DC
PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOL
BOARD

December 21, 2020

Anthony Lewis, Board Chair
KIPP DC Discover Academy Public Charter School
2600 Douglass Road SE
Washington, DC 20020

Dear Mr. Lewis:

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Review (QSR) visits 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. Your school was selected to undergo a QSR because its eligible for its 20-year charter review during school year (SY) 2020 – 21.

Qualitative Site Review Report
A QSR team conducted a virtual site review of KIPP DC Discover Academy Public Charter School from October 19 – 30, 2020.

DC PCSB intended to conduct the QSR in the spring of SY 2019 – 20. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in all DC public charter schools physically closing in March 2020 through the end of school year. As a result, the observations in this report were postponed to SY 2020 – 21 and took place remotely. The disruption in traditional school programming due to COVID-19 has had an untold impact on classroom environment and instruction, the primary areas of focus in this report. Observers considered these factors while visiting classrooms. Enclosed is the team's report.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young
Chief School Performance Officer

<h1 style="text-align:center">Qualitative Site Review Report</h1>

Date: December 21, 2020

<u>**Campus Information**</u>
Campus Name: KIPP DC Discover Academy Public Charter School (KIPP DC Discover Academy PCS)
Ward: 8
Grade levels: Pre-kindergarten 3 – Kindergarten

<u>**Qualitative Site Review Information**</u>
Reason for Visit: School eligible for 20-year charter review during school year (SY) 2020 – 21
Two-week Window: October 19 – 30, 2020
QSR Team Members: Three consultants, including one special education (SPED) specialist
Number of Observations: Ten unscored observations
Total Enrollment: 362[1]
Students with Disabilities Enrollment: 35
English Learners Enrollment: 0
In-seat Attendance on Observation Days: [2]
Visit 1: October 19, 2020 – 87.9%
Visit 2: October 20, 2020 – 88.3%
Visit 3: October 22, 2020 – 85.2%
Visit 4: October 26, 2020 – 87.5%
Visit 5: October 29, 2020 – 85.5%
Visit 6: October 30, 2020 – 82.8%

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,

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[1] This enrollment figure is based on preliminary, unvalidated data as of October 5, 2020.
[2] During SY 2020 – 21, educational services are being provided both in-person and via distance learning. While during normal operations there is a consistent city-wide definition of what constitutes "present" (a student must be physically present for at least 80.0% of the instructional day), there is significantly more variation in what constitutes "present" during distance learning. In-seat attendance as presented here represents all students receiving educational services, whether in-person or remote. This rate is fundamentally different than in-seat attendance during a typical year, and caution should be taken when comparing schools to each other or to historic rates.

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 some evidence that the school is achieving its mission. Observers found evidence of a highly supportive environment, with teachers encouraging students and affirming their abilities. Teachers used a variety of tools and platforms to deliver virtual instruction and instructional routines were consistent across the campus. However, observers noted low levels of academic rigor in many classrooms and a culture focused on passive engagement with the learning tasks. Teachers asked rapid-fire questions and rarely posed high-level "why" questions to students.

During the two-week observation window, the team used a modified version of Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendices I and II). After careful consideration regarding the uniqueness of virtual instruction, DC PCSB elected to summarize the overall findings from the observations using specific examples that apply to each indicator of the rubric, rather than assess individual scores and percentages for each domain. Therefore, the review team did not score any of the observations. Instead, observers used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* tool to make determinations about how well KIPP DC Discover Academy PCS is meeting its mission, based on specific examples of evidence the team observed during remote visits.

In the Classroom Environment domain, observers noted that teachers interacted enthusiastically with students. Student behavior was generally appropriate, and it was clear standards of conduct had been established and implemented successfully. In the Instruction domain, observers noted that teachers' explanation of content was clear and error-free, inviting student participation. However, observers noted frequent use of low-level, rapid-fire questions. Students rarely had the opportunity to respond to their peers or engage in meaningful classroom discussions.

Governance
Anthony Lewis 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 observation window, KIPP PCS Discover Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities. The QSR team looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. According to the school, it has created a robust system of supports across the network including a broad continuum of placements designed to support each student's individual needs. The school stated that, the general education teachers co-plan with special education teachers and use the special education teachers to help with modification and adaptation of the general education content to ensure student access. The school notes that it "uses research-based intervention to promote data-driven instruction, to individualize learning experiences, and to effectively integrate resources which would positively impact students' educational programs." The school also named that observers should see co-teaching models including alternative, team, parallel, and station support. Overall, the school implemented its stated program with fidelity, as evidenced by small group instruction and the implementation of specific strategies that support accommodations. Key trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- To demonstrate that teachers support students to use compensatory strategies and study/organizational techniques, the school explained that the team would observe supports and accommodations explicitly designed to fade[3] for increased student independence in small group lessons. In these observations, teachers led students in chanting the school rules with gestures and repetition. Teachers also implemented structured breaks as a strategy. One teacher said, "Sometimes we need a moment to calm down our bodies after movement break. Breathe in then breathe out." In another observation, the teacher made real-life connections using the day's weather. The teacher asked, "What do we notice about cloudy days? Let's compare."

- To demonstrate that teachers individualize learning experiences and effectively integrate resources in small group sessions, the school stated that observers would see adaptations and scaffolds built into lessons. Teachers elicited responses from students individually saying, "[Student X], tell us what you saw in your book?" The student responded, "My favorite part is the kids are playing with toys." Teachers also clarified and repeated expectations for students. One teacher gave a refresher of rules for Simon Says, while another

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[3] Fading, an applied behavior analysis strategy (ABA), is most often paired with prompts, another ABA strategy. Fading refers to decreasing the level of assistance needed to complete a task or activity. The overall goal is for the student to eventually engage in the skill independently. https://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/virtual-strategies/fading

teacher transitioned to a compound word activity. In another example, teachers used online music programs to end class with the closing "lightbulb dance" kids dance. Students engaged for the last 3 minutes of the lesson.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT[4]

This table summarizes the evidence collected on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced virtual observations. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	In all observations, interactions between teachers and students, and among students, demonstrated genuine care and respect. Teachers showed patience as they made connections with individual students. In all observations, teachers greeted students by name as they began class. In one observation, after a student answered a difficult question, the teacher said, "Let's do a celebration cheer; that was tough!"
Establishing a Culture for Learning	In all observations, teachers demonstrated a regard for students' abilities. In one observation, the teacher introduced the lesson by saying, "I'm going to show you how you can read 'just right' books, [because] it's time for you to become super readers." In another observation, a teacher focused a rule review on students' ability to learn. The teacher said, "Our second rule is 'Brains are Thinking' so it can grow big and strong from all the cool things we're gonna learn today." In contrast, observers noted many teachers' passively engaged with the content rather than insisting on deep student understanding. In one observation, a student was asked to go to the window to check the weather and reported, "It's sunny!" The teacher then asked, "How did you know?" Although the student did not respond, the teacher said, "You saw the sun peeking through? Nice job!"
Managing Classroom Procedures	In all observations, classroom routines functioned smoothly. Students and teachers transitioned with ease between morning meeting, read-aloud, and other activities. Teachers used timers to structure lesson time, and students used the mute/unmute button correctly and efficiently throughout the observation.
Managing Student Behavior	In all classrooms, student behavior was appropriate. Teachers reviewed behavior expectations and monitored student behavior frequently, respectfully, and effectively. Teachers often pointed out positive behaviors, such as, "I am going to highlight [Student X] this morning – you are calm and ready to learn; thank you for that."

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[4] Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

INSTRUCTION

This table summarizes the evidence collected on the Instruction domain of the rubric during the unannounced virtual observations. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain.

Instruction	Evidence
Communicating with Students	In all observations, teachers' explanation of content was clear and error-free. Most teachers involved students in the explanations of content, inviting their thinking and participation. For example, one teacher engaged various students in using arm motions to blend sounds to read consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. In another observation, the teacher explained, "Let's read our story. Today we will practice making connections to what we already know so we can understand the story better." Observers noted statements of learning objectives posted in some, but not all, classes.
Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	In some observations, teachers posed some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many had a single correct answer. Examples of low-level questions included, "Do *bell* and *cake* rhyme?" and "What's this shape?" Teachers across most observations made a point to include all students in discussion, using cold calling strategies to ensure equal participation.
Engaging Students in Learning	In all observations, observers noted most students intellectually engaged with the learning task. Additionally, materials and resources supported the learning goals. Teachers led activities including, 'feeding' a robot with rhyming words, sorting objects by shape and color, and blending sounds to pronounce CVC words. Lesson pacing was appropriate through all lessons, allowing students to remain intellectually engaged.
Using Assessment in Instruction	In most observations, teachers checked for understanding by posing questions to individual students and the whole class. For example, during a shape-sorting activity, the teacher asked, "Where does this shape belong?" In some observations, teachers did not check for individual evidence of student understanding and provided mostly global feedback, such as "Good job, kiss your brain."

Work Sample Review[5]
As an added accountability measure, during SY 2020 – 21, DC PCSB collected student work samples in addition to classroom observations in grades kindergarten – 12. Work samples were not reviewed for this campus.

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[5] Due to the unique makeup of the campus, with more than 50% of the students enrolled in Pre-kindergarten, the work sample tool is not applicable. The review tool is based on The New Teacher Project's report: *The Opportunity Myth*. See here for more information: https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/

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.