



May 11, 2016

Craig R. Barrett, Ph.D., Board Chair
BASIS DC PCS
410 8th Street NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Dr. Barrett:

The District of Columbia 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 2015-16 school year for the following reason:

- School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during 2016-17 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of BASIS DC PCS between February 22 and March 4, 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 BASIS DC PCS.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: May 11, 2016
Campus Name: BASIS DC Public Charter School
Ward: 2
Grade levels: 5 - 12
Total enrollment: 599
Students with Disabilities enrollment: 24
English Language Learners enrollment: 4
Reason for visit: Review in SY 2016-17
Two-week window: February 22 – March 4, 2016
Number of observations: 37

Summary

BASIS DC Public Charter School (BASIS DC PCS) is designed to provide a demanding college preparatory education and is focused on high academic achievement. The school's mission is as follows: BASIS DC PCS will provide an academically excellent and rigorous liberal arts college preparatory education available to all middle and high school students of the District of Columbia. The Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to score observations in two domains: Classroom Environment and Instruction (attached as Appendix I).

In the Classroom Environment domain, the QSR team scored 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in two components: (1) Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport and (2) Managing Classroom Procedures. Students and teachers generally showed respect in their actions and words. Teachers successfully responded to the few instances of disrespect. Teachers also managed classrooms through established routines, appropriate pacing of lessons, and various groupings for class instruction.

In the Instruction domain, the QSR team scored 84% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. The QSR team scored an impressive 97% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Communicating with Students component. Teachers gave clear purposes for learning, provided clear directions, and delivered content with detailed explanations and examples. In many observations teachers explained what students should do or look for during an assigned task.

In addition to observing general education classrooms and students, the QSR team includes reviewers with expertise in special education and English language acquisition. These specialists take a close look at the school's instruction with these populations. While their ratings are included in the overall school's performance, descriptions of their findings are below:

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

BASIS DC PCS indicated on the special education questionnaire that it offers special education services through a range of services from full inclusion to pull-out instruction,

and so this is what the observers expected to see. The SPED observer on the QSR team saw both types of instruction. SPED teachers met with students before and after school to prepare students for their upcoming classes. They checked and corrected homework, clarified misconceptions, and quizzed students to help them prepare for assessments. Some SPED teachers were scheduled to monitor student progress in all subject areas, often sitting in close proximity to two or three students to provide support in inclusive classrooms. SPED teachers provided modifications and accommodations to students by reading aloud passages, assisting students with annotating reading selections, and coaching students to reread texts for revision. They also collected data on students in general education classrooms and referred to it when providing supplemental instruction in pull-out settings. SPED teachers checked agenda books and advised students on time management and organization of tasks. Students sometimes asked for assistance in additional subjects.

Instruction for English Language Learners

Prior to the two-week window, BASIS DC PCS submitted answers to a questionnaire related to the school's provision of services for the school's English Language Learner (ELL) population. The school explained that it has a tiered system of support for ELLs. Support is differentiated depending on the student's level of proficiency indicated by the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs assessment. The three levels are: intensive, for students who score between a Level 1 and a Level 4 on the assessment; monitoring, for students who score a Level 4 or a Level 5 on the assessment; and consult support for students who are ELLs who score above a Level 5. The school explained that its ELL support model uses elements of Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE). According to the school, these elements include: the use of visuals, sketches, gestures, and non-verbal clues to make language accessible; regular checks for understanding; slow and clear speech with adequate wait time for students to respond; and modeling of learning tasks and sharing thought processes out loud.

During the two-week window, the ELL specialist on the QRS team attended a class with push-in ELL support and a one-on-one session between the ELL teacher and an ELL student. While the specialist did not see evidence of the elements of SDAIE that the school referenced in its ELL questionnaire, including the use of of visuals, gestures, or non-verbal cues in the push-in and pull-out sessions, the student increasingly participated in the classroom discussion by answering questions and responding to writing prompts as the ELL teacher provided support. The support provided by the ELL teacher (including regular checks for understanding, slow and clear language and further explanations of the general educator's instruction) appeared to be effective in enhancing the student's comprehension of the content and his language development. During the push-in session, the ELL teacher asked comprehension questions and provided explanations of vocabulary words. During a class discussion the ELL teacher explained the general education teacher's question to the student.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

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

| Mission and Goals | Evidence |
|---|--|
| <p>Mission: BASIS DC will provide an academically excellent and rigorous liberal arts college preparatory education available to all middle and high school students of the District of Columbia.</p> | <p>There is evidence that BASIS DC PCS is meeting its mission. BASIS DC PCS offers coursework in literature, science, mathematics, and social studies which aligns with providing a liberal arts college preparatory education. Expectations of students were universally high. The classrooms were cognitively busy places. Teachers facilitated discussions and worked through new content with students. Students were eager to share their knowledge and did not hesitate to ask questions about new material.</p> |
| <p>Goals:</p> | |
| <p>PMF Goal #1: Student Progress – Academic Improvement over time</p> | <p>Teachers organized classwork and discussions to encourage student thinking and understanding of concepts throughout the observations. Teachers assisted students when necessary while giving students ample time and clues to arrive at answers on their own. Teachers asked both high and low-level questions to assess student comprehension. Teachers developed writing and discussion tasks extended student thinking.</p> <p>The content level and pacing of the math and science classes appeared to challenge students. Teachers provided time for students to help each other understand problems from the homework. Students also worked in small groups to prepare for math tests and to complete science labs.</p> |
| <p>PMF Goal #2: Student Achievement – Meeting or exceeding academic standards</p> | <p>Teachers reviewed concepts with students. Teachers and students used rich vocabulary while engaging in open-ended discussions about subjects in multiple content areas. Students agreed and disagreed with other students in a respectful manner during class discussions. Teachers provided criteria for high-quality work to ensure that students knew what was expected of them.</p> |
| | |

| Mission and Goals | Evidence |
|--|--|
| PMF Goal # 3: Gateway – Outcomes in key subjects that predict future educational success | The culture of the classroom and the school itself was bustling but orderly. Students got to class on time and participated enthusiastically in discussions with each other about academic content. In most observations students appeared to have a lot of freedom during class time and handled it maturely, completing their tasks and asking the teachers for assistance when necessary. DC PCSB will evaluate quantitative data to assess if the school met this goal during the 5-year review process. |
| PMF Goal #4: Leading Indicators – Predictors of future student progress and achievement | All of the classrooms were filled with students and there were very few empty desks. DC PCSB will evaluate quantitative data to assess if the school met this goal during the 5-year review process. |
| Governance: | A DC PCSB staff member attended the BASIS DC PCS Board of Trustees meeting on March 15, 2016. A quorum was present. Several members from the BASIS headquarters also participated via conference call. The board discussed the school’s mission statement, enrollment ceiling, and the school budget. The CEO shared a quarterly management report with an overview of the school’s comprehensive exam rates as compared to other BASIS charter schools across the country and 2014-15 PARCC results. The principal provided an update on community outreach efforts, professional development strategies for staff and an update on the current student enrollment. |

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric. The label definitions for classroom observations of “distinguished,” “proficient,” “basic,” and “unsatisfactory” are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 79% of observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

| The Classroom Environment | Evidence | School Wide Rating | |
|---|---|--------------------|-----|
| Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport | The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Student and teacher interactions were respectful across these observations. Teachers and students talked about their lives outside of school. Some teachers used endearing terms for students. Students showed respect for teachers during instruction and easily quieted down when teachers asked them to lower their voices. | Distinguished | 14% |
| | | Proficient | 69% |
| | The QSR team rated 11% of the observations as basic in this component. In one observation students continued to interrupt each other. The teacher attempted to stop the disrespectful behavior but was unsuccessful. | Basic | 11% |
| | The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. | Unsatisfactory | 6% |
| Establishing a Culture for Learning | The QSR team scored 69% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations students and teachers demonstrated keen interest in the academic work. Through lively discussion about the academic topics and detailed questions. Teachers made connections to the material with real-life experiences. In one observation where students were observing cells and identifying different stages of mitosis, the teacher told the | Distinguished | 16% |

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

| The Classroom Environment | Evidence | School Wide Rating | |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|-----|
| | <p>students about working in a lab as a scientist where she did similar work.</p> <p>In most observations teachers communicated the importance of the content and expressed interest in what they were teaching. Students put forth high levels of effort in their work, and teachers consistently showed high regard for students' abilities through direct praise, asking students probing questions instead of giving them the answer, and asking students to explain content to each other. Teachers expected students to participate in the lessons and would circulate the classroom or speak directly to a student to ensure they were on task.</p> | Proficient | 53% |
| | <p>The QSR team scored 31% of the observations as basic in this component. Some teachers moved from one worksheet to another without discussing the content. In a few observations teachers did not encourage the students or hold them to high expectations. Some students displayed low effort and interest in the learning tasks and were not redirected by the teacher.</p> | Basic | 31% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 0% |
| Managing Classroom Procedures | <p>The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient. Teachers ensured that all students had the necessary materials to complete classroom assignments. Students participated in well-established routines and did not need any direction from the teacher. In multiple math observations, students told the teacher which homework problems they needed explained and the teachers wrote down the numbers on the board. The teachers asked for student volunteers to put the solutions on the board. Students who needed help could then go up to the board and discuss the work with the student who provided the solution.</p> | Distinguished | 8% |
| | <p>Students transitioned easily between the "Do Nows" and whole group discussions. Teachers made use of timers and word prompts to transition the students from one part of the lesson to the next. Students easily collected and distributed materials when needed.</p> | Proficient | 75% |

| The Classroom Environment | Evidence | School Wide Rating | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|-----|
| | <p>The QSR team scored 14% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations transitions were not timely and led to loss of instructional time.</p> | Basic | 14% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 3% |
| Managing Student Behavior | <p>The QSR team scored 80% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations student behavior was respectful and compliant with the posted classroom rules. Teachers monitored student behavior by visiting each small group work while the students worked.</p> | Distinguished | 16% |
| | <p>Teachers also managed the classroom by walking over to students and quietly correcting their behavior. In one observation where students were getting a little loud at the end of class, a teacher said, "I'll wait for you and then we can be dismissed." The students promptly quieted down and were dismissed.</p> | Proficient | 64% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated 17% of the observations as basic in this component. A teacher in one observation was inconsistent in addressing student behavior. Some students continued to engage in loud talking and side bar conversations during the lesson after the teacher asked the students to stop talking and pay attention.</p> <p>In another observation students remained noisy after the teacher asked them to quiet down. The teacher counted to ten and the students still continued to disrupt the class.</p> | Basic | 17% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 3% |

INSTRUCTION

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Instruction domain of the rubric. The label definitions for classroom observations of “distinguished,” “proficient,” “basic,” and “unsatisfactory” are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 84% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” in the Instruction domain.

| Instruction | Evidence Observed | School Wide Rating | |
|---|--|--------------------|-----|
| <p>Communicating with Students</p> | <p>The QSR team scored 97% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers provided clear and concise explanations of academic material and directions. Students and teachers used sophisticated and descriptive vocabulary while explaining concepts and students appeared to understand the presentations. Lessons were purposeful with clear learning objectives and student expectations. One teacher explained, “Today is all about thinking about the concept of titration, and tomorrow will be all about the calculation of titration.”</p> <p>Teachers and students discussed strategies for learning the content. Teachers engaged students in the explanation of the material by working through examples of the subject matter. Most students in these classes showed that they understood the teacher’s explanation of the content by beginning to work through the content or ask clarifying questions.</p> | Distinguished | 19% |
| | | Proficient | 78% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.</p> | Basic | 3% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 0% |
| <p>Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques</p> | <p>The QSR team scored 80% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Some students extended conversations and interacted with each other about the content without prompting by the teacher. In one observation students initiated conversations about the point of view in a book. The teacher asked</p> | Distinguished | 14% |

| Instruction | Evidence Observed | School Wide Rating | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------|-----|
| | <p>students to recall the aspects about the different options for point of view and to cite text to support their examples.</p> <p>Questioning in many observations was robust and cognitively challenging. Teachers stimulated discussions with open-ended queries. One teacher started by asking students to describe what the two poems have in common and students were able to build on each other's responses.</p> | Proficient | 66% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated 20% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations students who did not raise their hands were not involved in the discussions. Some teachers led reviews of worksheet answers with single path responses. In some observations the teacher did not provide opportunities for critical questioning and discussion about the material.</p> | Basic | 20% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 0% |
| Engaging Students in Learning | <p>The QSR team scored 75% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Most students were actively involved in learning tasks through the observations. Teachers provided time for students to become engaged in the lesson. Teachers also made adjustments to the pacing of the lessons based on student engagement.</p> | Distinguished | 11% |
| | <p>In most observations students were highly engaged with the content. Teachers provided a "Do Now" on the board, gave students a chance to complete it, called on students to explain their answers, and then dove into the lesson by projecting new content on an interactive whiteboard. Students took copious notes on the new material. Some teachers gave students choices in completing learning tasks. The fast-paced nature of many classrooms required students to think for themselves, stay engaged, and actively work.</p> | Proficient | 64% |

| Instruction | Evidence Observed | School Wide Rating | |
|---|---|--------------------|-----|
| | <p>The QSR team scored 25% of the observations as basic in this component. In some observations students provided very short responses, and at times some students were not engaged in the lesson. Students were either doing their homework or talking to each other.</p> <p>In one observation the pacing of the class was too fast and not all students were engaged in the activity. The teacher gave students one minute to practice what they had learned on their own before students had to pack up to go to the next class.</p> | Basic | 25% |
| | <p>The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p> | Unsatisfactory | 0% |
| <p>Using Assessment in Instruction</p> | <p>The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In most observations teachers checked for understanding by engaging students in conversation by asking questions. Teachers circulated the classroom and walked over to students who raised their hands. In some observations teachers intentionally waited to call on students who needed additional help and would not call on the first student who raised his/her hand.</p> <p>Math teachers used various assessment strategies including: asking students to work on a problem and put up one finger if they believe they should add and two fingers to indicate they should subtract; noting students' completion of work on iPads; having students read out the answers to the practice problems and explain how they obtained the answer.</p> | Distinguished | 9% |
| | | Proficient | 74% |

| Instruction | Evidence Observed | School Wide Rating | |
|-------------|--|--------------------|-----|
| | The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as basic in this component. Some teachers used single methods to monitor student progress. In some observations teacher feedback was restricted to passing out tickets for single right answers. | Basic | 17% |
| | The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. | Unsatisfactory | 0% |

APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

| The Classroom Environment | Unsatisfactory | Basic | Proficient | Distinguished |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport | Classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are negative or inappropriate and characterized by sarcasm, putdowns, or conflict. | Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict but may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity. | Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring, and are respectful of the cultural and developmental differences among groups of students. | Classroom interactions are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and caring toward individuals. Students themselves ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among member of the class. |
| Establishing a Culture for Learning | The classroom does not represent a culture for learning and is characterized by low teacher commitment to the subject, low expectations for student achievement, and little student pride in work. | The classroom environment reflects only a minimal culture for learning, with only modest or inconsistent expectations for student achievement, little teacher commitment to the subject, and little student pride in work. Both teacher and students are performing at the minimal level to “get by.” | The classroom environment represents a genuine culture for learning, with commitment to the subject on the part of both teacher and students, high expectations for student achievement, and student pride in work. | Students assumes much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning in the classroom by taking pride in their work, initiating improvements to their products, and holding the work to the highest standard. Teacher demonstrates as passionate commitment to the subject. |
| Managing Classroom Procedures | Classroom routines and procedures are either nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time. | Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function unevenly or inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time. | Classroom routines and procedures have been established and function smoothly for the most part, with little loss of instruction time. | Classroom routines and procedures are seamless in their operation, and students assume considerable responsibility for their smooth functioning. |

| The Classroom Environment | Unsatisfactory | Basic | Proficient | Distinguished |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Managing Student Behavior | Student behavior is poor, with no clear expectations, no monitoring of student behavior, and inappropriate response to student misbehavior. | Teacher makes an effort to establish standards of conduct for students, monitor student behavior, and respond to student misbehavior, but these efforts are not always successful. | Teacher is aware of student behavior, has established clear standards of conduct, and responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students. | Student behavior is entirely appropriate, with evidence of student participation in setting expectations and monitoring behavior. Teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive, and teachers' response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs. |

APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

| Instruction | Unsatisfactory | Basic | Proficient | Distinguished |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Communicating with Students | Teacher’s oral and written communication contains errors or is unclear or inappropriate to students. Teacher’s purpose in a lesson or unit is unclear to students. Teacher’s explanation of the content is unclear or confusing or uses inappropriate language. | Teacher’s oral and written communication contains no errors, but may not be completely appropriate or may require further explanations to avoid confusion. Teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success. Teacher’s explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow. | Teacher communicates clearly and accurately to students both orally and in writing. Teacher’s purpose for the lesson or unit is clear, including where it is situated within broader learning. Teacher’s explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students’ knowledge and experience. | Teacher’s oral and written communication is clear and expressive, anticipating possible student misconceptions. Makes the purpose of the lesson or unit clear, including where it is situated within broader learning, linking purpose to student interests. Explanation of content is imaginative, and connects with students’ knowledge and experience. Students contribute to explaining concepts to their peers. |
| Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques | Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low-level questions, limited student participation, and little true discussion. | Teacher’s use of questioning and discussion techniques is uneven with some high-level question; attempts at true discussion; moderate student participation. | Teacher’s use of questioning and discussion techniques reflects high-level questions, true discussion, and full participation by all students. | Students formulate many of the high-level questions and assume responsibility for the participation of all students in the discussion. |
| Engaging Students in Learning | Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning, as a result of inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure. | Students are intellectually engaged only partially, resulting from activities or materials or uneven quality, inconsistent representation of content or uneven structure of pacing. | Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson, with appropriate activities and materials, instructive representations of content, and suitable structure and pacing of the lesson. | Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson and make material contribution to the representation of content, the activities, and the materials. The structure and pacing of the lesson allow for student reflection and closure. |

| Instruction | Unsatisfactory | Basic | Proficient | Distinguished |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Using Assessment in Instruction</p> | <p>Students are unaware of criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and do not engage in self-assessment or monitoring. Teacher does not monitor student learning in the curriculum, and feedback to students is of poor quality and in an untimely manner.</p> | <p>Students know some of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and occasionally assess the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of the class as a whole but elicits no diagnostic information; feedback to students is uneven and inconsistent in its timeliness.</p> | <p>Students are fully aware of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of groups of students in the curriculum, making limited use of diagnostic prompts to elicit information; feedback is timely, consistent, and of high quality.</p> | <p>Students are fully aware of the criteria and standards by which their work will be evaluated, have contributed to the development of the criteria, frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards, and make active use of that information in their learning. Teacher actively and systematically elicits diagnostic information from individual students regarding understanding and monitors progress of individual students; feedback is timely, high quality, and students use feedback in their learning.</p> |