DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

May 11, 2016

Erica McGrady, Board Chair
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom PCS
3700 Oakview Terrace NE
Washington, DC 20017

Dear Ms. McGrady,

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, 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 20-year Charter Review during 2017-18 school year

Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School (Stokes PCS) gave DC PCSB permission to conduct the Qualitative Site Review a year in advance.

Qualitative Site Review Report
A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Stokes PCS between February 22, 2016 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 Stokes PCS.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: May 11, 2016
Campus Name: Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom PCS
Ward: 5
Grade levels: Pre-kindergarten 3 – grade 8
Total Enrollment: 350
Students with Disabilities enrollment: 23
English Language Learners enrollment: 59
Reason for visit: 20-year review
Two-week window: February 22 – March 4, 2016
Number of observations: 24

Summary
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom PCS (Stokes PCS) has the following mission: The Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School prepares culturally diverse elementary school students in the District of Columbia to become leaders, scholars, and responsible citizens who are committed to social justice.

Stokes PCS offers a dual language program for students in DC focused on inquiry learning. The school offers tracks in either Spanish or French with full immersion in pre-kindergarten (PK) and then classes in the target language half of the time and English the other half for kindergarten through fifth grade. With a Master or Leader Teacher and Resident Teacher or student teacher in most classrooms, students have access to support from multiple adults who share the implementation of the school's mission and vision. There is a focus on the culture of the school as evident through the consistent collaboration among teachers and students observed in all classrooms at each grade level.

The Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team used the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (see Appendix I) to score observations in two domains: Classroom Environment and Instruction.

The QSR team scored 93% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. In these observations teachers and students had a good rapport with each other and a culture of respect and high expectations permeated throughout the school. Teachers had consistent processes in place for transitioning students between work groups and had established clear standards of conduct.

The QSR team scored 84% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. Teachers clearly described the purpose of each lesson and used an array of questioning techniques to keep students intellectually engaged. Teachers circulated throughout small group and individual work time to focus on the students' questions and assess their learning.

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

Stokes PCS completed a special education questionnaire prior to the site visit in which they stated that a learning specialist would be observed being a resource and support to the general education teacher in modifying and accommodating lessons to meet the needs of students with disabilities. According to the survey, teachers used many resources to support their students with disabilities, including assistive technology, manipulatives, differentiated texts/libraries, graphic organizers, and timers. Observers expected to see these supports when visiting the school.

During the special-education specific observations services were provided using a push-in and pull-out model, which was not mentioned in the questionnaire. The general education and special education teachers collaborated to provide instruction and academic supports to students with and without disabilities. During a one-on-one pull-out session, a special education teacher worked on specific language-arts skills with a student. The SPED teacher was able to adapt instruction and the overall lesson based on the student's feedback and understanding. All students appeared to be comfortable with seeking assistance, direction, and support based on their eagerness to ask questions from both teachers in the class as they worked through whole-group, guided, and independent practice activities.

Instruction for English Language Learners

EW Stokes PCS outlined their services and approaches to English Language Learner (ELL) instruction in response to the ELL questionnaire prior to the two-week window. The school explained that it uses Sheltered Instruction for ELL students. This model provides teachers with content, language objectives and key vocabulary for effective content-based instructional design and delivery. The ELL specialist expected to see Sheltered Instruction in the general education classrooms.

During the two-week window, the ELL QSR specialist observed ELL teachers engaged in many strong Sheltered Instruction practices. The teachers engaged the students one-on-one and in small groups, using questioning and informal assessments (thumbs up, thumbs down, and visual checks) to gauge the progress and needs of their students. The ELL teachers used specific language objectives from the English content teachers or their own, to drive the instruction. Teachers were explicit in stating the learning objectives and in relating the objectives to the larger, language learning context. The teachers also used appropriate language leveled materials and activities and allowed for sufficient wait-time for the students when answering questions. The ELL teachers emphasized the use of academic vocabulary and incorporated key vocabulary into the learning task, through

teacher language, questioning, and correct student speech and writing. The students were engaged and eager to participate, even when they were reluctant to speak. The teachers valued and respected the students' contributions.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes Stokes 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
Mission: The Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School prepares culturally diverse elementary school students in the District of Columbia to become leaders, scholars, and responsible citizens who are committed to social justice.	During the two-week window, the QSR team observed a culturally diverse school population in the staff and student body. Students collaborated on group projects and tasks. During this collaboration time, students took turns being leaders among their peers. Teachers also gave cues to show their students how to be leaders, modeling how students can solve their own problems and handle conflicts between themselves. In all of the QSR observations, students worked hard and put forth good effort. Students were comfortable looking up questions on the computers and worked well independently. Students at Stokes PCS took pride in their environment to become responsible citizens committed to social justice. During one observation two students quickly picked up the broom and dustpan to clean up crumbs on the floor from the snack at the end of recess. In the entrance of the school was a large poster with "hands across the waters, taking care of our global community" written on it. On other bulletin boards were common themes such as "Respect our community," "Creating our community," and "I will take care of my community." The school also tends a community garden in front of the building.
Goals:	

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Please note that the school was in the process of revising its goals at the time of the QSR. In cases where current goals were similar to revised goals, DC PCSB staff combined them to simplify evidence collection and reporting.	
Current Goal: At each grade level, 4th-5th grade students will demonstrate increasing reading proficiency in English, as indicated by a median growth percentile of 50% or above on the state standardized test. At each grade level, 4th-5th grade students will demonstrate increasing proficiency in mathematics, as indicated by a median growth percentile of 50 percent or above on the state standardized test. **Proposed Goal:** **PMF Goal #1: Student Progress – Academic Improvement over time** *Effective instruction supporting student academic progress and achievement in reading and math.*	Every classroom had posters on the wall giving students cues to help them progress in math, reading and other subjects when they were stuck. Some of the posters were "How to write an intro," "How to write a literacy essay," and "Skip counting." Teachers asked clarifying questions of mixed levels of difficulty to challenge student thinking. When students tried to answer a question and had difficulty, the teacher offered for a friend to help answer the question, then the teacher circled back to the original student to make sure the student understood the answer. During pull-out sessions for both special education and ELL, the teachers focused on specific skills each student needed to master. In one session the teacher focused on the difference between clauses and complex sentences, helping the student with the necessary foundational skills to support writing growth. Teachers differentiated instruction for each student so they could work at their own level in Readers and Writers workshop. Math classes included hands on experiences so students could build foundational skills when measuring angles with triangles in fifth grade, using fake money for subtraction problems in third grade, and learning how to use tally marks to count multiple items in kindergarten.
Current Goal: 75% of Pre-K students will meet or exceed the widely held literacy	Teachers consistently demonstrated instruction that supports the school's goals of strong reading across all grade levels. Teachers provided a grade-level appropriate focus on reading and writing skills required for proficiency. Students

Mission and Goals	Evidence
expectations as measured by Teaching Strategies Gold. 75% of Pre-K students will meet or exceed the widely held mathematics expectations as measured by Teaching Strategies Gold. 65% of K-2 students will meet or exceed the college readiness target on the NWEA MPG assessment (K: 149 - Reading; 1st: 166-Reading; 2nd: 179-Reading) 65% of K-2 students will meet or exceed the college readiness target on the NWEA MPG assessment (K:144- Math; 1st: 164-Math; 2nd: 177-Math.) 60% of students will score proficient or advanced in reading on the state assessment. At each grade level, 4th-5th grade students will demonstrate increasing reading proficiency in English, as indicated by a median growth percentile of 50% or above on the state standardized test. 60% of students will score proficient or advanced in math on the state assessment. **Proposed Goal:** **PMF Goal #2: Student Achievement – Meeting or exceeding academic standards** *Moving students to advanced levels of proficiency in reading and math*	were eager to read in all classrooms. Teachers challenged second grade students with identifying the morals in fables and coming up with their own morals to the stories. Kindergarten students chose to read independently and to each other after lunch, before class began and had their own "book sacks" with books at different reading levels to take home. Teachers challenged students at all grade levels to demonstrate or explain their thinking in math. Many teachers incorporated manipulatives to help students understand math concepts. One teacher modeled how to problem solve if an answer does not make sense. The class was then able to work together to come up with a solution that they applied in their small groups. In another observation students worked in small groups to identify the angles within triangles. The students discussed how the information they already knew could help them solve each problem. When the whole class went over the assignment, students from every group brought forth their ideas to help the class arrive at the correct answers.
Proposed Goal:	Students worked on key skills to help them succeed in reading. The class took notes on the fiction books they were reading and talked about the main

Mission and Goals	Evidence
PMF Goal # 3: Gateway – Outcomes in key subjects that predict future educational success *Promotion of reading proficiency by third grade and math proficiency by eighth grade.*	characters as their "friends" so they could describe character traits. The teachers helped to personalize the lessons by having students discuss the traits they observe in their real-life friends and in other people. The students made a list of character traits that they referenced throughout their work. DC PCSB will evaluate quantitative data to assess if the school met this goal during the 5- year review process.
Current Goal: Stokes PCS will maintain an in-seat attendance rate of at least 90%. Stokes PCS will maintain a re-enrollment rate of at least 80%. **Proposed Goal:** **PMF Goal #4: Leading Indicators – Predictors of future student progress and achievement** *Culture of learning and support in the classrooms*	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.
Current Goal: At each grade level, 5^{th}-6^{th} grade students will demonstrate increasing writing communication proficiency in English each year, as measured by the ACCESS.	Students across all grades actively worked on writing communication. During an ELL pull-out, students were engaged in writing with the support of their teacher. The students worked on identifying key words, main ideas, and writing a summary.
Current Goal: 80% of 5^{th} grade students will score at the proficiency level (≥50/100), as measured	Students wrote about a dream in Spanish and then shared their stories at the end of class in the target language. Teachers posted work in French including three-to-

Mission and Goals	Evidence
by Diplome d'etudes en langue francaise (DELF) or Diplome de Espanol (DELE).	four paragraph opinion papers on various topics including candy and pets.
Current Goal: 85% of 5th grade students will prepare and present a science project that demonstrates understanding of the scientific method as applied to at least one of the following content areas (physical science, life sciences, earth sciences, technology) rated at ≥24, as measured by the attached rubric.	Fourth grade students participated in a scientific experiment related to the scientific process. Students were asked to justify and explain their reasoning for their generated hypothesis. Students then used the materials presented by the teacher to create a closed circuit. During the lesson students worked in small groups to design a circuit and test their hypothesis.
Current Goal: 85% of 4th-5th grade students will demonstrate mastery of visual and/or musical arts by creating a visual arts project and/or performing a vocal or instrumental music piece rated at ≥ 12, as indicated by the attached rubric.	During one music class students were instructed to warm up in their groups on the song they had been working on before they would be recorded that day. Small groups of students sat at each keyboard, one or two students in charge of playing the instrument, while the other students sang. The students were working towards an end of the year performance and the teacher said that the recordings are helping them practice performing in front of others.
Governance:	On January 9, 2016 a DC PCSB staff member observed a board A quorum was present. During the retreat the board discussed good governance standards, smaller committees within the board had breakout sessions, and the board reviewed board norms and discussed upcoming board business.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT[1]

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 93% of the 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 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers demonstrated knowledge, caring, and respect for the students. When a student was frustrated, the teacher knelt next to the student to quietly speak about the situation. Teachers modeled saying, "please" and "thank you" for the students, which in turn, students used with each other.	Distinguished	17%
		Proficient	79%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	4%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers continually encouraged students to work hard and not give up, saying, "I know you can all do this," and "I tried and that's the most important thing." Students showed pride in their work and were willing to help others.	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	92%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations basic in this component.	Basic	4%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers used the call and response method or a gentle chime to call the attention of the students. At the sound students immediately became quiet and focused on the teachers. Routines were in place for moving between activities and minimal instructional time was lost. The adults in each room also worked together well to set up the materials for the next lesson while one adult was finishing the current lesson.	Distinguished	17%
		Proficient	71%
	The QSR team rated 12% of the observations as basic in this component. In these instances the procedures that had been established functioned unevenly and some instructional time was lost. During one observation the teachers continually reminded students of the expectations at each center, but the classroom was chaotic.	Basic	12%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 92% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Across many of the observations, student behavior was aligned to the established classroom standards. Standards of conduct had been established and when a student required redirection, the teacher used proximity or quick verbal redirects that did not disrupt the class, "please put that away, I can see it is distracting you."	Distinguished	21%
		Proficient	71%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored fewer than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	8%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	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 84% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored 96% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers clearly stated the purpose of the lesson and engaged students in the learning task through the introduction of the lesson. Teachers invited students to answer questions, repeat previously learned content, and connect topics to real life experiences.	Distinguished	22%
	In one distinguished observation the teacher discussed using tally marks to count multiple items. The class chose to count how many students liked ice cream on a cone versus in a cup. The students asked many questions to learn how tally marks worked and continued to practice counting this way. Teachers prompted students to respond in full sentences and to help each out.	Proficient	74%
	The QSR team scored fewer than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	4%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 83% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers asked a mix of recall and open-ended questions to allow for participation from many students. Students	Distinguished	8%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	helped each other with answers when prompted by the teachers. Teachers also prompted students to explain their thinking.	Proficient	75%
	The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations the teachers asked limited questions and the questions asked only had one correct answer. At times the teacher did not give enough wait time and provided the answer to the students.	Basic	17%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In most observations the students were intellectually engaged in the lesson and the activities were aligned with the goals. Teachers engaged all students through questioning and students actively participated. Students collaborated well in small groups in almost every classroom.	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	75%
	The QSR team scored 21% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations students were not intellectually engaged, they were off task talking or drawing unless the teacher worked directly with them.	Basic	21%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
		Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team scored 79% of the observations as proficient, with none scoring distinguished in this component. Teachers circulated during small group work to ask questions and allow students to explain their thinking. Teachers used this opportunity to offer suggestions or make adjustments to the lesson. Some teachers used hand gestures to check if students understood the directions.	Proficient	79%
	The QSR team scored 21% of the observations as basic in this component. In a few observations the teacher's directions did not articulate what high quality work looked like. At times the feedback was general such as a universal check for understanding. Some teachers did not follow up when the students did not appear to understand the lesson.	Basic	21%
	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 situation within broader learning. Teacher's explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students' knowledge and experience.	Teacher's oral and written communication is clear and expressive, anticipating possible student misconceptions. Makes the purpose of the lesson or unit clear, including where it is situated within broader learning, linking purpose to student interests. Explanation of content is imaginative, and connects with students' knowledge and experience. Students contribute to explaining concepts to their peers.
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low-level questions, limited student participation, and little true discussion.	Teacher's use of questioning and discussion techniques is uneven with some high-level question; attempts at true discussion; moderate student participation.	Teacher's use of questioning and discussion techniques reflects high-level questions, true discussion, and full participation by all students.	Students formulate 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.

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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.