



June 16, 2017

Dr. Julie Johnson, Board Chair  
Maya Angelou Public Charter High School  
5600 E. Capitol St., NE  
Washington, DC Zip Code

Dear Dr. Johnson:

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 20-year Charter Review during 2017-18 school year

**Qualitative Site Review Report**

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Maya Angelou Public Charter High School between May 1, 2017 and May 12, 2017. Enclosed is the team's report.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Maya Angelou Public Charter High School.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux  
Deputy Director

Enclosures  
cc: Dr. Heather Wathington, CEO

# Qualitative Site Review Report

**Date:** June 16, 2017

## **Campus Information**

**Campus Name:** Maya Angelou Public Charter School – High School (Maya Angelou PCS – High School)

**Ward:** 7

**Grade levels:** 9-12

## **Qualitative Site Review Information**

**Reason for visit:** School eligible to petition for 20-year Charter Review during 2017-18 school year

**Two-week window:** May 1, 2017 - May 12, 2017

**QSR team members:** 2 DC PCSB staff including a Special Education Specialist, 6 consultants

**Number of observations:** 18<sup>1</sup>

**Total enrollment:** 208

**Students with Disabilities enrollment:** 77

**English Language Learners enrollment:** 0

**In-seat attendance<sup>2</sup> on the days the QSR team conducted observations:**

**Visit 1:** May 4, 2017- 66.3%

**Visit 2:** May 9, 2017- 67.8%

**Visit 3:** May 12, 2017- 54.1%

## **Summary**

Maya Angelou PCS's mission is to create learning communities in lower income urban areas where all students, particularly those who have not succeeded in traditional school settings, can grow academically and socially. At Maya Angelou, our students develop the academic, social, and employment skills that they need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities.

The QSR team noted a marked, positive change in the school as compared to the visits made over the past three years. Administrators monitored the hallways and classrooms were mostly void of misbehavior. Students were engaged in learning tasks throughout the observations and were kind to one another. The classroom environment marked a strong improvement for the school.

By contrast, overall instruction remains weaker than most other schools in the charter sector. However this domain also has shown significant improvement since observations began four years ago.

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).

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<sup>1</sup> Maya PCS – High School had a school staff member present during each of the QSR observations.

<sup>2</sup> This data has not been validated by the school. DC PCSB pulled the data in June 2017.

The QSR team scored 79% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest rated component in this domain was *Managing Student Behavior* with 89% of observations rated as distinguished or proficient. Student behavior was almost always entirely appropriate and there were no instances of serious misbehavior. Teachers actively monitored students in classrooms and hallways and effectively redirected minor behavior infractions with no loss of instructional time. The lowest rated component was *Managing Procedures* with 59% of observations rated as proficient. In these observations on-task time was lost due to ineffective transitions from whole class to small group work or ineffective routines related to material distribution.

The QSR team scored just 44% of observations as proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest rated component in this domain was *Communicating with Students* with 65% of observations rated as proficient. In these observations teachers clearly articulated what the students were expected to do with little need to clarify. The lowest rated component was *Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques* with only 22% of observations rated as proficient. While some teachers asked open-ended questions overall there were few opportunities for students to share their thinking or demonstrate their learning. The QSR team did not generally see evidence of academic discussion.

For score comparisons in past QSRs, please see the table below.

<b>Date of QSR</b>	<b>Percent Distinguished/Proficient in Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Percent Distinguished/Proficient in Instruction</b>
<a href="#">Fall 2013</a>	45%	17%
<a href="#">Spring 2014</a>	36%	21%
<a href="#">Fall 2014</a>	50%	32%
<a href="#">Fall 2016</a>	51%	33%
Spring 2017	79%	44%

### Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Prior to the two-week window, Maya Angelou PCS – High School provided answers to specific questions posed by DC PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities (SWDs). Special Education specialists looked for evidence of the school’s articulated program. Overall, the school program effectively implemented co-teaching and targeted instruction in small groups; however, they unevenly implemented differentiating for SWDs in the general education classroom and gauging of student understanding.

- The school stated that co-teaching is the most effective factor in supporting their students with disabilities. The special education specialists observed one teach one assist in one classroom and parallel teaching in another classroom. In one classroom, the observers saw only one teacher (general educator) and the remaining observations were self-contained classrooms, with multiple paraprofessionals.

- The school stated that exit tickets and verbal checks for understanding are used to informally assess students. In each observation teachers conducted verbal checks for understanding (e.g., thumbs up/thumbs down if you understand, through questions/discussions of individual students) during whole group and small group activity. However, in one classroom where the teacher gauged student understanding through thumbs up/thumbs down, a student voiced confusion with the activity. The teacher acknowledged the student's thumbs down, but did not address the source of the confusion in content. In one observation teacher dismissed students without giving an exit ticket or wrapping up the lesson.
- The school reported that differentiating lessons takes on many forms including small ability groups after a whole group mini lesson, individual and targeted skill practice, as well as targeted skill practice on the class Chromebooks via online learning applications.
  - In all self-contained and inclusion observations, reviewers observed small group and individual practice. In two classrooms the teacher answered a student's questions and had a one-on-one discussion with a student during independent practice. It was unclear if the activities were intended to allow the student to practice the content provided prior to the independent activity, as the student was unable to do so without teacher prompting.
  - The school reported in that teachers have access to online learning applications and resources to support the learning of SWDs (e.g., Achieve 3000, Study Island, etc.). Students accessed the *Edgenuity* program that provided online lessons at the student's ability level. In another observation students accessed Read 180 which aligned reading passages to their level. Teachers also gave worksheets or composition books to students.

### THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT<sup>3</sup>

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 77% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	<p>The QSR team scored a high 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers and students displayed positive rapport in almost all classrooms. Most teachers stood at classroom doors and greeted each student by name or with a handshake to start the class. Teachers addressed student needs with warmth and sincerity. When one student put her head down on the desk, the teacher gently put her hand on the student’s back and said, “Are you okay?” In another observation without the student asking, the teacher said, “I’ll get you a hall pass, I know it is annoying to be sniffing all day.” The student smiled and quickly went to the bathroom. Students spoke respectfully to each other and greeted each other with appropriate hugs or high-fives as they entered the classrooms.</p>	Distinguished	11%
	<p>In the distinguished observations students and teachers openly discussed their lives outside of the school. In one distinguished observation a student realized she was doing the wrong assignment. Her peers giggled in a friendly manner and helped get her back on track with the correct assignment. One student took an academic risk and made a mistake when trying to pronounce <i>initially</i>. The teacher told the student it was okay and that he could relax and take a deep breath before attempting to read it aloud again.</p>	Proficient	77%

<sup>3</sup> Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	6%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 77% of the observations as proficient in this component. In these observations teachers maintained high expectations for students, praised student effort, and demonstrated a commitment to the learning process. In one observation the teacher repeatedly reminded students to believe in themselves and students sought the approval of their teacher saying, "Can you come over here and look at my work?" or "What do you think of this?" Teachers and students gave one another praise such as, "Look at you - that is amazing. You're making me proud!" or high-fives to celebrate academic successes.</p> <p>Teachers pushed students to think for themselves and encouraged students to work hard. In one observation a teacher checked in to see how many questions a student had left and asked if the student could manage three more to which he replied, "yes." In another observation the teacher encouraged students to explain their thinking to peers. The teacher did not move on until everyone in the group understood, rather than just have the right answer.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	77%

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>School Wide Rating</b>	
	<p>The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as basic in this component. In basic observations teachers did not consistently demonstrate high expectations or belief in the abilities of all students. In one observation the teacher said to the class, "Your goal is to finish this lesson. You don't have to get an A, but just finish it, OK?" In another observation the teacher instructed students to, "Just write the number of candies right here," without explaining why or encouraging students to think deeply.</p>	Basic	17%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 59% of the observations as proficient in this component. In these observations classroom routines and transitions were smooth resulting in little loss of instructional time. In some observations students played a role in classroom procedures by collecting cell phones at the beginning of class, handing out materials such as highlighters and books or collecting work at the end of the lessons. Late arriving students knew where to go to get materials without disrupting the flow of the classrooms. In a few observations teachers gave verbal reminders or used cell phones or computer timers to let students how much time was left to complete tasks.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	59%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 41% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations transitions and routines did not operate efficiently resulting in lost instructional time. In many observations students did not know how to get into small groups. The teacher said, "You need to be where you're supposed to be," but students needed explicit directions and were still moving when the timer stopped. In another observation students took several minutes to get head phones and log into computers. Once they logged on, the students did not initially put their headphones on and multiple read-alouds were happening at one table.</p>	Basic	41%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<p>The QSR team scored a high 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations student behavior was almost entirely appropriate. Teachers circulated and used proximity to monitor students or to give quick non-verbal redirections. Classrooms had behavior expectations posted in a variety of ways, but always in positive language, such as, "Be polite, be prepared, be punctual, be productive." Teachers effectively and respectfully redirected minor student behaviors or acted proactively to minimize disruptions. In one observation the teacher collected student cellphones at the start of class in a basket labeled, "extra credit." In another observation when the teacher quickly said, "You worry about yourself" to a student who started to get off-task. The student immediately returned to work. The QSR team saw many students turn-off cell phones or put them away without any reminders from the teacher.</p>	Distinguished	6%
		Proficient	82%



The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	6%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	6%

**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 44% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p><b>Communicating with Students</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 65% of the observations as proficient in this component. In these observations teachers shared learning objectives and explicit directions for aligned activities. In one observation the teacher provided clear directions for various learning stations with each center aligned to the objective of identifying political liberation in primary sources. Students demonstrated understanding by actively engaging in the work without asking clarifying questions.</p>	Distinguished	0%
	<p>Teachers in some observations connected learning to previous lessons as part of an explanation about what would be taught that day. In one observation prior to introducing a new science concept using a video, the teacher said, “Remember yesterday when you squeezed the water bottle. Pressure is caused by the force, right? As much force as you apply to an object that's going to change the pressure, the area, and the volume of the bottle.” In one class the teacher followed a scripted Read 180 curriculum to teach vocabulary and model how to identify the meaning of words in context.</p>	Proficient	65%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 23% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations teacher instructions and content delivery was not clear. Students in these observations frequently asked questions demonstrating confusion. The QSR team heard, "What am I supposed to be doing?" or "Should I do the next one?" or "What do we need to do with this?" (pointing at a packet). Teachers attempted to clarify in response to these questions, but did not offer additional context, share examples or model the steps.</p>	Basic	23%
	<p>The QSR team scored 12% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations there were content errors that impacted the effectiveness of the lesson. In one observation the teacher wrote a scientific formula incorrectly and did not give any explanation for why the formula is significant. Rather than giving students context, the teacher simply gave them the (incorrect) formula and asked students to solve the equations. In another observation a teacher stated that, "1½ = 5.1." Additional adults in the room didn't correct the teacher and students completed work using this incorrect calculation.</p>	Unsatisfactory	12%
<p><b>Using Questioning/Prompts</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored just 22% of the observations as proficient in this component. In a few classrooms teachers</p>	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<b>Instruction and Discussion Techniques</b>	<p>asked open-ended questions and attempted to have class discussions. In one classroom a teacher asked open ended questions with multiple answers about the Bill of Rights. The teacher asked, "What do you think would happen if that law did not exist? and "If you're a citizen and you don't like something that the government does, it is your first amendment right to do what?" In another observation the teacher used open-ended questioning with individual students while circulating during work time. Students in these observations volunteered to answer questions and the teacher cold-called on those who did not.</p>	Proficient	22%
	<p>The QSR team scored 72% of observations as basic in this component. In most observations there were not opportunities for students to engage in academic discussion and most teacher questions had a single correct answer or related directly to procedures rather than content. In one observation there was only one high-level question: "Why did slavery end? Not just because it's bad, but I need us to think deeper."</p> <p>In one observation the teacher attempted to have students share and discuss new content. But after each student shared, the teacher did not provide time for the discussion or for students to question each other. Teachers frequently did not provide wait time for students to answer questions and often answered their own questions. In one observation a teacher asked, "What is a suffix?" The teacher then immediately gave students the answer and didn't solicit student responses.</p>	Basic	72%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	The QSR team scored just 33% of observations as proficient in this component. In these observations teachers used a variety of instructional groupings, activities and materials to intellectually engage students in learning tasks. Class activities ranged from whole class instruction to small group work to independent practice. In one observation students used primary source documents at all centers. Students engaged with each other and demonstrated interest by asking questions of one another. In these observations pacing was appropriate as students were not frustrated by being rushed or bored after completing work early.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	33%
	The QSR team scored 61% of observations as basic in this component. In these observations students were engaged in groups or with independent where the focus was primarily on task completion.  In one observation students completed a fill-in-the-blank vocabulary sheet for the entire 35-minute observation. In another observation students defined the meanings of words in context, but the teacher allowed students to take conversations off-topic. The QSR team noted that students appeared eager to work and readily engaged with tasks however the tasks were generally low-level or rote.	Basic	61%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	6%
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	The QSR team scored 55% of observations as proficient in this component. In these observations teachers actively monitored students during work time and provided timely feedback. In one observation a teacher said, "You have the right number. You just need to figure out the right component of it. I see where you went wrong" and then walked the student through the misunderstanding.	Distinguished	0%
	In another observation a teacher worked individually with students giving specific feedback for how to improve their essays and then asked students to trade papers to peer edit before printing. Students in these classes appeared to understand how they are evaluated and the QSR team observed peer-edit and self-edit checklists in a few classes. Students in one class independently used the self-edit checklists to make improvements to their essays. In a few classrooms teachers used exit tickets at the end of the observation.	Proficient	55%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 39% of observations as basic in this component. In these observations teachers used global checks for understanding such as thumbs up/thumbs down. In one observation a teacher asked a student with a thumb down, "What could I do to get it up?" The student responded, "I don't know" to which the teacher said, "If you think of something let me know" before moving on with the lesson.</p> <p>In these observations students did not have guidelines or rubrics to assess their own work. Teachers frequently monitored learning as they circulated during work time, however feedback to students was not specific. In one observation a teacher tracked student work in real-time via <i>Edgenuity</i>. The teacher told students to correct their work, but did not offer explanations about why the problems were incorrect.</p>	Basic	39%
	<p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	6%

## APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	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.
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	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.
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	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.
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	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
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	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.
<b>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</b>	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.
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	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.
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	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.