



New York State Education Department

Renewal Site Visit Report
2016-2017

KIPP NYC Washington Heights Academy Charter School
(Elementary and Middle Schools)

Visit Date: 11/29/2016
Date of Report: 6/11/2017

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	KIPP NYC Washington Heights Academy Charter School
Board Chair	Rafael Mayer
School Leader	Becca Mc Murdie (Grades K-3) Danny Swersky (Grades 4-

The information in this section was provided by the NYS Education Department Charter School Office.

METHODOLOGY

A one day renewal site visit was conducted at KIPP NYC Washington Heights Academy Charter School (elementary and middle school campuses) on November 29, 2016. The Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted interviews with the school leadership team and with parents.

The team conducted 14 classroom observations in Grades K-8. The observations were approximately 15-20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with school leaders.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- Teacher roster
- Current organization chart

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).

Finding: Exceeds

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1 See Appendix A for further information.

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

1.a. ESEA Accountability Designation

KIPP New York City Washington Heights Academy (KNYWHACS) was designated by the Department as a school *In Good Standing* in 2015-2016 (based on data from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015).

1.b. Similar Schools Comparison

Using a list of schools generated by NYSED's "similar schools" algorithm, the school analyzed their performance compared to schools with similar characteristics for the past three years. The school has gone from underperforming the state average in English Language Arts by about 5% in 2013 and 2014, to exceeding the state average by 12% in 2016. Similar schools have underperformed the state on average by -15 points over the same period.

According to their analysis, KNYWHA outperformed the state average in Mathematics over the same three year time period by 14%, 6% and 14% respectively. The school reported that their performance was above that of similar schools, where students generally underperformed students across the state by roughly -17 points.

Trending Towards Proficiency

2.a. (i-ii) Growth

KNYCWHA reports that a greater percentage of students are demonstrating "trending toward proficiency" as defined in the CSO Performance Framework, in both ELA and mathematics. In 2014 and 2015 the percentage of students who were able to maintain a level 3 or 4 score in ELA was about 10% with 20-24% of students demonstrating an increase of one or more levels. In 2016, the overall percentage doubled with 15% able to maintain a level 3 or 4 and 41% increasing their score by one or more levels.

The school reports the same trend can be seen in mathematics scores. In 2014, 65% of the students tested were able to maintain a level 3 or 4 proficiency score or perform at one or more levels higher than the year prior. 2015 testing saw a drop in scores with 42% of students able to maintain proficiency or growing one or more levels. An increase in scores was seen in 2016 with over 23% of the students able to maintain proficiency from the previous year, with 42% of the students tested increasing by at least one level.

2.b. (i-iii) Proficiency 3-8 Assessments

KNYCWHA reports that it has consistently outperformed their district of location (NYC CSD 6) in both ELA and Math since commencing instruction in 2012-13. In 2015-16, their students outperformed students in NYC CSD 6 by +23% points in ELA and +29% points in Math.

When compared to the state average, KNYCWHA students have historically performed about 6% lower than students across the state in ELA. However, in 2015 KNYCWHA students achieved proficiency scores of level 3 and 4 at a rate of over 12% points higher than students across the state. In mathematics students have historically outperformed students across the state by 6-15% points. In 2015-16, KIPP students outperformed students across the state by 14%.

The school reports that it has continually improved in the performance of economically disadvantaged (ED), students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL) since 2014. As stated in the renewal report, “31% of ED students, 20% of SWD, and 18% of ELL students saw an increase in their performance from year to year. In 2016, the percentages of students in those subgroups that saw growth increased to 63%, 38% and 66%. This improvement occurred while the number of students in each subgroup increased significantly.”

In comparison to their peers across CSD 6 and the state, ED students have consistently outperformed their peers both ELA and Math. In 2016, ED students had their strongest scores, outperforming similar students across the state by 22% point in ELA and 24% points in Math.

The trends among SWD and ELL students at KNYCWHA were similar to those among ED students. SWD students enrolled at KNYCWHA have consistently outperformed similar students at both the district and state level in ELA since 2015, and Math since 2014. ELL students enrolled at KNYCWHA have outperformed their peers across the state in both ELA and math across the district and state in 2016.

Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning

School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students' well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSLs) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.

Finding Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Curriculum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSLs. b. Teachers use unit and lesson plans that introduce complex materials, stimulate higher order thinking, and build deep conceptual understanding and knowledge around specific content. c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades. d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.
2. <i>Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding. b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.
3. <i>Assessment and Program Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments. b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes. c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program, and modifies the program accordingly.
4. <i>Supports for Diverse Learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for all students, including but not limited to: students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students. b. The school has systems to monitor the progress of individual students and facilitate communication between interventionists and classroom teachers regarding the needs of individual students.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2

The school stated in the renewal application that they attribute the growth in their performance, “to a more aligned curriculum, better training for teachers, a focused internal procedure to prepare for state tests, and interim assessments that are more closely aligned to state test content and testing conditions.”

KNYCWAH uses the KIPP Wheatley program for ELA instruction. This curriculum was developed by the KIPP Foundation and is used across KIPP NYC elementary and middle schools. The school’s elementary campus has implemented a school-wide guided reading program with cross grade leveled groups and

participation by every teacher to maximize adults. The elementary campus is also focused on how to “unpack complex text” and has modified close reading lessons for grades K and 1. In mathematics, the school uses combinations of Eureka Math, Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) and the KIPP NYC Math Curriculum. Content team meetings are used to launch units by identifying skill deficits and common misunderstandings that inform lesson plan modifications. At the middle school campus, the curriculum includes electives such as coding and dance, and school leaders reported beginning to roll out a social justice curriculum. The middle school campus also has leveled math classes with some students preparing for the math Regents exam. School leaders reported that the network provides ample resources, which they are able to modify them based on their students’ needs.

Observations of classroom instruction at both elementary and middle school campuses found organized and purposeful lessons and effective classroom management. Clear routines, such as transitions between activities, tracking speakers and hand signals, were internalized by students. Most students were consistently engaged in learning activities. Elementary leaders indicated a focus this year on co-teaching and co-planning to maximize the use of multiple adults in the classroom. While they have expanded the use of a re-teach period to the full school year within classes, they are considering using it across grades. Questioning in a number of observed classes challenged students to provide reasoning for their answers or increase specificity.

The school is using data to modify curriculum, plan lessons and to evaluate and refine programs. At the elementary campus STEP, interim assessments and monthly unit assessments are administered and grade level teams and the leadership teams evaluate data and look at student work together. Assessment results are used to form and regularly adjust leveled groups for instruction and interventions, such as Read 180 and System 44. Middle school leaders described quarterly data days to review results and action plan to “make sure the kids are doing the heavy lifting.”

The school uses goals to motivate student performance. For example, in some elementary classes students had goal cards with 2-3 academic and character goals taped to their desk. School leaders are also focused on ambitious regional goals and were knowledgeable about their achievement and growth towards those goals. In addition, recognizing the gap for special education, the elementary campus has established distinct goals for special education as well. At the middle school campus, goals and interim assessment results were posted in halls and classrooms.

This year, to increase support for students with disabilities, elementary school leaders added dedicated special education coordinators by grade spans, who were all previously teachers at the school, and provided small group instruction. The school contracts for SETSS as well, with a full-time person just starting at the time of the renewal site visit. In addition, the school is providing speech pro-actively as an extra support for students identified at risk.

Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate and Family Engagement

The school has systems in place to support students' social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school's academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Behavior Management and Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy. b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment. c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination. d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption.
2. <i>Family Engagement and Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students' strengths and needs. b. The school assesses family and student satisfaction using strategies such as surveys, feedback sessions, community forums, or participation logs, and considers results when making schoolwide decisions. c. The school has a systematic process for responding to parent or community concerns. d. The school shares school-

Near-term indicators of financial health are used to understand the current financial performance and viability of the school. NYSED

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.

Finding: Meets

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:

NYSED reviewed KNYCWA's 2015-2016 audited financial statements to determine whether the independent auditor observed sufficient internal controls over financial reporting. The auditor did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls that could be considered material weaknesses.

Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance

The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.

Finding:

Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity

The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.

Finding: Exceeds

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>School Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to a clearly defined mission and set of goals, allowing for continual improvement in student learning. b. Roles and responsibilities for leaders, staff, management, and board members are clearly defined. Members of the school community adhere to defined roles and responsibilities. c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensure effective communication across the school. d. The school successfully recruits, hires, and retains key personnel, and makes decisions – when warranted – to remove ineffective staff members.
2. <i>Professional Climate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school is fully staffed with high quality personnel to meet all educational and operational needs, including finance, human resources, and communication. b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers. c.

Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements

School leaders reported stable enrollment with little student attrition and parents sending their children from the Bronx to attend this school in Washington Heights. The school benefits from the KIPP NYC recruitment efforts, which are described in the renewal application as including “mailers to targeted buildings and neighborhoods; subway and bus advertisements; visits to organizations with similar missions in the area (distribute pamphlets and other educational materials); targeted e-mail and digital advertising; and other efforts.” Historically, the school has enrolled comparable percentages of students with disabilities compared to the district and a smaller percentage of English language learners, though that number has risen considerably this year. The school indicated in its renewal application plans -3.1(hi732.3(-3.17

Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.

Finding:Approaches

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Legal Compliance</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter including, but not limited to: those related to student admissions and enrollment; FOIL and Open Meetings Law; protecting the rights of students and employees; financial management and oversight; governance and reporting; and health and safety requirements.b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed, and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:

The school meets the majority of indicators; however, they are not in compliance with statutory teacher certification regulations. The NYS School Report Card states that 32% of the school's teaching staff is uncertified. KNYCWA is continuing the implementation of its plan to increase the percentage of certified teachers on staff.

APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT AND GRADUATION OUTCOMES

Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for All Students:
School, District & NYS Level Aggregates

All Students	ELA					Math				
	School	District		NYS		School	District		NYS	
		District	Delta = (Sch-Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch-NYS)		District	Delta = (Sch-Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch-NYS)
2013-14	24%	17%	+7	29%	-7	50%	22%	+28	38%	+14
2014-15	27%	29%								

