



June 19, 2015

Rachel Sussman, Board Chair
The Next Step / El Próximo Paso Public Charter School
3047 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ms. Sussman:

The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, 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 Qualitative Site Review during the 2014-15 school year for the following reason:

- School eligible for 20-year Charter Review during 2015-16 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of The Next Step / El Próximo Paso Public Charter School between May 18 and May 29, 2015. The purpose of the site review is for PCSB to gauge the extent to which the school's goals and student academic achievement expectations were evident in the everyday operations of the public charter school. To ascertain this PCSB staff and consultants evaluated your classroom teaching by using an abridged version of the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* observation rubric. We also visited a board meeting.

You will find that the enclosed Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: charter mission and goals, the classroom environment, and instruction.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that the staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at The Next Step / El Próximo Paso Public Charter School.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Next Step / El Próximo Paso Public Charter School (The Next Step PCS) is an adult education school serving 340 students ages 16 to 24 in Ward 1 through a day program and an evening program. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in May 2015 because The Next Step PCS is eligible for 20-year Charter Review during the 2015-16 school year.

The QSR team conducted observations over the course of a two-week window, from May 18 through May 29, 2015. A team of two PCSB staff members and three consultants (including a special education consultant) conducted 29 observations of both the day and evening program. A member of the QSR team also attended a Board of Trustees meeting.

The QSR team used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* Rubric throughout the observations and observed classrooms in mornings and afternoons. In some instances a QSR team may have observed a teacher twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school's stated mission and goals. The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. In the vast majority of observations, students were engaged in the learning tasks and teachers expressed high expectations through praise and encouragement. In only a couple of instances interactions between teachers and students were not respectful and teachers did not respond effectively to poor behavior. The QSR team scored 73% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. In the majority of observations, teachers gave clear explanations of the content and students asked few clarifying questions. Several teachers modeled how to complete assignments and gave students feedback on how they could improve their work. Some teachers asked only recall or leading questions that did not require students to think critically.

Prior to the two-week window, The Next Step PCS provided answers to specific questions posed by PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities in the Special Education Questionnaire. The special education specialist on the QSR team saw the provision of special education services through a number of service delivery models. One classroom setting used co-teaching with one general education and one special education teacher to support students. Co-teachers working in this classroom setting used two different co-teaching models (parallel teaching and one teach-one assist) when delivering instruction to students. The QSR team member observed pullout services in another classroom where the special education teacher provided math skill building instruction to a small group of students. As noted in the Next Step's Special Education Questionnaire, both general and special education teachers used Smart Boards in all classrooms observed; however, the QSR team did not observe the use of other aforementioned technologies such as ALEKS and Achieve 3000. The observer saw teachers using assessments including warm-up activities, class discussions, and teacher-created handouts as a means of gauging students' comprehension. While the QSR team did not observe teachers using math manipulatives, graphic organizers, and "choices" for students to assist with differentiating instruction; the observer did see evidence of differentiated instruction in all classroom settings with teachers using visual, auditory and kinesthetic supports when delivering instruction.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes The Next Step PCS’s goals and academic achievement expectations as detailed in its charter and subsequent Accountability Plans, and the evidence that the Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team observed of the school meeting those goals during the Qualitative Site Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission:</p> <p>The mission of The Next Step PCS is to provide students who face extraordinary challenges and who are not supported in traditional high schools the opportunity to continue their education.</p>	<p>The QSR team saw evidence that the school is working to meet its mission. The Next Step PCS offers both a day and an evening program to support students with different schedules. School staff told QSR team members that all students have an individual learning plan (ILP) based on their adult basic education level. The QSR team observed students leaving classes to meet with counselors about their ILPs. The classes are divided into different skill levels.</p>
<p>Students will show an average increase of at least a grade level equivalent of growth in reading on the Test of Adult Education (TABE)</p>	<p>The QSR team observed effective instruction in the majority of observations. As further detailed in the Instruction section of the Danielson Framework, 73% of the observations scored proficient or distinguished in instruction. In these observations teachers posed open-ended questions and students actively participated in the learning tasks.</p> <p>Teachers mentioned the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment in several observations and discussed the skills that students will be demonstrating on the assessment. In English as a second language (ESL) classes, the QSR team observed students engaging in dialogues with classmates to practice speaking in English. Teachers gave students feedback on how to improve their pronunciation and phonics skills.</p>
<p>Students will show an average increase of at least a grade level equivalent of growth in mathematics on the TABE</p>	
<p>English language learners will show an average increase of at least a grade level equivalent of growth in English language proficiency on TABE</p>	
<p>70% of eligible students will pass the General Education Development exam</p>	

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>In the GED classes several teachers worked one-on-one with students, providing them with specific and actionable feedback on how to improve their work. One teacher gave the student strategies for how to study learning the states in the United States. Another teacher taught a whole group lesson and then differentiated the practice problems for students at different levels.</p>
<p>On average, enrolled students will attend school 69% of the time.</p>	<p>The number of students in each classroom varied. Some classrooms were generally full with few empty desks and others had several empty desks. A teacher in one observation discussed the importance of coming to class every day before presenting a student with a student of the week award for strong attendance and hard work. The QSR team noted that many students arrived late to classes throughout the observations, particularly in the day program. An official attendance rate will be available after the data is validated in August 2015</p>
<p>Governance:</p>	<p>A PCSB staff member attended The Next Step PCS Board of Trustees meeting on March 11, 2015. A quorum was present. The board voted in a parent and alumna representative in the first half of the meeting. The Executive Director and school principals gave updates on programming, performance, finance, and facilities. Committees discussed their short-term and long-term projects and shared them with the larger group.</p>

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environments 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 83% of observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team rated 86% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. Teachers and students in these observations showed care for each other. Teachers called students by name and sat side-by-side with students when working with them. In several instances teachers and students had a friendly rapport and joked with each other.	Distinguished	18%
		Proficient	68%
	The QSR team rated just 14% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. There was occasional disrespect between students and teachers did not intervene in these observations. One student told a classmate, “I can’t stand you, you’re not funny,” and the teacher did not respond. In another classroom students laughed at classmates who answered questions wrong or made mistakes with content and the teacher did not address the behavior. One teacher criticized students’ Spanish accents.	Basic	14%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team rated 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Establishing a Culture for Learning. In these observations most teachers checked in with all students and expected effort from all students. Students consistently put forth effort to produce quality work. Teachers praised and encouraged students saying things like, “Try your best,” and “It’s okay if he gets it wrong.”	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	72%

¹ Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team rated 21% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In a few observations students looked for the easy path rather than focusing on quality work. One teacher gave a student feedback on a project and suggested that the student do more research. The student responded, “That’s too much,” and the teacher did not encourage the student to put forth effort when the student moved on without doing the additional research. In a couple of instances some students did not participate in the lesson and the teacher did not encourage them to participate.</p>	Basic	21%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	<p>The QSR team rated 80% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Classroom Procedures. Clear routines and procedures were in place, which maximized instructional time. Students passed out materials such as computers quickly and effectively with little to no teacher intervention. All students entering the class late immediately got to work.</p>	Distinguished	14%
		Proficient	66%
	<p>The QSR team rated 20% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in this component. Students work in small groups or independently got off task in a few observations. Teachers had to prompt students multiple times before students transitioned between activities. One teacher did not have all routines in place and some instructional time was loss while the class settled back in from a break.</p>	Basic	17%
		Unsatisfactory	3%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>The QSR team rated an impressive 90% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Student Behavior. In these observations student behavior was generally appropriate. Teachers actively</p>	Distinguished	10%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>monitored student behavior by circulating the classroom or refocusing students who got off task. One teacher non-verbally redirected a student talking by gesturing with a finger to the lips. Another teacher respectfully asked a student to put away a cellphone and the student immediately complied.</p>	Proficient	80%
	<p>The QSR team rated just 10% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers in these observations did not have clear systems in place for classroom management resulting in stricter consequences in some instances and lenient consequences in others for the same behaviors. One student disrupted the class and the teacher asked the student to step into the hallway. The student banged on the door to be let back into the class.</p>	Basic	10%
		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 73% of observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 74% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Communicating with Students. In these observations teachers made the expectations for student learning evident by posting and referencing daily agendas and objectives. Teachers used appropriate vocabulary and helped students to decipher words in ESL classes using strategies such as context clues. A couple of teachers modeled ways to approach different problems, and in one class students modeled and explained the content to classmates.	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	67%
	The QSR team rated 26% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers' explanations in these observations resulted in students asking clarifying questions in order to begin the assignment. In one observation the teacher taught students about reciprocals and later in the lesson showed a reciprocal relationship but students could not produce the new term. Another teacher stated the objective for the lesson, but the lesson activities did not align to that objective.	Basic	26%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 60% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. Teachers asked a variety of questions including open-ended	Distinguished	4%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>questions in these observations and encouraged students to respond to each other. In a few instances students asked classmates questions about the content with little prompting from the teacher.</p>	Proficient	56%
	<p>The QSR team rated 40% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations teachers primarily asked recall questions or answered their own questions if students did not respond quickly. A few students answered the majority of questions in several observations and the teacher did not attempt to bring other students in to the discussion. One teacher asked leading questions that did not require students to put thought into their answers.</p>	Basic	40%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team rated 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Engaging Students in Learning. In these observations the majority of the class engaged intellectually in the learning tasks. Students showed interest and enthusiasm in their work by asking questions and persisting when they did not get an answer immediately. Teaching materials, such as text and audio to practice dialogues, supported the learning and involved all students in the lesson.</p>	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	72%
	<p>The QSR team rated 21% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Students in a few observations were not intellectually engaged in the lesson. One teacher asked low-level, recall questions on a movie and students passively participated in answering the questions. Teachers gave students little or no choice in how to complete tasks.</p>	Basic	21%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team rated 77% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Assessment in Instruction. Teachers monitored students' work and performance regularly in these observations. Many teachers circulated around the room and gave students feedback on their work. One teacher asked students to give a thumbs up or thumbs down if they understood parts of the lesson. An ESL teacher gave students feedback on their pronunciation including quick re-teaching of phonetics rules.	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	73%
	The QSR team rated 23% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Checks for understanding were solely global and teachers did not hear from all students. A few teachers sat at their desks throughout the observation and did not give students feedback on their work. One teacher attempted to reteach a vocabulary term when students did not understand but moved on even though students still did not understand after the second explanation.	Basic	23%
		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.

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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 situated 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 many 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.

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>Using Assessment in Instruction</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>