



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

October 27, 2015

Peggy O'Brien, Board Chair
St. Coletta PCS
1901 Independence Ave SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Ms. O'Brien:

The 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 2015-16 school year for the following reason:

- School eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2015-16 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of St. Coletta Public Charter School (St. Coletta PCS) between September 14 and September 29, 2015. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: charter mission and goals, classroom environments, and instructional delivery.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at St. Coletta PCS.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: October 27, 2015

Campus Name: St. Coletta Public Charter School

Ward: 7

Grade levels: St. Coletta serves non-graded students ages three to 22

Enrollment: 249

Reason for visit: 10-year review

Two-week window: September 14 – September 29, 2015

Team: Two PCSB staff members including the SPED specialist and two SPED specialist consultants

Number of observations: 24

Summary

The mission of St. Coletta Public Charter School is to serve children and adults with intellectual disabilities, and to support their families. “At St. Coletta, we believe in the immeasurable value of the individual human spirit and the right of each individual to live as full and independent a life as possible. We respect the dignity of all persons entrusted to our care and our goal is to serve them in an atmosphere that encourages their talents, celebrates their successes and builds their self-esteem.”

St. Coletta is a unique school in which all of the students are receiving level 4 special education services. There is evidence of a rich, genuine, progressive academic setting that supports the growth and success of each student. The instruction covers functional life and academic skills. Classroom supports ranged from special education classroom teachers to instructional aides/paraprofessionals, dedicated aides, and therapists.

The QSR team scored 97% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. Collaboration among the school staff translated into smooth procedures in each of the class settings. With the low student to teacher ratio, students appeared to benefit greatly in terms of the level of individualization, differentiation, attention, and support. The QSR team scored 93% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. Individualization was evident in each of the observations. There was consistency in the content and themes presented during class instruction and activities. Teachers and adult supports were able to individualize instruction and strategies to ensure they were specific to the individual needs of each student. Both small group and whole group instruction were used regularly, and there were numerous opportunities for one-on-one instruction.

Prior to the two-week window, St. Coletta PCS provided answers to specific questions posed by PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities. The reviewers who conducted special education-specific observations noted the following based on the answers provided by the school. Supplemental supports that were seen regularly in each of the observations included: visual schedules, the use of communication devices for students who are nonverbal or limited in verbal communication skills, and the use of positive behavior supports such as incentive charts. Instructional supports such as repetition, visual cues, regular prompting and redirection, and visual organizers were also seen in each observation. Adults appeared very

knowledgeable and attuned to the unique needs of each of their students, and many of the students appeared comfortable with their relationships and interactions with both peers and adults.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes St. Coletta’s mission, 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: The mission of St. Coletta Special Education Charter School, Inc. (“St. Coletta”) is to serve children and adults with intellectual disabilities, and to support their families. At St. Coletta, we believe in the immeasurable value of the individual human spirit and the right of each individual to live as full and independent a life as possible. We respect the dignity of all persons entrusted to our care and our goal is to serve them in an atmosphere that encourages their talents, celebrates their successes and builds their self-esteem.</p>	<p>St. Coletta is working to meet its mission. Staff members demonstrated their respect for the dignity and talents of the students with whom they were working. In one observation two aides helped a nonverbal student transition from a standing desk device with straps to a wheel chair. The staff members carefully held the student’s legs, arms, and body as they moved him into the wheelchair and soothed him when he gestured and moaned his discomfort, saying to him, “It’s ok, buddy. We got you.”</p> <p>During one observation the teachers reviewed the week’s content through an interactive Jeopardy game with the following content areas: cooking, CBI (Community-Based Interventions), “Where do I live?”, and DC transportation. Students discussed a recent trip they had made on the metro system, which teachers referenced. In another observation students participated in a cooking lesson where small groups were preparing turkey burgers, rice, and strawberry desserts.</p> <p>Teachers and support staff worked with students to understand how to follow a recipe. They used interactive assistive technology devices to help students who are immobile, and essentially enabled every student access to the classroom lesson through either a task, a discussion, or by physically participating in the lesson. Students were smiling, giving high-fives, giving positive praise to their</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	classmates, and overall were encouraged by the adult staff members to persevere when they appeared frustrated with a particular task or assignment.
Goals:	
75% of student objectives upon completion of the fourth quarter of student IEPs will be achieved at the Expanding, Progressing or Mastered level.	PCSB will analyze quantitative data to assess these goals in the 10-year charter review report. Teachers used specific tools with each student to enhance their mobility, ability to communicate, and understanding of concepts in the classroom. These tools included Tech Talk (assistive technology that students use to communicate with others), iPads, wheelchairs, and walking devices, depending on the needs of the student.
68% of student objectives will be achieved at Expanding, Progressing, or Mastery Level.	Students had freedom to move around the garden while others took turns pulling vegetables out of the soil. Teachers were attentive to students' need to move and explore. Teachers redirected students' attention in small group work and individual work when needed. Incentives such as toys or iPad time were used to reward students after they finished certain work periods.
Students will attend school 88% of the school days.	PCSB will analyze quantitative data to assess this goal for the 10-year charter review report. The QSR observed classrooms that appeared to be full.
90% of students who are eligible will graduate with a High School Certificate (IEP Certificate of Completion).	PCSB will analyze quantitative data to assess this goal for the 10-year charter review report. The high school curriculum included home life, cooking, and academic subjects. Teachers worked with students to complete tasks and encouraged students to try new things.
Governance:	A PCSB staff member attended the St. Coletta PCS Board of Trustees meeting on September 15, 2015. A quorum was present. The school's principal shared an overview of PCSB's 10-year charter review process. The CFO gave an update on the school's fourth quarter financial reports, shared updates PCSB is making

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>to its financial reporting, and reviewed the current year budget projections. The board discussed the school's budget and teacher retention strategies. The principal gave an update on enrollment for the 2015-16 school year, school discipline actions from the previous school year, the annual report submission, and the National Center and State Collaborative assessment for students with disabilities.</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 97% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	<p>The QSR team scored 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient with over half of the observations earning a distinguished rating. Teachers asked students about their lives outside of the classroom with questions such as, “What movie are you going to watch this weekend?” In another observation one teacher motivated a student to continue working by saying, “You’re happy today. I’m so glad you’re happy!”</p> <p>In a distinguished observation a teacher called on a student to participate while another teacher clapped for him. After he finished his part, the entire class clapped for him in recognition of his contribution.</p>	Distinguished	54%
		Proficient	46%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	0%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers’ classrooms had student work, transition zones, student schedules, and word walls posted. A student who entered class immediately began working on her journal, with the assistance of her aide. Teachers encouraged students to keep trying especially if they were attempting a challenging task. Teachers exuded positivity and excitement when presenting material and working with students on activities.</p>	Distinguished	25%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Proficient	71%
		Basic	4%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers and students orchestrated smooth transitions with ample instructions and time to end and start new activities. In a distinguished observation a student assisted another student with a visual impairment in finding his seat by tapping the chair and providing verbal directions.	Distinguished	17%
	Aides helped students clean up their workstations after they completed their activities. The students used their student schedules to move to the next activity. Students who were not working with an adult worked independently with minimal prompting or direction. Students also appeared to be responsible for determining what they needed to be working on and then initiated that task with little direction.	Proficient	79%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	4%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Overall students' behaviors were generally appropriate with students being redirected immediately if they got off task. Teachers provided positive praise for appropriate behavior, "It's great to have a quiet voice. Thanks!"	Distinguished	29%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>When a student begins to have a meltdown during a one-on-one activity, the teacher asked him if he needed a break. She then walked him over to the corner of the room and allowed him to take a break with another adult in the room.</p> <p>Teachers used proximity to help manage student behavior. The instructional aide provided sensory “squeezes” to one student in response to appropriate behavior and responses.</p>	Proficient	67%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	4%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	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 93% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p>Communicating with Students</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers worked one-on-one with students in small groups to complete their journal activity through picture cards, that depicted the month, the day of the week, and how they felt that day.</p>	Distinguished	21%
	<p>Teachers used visual tools to communicate steps and expectations for lessons. In one observation a teacher used a flat screen TV to display a pictorial chart of a turkey burger recipe. Teachers also previewed material and gave clear instructions before students started work. In one observation a teacher explained to students that they were going to learn about personal space. She used social stories to assist students in understanding concepts behind this theme.</p>	Proficient	67%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	4%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<p>Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 87% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations teachers asked questions, encouraged discussion, and used prompts and communication devices to aid students in participating in the discussion. One teacher asked a student to organize pictures of events in the correct sequence based on a text.</p>	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	83%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 13% of the observations as basic in this component. In one observation a whole group discussion provided few opportunities for students to discuss the topic, ask questions, or respond. In another observation the teacher solicited student responses from specific students who were assigned to answer questions while others were not encouraged to participate. The teacher attempted to promote student thinking, but only a few students were involved in responding.</p>	Basic	13%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. In some observations students determined their own tasks and demonstrated their completion of the task by removing the picture of their assigned tasks from their individualized picture schedules.</p>	Distinguished	13%
	<p>In all the observations teachers and support staff worked with students in a whole group, small group, and one-on-one settings using multiple accommodations: adapted online libraries, picture communication symbols, iPads, programs on computers, and adapted equipment. In one observation a student used a switch device to participate in her cooking class. The student pressed her cheek against the switch, which caused the contents of a measuring cup to pour into a bowl. Teachers and aides encouraged students to use assistive technology throughout multiple observations when students had difficulty communicating (e.g., during times of frustration, confusion, or clarification).</p>	Proficient	83%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	4%
	<p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team score 92% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Teachers worked to constantly take a pulse of understanding of the class in most observations. Teachers used numerous methods of gauging student-understanding including: finished work samples, student participation and responses to questions asked and/or student demonstration of a task during instruction and throughout the day. In one observation the teachers created a cumulative Jeopardy game with the week's lesson objectives as categories and had students review them in teams and debrief the main takeaways from each days' lesson.	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	88%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	8%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	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

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
				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.