



November 10, 2014

James Kemp, Board Chair
Hope Community PCS – Tolson
2917 8th Street NE
Washington, DC 20012

Dear Mr. Kemp:

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 eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2014-15 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Hope Community PCS – Tolson between September 15 and September 26, 2014. The purpose of the site review is for PCSB to gauge the extent to which the school's mission, goals and student academic achievement expectations are 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 Hope Community PCS – Tolson.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope Community PCS – Tolson serves 514 students in grades PK3 through 8 in Ward 5. It is part of a two-campus network operated under a management agreement with Imagine Schools, Inc. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in September 2014 because Hope Community PCS is eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2014-15 school year.

The QSR team conducted observations over the course of a two-week window, from September 15 through September 26, 2014. A team of two PCSB staff members and one special education consultant conducted observations of 21 classrooms. A member of the QSR team also attended a Board of Trustees meeting. 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 scored 85% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in the Classroom Environment domain. Teachers and students had mostly positive interactions and demonstrated mutual respect in almost every observation. The QSR team observed teachers effectively guiding students through transitions and employing classroom management techniques successfully. Classroom routines and procedures were well executed.

The QSR team scored just over half, 58%, of the observations as proficient or distinguished in the Instruction domain. These teachers shared learning objectives with students and asked a variety of questions ranging from recall to open-ended. The rigor of the learning tasks in many classrooms was low. In several observations, students were not intellectually engaged with assignments requiring low-level skills such as copying definitions from a glossary. Teachers' use of assessment in instruction was also inconsistent. Some teachers gave students clear feedback and modeled high quality work while others only used global checks for understanding and did not make changes to instruction based on the feedback.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes Hope Community PCS – Tolson’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 mission of Hope Community is to shape the hearts and minds of our students positively, by providing them with an academically rigorous, content rich curriculum, an environment in which character is modeled and promoted, and a community in which to build trusting relationships with others.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed evidence that Community Hope PCS – Tolson is carrying out parts of its mission.</p> <p><i>Shape hearts and minds positively:</i> The school day opened with the recitation of an encouraging statement over the public announcement system. Observers witnessed teachers giving students positive comments and praise in almost every observation and saw students’ personal writings about their hopes and dreams for the future posted in the hallways.</p> <p><i>Academically rigorous and content rich curriculum:</i> There was inconsistent evidence to support whether or not the campus was providing a rigorous and content rich curriculum. In grades 6-8, the rigor of work in several observations was low, with the primary learning activity consisting of students copying definitions with little or no class discussion. In the pre-kindergarten and elementary grades, teachers posed open-ended questions in some observations and students pushed themselves to articulate their ideas using demanding vocabulary. However, discussions in several observations were only between the teacher and one student, and the questions and activities only required students to recall information.</p> <p><i>Character modeled and promoted:</i></p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>Students behaved politely and kindly toward each other in almost every observation. In a few observations, teachers encouraged students to help classmates understand the material. The dean of students explicitly praised one class for modeling the school’s character values during presentations.</p> <p><i>Build trusting relationships:</i> Students were eager to participate in class and seemed unafraid of being wrong. The team observed parents and students having positive interactions with administrators during morning drop-off.</p>
<p>1. HCPCS students will be strong readers.</p>	<p>Every elementary and pre-kindergarten classroom had a library with leveled books. Teachers incorporated guided reading instruction into lessons. In one observation, students had personal book bins containing multiple books on their reading level. Teachers in the middle school grades had students read aloud in class, and students carried independent reading books with them.</p>
<p>2. a. Hope Community students will master key concepts related to mathematics, science, and technology and apply them effectively in observing, analyzing, problem solving, and synthesizing data. b. Hope Community students will be critical thinkers and numeric problem solvers and will demonstrate the ability to integrate concepts and make connections related to the core disciplines.</p>	<p>Students in several observations were using computers or iPads to complete class assignments. Teachers also used projectors and interactive whiteboards to deliver instruction. The QSR team, however, did not observe strong evidence of analyzing and synthesizing data or problem solving in mathematics and science. In two different science classrooms, teachers made content errors. Students were not consistently engaged intellectually.</p>
<p>3. HCPCS will effectively manage negative student behavior.</p>	<p>Students were generally well behaved in almost all observations. The dean of students circulated the hallways and classrooms helping</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>teachers with the few minor behavior issues that arose. Teachers effectively implemented the school-wide “Give Me Five” technique, where the teacher holds up a hand and students have five expectations to get silent, to get students’ attention and quiet the class when needed.</p>
<p>4. Hope Community teachers will have continuing opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to present challenging subject matter and to foster student mastery of the required curriculum.</p>	<p>The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.</p>
<p>5. Quality Assessment and Accountability Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hope Community assessments will reflect the standards that are the most important for students to learn. b. Hope Community assessments will support good instructional practices and enhance every student's opportunity to learn. c. Hope Community will be accountable for providing student and parent assessment results and feedback on each student's educational achievement. d. Hope Community teachers will implement data-driven decision-making and use assessment data to diagnose student progress and improve classroom practices. e. Hope Community students will master the District of Columbia Standards for Teaching and Learning. 	<p>While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed explicit evidence related to this goal, the team saw achievement goals for math and ELA displayed outside of classrooms for the STAR assessment.</p>
<p>6. HCPCS will involve parents and the community as active partners in support of student education.</p>	<p>While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed explicit evidence related to this goal, the team saw parent bulletin boards posted in each grade level. The boards contained a parent newsletter, lesson plans, and assessment expectations. There was also a sign-up sheet for parents to volunteer at the school.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
7. Parents will indicate satisfaction with the school's program	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
8. HCPCS students will regularly attend school.	While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed explicit evidence related to this goal, the team observed that all classes appeared to be well attended with very few empty desks.
Governance:	<p>A PCSB staff member attended the Hope Community PCS Board of Trustees meeting on September 4, 2014. A quorum was present. The board discussed the common lottery and age cutoff for allowing students to enter PK3, which was ultimately tabled until further data is available. They also had a conversation about a slight name issue (Hope Community Charter School, Inc. or Hope Community Public Charter School). They are following up with PCSB on whether to amend their charter agreement or their articles of incorporation.</p> <p>Hope Community PCS Tolson and Lamond campus leaders reported to the board. Hope Community PCS – Tolson leaders shared current enrollment for the 2014-15 school year, school culture and improvement plans, in addition to details of the upcoming QSR and accreditation. Hope Community PCS – Lamond leaders shared academic gains on the DC CAS, student recruitment efforts, and a new principal from closed Imagine Southeast Public Charter School.</p>

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

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 85% of the observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team rated 91% of observations as proficient or distinguished in the component of Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. Teachers in these observations greeted students warmly at the start of class and encouraged students to be kind to each other. A teacher in one observation thanked students for being polite to each other. In another observation, a student encouragingly said, “You know it,” to a classmate who was hesitant to answer a question the teacher posed.	Distinguished	29%
		Proficient	62%
	The QSR Team rated less than 10% of observations as basic or unsatisfactory.	Basic	9%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team rated 81% of observations as proficient or distinguished in the component of Establishing a Culture for Learning. High expectations for learning were apparent in these observations. Teachers encouraged students to put forth their best effort even if they were not initially confident. During a math warm-up exercise, the teacher said, “It’s okay if you don’t know. Just try to solve the problem.” Students were eager to try using new words or solving new problems. In one observation, students high-fived a classmate who answered correctly during a subtraction game.	Distinguished	10%
		Proficient	71%
	The QSR team scored 19% of the observations as basic. Teachers did not	Basic	19%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	exhibit high expectations for all students. One teacher ignored students who were not on task and only encouraged students who worked or raised their hands. Another teacher had low energy for the work and demeaned her drawing ability several times throughout the observation.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team rated 71% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in the component of Managing Classroom Procedures. Teachers in these observations had clear procedures and routines that students were comfortable following. Teachers used timers and bells or announced time warnings to better facilitate transitions. Students transitioned with little guidance from teachers.	Distinguished	9%
	Several observations included students working in centers. Students cleaned up their area and moved between centers smoothly in the observations scoring proficient or distinguished. Additionally teachers had clear systems for assigning students quickly and efficiently to each center.	Proficient	62%
	The QSR team scored 29% of observations as basic in this component. Teachers had some procedures in place, but they were not executed well. For example, students were not given any directions on the cleanup expectations at the end of an art activity, which resulted in construction paper, scissors, and glue being left out. In a science classroom, the teacher had an activity planned using the periodic table, but there was no plan for how students without the table could participate.	Basic	29%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team rated 95% of the observations as proficient or distinguished in the component of Managing Student Behavior. Student behavior in these observations was almost always appropriate. Several teachers narrated the positive behaviors they observed. In the few instances when students did not	Distinguished	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>behave appropriately, teachers employed strategies effectively to redirect the inappropriate behavior. Many teachers used a behavior chart with clothespins to move students up or down a scale depending on their behavior. Other teachers used the school-wide “Give Me Five” technique and students responded by quickly raising their hands and quieting down.</p>	Proficient	95%
	<p>The QSR Team rated less than 10% of observations as basic or unsatisfactory.</p>	Basic	5%
		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 58% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 76% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in the component of Communicating with Students. Teachers in these observations gave consistent directions and error-free explanations of the content. In several observations teachers wrote the objective for the day on the board or discussed the importance of what the class was learning. Teachers used rich vocabulary that was appropriate to the subject matter; for example, students learned the word medium during art as they discussed the work they created. Teachers also made analogies or used kinesthetic techniques to instruct students in new material.	Distinguished	0%
	In the 24% of observations that scored basic, teachers did not clearly communicate the purpose of the lesson or the assignment's directions. The teacher in one observation gave an overview of the activities at different stations. When students got to the stations, however, they were not able to get started right away because they did not understand what to do. Two teachers made content errors during their lessons and did not correct or clarify their mistakes during the observation.	Proficient	76%
		Basic	24%
	Unsatisfactory	0%	
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated fewer than half (43%) of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in the component of Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. Teachers in these observations asked open-ended questions and facilitated discussions among students. One teacher posed a question to students about how to distinguish between living and non-living things. Another teacher had students turn	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	and talk to each other in order to discuss the answer to a question. Almost all of these teachers asked a mix of higher-order and recall questions in the observations scoring proficient.	Proficient	43%
	The QSR team scored more than half (57%) of the observations as basic. Teachers primarily asked questions that required students only to recall facts. There was little discussion among students in these observations with almost every interaction being between the teacher and a student. In a few instances the teacher asked a more open-ended question but did not allow enough wait time for students to formulate responses. One teacher asked a higher-order question but had a difficult time scaffolding and expanding on the conversation.	Basic	57%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team rated 62% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in the component of Engaging Students in Learning. In these observations, teachers grouped the students and differentiated the activities. Students in a few observations worked in groups on assignments that required them to engage and discuss with classmates. Teachers also pulled	Distinguished	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
		Proficient	62%
	<p>The QSR team scored 38% of the observations as basic. The pacing of the lessons were not appropriate, and students were not consistently intellectually engaged in the lessons. A teacher in one observation asked students whether they were ready to move on and then did so even though many students indicated that they were not ready. In a couple of other observations, students were asked to complete assignments that lacked rigor. Two of the stations in one class were putting together a puzzle and writing the definitions of words from the textbook. Students worked on these tasks without any intellectual engagement.</p>	Basic	38%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team rated 52% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in the component of Using Assessment in Instruction. Teachers in these observations gave students feedback on how to improve their work. In one observation, the teacher circulated the student groups and offered specific feedback while students worked. Another teacher asked students questions to gauge their comprehension and made adjustments to the lesson accordingly. Two teachers observed modeled high quality work by walking through an exemplar with the class.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	52%
	<p>The 48% of observations that the QSR team scored as basic or unsatisfactory included teachers only using global checks for understanding. Teachers in a couple of observations used thumbs up or thumbs down to gauge whether students understood the material, but they did not follow up with students who had their thumbs down. In another observation, the teacher gave very general feedback, such as “good” or “hmm” without providing any direction for students to improve their work.</p>	Basic	43%
Unsatisfactory		5%	

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>