

KCMSD Evaluation

Final Report

Submitted to Arthur Benson
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In October and November, 2001, a team of four researchers made site visits to 14 schools in the KCMSD to gather data for a qualitative evaluation. The schools included nine elementary schools—Askew, East, Gladstone, Knotts, Ladd, McCoy, Mt. Washington, Three Trails, and Wheatley; three middle schools—Northeast, Paul Robeson, and J. A. Rogers; and two high schools—Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts and Van Horn High School.

A schedule for the site visits was arranged through the Office of the Superintendent of the KCMSD. Principals were notified of the site visits by the KCMSD, and visits were confirmed by the researchers at least one day prior to their visits to the schools. A copy of the schedule can be found in Appendix A.

One researcher spent a school day at each elementary school except East, where the size of the school mandated a second researcher. A team of two researchers also visited each middle and high school for a school day. At each school, the researchers interviewed the principal, observed in classrooms, and talked informally with teachers and children. In the elementary schools, researchers observed in classrooms at each of the grade levels in the school; in each classroom they observed an entire lesson or a significant portion of a lesson. In the middle and high schools, researchers observed in some classrooms in each core curriculum area—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—at each grade level, as well as

other curriculum areas, such as foreign language, computers, the arts, and seminars or study skills classes, as time permitted.

The visits focused on the issues of implementation of the KCMSD Core Curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning experienced by children, the quality of professional development provided for the teachers at each school, the use of assessment tools aligned with the Core Curriculum and MAP, and the school's attention to addressing the achievement gap.

The research questions that guided the evaluation were:

1. To what extent is the KCMSD Core Curriculum being implemented in classrooms? Is the Core Curriculum being translated into rich, authentic, and meaning-centered content?
2. What characterizes teaching in classrooms in these schools? How does it reflect best practice in terms of supporting students constructing knowledge and concepts through active, meaning-centered learning experiences?
3. What kinds of professional development are available to teachers in the schools? How do the professional development activities offered at the school support teachers in using classroom practices that are aligned with the Principles of Learning and best instructional practice?
4. What kinds of assessment tools and practices are being used at the schools to document student learning, to plan for instruction, and to inform teaching practice?
5. To what extent are the schools actively addressing the narrowing or closing of the achievement gap?

Interview and observation data from the schools were used to develop a set of case studies, one for each school, that are presented later in this report. Care was taken in the development of the case studies not to include information in descriptions of classroom observations that would identify or place in jeopardy any individual teachers or students. Principals of the schools were invited to provide feedback or corrections to drafts of the case studies. All nine elementary principals provided feedback in the form of corrections, additional

information, or updated information. One of the middle school principals and one of the high school principals also provided such feedback. All feedback submitted by the principals was addressed in the final drafts of the case studies.

The four researchers are all experienced in gathering data through interviews and observations. They have all been classroom teachers and/or administrators , and they all share a common understanding of best instructional practice based on constructivism and the Institute for Learning Principles of Learning. Standard protocols for the site visits in general and for interviews were used to ensure that comparable data were gathered at each of the school sites. The interview protocols can be found in Appendix B of this report.