



February 18, 2020

Terry Golden, Board Chair  
KIPP DC KEY Academy Public Charter School  
4801 Benning Road Southeast  
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 KEY Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS) was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review 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 KEY Academy PCS between December 2, 2019 – December 13, 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 Qualitative Site Review at KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young  
Chief School Performance Officer

Enclosures  
cc: School Leader

## Qualitative Site Review Report

**Date:** February 18, 2020

### **Campus Information**

**Campus Name:** KIPP DC KEY Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS)

**Ward:** 7

**Grade levels:** Fifth through eighth

### **Qualitative Site Review Information**

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

**Two-week Window:** December 2 – December 13, 2019

**QSR Team Members:** One DC PCSB staff member who is a special education (SPED) specialist and two consultants

**Number of Observations:** 16

**Total Enrollment:** 354

**Students with Disabilities Enrollment:** 65

**English Language Learners Enrollment:** 4

**In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:**

**Visit 1:** December 5, 2019 – 96.3%

**Visit 2:** December 9, 2019 – 87.7%

**Visit 3:** December 10, 2019 – 93.6%

### **Summary**

According to its 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 Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team observed strong evidence that KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS is achieving its mission. Highly skilled teachers clearly communicated the instructional purpose and learning task directions, allowing students to engage with the content. The QSR team observed a strong college-going culture as hallways and classrooms displayed signs, banners and pennants for different colleges. Teachers had high expectations for students, demanding their focus for the entire class period and recognizing effort as they named students who started working

immediately. Students recognized each other's efforts, high-fiving peers for correct answers and giving each other "shine" (silent wiggly fingers) as they spoke to encourage or praise one another.

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 88% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest rated component was *Managing Classroom Procedures (2c)* with a perfect 100% of observations scored as proficient. Teachers maximized instructional time by using countdowns, call-and-response, and timers to manage transitions. Students also helped return materials, collect and distribute papers.

The QSR team scored 83% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest rated component was *Using Assessment in Instruction (3d)* with 90% of observations scored as proficient. Teachers constantly took the pulse of the class as they circulated the room, examined student work, and asked guiding questions to help students arrive at correct answers. Students had opportunities to self-assess as they compared their own work to that of exemplars.

### 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

Prior to the two-week window, KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. Overall the SPED specialist observed five special education environments, of which only two could be scored because of the small number of students in the other three classrooms. However, the SPED specialist used the evidence collected from all five SPED observations to evaluate how well the school implements its stated program with fidelity. DC PCSB staff found that the school implemented some aspects of its stated SPED program with fidelity, as evidenced by a rigorous curriculum and a continuum of special education services. KEY trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- To support the learning of SWD, KIPP DC-KEY PCS reported that it offers a continuum of SPED services to educate students in the least restrictive environment. Per the school's questionnaire, its continuum includes special education services in inclusion classrooms, resource rooms, workshops, and

fulltime special education services at the Learning Center. The SPED specialist observed uneven evidence of the use of various settings with fidelity. In both the general education and pull-out settings, SWD worked on the same work as their nondisabled peers. However, engagement was mixed. In the general education settings, most students demonstrated high levels of engagement, but most students monitored by the SPED teacher did not participate in discussions. These students were off-task in most cases when not working directly with a teacher. In the pull-out classroom, the teachers were patient and responsive to students' emotional and academic needs. The teachers attempted to support SWD by repeating and simplifying directions, re-teaching content, and encouraging students to persist and providing frequent breaks. The SPED teachers in these settings were persistent in delivering challenging instruction; however, not all students engaged in the learning tasks and off-task behaviors occurred.

- As a program that uses co-teaching, the school stated in its questionnaire that KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS trains its teachers on the six co-teaching models by Marilyn Friend, of which the school primarily uses alternative team-teaching, parallel co-teaching, and station teaching. The SPED specialist saw evidence of co-teaching in the inclusion classrooms where the model implemented was one teach, one assist. The SPED teacher primarily worked with specific students, circulating around the classroom, providing support and assistance based on the instruction of the general education teacher and the needs of the students. The general education teacher also delivered instruction and supported students, including the same students that the SPED teacher supported.
- To provide accommodations and modifications according to the Individualized Education Plans (IEP) of SWD, KIPP DC KEY Academy PCS stated that accommodations and modifications frequently change to meet students' needs. The SPED specialist saw evidence of teachers using strategies such as repetition of directions, re-teaching content, small-group instruction, preferential seating, visuals, frequent reinforcers and movement breaks. Teachers used timers to keep students on task and to help with the pacing of their lessons. In one of the observations, the teacher used a modified curriculum to teach students basic reading skills. This support focused on decoding and encoding of words. A small portion of this observation focused on the independent reading of chapter books.

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

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations talk between teachers and students and among students was uniformly respectful. Teachers showed warmth for students as they shared their email addresses and encouraged office visits. Students demonstrated respect for teachers by following directions the first time asked, answering questions enthusiastically, transitioning quietly from whole to small groups, and working productively. Students demonstrated warmth for each other by giving “shine” (pointing and wiggling fingers as praise or encouragement) when classmates answered questions correctly. Teachers responded successfully to disrespectful behavior, by quietly talking to students individually and reminding them of expectations.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	85%

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>School Wide Rating<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<p>The QSR team scored 15% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers attempted to respond to disrespectful behavior among students with uneven results. In one observation, several students consistently disobeyed directions to stay quiet during a movie and while their classmates presented. Teachers in these observations attempted to respond to disrespectful behavior by quietly talking to students individually or threatening phone calls home but with mixed success. In another observation, the teacher reminded students to “Please be respectful when a teammate is talking,” however many students continued talking anyway.</p>	Basic	15%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. One teacher communicated a genuine passion for reading, telling students, “I’m really, really excited to start conferencing with you about your independent reading books!” Teachers in these observations expected student effort, saying things like, “Let me hear from someone I have not heard from,” and, “It’s not totally right until it’s in your own words.” Teachers recognized student</p>	Distinguished	0%

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>School Wide Rating<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<p>effort, saying “I love that Student X read on the back...” and, “That process was explained perfectly!” In one observation, the teacher commended students for comparing the same setting at two different points in time, flipping back to their notes for clues, and finding the right piece of evidence.</p>	Proficient	85%
	<p>The QSR team scored 15% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers conveyed high expectations for only some students. In one observation, a student briefly attempted to read aloud before being stopped by the teacher who finished the reading themselves. In one observation, some students failed to complete learning tasks, such as filling out a packet related to a movie, despite the teacher walking around and monitoring student work time.</p>	Basic	15%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 100% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations teachers and students lost minimal instructional time due to effective classroom routines. In these observations teachers used timers projected on the board and verbal</p>	Distinguished	0%

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>School Wide Rating<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<p>reminders indicating how much time remained before transitions. In several observations, students responded successfully to other verbal cues like, “When I say bring it, you say back! Bring it! Back!”, “Back in three, two, one,” and, “Eyes focused in three, finishing your last thought in two, pencils down in one,” to get students’ attention. In one observation, the teacher reminded students of the expectations for learning tasks, like silent hands, voice levels, and “knee-to-knee and eye-to-eye” for sharing with peers. In all observations, teachers had materials like work packets, texts, videos, and maps projected on the board, and ready when students entered classes.</p>	Proficient	100%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	0%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations student behavior</p>	Distinguished	0%

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>School Wide Rating<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<p>was generally appropriate. Students followed directions, raised their hands when they wanted to talk, gave silent “shine” when classmates spoke, and tracked text as the teacher read out loud. Teachers in these observations monitored behavior subtly, moving around the room, narrating positive behavior, and waiting for students to stop talking before continuing instruction. In a couple of observations students respectfully intervened with classmates, quieting them down as they walked into classrooms late.</p>	Proficient	85%
	<p>The QSR team scored 15% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers attempted to respond to instances of student misbehavior with mixed success. For example, in one observation, teachers threatened to take points from students’ trackers or make phone calls home but many students continued to talk out of turn during instruction.</p>	Basic	15%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory 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 83% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as proficient in this component. In the proficient observations teachers clearly communicated the instructional purpose of the lesson. In these observations teachers referred to objectives verbally and wrote them on the board. Teachers modeled learning tasks like multiplication problems and reading poetry for the class before asking students to do so on their own. Students participated in explanations of content by predicting events based on pictures and texts and by comparing their math solutions to another student's model math solution on the board. In one observation, the teacher explained lesson outcomes within the broader learning context, asking students to connect a historical event to a novel they read. Students used rich vocabulary relevant to course content like independent vs. dependent variable, text dependent questions, figurative language, mixture analysis, and personal anthology.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	85%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 15% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers' explanations of the content was purely procedural, with no indication of how students could think strategically. In one observation, students read silently then read a play together as a class with no explanation of the purpose. In another observation, the teacher referred to the instructional purpose in passing as students watched a movie. Students had a packet of questions to answer as the movie progressed, but few questions related to the instructional purpose, which was learning about the Cold War through sports.</p>	Basic	15%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<p><b>Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as proficient in this component. In the proficient observations teachers used a mix of low and high-level questions to promote student thinking and understanding. Questions included, "What are some things you learned about the writer during the introduction?"; "What do their actions tell us about the earthquake?"; and, "What ideas did you</p>	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>hear that are similar to your thoughts and why?" Teachers in these observations also asked students to turn-and-talk with their neighbors about their responses and cold-called on students who did not initially volunteer. Most students actively engaged in discussions, raising their hands to answer the teachers' questions and talking to partners about their work.</p>	Proficient	83%
	<p>The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations the teacher called on many students but only a few actually participated in the discussion. In one observation, the teacher asked some questions designed to promote student thinking, but most discussion was between the teacher and students with few opportunities for students to speak directly to each other.</p>	Basic	17%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<p><b>Engaging Students in Learning</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 77% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations most students intellectually engaged in lessons. Students in these observations read independently, answered questions about main idea, investigated mixtures to identify</p>	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>substances, answered questions about the European Union based on a map, and wrote poems. Most students participated enthusiastically in learning activities, answering questions, talking to their partners about their answers and math solutions, and tracking texts as teachers read. Students in these observations had choice in how they approached learning tasks, selecting their own books for independent reading and choosing how to organize their substances for a science investigation. Teachers in these observations scaffolded to support engagement, encouraging students to use various techniques to solve problems.</p>	Proficient	77%
	<p>The QSR team scored 23% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations some students intellectually engaged in lessons without ongoing mediation from the teacher while others required frequent redirection in order to complete learning tasks. In these observations student engagement with the content was largely passive. For example, in one observation students read a script as a class and answered recall questions related to the plot or watched a movie and answered questions from a packet.</p>	Basic	23%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 90% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations teachers regularly used assessment to diagnose student understanding. For example, teachers asked students to justify their responses by asking, “How do you know?” Teachers in these observations also used exit tickets on computers and on paper and circulated throughout the classroom, conferring with students, giving individual feedback to improve work, and asking guiding questions to help students arrive at the correct answer. In one observation, students had the opportunity to compare their work to exemplars as teachers posted work under the heading “High Quality Work Looks Like This.”</p>	Distinguished	0%
	<p>The QSR team scored 10% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations feedback was vague and not oriented towards future improvement. In one observation, a student asked for feedback because they didn’t feel content with their work and the teacher simply replied, “Why? There’s nothing wrong with it.” Teachers in these observations provided minimal feedback as students worked, nodding their heads or saying things like, “Remember the examples. Let’s look at the poem.”</p>	Basic	10%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

## APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	Classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are negative or inappropriate and characterized by sarcasm, putdowns, or conflict.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict but may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring, and are respectful of the cultural and developmental differences among groups of students.	Classroom interactions are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and caring toward individuals. Students themselves ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among member of the class.
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	The classroom does not represent a culture for learning and is characterized by low teacher commitment to the subject, low expectations for student achievement, and little student pride in work.	The classroom environment reflects only a minimal culture for learning, with only modest or inconsistent expectations for student achievement, little teacher commitment to the subject, and little student pride in work. Both teacher and students are performing at the minimal level to "get by."	The classroom environment represents a genuine culture for learning, with commitment to the subject on the part of both teacher and students, high expectations for student achievement, and student pride in work.	Students assumes much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning in the classroom by taking pride in their work, initiating improvements to their products, and holding the work to the highest standard. Teacher demonstrates as passionate commitment to the subject.
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	Classroom routines and procedures are either nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function unevenly or inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and function smoothly for the most part, with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are seamless in their operation, and students assume considerable responsibility for their smooth functioning.
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	Student behavior is poor, with no clear expectations, no monitoring of student behavior, and inappropriate response to student misbehavior.	Teacher makes an effort to establish standards of conduct for students, monitor student behavior, and respond to student misbehavior, but these efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is aware of student behavior, has established clear standards of conduct, and responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Student behavior is entirely appropriate, with evidence of student participation in setting expectations and monitoring behavior. Teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive, and teachers' response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs.

## APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

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

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Basic</b>	15%	15%	0%	15%	15%	17%	23%	10%
<b>Proficient</b>	85%	85%	100%	85%	85%	83%	77%	90%
<b>Distinguished</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Subdomain Average</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>2.90</b>

	Domain 2	Domain 3
<b>% of Proficient or above</b>	88%	83%
<b>Domain Averages</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.84</b>