



February 18, 2020

Terry Golden, Board Chair
KIPP DC Valor 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 Valor Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC Valor 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 Valor 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 QSR at KIPP DC Valor 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 Valor Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC Valor Academy PCS)

Ward: 7

Grade levels: Fifth through eighth

Qualitative Site Review (QSR) Information

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

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

QSR Team Members: Two DC PCSB staff members including one special education (SPED) specialist and one consultant

Number of Observations: 14

Total Enrollment: 325

Students with Disabilities Enrollment: 55

English Learners Enrollment: 2

In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:

Visit 1: December 4, 2019 – 94.6%

Visit 2: December 10, 2019 – 96.6%

Visit 3: December 12, 2019 – 93.5%

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 evidence that KIPP DC Valor Academy PCS is fulfilling its mission. In most observations, teachers had established classroom norms that supported and encouraged student engagement and critical thinking. Teachers often insisted that students produce high-quality work and frequently praised their efforts. At times, however, teachers' questions led students along a single path of inquiry, and limited students' opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with their peers.

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 70% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Establishing a Culture for Learning (2b)*, with 85% of observations scored as proficient or distinguished. In many observations, teachers held high expectations for students, and students put forth effort to produce high-quality work. Teachers insisted that students show their work, answer questions in complete sentences, and use content related vocabulary when engaging in group discussions.

The QSR team scored 72% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Communicating with Students (3a)*, with 93% of observations scored as proficient or distinguished. In almost all observations, teachers clearly communicated the purpose of the lesson to students. Teachers often used think-aloud activities to model expectations for students, and they often required students to repeat back the expectations to ensure they understood.

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 Valor Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD), and reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. Per the school's SPED questionnaire, KIPP DC Valor 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 SWD. Overall, DC PCSB observed three SPED classroom environments, including a resource room, a two-part pull-out session, and an inclusion class. Given the small number of students in the pull-out sessions, the SPED specialist could only score the observations in the resource room and inclusion class. Ultimately, the SPED observer found the school implements some aspects of 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. Key trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- To support the learning of SWD, KIPP DC PCS has created a variety of educational placements to best meet students' needs. In all three SPED observations, DC PCSB saw evidence of teachers making genuine

connections with students while providing either whole-group, small-group, or individualized support. Teachers were vigilant in their efforts to stress the importance of students trying their hardest and doing their best in whatever learning task they were assigned. In one observation during a resource class, the teacher expressed to a student, “I need you to try. I can’t help you if you don’t try.” In that same observation, the teacher mentioned to a student that had been absent, “This is why I need you in class, because you don’t even know what happened at the end of the story. When you miss class, you miss valuable stuff.” In every SPED classroom environment, teachers implemented accommodations such as repetition of instructions, or recommended best practices to students like encouraging them to look for strong textual evidence in their reading to support their responses to various writing and discussion prompts. Teachers consistently told students what high quality work looks like, and teachers clearly communicated their expectations for every student to put forth their best effort during their learning tasks.

- To provide accommodations according to the individualized education programs (IEP) of SWD, 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 to further support the learning of SWD. The SPED specialist observed evidence of students receiving such accommodations at KIPP DC Valor Academy PCS in each of the three SPED environments observed. During the pull-out sessions, the teacher allowed students to use manipulatives to support their efforts with completing math practice. Additionally, the teacher provided individualized support to each student in the pull-out session, in which the teacher balanced students’ class time between allowing students to independently practice various learning tasks on their own, and having an opportunity to work directly with the teacher to practice their reading and math computation skills. In the resource classroom, the teacher provided each student with scaffolded notes to help them answer questions regarding the text the class had been reading.
- To demonstrate that co-planning had occurred, the school stated in its questionnaire that DC PCSB should see co-teaching teams working seamlessly together in a classroom environment where it should not be easily determined who is the SPED teacher versus the general educator. DC PCSB only observed one inclusion class where both a general education teacher and a SPED teacher were present. In this observation, there was little evidence that co-planning had occurred. The SPED teacher arrived

late to the class and did not have a specific role in facilitating the lesson that was already underway. In this observation, the co-teachers mostly used a One Teach, One Assist teaching model, in which the SPED teacher primarily roamed the classroom to monitor students' behavior and ensure they were reading along during the whole-group reading activity. The general education teacher facilitated the classroom discussion with little input from the SPED teacher for the duration of the class period.

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 70% 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 57% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation teachers demonstrated knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond the class and school. For example, students and the teacher joked with one another when appropriate, gave compliments to one another, and greeted each other warmly as they entered the classroom.</p>	Distinguished	7%
	<p>In the proficient observations talk between teachers and students was uniformly respectful. In one observation, a student became visibly upset after noticing that there was a mark in their book. The teacher calmly went over to the student and explained why the mark was there. The student accepted the teacher's explanation and continued reading. Teachers in these observations encouraged student participation and praised students for their efforts. For example, when one student answered a problem incorrectly, the teacher replied, "Don't stress. We will come back to it."</p>	Proficient	50%

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	
	<p>The QSR team scored 29% of 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, the teacher reprimanded a student for talking during independent reading time. The teacher attempted to redirect the student by calling their name twice, however the student continued to talk. In another observation, one student sat unsafely in their desk and almost fell out of their chair. The teacher asked the student to sit safely, but the student did not comply. Instead, the student called out to their peers and placed their feet onto their desk.</p>	Basic	29%
	<p>The QSR team scored 14% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In the unsatisfactory observations students used disrespectful and insensitive language when interacting with their peers. For example, one student called another student "weird." During the same observation, a student threw a pencil at one of their peers and told them to, "Shut up crybaby." Neither incident was addressed by the teacher.</p>	Unsatisfactory	14%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 85% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations students recognized the efforts of their classmates. For example, after one student hesitated to answer a question, one of their peers cheered them on saying, "You got this girl."</p>	Distinguished	14%
	<p>In the proficient observations teachers demonstrated a high regard for student abilities. In one observation, after the teacher gave students the instructions for their assignment, the teacher said, "You all are 8th graders, you can do this." Teachers in these observations expected and recognized student effort. For example, one teacher said, "I see some of us are underlining important facts," and "We are doing an excellent job of staying focused and not talking."</p>	Proficient	71%
	<p>The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	7%
	<p>The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	7%

Managing Classroom Procedures	<p>The QSR team scored 78% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observations students themselves took initiative in distributing and collecting materials efficiently. In one observation as students walked into the classroom, they immediately went to gather pencil, notebooks, and other materials and started working.</p> <p>In the proficient observations students transitioned quickly between large and small group activities. In one observation, the teacher gave a signal to end small group work time and gave students 15 seconds to transition back to their assigned seats. All students quickly and quietly transitioned back before the end of the countdown. Teachers in these classrooms had well established routines that limited the amount of instructional time that was lost.</p>	Distinguished	14%
		Proficient	64%
	<p>The QSR team scored 14% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations classroom routines functioned unevenly. In one observation, as students gathered laptops, they called out to their peers from across the room and engaged in off-topic conversations resulting in some loss of instructional time. In another observation, students had to be redirected several times during an independent work block for engaging in side conversations and off-task behavior.</p>	Basic	14%
	<p>The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	7%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>The QSR team scored 57% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observations student behavior was almost entirely appropriate. During one observation students took a quiz throughout the majority of the instructional block. Students quietly completed their assessments without any intervention from the teacher. In the proficient observations teachers' response to student misbehavior was effective. In one observation, when students had to be redirected, the teacher quietly called their names or discretely walked towards their desk to ask if they needed help. Students in these observations quickly and respectfully responded to all redirections made by their teachers.</p>	Distinguished	14%
		Proficient	43%

	<p>The QSR team scored 43% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers response to student misbehavior was inconsistent. In one observation, the teacher sent three students out of the room for calling out, while they ignored the same behavior from other students. Teachers in these observations attempted to use class chants to redirect students but they were not successful. For example, one teacher told students to clap once if they could hear them. After only a few students clapped, the teacher repeated the direction and many students continued to talk. Eventually, after repeating this chant three times, students quieted down and continued working.</p>	Basic	43%
	<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 72% 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 94% of observations as proficient and or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observation the teacher explained the content clearly, using metaphors and analogies to bring the content to life. At the start of the lesson, the teacher began by stating the lesson would focus on the state of solids, liquids, and gases. The teacher explained, “If I were to pour this water on a student, it would spread on the floor because the particles are loose”. To support further understanding of the learning task, the teacher later had students get up to act out the speed of each of the particles.</p> <p>In the proficient observations teachers stated clearly at some point what students would be learning. Teachers in these observations also made reference to previous lessons to help frame students’ understanding of different activities. For example, one teacher said, “Yesterday, you were taught how to divide decimals. We are going to do a quick review. Look at this set of numbers on the board. What do you notice about them?” Multiple students responded, connecting their previous learning to the current lesson.</p>	Distinguished	7%
	<p>The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	7%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
	<p>Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 62% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations teachers used open-ended questions designed to promote student thinking. In one observation, the teacher asked students to analyze the characters in a text by asking,</p>	Distinguished

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>“How is this version of [the character] different from how [the character] was in chapter 1? How has her character changed?” Teachers in these observations gave multiple students the opportunity to respond to prompts and engage fully in classroom discussions. Students participated freely and respectfully showed that they agreed or disagreed with their peers through the use of non-verbal hand signals and gestures.</p>	Proficient	62%
	<p>The QSR team scored 23% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers invited students to respond directly to one another’s ideas but only a few students responded. In one observation, the teacher polled the class by asking, “What was the important fact?” Only a few students responded, and those that did gave incorrect responses. As a result, the teacher simply answered some questions for students.</p>	Basic	23%
	<p>The QSR team scored 15% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In the unsatisfactory observations teachers only asked rapid-fire questions with single-correct answers. For example, teachers asked questions like, “What mountains are we looking for?” and “What countries to the mountains separate?” Students quickly shouted out answers as the teacher quickly moved on to new questions. Questions did not invite student thinking and students did not have to explain their thinking.</p>	Unsatisfactory	15%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 64% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations most students were intellectually engaged in the lesson. In one observation, a teacher read the quote of the day and multiple students raised their hands to share their thoughts on its meaning. Students in these observations had choice in how they completed learning tasks. For example, during one observation, the teacher gave students vials, cold water, and cups and left it up to students to determine how they could heat the water to 30 degrees.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	64%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 36% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations student engagement with the content was largely passive. In one observation, the teacher attempted to engage students in a discussion. However, students talked to their peers, made noises, or sat idle instead of responding to questions posed by the teacher. Students in these observations had no choice in how they completed tasks. During one observation students worked on a packet, answering questions as a group for the entire work block.</p>	Basic	36%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team scored 67% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished. In the proficient observations teachers made standards of high-quality work known to students. In one observation, the teacher emphasized using textual evidence to support student responses to writing prompts and classroom discussions. In another observation, the teacher pushed a student to provide additional detail by saying, "Give a stronger piece of evidence to support your statement." After the student replied, the teacher continued to probe asking, "What happened at the end of the story?" and "What's the tradition you read about?" Teachers in these observations provided targeted and immediate feedback to ensure that students completed tasks correctly.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	67%
	<p>The QSR team scored 33% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations teachers monitored student understanding through the use of a single method. In one observation, the teacher asked students to raise their hands to indicate whether or not they agreed with an answer. At times students raised their hands twice to indicate that both responses were correct, and the teacher did not clarify this misunderstanding. Teachers in these observations attempted to adjust the lesson but were only partially successful. For example, one student expressed confusion and the teacher responded, "At least circle all the objects that you see," without addressing the student's initial misunderstanding.</p>	Basic	33%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	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

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	14%	7%	7%	0%	0%	15%	0%	0%
Basic	29%	7%	14%	43%	7%	23%	36%	33%
Proficient	50%	71%	64%	43%	86%	62%	64%	67%
Distinguished	7%	14%	14%	14%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Subdomain Average	2.50	2.93	2.86	2.71	3.00	2.46	2.64	2.67

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	70%	72%
Domain Averages	2.75	2.69