



December 8, 2016

Le Roy (Terry) Eakin, Board Chair
DC Prep Benning Middle Campus
100 41st Street NE
Washington, DC 20019

Dear Mr. Eakin:

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, DC 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 2016-17 school year for the following reason:

- School eligible to petition for 15-year Charter Renewal during 2017-18 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of *DC Prep Benning Middle Campus* between October 17, 2016 through October 28, 2016. 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 DC Prep- Benning Middle.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: December 8, 2016

Campus Information

Campus Name: DC Prep Benning Middle Campus

Ward: 7

Grade levels: 4-7

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for visit: Eligible for 15-year charter renewal (SY2017-18)

Two-week window: October 17-28, 2016

QSR team members: 3 DC PCSB staff members, 1 consultant, SPED specialist

Number of observations: 21

Total enrollment: 281

Students with Disabilities enrollment: 51

English Language Learners enrollment: 0

In-seat attendance on the days the QSR team conducted observations:

Visit 1: October 19, 2016 – 90.0%

Visit 2: October 21, 2016 – 83.21%

Visit 3: October 25, 2016 – 92.14%

Visit 4: October 27, 2016 – 93.92%

Summary

DC Prep Public Charter School's mission is

to bridge the educational divide in Washington, DC by increasing the number of students from underserved communities with the academic preparation and personal character to succeed in competitive high schools and colleges.

School leadership explained that the LEA aims to support teachers to develop the skills and cultivate the tools needed to create a rich learning environment where the heavy lift is on the students, where non-curricular Prep Skills are embedded in instruction, and where strong teacher presence creates positive classroom momentum where everyone works towards excellence. The school defines Prep Skills as: speaking and listening to others, persevering on tasks and projects, contributing to group activities, advocating for oneself, and using emotional management strategies. DC Prep provides a program of intensive academic support including individual academic intervention and small group instruction called "Prep Sessions" where students receive reading or math intervention tailored to their individual needs.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environments and instructional

delivery (see Appendix I). The QSR team scored 88% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. In the component of *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport*, the vast majority of observations scored proficient or advanced. This corresponded to the high level of civility, respect and positivity that pervaded all interactions among teachers and students in both words and actions. There was a wider variance in the component of *Managing Student Behaviors* where the QSR team noted that not all teachers utilized the merit-demerit system consistently and effectively. Some teachers also addressed individual student behaviors inconsistently within their classroom.

The QSR team scored 70% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. In several observations teachers clearly framed the learning as it connected to prior learning and within the current unit of study. Throughout the school students engaged in learning tasks using clearly appropriate materials and resources. While teachers focused on maximizing instructional time throughout the school, the QSR team saw evidence that some students did not have enough time to grapple with the content at a deep level or interact with each other frequently or consistently.

A member of the DC PCSB staff attended the DC Prep Board Meeting on November 13, 2016. A quorum was present; board members reported both in person and on the phone. The board reported on academic highlights from all DC Prep Campuses. Additionally, they discussed DC Prep student demographics. Other topics covered by the meeting included: three- year strategic plan, governance matters, social and mental health support in schools, and participation rates of employees in DC Prep's 403(b) retirement plan.

Special Education

Prior to the two-week observation window, DC Prep – Benning Middle provided answers to specific questions posed by DC PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities in the Special Education Questionnaire.

- The school described the collaborative process between general educators and special educators. Special education teachers co-teach high-leverage blocks (ELA and Math grade-level focus lesson) with general educators, and they work with the teaching team to adapt instructional materials and implement supports for students with disabilities. The special education specialist saw at least two adults in three high-leveraged blocks use a variety of co-teaching models. In an ELA class both teachers checked in with students as they drafted narratives. Some students had additional writing supports, such as more detailed story planners. In a math class the general education teacher delivered content and instructions, while the special education teacher sat next to a few students and assisted them.

- The school explained that teachers analyze daily exit tickets, formative assessments, and anecdotal data, all of which is discussed at co-teaching meetings to determine the progress of students with disabilities. The special education specialist saw examples of ongoing assessment included teacher-student conferences and end-of-class exit tickets. Questions on the exit tickets corresponded to the objective posted. During three out of four of the observations, teachers did not frequently elicit evidence of understanding from students, and feedback was general.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes qualitative evidence related to the goals and academic achievement expectations as detailed in the school’s charter and subsequent charter amendments. Some charter goals can only be measured quantitatively. The Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team recorded evidence of what the school is doing on the ground to meet these quantitative goals. During the 5-year charter review, 10-year charter review, or 15-year charter renewal process, DC PCSB staff will use quantitative data to assess whether the school met those goals.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission:</p> <p>Our mission is to provide middle school students in Washington, D. C. with an outstanding education emphasizing academics, character, and leadership. This education will prepare our graduates to attend top high schools and to develop the skills, knowledge and character necessary for further academic achievement, professional success and civic leadership.</p>	<p>The QSR team saw strong evidence that DC Prep, Benning Middle Campus is meeting its mission. Classrooms are highly organized and productive with a focus on maximizing time. There are consistent school-wide non-curricular Prep Skills integrated into conversations with students and in lessons. Prep Skills include (1) speaking and listening to others, (2) persevering, (3) contributing to group activities, (4) advocating for oneself, and (5) using emotional management strategies.</p> <p>Character development is a clear focus throughout the school, as evidenced by hallway motivational quotes, no bullying posters, and a "Be Caught Being Kind" initiative. The QSR team observed respectful relationships between students and collegiality among faculty members.</p> <p>The teachers appeared to know all of the students’ first and last names throughout the building and used them when praising or redirecting behavior. There were always adults in the hallways, and at least two adults in each classroom. There was a very strong presence of routine and consistency for the students.</p>
<p>Goals:</p>	

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>The school's leadership, faculty and staff are highly effective and work together in a constructive and sustainable fashion.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed at least two adults in every classroom working effectively with children in small groups, individually or with the whole class. The principal and other administrators supported individual students or whole classrooms as needed.</p>
<p>Students abide by DC Prep's code of conduct, demonstrating good habits, character, and leadership.</p>	<p>DC Prep Skills and Expectations are posted in classrooms and referenced by all teachers. Nearly all students followed the school's code of conduct throughout all classroom observations. Students received a daily Prep Note paper that was carried throughout the day. This daily record included: Prep check with dollar amounts associated; "My goal today..." that students could fill out; Prep Skills; Prep expectations; hallway passes; reflections; and notes to parents. Additions and deductions on Prep Notes corresponded to students' ability to demonstrate Prep Skills. In one classroom a student who was not engaging in classroom activities was assigned a reflection essay to complete before he could rejoin the main lesson.</p>
<p>Students graduate with an eighth-grade level of academic competency or better.</p>	<p>All content was grade-level appropriate and aligned to grade-level standards. It was unclear to the QSR team whether student learning extended to more advanced skills and content. Teachers highlighted that the students who persevered on learning tasks are "the ones getting top marks and going to the best high schools." This teacher also praised students who solved a challenging problem as "ready for 8th grade math."</p>
<p>Students enroll in academically challenging college-preparatory high schools.</p>	<p>Not observable</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
The school assists in the launch and success of other charter schools, and in the improvement of non-charter public schools in the city.	Not observable
DC Prep alumni graduate from academically challenging high schools and attend college.	Not observable

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environment 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. Overall, the QSR team scored 88% 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	The QSR team scored an impressive 95% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the vast majority of classrooms, interactions between students and teachers demonstrated respect and any disrespectful behaviors were immediately addressed and effectively resolved. All classrooms included evidence of the school's Prep Skills through posters on the walls and interactions between and among teachers and students. This contributed to a uniform environment of respect. In one of the distinguished observations, the teacher shared interesting facts about her family and encouraged her students to also share facts as they created symbols representative of their families.	Distinguished	10%
		Proficient	85%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	5%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 86% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Expectations for hard work and learning are pervasive across the school.	Distinguished	14%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>Teachers regularly noticed and commented on students who demonstrated learning behaviors such as referring to their notes, persevering, and even using mistakes as demonstrations of thinking. In one distinguished observation students nominated a daily warm-up champion who was focused and provided thoughtful answers to the task. One teacher's energy was high throughout the lesson saying things like, "I'm excited for this day, we're really having our strongest day of the week." The teacher used a visual of a week at a glance to show students how much they had learned for the week and what the daily objective would be.</p>	Proficient	72%
	<p>The QSR team scored 14% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations students complied with the teachers' requests, but task completion seemed to be the ultimate goal, rather than delving more deeply into content meaning and ensuring student understanding. For example, when one student asked a question, the teacher's response indicated that she should simply do the operation (division) that they had been doing during the entire class period.</p>	Basic	14%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	<p>The QSR team scored 90% of the observations as proficient in this component. Classroom routines are clearly established and consistently implemented. In one observation the teacher reminded students of expectations for making comments and how to politely disagree with a</p>	Distinguished	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>peer. Teachers asked students to repeat back the instructions for an activity to make sure they understood before moving onto another activity. All teachers used a count-down process, either with a timer or counting backwards to manage instructional time.</p>	Proficient	90%
	<p>The QSR team scored 10% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations teachers had to repeat directions or students engaged in off-task conversation. Teachers and students did not always follow established routines. In one observation when the teacher engaged elsewhere and students were off-task, the teacher lost approximately 5 minutes of instructional time in addressing the behavior.</p>	Basic	10%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>The QSR team scored 81% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. Throughout the school student behavior was generally appropriate and aligned to the school-wide standards of conduct. Many teachers effectively used non-verbal reminders or proximity to manage student behavior. In one distinguished observation students took an active role in monitoring and marking their own behavior on their Prep Sheets. In other observations the teachers remained calm but persistent as they waited for individual student compliance with the direction.</p>	Distinguished	10%
		Proficient	71%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 19% of the observations as basic in this component. In several observations teachers used a deduction system for behavior management but this was either limited or ineffective. Some teachers were also inconsistent in the implementation of the system; offering several warnings for one specific student or offering points/requesting deductions haphazardly.</p>	Basic	19%
	<p>The QSR team scored 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 70% 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 76% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In many classrooms the objective was posted on the board or stated at some point in the lesson. Many teachers explained content by asking questions and modeling note-taking, graph plotting, or completion of a graphic organizer. In one distinguished observation the teacher connected current learning to what students learned last year about comparing fractions by stating, "Today we are bringing together decimals, fractions, and percents - don't be scared. You can do this" as they began to compare all three numerical forms.</p>	Distinguished	5%
		Proficient	71%
	<p>The QSR team scored 24% of the observations as basic in this component. In several observations teachers' explanation of content consisted of a monologue while they filled out something that was then copied by students. In one observation the teacher clarified the learning task – a lesson on identifying the author’s purpose - and tried to use metaphors to help the students understand the content. The student responses to the teachers’ questions were repeatedly incorrect and the teacher did not clarify. A student and the teacher also pronounced a key term incorrectly.</p>	Basic	24%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 57% of observations as proficient in this component. In several observations students responded to or built on their peer's ideas using phrases such as, "I agree with..." or "to add on..." Teachers utilized various strategies to hear from a wide range of students: calling on students who did not have their hand raised and utilizing choral response. Teacher used questions to promote and check student understanding and several teachers probed after an initial student response.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	57%
	The QSR team scored 43% of the observations as basic. The majority of interactions were between the teacher and one student with little to no dialogue or interaction among students. Many of the questions posed by teachers had single correct answers and students were not prompted to explain their reasoning. In one observation the teacher asked high-level questions but did not allow for enough wait time before providing the answer.	Basic	43%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 76% of the observations as proficient in this component. The majority of students engaged in the lessons and learning. Teachers utilized uniform note-taking documents, displayed content with	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	document cameras, and maintained clear structures for the lesson in most observations. In several observations students were offered choices - for how to create a class project or with whom to work (partners, small groups or independently). In one observation teachers instructed students to review their work for specific content or move on to the next step if they finished early.	Proficient	76%
	The QSR team scored 24% as basic in this component. In several observations students copied each other's work. During one observation the class stated that a goal was to have more students read aloud that day but the teacher read the novel aloud instead of the students. In another observation the pacing was rushed and the teacher did not adjust the lesson even when students were unable to complete the work.	Basic	24%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team scored 71% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations teachers monitored student learning through questioning during the lesson and utilized exit tickets at the end. Some teachers incorporated rubrics as part of the class or project work, and in one observation, the teacher referenced that it was the same rubric the students had in another class. In several observations teachers provided specific feedback to individual students while	Distinguished	5%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	they circulated or as part of homework checks. One teacher stated, "I don't want you to rush. It's okay if it takes you longer because I want you to keep using that detailed dialogue that you have been."	Proficient	66%
	The QSR team scored 24% of observations as basic in this component. Feedback was general and/or global in these observations. For example, "good job" was heard frequently. Additionally few students assessed their own work. Several teachers circulated during work time but respond to student behavior rather than content.	Basic	24%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	5%

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.
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 situation 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.
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.

