

January 26, 2018

Percy Wilson, Board Chair Ideal Academy Public Charter School 6130 North Capitol Street NW Washington, DC 20011

Dear Mr. Wilson,

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 2017-18 school year for the following reason:

School eligible for 20-year Charter Review during 2018-19 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Ideal Academy Public Charter School (Ideal Academy PCS) between November 27, 2017 – December 8, 2017. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: classroom environment and instruction.

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

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux Deputy Director

Enclosures

cc: Dr. George Rutherford, Executive Director

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: January 26, 2018

Campus Information

Campus Name: Ideal Academy Public Charter School (Ideal Academy PCS)

Ward: 4

Grade levels: Prekindergarten-3 (PK3)-8

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for visit: School eligible for 20-year charter review during 2018-19

school year

Two-week window: November 27, 2017 - December 8, 2017

QSR team members: Three DC PCSB staff including one special education (SPED)

specialist and two consultants

Number of observations: 20

Total enrollment: 286

Students with Disabilities enrollment: 30 English Language Learners enrollment: <10 In-seat attendance on observation days:

Visit 1: November 28, 2017 – 94.7% **Visit 2:** November 30, 2017 – 94.0% **Visit 3:** December 8, 2017 – 89.8%

Summary

Ideal Academy Public Charter School's mission is:

To empower all students to excel in academics, body, and character, enabling them to become competent and contributing global citizens.

As documented in this report, the observation team often noted an environment of respect and caring at the school. However, this was not universal. Moreover, the QSR team found the overall level of instructional and academic quality to be uneven and often very low, and the academic administration to be frequently chaotic.

The school employs several strategies to support their mission including small class sizes, and Quiet Time™. During the observation window classroom sizes ranged from 6-18 students. The QSR team also observed Quiet Time™ which involved 15 minutes of silence twice a day. An Ideal Academy PCS staff member noted that the time observed was the best session of the year because all students remained quiet. All staff members were addressed as "Baba" or "Mama" which contributed to warm rapport between students and teachers. In many observations the QSR team

saw posters of Nguzo Saba (the seven principles of African Heritage) but no teachers actively referred to these character traits and ways of being.

The QSR team observed most content areas including literacy centers, non-fiction reading, social studies, phonics, and math. During a few visits the team planned to observe math and science but the schedule provided by the school was incorrect, and literacy occurred instead. Although school leadership shared that the school uses Achieve 3000 and differentiated instruction, the QSR team only saw minimal use of this program and instructional strategy. Copying notes predominated in many observations with little to no differentiation.

Overall, the QSR team noted that student behavior was appropriate. However, the team had concerns with teacher behavior in several observations. A few teachers spoke harshly to students, at times crumpling up student work and throwing it away. Another teacher told a student that she would not receive help because she was smart, and then the teacher immediately turned to help two other students. Several teachers were not prepared for instruction. Some did not have materials ready or a clear plan for what students were to do during the lesson. Teacher attendance was another issue. Each member of the QSR team had to revise their schedule due to teacher absences including one situation when the team member was told that staff member no longer worked at the school.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendix I and II). The QSR team scored 53% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. This was significantly lower than the score of 81% proficient or distinguished in this domain when the school received their last QSR in 2013. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport scored the highest, with 70% of observations rated as distinguished or proficient. Students exhibited respect for their teachers, addressing all adults with "Baba" or "Mama" and teachers addressed students by name or other terms of endearment. Generally, students were polite to each other and several teachers responded to disrespectful behavior quickly.

The QSR team rated 65% of the observations as basic in *Managing Classroom Procedures*, making this the lowest scoring component in this domain. Teachers in these observations were often not prepared with materials and/or clear plans for what students were to do during the lesson. At times students were unable to locate their materials, find their seats without arguing, or engage in productive learning when not directly working with the teacher. These disruptions led to a loss of instructional time and a disruption of learning.

The QSR team scored just 40% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the <u>Instruction</u> domain. This overall score is significantly lower than the 75%

distinguished or proficient rate from the 2013 QSR report. There was only one distinguished observation in this domain, in the *Communicating with Students* component. The lowest scoring component in this domain was *Using Assessment in Instruction* where 65% of all observations were rated as either basic or unsatisfactory, with a relatively large percentage of observations (15%) scored as unsatisfactory. The QSR team observed teachers sporadically monitoring student understanding and/or infrequently giving feedback. Few teachers were able to successfully diagnose student understanding and adjust instruction accordingly.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

During the two-week window, the QSR team observed the ISS room. Ideal PCS has an ISS room with two adults for all students. One student came in for a short period of time after being dismissed from the classroom. Both adults asked the student what happened for approximately five minutes and then the student was walked back to class to apologize. One of the ISS adults informed the QSR team member that some students are assigned to the room for the day and others come in for counseling as part of the school-wide discipline model.

<u>Governance</u>

A QSR team member reviewed minutes from the Ideal PCS' most recent board meeting, which occurred on September 10, 2017. Though there was not a quorum present at this meeting, the Board did not vote or take any other official actions that would require the presence of a quorum to be legally valid under the DC Nonprofit Corporation Act. The principal reported on plans for academic improvement, including using instructional coordinators and programs such as NWEA MAP, Achieve 3000, and the Capstone Institute. The treasurer reported on the school's change in net assets and the school's statement of position.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Observers scored just 25% of special education observations as proficient or distinguished in the <u>Classroom Environment</u> domain, and 50% of special education observations as proficient or distinguished in the <u>Instruction</u> domain. Prior to the two-week window, Ideal Academy PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program, and observed two inclusion classrooms, two pull-outs, and two resource classrooms. Overall, while the observations included evidence of some of the listed accommodations pursuant to student IEPs, and pull-out and resource observations included strong evidence of remedial support to students, most push-in observations did not fully support the learning of SWD in a fluid "one-team" approach. Most observations had infrequent and minimal differentiation to engage students in learning to effectively achieve the quality special education program as described in the questionnaire.

- To demonstrate that co-planning occurred between general education and special education teachers, the school reports that the general education teacher will demonstrate evidence of differentiated lessons using strategies and interventions, even in the absence of special education teachers. In one classroom the special educator, an aide, and the general educator were at one station each during rotating small groups and provided direct instruction to students. However, during this observation, the observer saw the teacher correct an aide on the expectations for the classroom activity. In another push-in observation, the special education teacher provided remedial support to a student who was working on a formative computer assessment.
- The school reported that they provide resources such as access to support from special educators and related service providers in push-in/pull-out settings, in addition to access for general educators to student IEPs, to support the learning of SWDs. The observer was unable to see evidence of resources as described, but did see special educators pushing in and pulling out students to provide support. Students pulled out or in the resource setting, except for one classroom, were intellectually engaged with the teacher and participated at a proficient level during discussions. In one pull out classroom, the teacher's explanation of content was erroneous (s/he explained that ¼=20%) and left students unable to complete practice problems independently.
- The school reported that it does not implement a co-teaching model, but instead provides a "one-team" philosophy with special educators working collaboratively with general educators. Special education services are provided in a push-in setting with a special educator supporting one or a few students within a general education classroom. In the two push-in observations, students engaged with the special educator at a station were intellectually engaged in the first observation, while the student receiving individualized support in the second observation had minimal opportunities to explain his/her thinking. The special educator told the student the answers after when the student was unable to answer questions.
- To provide accommodations according to the IEPs of SWD, the school stated that reviewers might see: read-aloud, small group/instruction/testing, preferential seating, use of calculators, seating with minimal distractions, repetition, and/or clarification of direction, extended time, frequent breaks, and/or large print. In the six observed special education observations, the observer only saw the use of small group instruction and repetition, and did not observe any of the other listed potential accommodations.

 To provide modifications, the school wrote that reviewers might see lesson enhancements such as visual cues, oral and written directions, the use of study guides for students reading below grade level - vocabulary supplements, computer programs for drill and practice, frequent and positive feedback and modeling. While the observer saw examples of vocabulary supplements (word walls), computer programs for drill and practice, and the use of study guides, these resources are not actual lesson modifications.

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. The QSR team scored 53% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Classroom Environment domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team scored 70% of the observations as distinguished or proficient, making this the highest scoring component for the school. The majority of observations were characterized by general caring and respect towards students and teachers.	Distinguished	10%
	In the distinguished observations students exhibited care and concern to their classmates and teachers made connections to individual students. In another observation the teacher immediately and effectively responded to a student who made an inappropriate comment to ensure language use by all demonstrated civility.	Proficient	60%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
	The QSR team scored 20% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations teachers were inconsistent in their responses to students and at times, disrespectful. In one observation some students were allowed to work ahead of the group but other students were told they had to stop and were reprimanded for going on. In another observation the teacher shouted, "No, no, no!" repeatedly when some students asked questions.	Basic	20%
	The QSR team scored 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these classrooms the teachers exhibited more disrespectful behavior towards students than the students did to each other or to the teacher. Teachers raised their voices, snatched things out of students' hands, and spoke harshly and disrespectfully to several students. In one observation the teacher did not successfully engage the students in academic work. The students were moved from their workbooks to dry erase boards and then to a game on the interactive white board. Each transition was without warning and without explanation. The students were confused and unproductive.	Unsatisfactory	10%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored just 50% of the observations as proficient in this component and none as distinguished. In these observations students expended effort to learn and several teachers recognized students' hard work. In	Distinguished	0%
	recognized students' hard work. In one observation the teacher noted, "If you think this is hard, what are you going to do?" to which the students responded, "Chalk it up!" Another teacher exuded excitement about the content and facilitated all students in participation.	Proficient	50%
	The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. The QSR team noted that the teachers and students in these observations seemed to be "going through the motions." Copying notes from the board was the task in several of these instances. The teacher would write notes down without explanation or student engagement. The students would complete the task of copying but the goal appeared to be compliance rather than learning.	Basic	40%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
	The QSR team rated 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Low expectations were the norm for many students, with high expectations reserved for a few. In one observation the teacher told a student that no help would be given for creating the chart because "you are smart." In the next moment, the teacher then turned to two other students and created the chart for them.	Unsatisfactory	10%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored a remarkably low 35% of the observations as proficient in this component and none as distinguished. Classroom routines and procedures were	Distinguished	0%
	smooth in these observations and little time was wasted. Several classrooms had bathroom passes which students asked to use. In other observations transitions were seamless. Teachers had materials ready, and when students needed to move their desks into other configurations, they were able to do so with little loss of instructional time.	Proficient	35%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
	The QSR team scored 65% of the observations as basic in this component. Teachers in these observations were often not prepared with materials. In one observation, the teacher noted to the QSR observer that they were late because another teacher was absent. Students in this classroom had to remind the teacher to pass out highlighters. In another observation, the teacher and students spent significant time floating around the room gathering the materials for centers. Other teachers experienced technical difficulties but did not have a backup plan, resulting in loss of instructional time. In other observations the teachers appeared to change the objective and/or procedure due to lack of planning. In one observation the teacher fumbled with papers and which order the students should copy them. Some students were unable to find their journals, argued over where to sit, and/or did not engage in productive work when not working directly with the teacher.	Basic	65%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 55% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Student behavior was generally	Distinguished	5%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide R	ating
	appropriate and several teachers acknowledged good behavior. Teachers also utilized verbal reminders and in some instances, proximity, to redirect students to appropriate behaviors. Some teachers also utilized a bell or count-down system to regain students' attention when needed.	Proficient	50%
	The QSR team scored 40% of the observations as basic in this component. The QSR team noted that several teachers had harsh and inconsistent responses to students. Several teachers were observed yelling at students or crumpling and throwing away student work. Other teachers responded inconsistently to misbehavior, redirecting or offering consequences to only some students. Some talking went unaddressed, while other students were threatened with a phone call home for talking.	Basic	40%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	5%

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 40% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wid Rating	de
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored 40% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In some observations teachers communicated in writing on the board, or verbally, what students were to do. Several teachers were clear about	Distinguished	5%
	directions and/or learning. In one observation the teacher reviewed vocabulary before reading a book and invited student participation and thinking before and during reading. Other teachers modeled the task to ensure students understood what to do.	Proficient	35%
	The QSR team scored 50% of the observations as basic in this component. The QSR team noted that several teachers had content and spelling errors, either in the notes they asked students to copy, or around the room. In many observations students indicated confusion with the task and teachers often gave several directions that conflicted.	Basic	50%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wie Rating	de
	The QSR team rated 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers in these observations had major or repeated minor content errors and confusing statements. In one instance the teacher asked students to take out journals, then changed directions and asked students to take out something else. In another observation students were visibly confused about what to do. Students asked multiple clarifying questions and engaged in off-task behaviors. The QSR team member in these classrooms also indicated that the learning tasks and objectives were unclear and that the teachers did not seem certain about what they wanted students to do or learn either.	Unsatisfactory	10%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored just 40% of the observations as proficient in this component and none as distinguished. Some teachers asked questions designed to promote student thinking or provided tasks for students to engage in that were open ended.	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wid Rating	de
	One teacher asked students to show her the meaning of "equal" using words or materials. Other teachers gave students choice during center time and within centers. Several teachers utilized strategies to engage many students in the discussion, and used student responses as part of the follow-up questions.	Proficient	40%
	The QSR team scored half of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations teacher questioning was either along a single path of inquiry with one-option answers and/or only a small number of students participated in the discussions. In several classrooms the teachers asked rapid-fire questions, not waiting for student responses. A few teachers answered their own questions.	Basic	50%
	The QSR team scored 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations there were few to no questions posed to students. The tasks were rote copying or required minimal thinking. Student thinking was not made evident either in a discussion nor in the written work produced.	Unsatisfactory	10%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wid Rating	de
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored only 45% of the observations as proficient in this component and none as distinguished. In these observations, learning tasks aligned with posted outcomes. Several lessons had a	Distinguished	0%
	predictable structure with sufficient time for students to complete tasks. In one observation the teacher facilitated a discussion after students watched a video and read a text. The pacing allowed students to engage in meaningful ways. Students in some observations had the	Proficient	45%
	opportunity to participate in various groupings and some choice in the tasks. The QSR team scored 40% of the observations as basic in this component. Students in these observations were largely passive and the tasks primarily		
	required recall. Several teachers attempted instructional grouping but were only partially successful in engaging all students. In another observation the pacing was too slow, resulting in many students engaging in off-task behavior or putting their heads on the desks.	Basic	40%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wid Rating	de
	The QSR team rated a disturbingly high 15% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations the activities required only rote responses, such as copying from the board or the pace of the lesson was rushed and students did not have sufficient time to complete their work. One teacher moved students through three different activities without explaining the purpose or directions. The students were confused and unproductive.	Unsatisfactory	15%
Using Assessment in Instruction		Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	35%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wid Rating	de
	The QSR team scored half of the observations as basic in this component. In several observations teachers checked for understanding but did not adjust instruction when it became clear that students did not understand the content. Other teachers checked for work completion without offering feedback or probing for student understanding.	Basic	50%
	The QSR team rated 15% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In some observations the teacher did not offer guidance or support either before or during work times. The teachers either did not look at student work or only monitored the room for behavior management. When some of the teachers asked questions designed to provide evidence of student understanding, they would answer the questions themselves.	Unsatisfactory	15%

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 highlevel 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 may 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.	

APPENDIX III: SCORE BREAKDOWN BY COMPONENT

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	10%	10%	0%	5%	10%	10%	15%	15%
Basic	20%	40%	65%	40%	50%	50%	40%	50%
Proficient	60%	50%	35%	50%	35%	40%	45%	35%
Distinguished	10%	0%	0%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Subdomain Average	2.70	2.40	2.35	2.55	2.35	2.30	2.30	2.20

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	53%	40%
Domain Averages	2.50	2.29