



To: Members of the Council of the District of Columbia

From: Monique Hardin-Simmons, Principal, KIPP DC Promise Academy

Re: Public Roundtable on Student Learning Loss: Widening the Achievement Gap During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Date: February 10, 2021

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Monique Hardin-Simmons, and I am the principal of KIPP DC Promise Academy. I have served as an educator in DC for roughly 9 years, teaching 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade and also serving as a Vice Principal for 2nd-4th grade. In those capacities, I have had the opportunity to teach, coach and design math curriculum for elementary students.

I am excited to stand before you all today to share more information with you on our math program at Promise as it relates to double-dosage.

While double-dosage math models can typically be seen in high schools and are marked by increasing the time a student spends in a particular math course or on a skill, there are developmentally appropriate versions of such a model in elementary schools.

We think of this not as double dosage but as a balanced math program. Students at Promise spend on average roughly 2 hours of their instructional day in our balanced math program. For us, the emphasis is not just on providing more time with a particular skill, but in ensuring that the additional coursework or classroom time allotted meets the needs of all learners. Students are forming their identities throughout their childhood, and we believe their identity as powerful mathematicians is ever more important.

I will take time now to discuss our math program, provide my thoughts on what makes this program beneficial for students and finally share how this approach could be modeled in other places.

Balanced Math at Promise

Promise serves students from Kindergarten to 4th grade. While systems and structures vary to meet developmental needs of students, at our core we seek to ensure that students have access to a math block that teaches skills aligned to the common core, students have access to a responsive teaching block if needed, and students have access to a problem-solving block that serves as a supplement or enrichment block.

Let's take time to talk about our Main Math Block: This block is designed to teach skills aligned to the common core standards. This block is roughly one hour long. Teachers provide direct instruction in teaching a mini lesson and supporting students with guided practice. Students have an opportunity to engage in guided discourse and independent practice before completing a daily exit slip.

This block of the day is extremely important in introducing new skills to students in a way that they can understand. The block is roughly an hour long because it allows time for students to practice a particular skill or task. The mini lesson is 15 minutes and the remaining 45 minutes gives students an opportunity to practice with guidance from the teacher first and then independently. I think this approach is valuable because it prioritizes practice. Learning a new skill can be challenging. We don't assume that all learners will get it the first time, every time. We plan additional practice time within the block to ensure that all students get what they need.

This model can be used in many places. As a coach, I have found that providing space and time for educators to infuse more practice time AND having clear structures during the math block that support additional practice time are key in implementation. Finally, having resources prepped or available for educators to easily access when providing practice opportunities will also ensure success.

Our next block of time that supports increased time in mathematics is our Responsive teaching block:

Utilizing formative exit slip data from the main math block along with informal check for understanding tools, teachers respond to student misconceptions during the responsive math teaching block. This block is roughly 30 minutes long and allows the teacher to pull up to two small groups and tailor instruction to student need. You could see use of manipulatives and/or a different teaching method during this time of the day.

This block adds an additional layer of support and requires educators to alter teaching methods or even provide scaffolds to meet students where they are. Students are still learning skills aligned to the common core, but the educator tries to teach in a way that addresses any misconceptions.

This model can be replicated also. It requires educators to have some understanding of data analysis. Educators will be able to identify what questions students got wrong AND why they got those questions wrong in order to effectively respond.

Finally, we have our problem-solving block, which is also roughly 30 minutes long: This block is also aligned to common core standards, and focuses on exposing students to just one problem in depth, allotting time for students to explain verbally, in words, and in pictures the mathematical reasoning or justification they have in solving the problem. Teachers serve as facilitators and student voice is especially championed here. Students share their approach to the mathematical challenge or question and other students respond. In K-2, this happens through a program called Cognitively Guided Instruction (or CGI). In grades 3 and 4, this happens through Problem of the Day. I would like to highlight a few things that are notable about this block.

1. This block creates the space for students to be the experts and in so doing enables students to explain their rationale for how they chose to solve a particular problem. We know that students can learn from one another. Another child's rationale can serve as a powerful tool in supporting other students.
2. This block also brings real world problems to our students that they must grapple with while also applying the mathematical justifications. We use this block many times to expose students to youth culture and culturally relevant pedagogy that not only helps students build their mathematical understanding, but also provides opportunity for students to develop their critical consciousness. In so



doing, it is typical to see students hunched over problems together and arguing vibrantly to defend their point of view.

This model can also be replicated. I always like to think of this block as the student's block: thought of and led by students. To engage in this block well, it is important to have mathematical challenges and problems that are relevant to students and their experiences. Students still practice skills aligned to standards, but there is a heavy emphasis on word problem development.

Hopefully, in hearing more about balanced math at Promise, you were able to see the benefits of providing additional time to math in an elementary program as long as that time is balanced in its approach. While we do believe additional time dedicated to strengthening skills in math has been incredibly important and helpful for our students, we also believe that providing students with a balanced approach to math where they are able to have direct, responsive, tailored instruction and an opportunity to grapple with mathematical concepts in a way that requires them to own their learning are all ways that this approach will effectively impact our young mathematicians.

Thank you all for your time and the opportunity to share my experiences.

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