



April 6, 2015

Thomas O'Hara, Board Chair  
Center City PCS – Trinidad  
1217 West Virginia Avenue NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. O'Hara:

The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. Your school was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2014-15 school year for the following reason:

- School had a Tier 3 rank on the Performance Management Framework during the 2013-14 school year

### **Qualitative Site Review Report**

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Center City PCS – Trinidad between February 2 and February 13, 2015. The purpose of the review is for PCSB to gauge the extent to which the school's goals and student academic achievement expectations were evident in the everyday operations of the public charter school. To ascertain this, PCSB staff and consultants evaluated your classroom teaching by using an abridged version of the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* observation rubric. We also visited a board meeting.

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, the 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 Center City PCS – Trinidad.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux  
Deputy Director

Enclosures  
cc: School Leader

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Center City PCS – Trinidad serves 276 students in prekindergarten 3 (PK3) through grade 8 in Ward 5. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in February 2015 because Center City PCS – Trinidad had a Tier 3 rank on the Performance Management Framework during the 2013-14 school year.

The QSR team conducted observations over the course of a two-week window from February 2 through February 13, 2015. A team of one PCSB staff member and one consultant conducted 12 observations. A PCSB staff member also attended a Board of Trustees meeting on March 18, 2015.

The QSR team used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* Rubric throughout the observations and observed classrooms in mornings and afternoons. In some instances, a QSR team may have observed a teacher twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school's stated mission and goals.

The QSR team scored a remarkable 90% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. In these observations the QSR team saw teachers maximize instructional time by effectively implementing classroom routines and procedures as well as managing student behavior. Interactions between teachers and students were consistently friendly and conveyed mutual respect in almost all observations. The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. Again this is a very high overall rating. Students in these observations eagerly participated in class activities and teachers gave students guidance on what high quality work looks like. Most teachers asked open-ended questions and gave students choice in how they completed assignments.

## CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes Center City PCS'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: The Center City Public Charter Schools (CCPCS) empower our children for success through a rigorous academic program and strong character education while challenging students to pursue personal excellence in character, conduct, and scholarship in order to develop the skills necessary to both serve and lead others in the 21st century.</p>	<p>The QSR team saw solid evidence of the school working to meet its mission.</p> <p><i>Rigorous academic program and strong character education</i> Teachers encouraged student curiosity in many observations. Students asked questions and teachers took opportunities to build upon student interests. Many teachers asked open-ended questions and students engaged in discussions with classmates about what they learned. The school's core values were posted in the hallways and many classrooms, and teachers referred to the core values during a few observations.</p> <p><i>Excellence in character, conduct, and scholarship</i> The school recognized students with a Student of the Month bulletin board posted for each grade level in the hallway. Students were kind and polite toward each other in classes. QSR team members observed students encouraging each other to line up appropriately for lunch and helping classmates with assignments.</p> <p><i>Develop skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i> Students worked on computers in several math and English observations. Students in the lower elementary grades engaged in peer review of class assignments.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p><b>Proposed Achievement Goal:</b> Center City PCS proposes that at least 70% of all students in grades K-8 will achieve at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile or meet/exceed their spring growth target in math and reading based on NWEA MAP national norms by June of each year.</p> <p><i>Students will read and comprehend grade-level appropriate text in the core content areas</i></p> <p><i>Students will master and apply grade-level appropriate computation skills and concepts; they will use mathematical reasoning to solve problems</i></p>	<p>The QSR team observed effective instruction in the majority of classrooms. As further detailed in the Instruction section of the Danielson Framework, 85% of the observations scored proficient or distinguished in the Instruction domain. Students read non-fiction texts and made connections between what they were reading and texts they had read previously. Teachers used reading strategies such as making predictions, using context clues, and summarizing. During a math lesson a teacher used multiple strategies to add numbers. Students also worked on computers using individualized math programs. A bulletin board in the hallway recognized students for challenging themselves and persevering through difficult math problems.</p>
<p><b>Proposed Achievement Goal:</b> Center City will adopt a performance goal tied to the state assessment in English/Language Arts and Mathematics prior to the start of the 2016-17 school year (to take effect that school year) if Center City PCS receives PARCC data by August 31, 2016. If Center City PCS receives PARCC data on September 1, 2016 or after, it will adopt a performance goal tied to the state assessment in English/Language Arts and Mathematics within two months of receiving the assessment data, and the goal will go into effect for accountability purposes for school year 2017-18.</p>	
<p><b>Proposed Attendance Goal:</b> All campuses should achieve an average of at least 90% attendance each year.</p>	<p>Most classrooms appeared to be full with an average of 22 students in each one. Observers did not note any students arriving late to school. A poster in the school's lobby advertised the On Time Tiger (OT)<sup>2</sup> Campaign, which celebrates students with perfect attendance for the month and classrooms meeting attendance goals.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p><b>Proposed Re-enrollment Goal:</b> All campuses should achieve an average of at least 75% re-enrollment each year.</p> <p><i>Parents will see themselves as partners in their children's education. Parents will view the school positively and express satisfaction with their choice.</i></p>	<p>The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.</p>
<p><b>Proposed Community Service Goal:</b> Center City PCS students will build character by performing community service. Our goal is for at least 75% of students in grades 4-8 to participate in a minimum of two community service activities annually as measured by student exit tickets and tracked through PowerSchool.</p> <p><i>Campuses will be thriving communities of respectful and responsible learners.</i></p> <p><i>Students will perform regular and reflective community service consistent with the core values.</i></p>	<p>The QSR team observed students demonstrating respect for each other and teachers in all observations. Students also reminded classmates of expectations in a few observations. A bulletin board posted in the hallway indicated students participated in a breast cancer walk.</p>
<p><i>Students will be effective communicators, clearly expressing ideas both orally and in writing, and consistently applying appropriate language conventions.</i></p>	<p>The school day opened with Drop Everything and Write, a designated time for everyone in the school to write independently. The QSR team observed teachers encouraging students to answer questions in complete sentences. Students in the middle grades confidently expressed their ideas orally and engaged in discussions with classmates in several observations.</p>
<p><i>Students will apply the process of scientific investigation through inquiry-based research and experiential learning activities.</i></p>	<p>The QSR team observed students engaged in experiential learning activities in a couple of science observations. In one classroom students made observations about mealworms by drawing pictures</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	and discussing them with classmates. Science classes include open-ended essential questions such as, "What positive and negative effects can people have on the earth?"
<i>Students will explain how various historical, cultural, economic, political, technological, and geographical factors impact our world.</i>	The QSR team observed teachers discussing famous African Americans in many of the elementary classes. In the middle grades hallway, a bulletin board related themes in the novel <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> to current events such as the Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown cases.
<i>Students will be equipped with the academic skills needed to be accepted into the competitive high schools of their choice.</i>	The QSR team observed effective instruction in the majority of classrooms. As further detailed in the Instruction section of the Danielson Framework, 85% of the observations scored proficient or distinguished in instruction. Teachers used a variety of strategies to deliver content and students engaged in discussions with classmates.
<i>Teachers will actively participate in ongoing professional development opportunities offered by the school, consistent with our philosophy of being reflective, lifelong learners.</i>	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
<i>Principals and academic deans will be instructional leaders.</i>	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
<i>Campuses will provide a safe and healthy learning environment that is conducive to learning.</i>	The principal greeted students at the front door in the morning and said things like, "We are going to have an awesome day." As further detailed in the Classroom Environment section below, the majority of classroom interactions were warm with students helping each other.

<b>Mission and Goals</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
	The school also had basic safety procedures in place including locking the doors to the building and having the front desk staff buzz in visitors.
<i>The CCPCS Board will provide effective policy guidance, governance and support to school leaders.</i>	The section on Governance contains evidence of this goal.

Governance:

A PCSB staff member attended the Center City PCS Board of Directors meeting on March 18, 2015. A quorum was present. Some members attended via conference call. The board chair explained that the school will be requesting a charter amendment at PCSB's March board meeting and that the school is working on implementing the feedback from Charter Board Partners on the CEO's performance review process. The CEO gave an overview of all the campuses' performance on the NWEA MAP test from fall to winter and discussed how the school leaders plan to share strategies across campuses. The CEO also gave an overview of the new state assessment, PARCC, and discussed the school's readiness to meet the technology demands of the new assessment. Center City PCS's director of talent management gave a presentation to the board on their efforts to retain and recruit high quality teachers. The board committees also shared updates on finances, academics, and governance.

## THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</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 90% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	The QSR team rated 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. Students and teachers treated each other with kindness and respect. Teachers smiled throughout many observations and praised students. For example one teacher said, "Awesome job going back to your text to find that definition." In two observations students shared what they liked about their classmates' work. A student in another classroom asked a classmate, "What's wrong?" in a caring tone when the classmate worked alone.	Distinguished	25%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Proficient	75%
		Basic	0%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	The QSR team rated 92% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Establishing a Culture for Learning. Teachers in these observations created opportunities for students to help each other. Most teachers encouraged students who did not know the answers by scaffolding questions rather than allowing them to sit passively. In one classroom the teacher suggested that students get help by "asking a brain partner next to you." Students in one class helped each other with the work even when the teacher was nearby.	Distinguished	8%
		Proficient	84%

<sup>1</sup> Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>		<b>Evidence Observed</b>	<b>School Wide Rating</b>	
		The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Basic	8%
			Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>		The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Classroom Procedures. Students in these observations transitioned between activities quickly and efficiently. Little to no instructional time was lost during these observations. In a music class students moved around the room to quickly pick up their xylophones and mallets with ease. A few teachers referenced classroom incentives to encourage students to execute established routines effectively saying things like, “I think everyone will get five tiger paws. You all did perfect.”	Distinguished	17%
		Proficient	66%	
		The QSR team rated 17% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations transitions were slow and instructional time was lost due to students not getting started on tasks quickly. In one observation the teacher did not have a solid procedure for passing out papers. In another observation the routine for transition between activities was unclear. Students got off task and socialized between the warm-up and start of the lesson.	Basic	17%
			Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>		The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Student Behavior. Students in these observations generally behaved appropriately and teachers gave effective redirections when needed. Teachers in several observations actively managed student behavior by circulating the room or reminding the class of the expectations saying, “We are still silent.” In two instances students redirected off-task peers without the teacher intervening.	Distinguished	8%
			Proficient	75%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team rated 17% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations the teacher redirections were ineffective or inconsistent. Teachers used techniques such as counting down to get the classes attention; however, students would quickly go back to socializing. In one classroom the teacher inconsistently distributed consequences called “checks” to students exhibiting similar behaviors.</p>	Basic	17%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

## INSTRUCTION

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Instruction domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 85% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Communicating with Students. Teachers in these observations scaffolded new material and provided students with ways to think about content and strategies. In one classroom the teacher provided a pre-reading prompt. A couple of other teachers used think-alouds to model for students, such as "Hmm, I wonder what "golden touch" means? I will look for that while I read."	Distinguished	33%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Proficient	67%
		Basic	0%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 67% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. In these observations teachers used open-ended questions and encouraged students to respond to classmates' comments. A teacher in one classroom paused in the middle of reading to ask focus questions such as, "What do you think, would king Midas rather have his daughter back or keep the golden touch?" Several other teachers asked students to explain their answers and respond to peers on why they got a different answer.	Distinguished	8%
	The QSR team rated 33% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Almost all interactions in these observations were between teachers and students. Teachers did not create	Proficient	59%
		Basic	33%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	opportunities for students to respond to or engage in discussion with classmates. In a couple of observations the questions were primarily recall in nature.	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	The QSR team rated 92% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Engaging Students in Learning. In these observations students eagerly participated in the learning tasks and were intellectually engaged in the lesson throughout the observation. Teachers used a variety of strategies to engage students in learning. In one class students played a game making compound words following a short mini lesson and then moved into small groups with activities aligned to the lesson objective. The QSR team observed students choosing how they would complete tasks in several observations. For example students in a music class gave input on what tempo to set the music based on how well they felt they were doing.	Distinguished	17%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Proficient	75%
		Basic	8%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Assessment in Instruction. Teachers in these observations modeled high quality work and gave students specific feedback on their work. In many observations teachers circulated the classroom pausing to address student questions and to guide students who were correcting their errors. One teacher circulated and had students share out key details from a text while she gave feedback to students who struggled to identify key details. Another teacher did a mini lesson with a student who was struggling to understand a math concept.	Distinguished	8%
		Proficient	75%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
<p>The QSR team rated 17% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations teachers only used global checks for understanding and did not give students feedback on how to improve their work. One teacher gave feedback only to the small group of students with whom she was working, ignoring the rest of the class.</p>		Basic	17%
		Unsatisfactory	0%

## 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>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<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

<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<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 of 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>Instruction</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<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.