this limited two-week observation window, DC PCSB was only able to observe individual and small-group placements, and the resource room setting. Ultimately, the SPED specialist found the school implemented its stated SPED program with fidelity as evidenced by students' warm rapport with teachers and their level of engagement in the instructional activities in most of the observations. While there was clear evidence that the school has strong interventions in place to support students with disabilities in most settings, as described below, there was also some evidence of uneven results regarding student engagement and the quality of instruction they receive in small-group "pullout" placements. Key trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- To support the learning of students with disabilities, KIPP DC PCS has created a variety of educational placements to best meet students' needs. In three of the four SPED observations, DC PCSB saw evidence of teachers making genuine connections with students in either small-groups or individualized settings, where students were both appropriately challenged and encouraged in their learning. Whenever students made mistakes, the teachers praised the students for their efforts and quickly modeled the appropriate way to sound out a word or count the number of syllables. During an individualized pullout session where the teacher was working with two students at different reading levels, the teacher created a partnership between the two students in which they supported each other during

their reading practice. The teacher often asked the student with a higher reading level to help their peer read a challenging word that her peer couldn't figure out. During this pullout session, the teacher coached and prompted each student as they read aloud to break down and sound out challenging words. When the teacher identified unique challenges for either student that needed to be addressed with their related service provider, the teacher intentionally took notes and let the students know that s/he would share this information with their related service providers to ensure the students could continue practicing their reading and speech beyond their pullout session.

While the SPED specialist saw evidence of rigor and strong supports for students with disabilities in most observations, one observation of a small-group pullout session lacked student engagement and rigor. For the duration of this 30-minute observation, virtually no learning took place as the teacher mostly allowed the students to play games, and then struggled to help them each get settled on a laptop to participate in iReady or some other online platform. In this observation, the teacher lost significant instructional time as students struggled to log into their computer accounts and squabbled over sharing a bean bag chair on the carpet. Students appeared to help one another at times by ensuring their peers' equipment was working, but when a student complained that her peer accidentally logged her out of the computer, the teacher dismissed the student and moved on to tend to another student.

- To provide accommodations according to the individualized education programs (IEP) of students with disabilities, the school stated that students may receive changes in instruction including how teachers present the lesson, the teacher's instructional strategies, the classroom environment where students receive instruction, and the use of graphic organizers and scaffolded notes, among other resources to further support the learning of students with disabilities. The SPED observer saw evidence of teachers using at least one of these accommodations in nearly every observation. For example, students in a resource room setting often referred to the scaffolded notes in their notebooks to recall information from a previous language and vocabulary lesson, and to record their daily reading logs. Given every SPED observation occurred either in a resource room setting or during a small-group or individualized pullout session, it's apparent the school frequently uses varied classroom environments and student groupings to provide targeted supports for students with disabilities depending upon their individual needs. Additionally, during an individualized pullout session, the student used a guided reading strip to help the student keep track of which line s/he was reading in a story. Overall, the school used a variety of differentiated methods to address the needs of students during both reading and math instruction.
- To provide modifications according to the IEPs of students with disabilities, the school wrote that it offers students modified instruction based on the instructional level, curriculum and content, and performance criteria required for each student. DC PCSB observed ample evidence of most SPED

teachers using leveled readers to either assess students' reading progress or to help students practice their identification of new and more challenging sight words.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environment 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 58% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	<p>The QSR team scored 67% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations teachers demonstrated knowledge and caring about individual students’ lives outside of school. For example, in one observation the teacher shared with the rest of the class that one of their peers was injured. In response, other students showed concern for their classmate, asking if they were okay. In another observation the teacher asked a student, “How’s the family?”</p>	Distinguished	20%
	<p>In the proficient observations, talk between teachers and students was uniformly respectful. In one observation the teacher volunteered to partner with a student during a “turn and talk” when the student didn’t have a partner. Before they started working, the teacher complimented the student on their sweater. Students in these observations shared freely and complimented their peers when they contributed to classroom discussions.</p>	Proficient	47%
	<p>The QSR team scored 33% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations interactions between students and teachers was uneven. In one observation the teacher told a student, “I’m out of patience with you right now.” Students in these observations occasionally used inappropriate language with one another. For example, one student called a classmate an unkind name. At times the teacher responded and at other times they did not. In another observation, three students consistently interrupted the class. One student covered the mouth of a classmate as s/he tried to work, while another student screamed in the face of another student. This small group of students consistently demonstrated unsafe and distracting behaviors, resulting in harsh reprimands from the teacher.</p>	Basic	33%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory scores in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

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

² DC PCSB does not report out qualitative evidence if less than 10% of observations in any given component earned a “basic” or “unsatisfactory” level of performance.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 54% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation the teacher conveyed high expectations for all students. The teacher publicly praised an injured student for their perseverance to complete their homework. The student's peers also praised the student by saying things like, "Good job, Student X." During this observation, the teacher tracked student behavior on a "Responsibility Tracker," where students earned stickers for the day. When the teacher posted one student's tracker, the student acknowledged that they were "having a little trouble." The teacher highlighted the behaviors that the student had done well, and in response their peers exclaimed, "Good job!" In the proficient observations the teacher expected and recognized student effort. One teacher insisted that students use precise language, such as literary genre and character analysis. Teachers in these observations encouraged students to work together and use each other as a resource.</p>	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	47%
	<p>The QSR team scored 47% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations the teacher conveyed high expectations for only some students. In one observation a group of students engaged in off-task and sometimes unsafe behavior like flipping and doing headstands on the carpet. The teacher attempted to get them to reengage with the activity but was unsuccessful. This group of students continued to distract other students from working throughout the thirty-minute observation. In another observation students engaged in loud off-topic conversations as the teacher attempted to speak over them. After the teacher explained the directions s/he asked students, "Got it?" Few students responded.</p>	Basic	47%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory scores in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 60% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, classroom routines functioned smoothly. In one observation the teacher used a one-two step transition between activities. After the teacher gave the initial step, most students got in the appropriate position. For students who did not comply, the teacher was able to quickly redirect them with no loss of instructional time. In another observation, the teacher used chants like “Stop, look, and listen” to reset the group before they transitioned. Students in these observations had familiarity with all classroom routines and procedures, resulting in no loss of instructional time.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	60%
	The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, classroom routines functioned unevenly. In one observation the teacher asked students to repeat the procedure for transitioning several times. During each attempt, students talked over one another and the teacher. After several attempts, the teacher eventually moved on to the next activity as students continued to talk. In these observations instructional time was lost due to inefficient routines. Many routines lasted several minutes as students had to be redirected several times.	Basic	40%
	There were no unsatisfactory scores in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 53% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observations student behavior was entirely appropriate, and there was no evidence of student misbehavior. Students in these observations worked cooperatively with their peers and did not receive any reprimands or redirection from the teacher. In the proficient observations, student behavior was generally appropriate. Teachers in several observations gave students points for displaying appropriate behaviors. Teachers tracked student behavior using the ClassDojo ³ system and recognized students who had the highest number of points. In these observations, teachers quickly and respectfully redirected students using non-verbal cues and proximity.	Distinguished	20%
		Proficient	33%

³ ClassDojo is a classroom communication app used to share reports between parents and teachers.

	<p>The QSR team scored 47% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, teachers attempted to maintain order in the classroom but with uneven success. In one observation a student got upset and walked away from the small group table. The teacher responded by saying, "Bye, ok then bye," without attempting to reengage the student. Later in the observation, two students got into an argument and yelled at each other loudly. One student threatened another, to which the other student responded, "Do it then." The teacher attempted to resolve the argument but was unsuccessful and one of the students had to be removed from the table. In another observation one student ran around the room before falling, to which the teacher yelled, "Get up or I'm going to call your mother." Another student used unkind language when interacting with a peer without any consequences.</p>	Basic	47%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory observations in this component.</p>	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 61% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
<p>Communicating with Students</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 62% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations teachers stated clearly at some point what students would be learning. In one observation the teacher explained to students that they would be modeling number sentences and showed students how to draw shapes to represent place value. In another observation the teacher explained to students, through modeling, how they should represent a number using rectangles and circles. After students finished their independent work, the teacher instructed them to take out their morning work journals and continue working; most students complied. Teachers in these observations explained content clearly and invited student participation and critical thinking. For example, one teacher invited several students to share their problem-solving strategies with the class. As they explained, the teacher asked probing questions and invited the class to do the same.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	62%
	<p>The QSR team scored 33% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers had to clarify the learning task so that students could complete it. In one observation the teacher attempted to model a problem-solving strategy but had to clarify the task several times. Many students asked questions and gave responses that indicated confusion. In another observation, the teacher had students quickly read different parts of a text without connecting the activity to the learning goal. As a result, students had difficulty responding to prompts about the text.</p>	Basic	33%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory observations in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	<p>The QSR team scored 54% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation students extended and enriched the discussion. In one observation the teacher asked, “What was the narrator’s problem and how was it solved?” Several students had the opportunity to share their ideas and respond to their classmates.</p>	Distinguished	8%
	<p>In the proficient observations teachers used open-ended questions to promote student thinking. One teacher asked, “How might these characters feelings modify the story?” Several students responded and contributed to the discussion. In another observation students engaged in a discussion about a text that they read. The teacher asked different students to describe their thoughts on the story. When one student hesitated to answer, the teacher provided ample wait time for her/him to come up with an answer.</p>	Proficient	46%
	<p>The QSR team scored 46% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers invited several students to engage in the discussion but only a few students responded. In one observation the teacher attempted a turn-and-talk but many students engaged in off-topic conversations instead. Teachers in these observations often asked questions solely related to behavior management such as, “Who’s ready?” and “What should you be doing?”</p>	Basic	46%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory observations in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 67% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations most students intellectually engaged in the lesson. In one observation the teacher used laptops to engage students in a math activity. While students worked on laptops, many still used paper and pencil to show their work. In another observation almost all students took notes in their journals during a reading activity. Teachers in these observations modeled when appropriate. For example, during a math lesson the teacher modeled multiple strategies that students could use for completing the problem.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	67%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 33% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations some students intellectually engaged with the lesson. In one observation student engagement with the content was mixed. Students who worked directly with the teacher stayed engaged, while many students who worked independently engaged in off-task behavior and non-content related conversations.</p>	Basic	33%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory observations in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team score 60% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished. In the proficient observations feedback included timely and specific guidance. In one observation the teacher gave students individual white boards to respond to a question prompt. After completing the problem, students held their white boards up to show their responses and the teacher gave individual feedback. In these observations several teachers held individual or small group conferences with students to give them direct feedback. For example, one teacher worked with students to identify sight words and practice counting syllables. The teacher later asked students to find sight words in a text they read to check for understanding.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	60%
	<p>The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, feedback to students was vague and not oriented towards future improvement. In one observation the teacher provided general feedback such as, "Yes" and "Great job." In another observation when a student asked what they should be doing, the teacher responded by saying, "You know what you are supposed to be doing," and did not provide any additional feedback.</p>	Basic	40%
	<p>There were no unsatisfactory observations in this component.</p>	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.
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 situation 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 of 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.
Using Assessment in Instruction	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.	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.	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.	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.

APPENDIX III: DOMAIN AVERAGES BY COMPONENT

Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic	33%	47%	40%	47%	38%	46%	33%	40%
Proficient	47%	47%	60%	33%	62%	46%	67%	60%
Distinguished	20%	7%	0%	20%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Subdomain Average	2.87	2.60	2.60	2.73	2.62	2.62	2.67	2.60

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	58%	61%
Domain Averages	2.70	2.62