DC
PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOL
BOARD

September 3, 2020

Terry Golden, Board Chair
KIPP DC Northeast Academy Public Charter School
1375 Mt. Olivet Rd, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Golden,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews 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 Northeast Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC Northeast 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 Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of KIPP DC Northeast Academy PCS between February 3, 2020 – February 14, 2020. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: classroom environment and instruction.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at KIPP DC Northeast Academy PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young
Chief Schools Performance Officer

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: September 3, 2020

Campus Information
Campus Name: KIPP DC Northeast Academy PCS
Ward: 5
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: February 3, 2020 – February 14, 2020
QSR Team Members: Two DC PCSB staff members (including one special education specialist) and one consultant
Number of Observations: 13
Total Enrollment: 324
Students with Disabilities Enrollment: 58
English Language Learners Enrollment: 8
In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:
Visit 1: February 4, 2020 – 96%
Visit 2: February 6, 2020 – 93%
Visit 3: February 10, 2020 – 95%

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 QSR team observed some evidence that KIPP DC Northeast Academy PCS is fulfilling its mission. Throughout the school, a focus on higher education was evidenced by college flags and university paraphernalia hanging throughout hallways and in classrooms. While many areas of strength were observed, and student engagement was generally high, observers noted that students often worked tasks that required them to be only passive learners, such as multiple-choice

questions or filling in blanks. Teachers maintained high expectations for student behavior, consistently encouraging students to "show excellence" through reminders and reinforcement. At times, however, some classroom environments reflected disrespectful behavior among students. Observers noted that a few teachers used sarcasm and harsh language when redirecting student misbehavior.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendices I and II). The QSR team scored 56% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest-rated component was *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport (2a)*, with 77% of observations scored as proficient. Interactions between students and teachers in these observations were uniformly respectful: teachers greeted students at the door, and often made general emotional connections with students. Teachers handled any disrespect swiftly and effectively. The QSR team scored 65% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Communicating with Students (3a)*, with 77% of observations scored as proficient. Observers noted clear learning goals, frequent use of academic vocabulary, and effective explanations of content that engaged students' thinking and participation.

Governance
Terry Golden chairs the KIPP DC PCS Board of Trustees. The School Reform Act requires each DC public charter school to have a majority of DC residents and two parents on its board, 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 Northeast Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). DC PCSB staff looked for evidence of the school's articulated special education (SPED) program. Overall, DC PCSB observed five SPED classroom environments, of which four were in a general education inclusion setting, and one was a small group resource room. While DC PCSB staff used all of the evidence collected to determine how well the school implements its SPED program with fidelity, the SPED specialist only scored four of the observations given the small number of students in the resource room class.

Overall, DC PCSB staff found that KIPP DC Northeast Academy PCS provides mostly inclusion and small-group pullout services to meet the needs of its SWD. In all of the inclusion settings there was both a general education teacher and a special educator present to facilitate instruction. In every SPED observation, the teacher

provided students with opportunities for small-group or individualized support to review the academic content being covered in the class. 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 meet students' needs in the least restrictive environment. DC PCSB saw evidence of this given all five SPED observations occurred in either an inclusion class or a small-group resource room. The general education teachers in these observations mostly facilitated instruction holistically with minimal differentiation, whereas the SPED teachers pulled individual students aside or conducted small-group reviews to ensure students had an opportunity to ask questions and review math problems at a slower pace. For example, in one observation, the SPED teacher pulled six students out of the general education class after the general education teacher finished the primary lesson and explained the math worksheet. In another observation, the SPED teacher waited until the class was working independently before calling a single student to the whiteboard to practice the same types of problems one-on-one that the general education teacher had just introduced to the class.

- According to its SPED questionnaire, the school explained QSR observers might see some of the following accommodations for SWD: adapted lesson presentation, use of graphic organizers and scaffolded notes, modified time and instruction scheduling, and use of visual aids and manipulatives. DC PCSB staff observed teachers using guided notes worksheets and visuals (such as number lines during math instruction) to aid students in grasping the content quicker. However, in several of the general education inclusion classes, the general education teachers made little attempt to differentiate instruction for different types of learners. In two of the observations, the teachers allowed students about ten minutes of independent work time to complete their math practice, but as soon as the timer went off, the teachers proceeded to go into a rapid-fire call-and-response sharing the correct answers, leaving little time for students to ask clarifying questions. Additionally, in three of the five observations, teachers mostly checked for understanding globally, making it unclear whether all students were grasping the content and which students needed more support.

- According to its SPED questionnaire, to demonstrate that co-planning occurred, the school explained that DC PCSB should see teachers working seamlessly together to meet the needs of students. DC PCSB observed solid evidence of this in two of the four inclusion classes the SPED specialist observed. In these observations, the SPED teachers had an equal role in

facilitating instruction in the class, and students called on both teachers when they needed assistance. In the two inclusion classes where co-planning was less evident, the SPED teachers mostly assisted with monitoring student behavior and pulling students aside for support; they did not appear to have a specific role during the general education teachers' instruction.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT[1]

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The ratings for classroom observations — "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" — come from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 56% 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	The QSR team scored 77% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, talk between students and teachers was uniformly respectful. For example, teachers greeted students warmly at the classroom door, and praised students who immediately started working. Teachers responded successfully to any disrespectful behavior among students. For example, in one class a student immediately apologized when the teacher redirected their off-task behavior. Teachers in these observations made general connections with individual students by giving them hugs and acknowledging their feelings when they felt upset.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	77%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	8%

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[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]	
	The QSR team scored 15% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In the unsatisfactory observations, teachers showed insensitivity toward students. For example, the team observed teachers dismissing students' questions about an assignment, and in one instance a teacher made a menacing throat-slicing motion toward a student. In another observation, one student excitedly showed their work to the teacher, and the two had a quiet conversation. The student walked away mumbling, "I did all this work for nothing; I still got it wrong." The student later threw their paper in the trash.	Unsatisfactory	15%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 46% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers demonstrated a high regard for students' abilities, as well as a high expectation for student effort. Teachers said things like, "Thank you for showing excellence, teammates," and "I see that everyone is taking the independent writing expectation seriously." Students put forth good effort to complete high quality work, and teachers called on many students throughout these observations, asking follow-up questions to ensure they all participated and stayed engaged.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	46%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[2]	
	The QSR team scored 54% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, teachers indicated high expectations for only some students while neglecting to provide opportunities for other students to participate. In these observations, teachers' primary focus was task completion. For example, one teacher read a text aloud to students and moved rapidly through a series of multiple-choice questions by simply giving students the answer. In another observation, most students disengaged during independent work time and simply copied the correct answers from the board when the teacher posted them as a review.	Basic	54%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 46% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation, students themselves ensured their time was used wisely. Students immediately opened their books and read silently as soon as they entered the classroom. Students also took the initiative	Distinguished	8%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[2]	
	to distribute classroom materials when instructed to do so by the teacher. In the proficient observations, routines and transitions functioned smoothly and teachers distributed materials in an efficient manner. In one observation, the general education teacher explained the lesson objective while the SPED teacher distributed calculators. As a result, once the teacher finished giving directions, students began working right away with no loss of instructional time.	Proficient	38%
	The QSR team scored 54% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, classroom routines had been established but functioned unevenly. Teachers in these observations attempted to use countdowns or chants to calm students, but these methods were only partially successful in refocusing students. In these observations, students not working directly with the teacher only partially engaged in classroom assignments and teachers had to pause their lesson periodically to regain students' attention. Overall, inefficient routines resulted in significant loss of instructional time.	Basic	54%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
	The QSR team scored 54% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in	Distinguished	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[2]	
Managing Student Behavior	this component. In the proficient observations, standards of conduct appeared to have been established and implemented successfully. Several teachers referred to a point system for reinforcing good behavior. Student behavior in these observations was generally appropriate, and teachers only had to monitor minor instances of off-task behavior like talking or students becoming distracted. Teachers in these observations managed behavior in ways that respected students and kept them focused on learning.	Proficient	54%
	The QSR team scored 46% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, behavior management was met with uneven results. Teachers' response to student misbehavior was inconsistent: sometimes harsh, other times lenient. In these observations some students received harsh reprimands like being removed from the class, while other students engaged in physical horseplay without being redirected by the teacher. Teachers attempted to track behavior with a point system, but the results were uneven. Ultimately, considerable instructional time was lost as teachers focused largely on redirecting student misbehavior.	Basic	46%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	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 65% 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	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored 77% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation, both the teacher and students used academic vocabulary. In two instances, the teacher invited students to explain content to their peers, which they did clearly and accurately. The teacher used rich language, offering brief vocabulary lessons where appropriate. Students, too, used the language of the discipline accurately. In the proficient observations, teachers stated clearly, at some point during the	Distinguished	8%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	lesson, what the students would be learning. In one observation, the teacher used the analogy of a family to describe to students that they would be examining the relationship between different shapes by comparing the similarities and differences. In another observation, the teacher guided students to "First think about how we will define the problem [of designing an effective thermos], that's the first step in our scientific method." In another observation, the teacher modeled completing a math problem, as students offered ideas for completing each step.	Proficient	69%
	The QSR team scored 23% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, the lesson objective was unclear. In one observation, the teacher clarified a student's misconception by saying, "No" and did not elaborate any further.	Basic	23%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 44% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers used a variety of instructional groupings to engage students in classroom discussions. For example, one teacher asked students, "Are all squares rhombi?" and "What makes them different?" In another observation, the teacher noticed students struggling with a math problem, and started a discussion about the problem by posing a series of open-ended questions. In another observation, the teacher set up a discussion that enabled students to talk to each other. The teacher said, "Turn to your neighbor and try to convince them whether the base of a triangular prism is the rectangle or the triangle." Multiple students responded to their peers.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	44%
	The QSR team scored 44% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, most of the questions posed by teachers had a single correct answer or followed a single path of inquiry. In one observation, the teacher read a passage aloud to students and quickly went through the questions that followed by having all students call out the answer in unison. Teachers in these observations called on several students, but only a few responded, and students had limited opportunities to engage directly with their peers.	Basic	44%

	The QSR team scored 11% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In the unsatisfactory observation, the teacher exclusively asked rapid-fire questions while reviewing a guided notes sheet with students. Students in this observation did not have any opportunities to engage with one another about the material or to explain their thinking.	Unsatisfactory	11%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 62% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, most students intellectually engaged in the lesson. In these observations, students composed a claim and identified supporting evidence for a persuasive essay, analyzed the characters in a novel, designed an insulated thermos, composed a problem-solution letter, and justified the steps they took to solve single-variable equations. Students in these observations had access to a variety of materials and resources that supported the learning goals and required intellectual engagement, as appropriate.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	62%
	The QSR team scored 44% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, student engagement was uneven. While some students listened intently and followed directions, others chatted with their peers or sat idle. While some teachers allowed students to choose whether they worked alone, with a partner, or with a group, most of the groupings did not enhance the lesson's effectiveness.	Basic	38%

	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team scored 73% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers made the standards of high-quality work clear to students. In one observation, the teacher reviewed the traits of a high-quality essay with students and allowed several students to offer ideas. Teachers in these observations also elicited evidence of student understanding. For example, teachers pushed students to explain their thinking by saying things like, "Tell me more," and asking questions like, "Can you explain your answer to me?" Teachers across these observations circulated and whispered comments to individuals and groups of students about their work.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	73%
	The QSR team scored 27% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, teachers checked for understanding through a single method. In these observations, teachers asked questions to the class as a whole, but did not elicit evidence of understanding from individual students. Feedback was vague, such as, "Ok" and "Got it?"	Basic	27%
	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 may of the high-level questions and assume responsibility for the participation of all students in the discussion.
Engaging Students in Learning	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning, as a result of inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure.	Students are intellectually engaged only partially, resulting from activities or materials or uneven quality, inconsistent representation of content or uneven structure of pacing.	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson, with appropriate activities and materials, instructive representations of content, and suitable structure and pacing of the lesson.	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson and make material contribution to the representation of content, the activities, and the materials. The structure and pacing of the lesson allow for student reflection and closure.
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	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%
Basic	8%	54%	54%	46%	23%	44%	38%	27%
Proficient	77%	46%	38%	54%	69%	44%	62%	73%
Distinguished	0%	0%	8%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Subdomain Average	**2.62**	**2.46**	**2.54**	**2.54**	**2.85**	**2.33**	**2.62**	**2.73**

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	56%	65%
Domain Averages	**2.54**	**2.63**