



April 2, 2014

Dr. Aprille Ericson
Board Chair
Howard University Middle School of Math and Science PCS
405 Howard Place
Washington, DC 20059

Dear Dr. Ericson:

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews (QSR) 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 QSR during the 2013-14 school year for the following reason:

- School is eligible for a 10-year Charter Review during 2014-15 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A QSR team conducted on-site review visits of the Howard University Middle School of Math and Science Public Charter School (Howard University PCS) between February 3 and February 21, 2014. The review window was extended one week beyond the normal two-week window due to inclement weather. The purpose of the site 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. Members of the QSR team conducted 30 to 45 minute observations in classrooms. The QSR team scored each observation based on the critical attributes outlined in the *Framework for Teaching*. The team also visited a board meeting in order to observe the school's governance as it relates to fulfilling its mission, and charter goals.

The QSR team's report is attached. 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 Howard University PCS. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that Howard University PCS is in compliance with its charter.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Howard University Middle School of Math and Science Public Charter School (Howard University PCS) serves 316 sixth through eighth grade students on the campus of Howard University in Ward 1. Through collaborative efforts with the school community, the mission of the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science is to provide a sound foundation in all academic subjects, with a concentration in mathematics and science; the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of each student will be nurtured, while an appreciation for diversity and sensitivity for all individuals will be encouraged in an enriched educational environment that will prepare students to succeed in high school and beyond. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in February 2014 because Howard University PCS is eligible for 10-year Charter Review during the 2014-15 school year.

PCSB conducted observations over the course of a three-week window, from February 13 to February 21. A team of two PCSB staff members and three consultants (including a consultant with a background in special education) conducted 19 observations of classrooms. The spirit of the QSR process is to identify the educational experience for all students, inclusive of students with disabilities, at a particular school. The results of this QSR are thus reflective of what the QSR teams observed in all learning environments within the school, including where students with disabilities are being serviced. This includes two Special Education teachers observed pushing into classrooms and pulling students out of the classroom for additional support. In some instances the QSR team may have observed a classroom twice. The QSR team used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* Rubric throughout the observations and observed classrooms in mornings and afternoons. In addition to this three-week observation window, PCSB also attended a Board of Trustees meeting to observe the school's governance as it relates to fulfilling its mission and charter goals.

On average the QSR team scored 83% of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Classroom Environment domain. In nearly all of the observations the students and teachers were respectful to one another. Students were focused on their learning and teachers maintained high expectations for behavior and work completion. There were very few instances of student misbehavior and nearly all were dealt with fairly and maintained the students' dignity. In a majority of the observations classroom routines and procedures functioned smoothly with little to no loss of instructional time.

On average the QSR team scored just 51% of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Instructional Delivery domain. This is a low overall percentage, considering the school is entering its 10th year of operation. Seventy-four percent of the observations were scored as proficient with Communicating with Students, the highest rated element in this domain. Most teachers communicated directions and presented content clearly to students. They used age-appropriate vocabulary and at times modeled the learning tasks for students. However fewer than 50% of the observations received a rating of proficient or exemplary in three domains: Using Questioning & Discussion Techniques, Engaging Students in Learning, and Using Assessment in Instruction. There was inconsistency school wide regarding the level of questioning posed to

students and differentiation of learning tasks. The QSR team saw few examples of student discussion in classrooms and many teachers posed questions simply requiring one-word answers. There was also inconsistency school wide with the quality of assessment used in instruction. Some teachers were constantly taking the pulse of student learning and providing feedback in a timely manner. Other teachers provided little feedback to students. Checks for understanding were often global and did not provide teachers with individual student understanding.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS, AND BOARD GOVERNANCE

This table summarizes Howard University’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 Review Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission: Through collaborative efforts with the school community, the mission of the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science is to provide a sound foundation in all academic subjects, with a concentration in mathematics and science; the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of each student will be nurtured, while an appreciation for diversity and sensitivity for all individuals will be encouraged in an enriched educational environment that will prepare students to succeed in high school and beyond.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed evidence toward the school meeting its mission.</p> <p><i>Collaborative efforts with the school community</i> The QSR team observed one of the math teachers supporting other math and science teachers during multiple class periods. Several college students enrolled in Howard University are student tutors. The team saw the student tutors assisting with administrative duties and supporting teachers and students.</p> <p><i>Concentration in Mathematics and Science</i> The school offers a variety of science and mathematics courses to its students in 6th through 8th grade. Students take a standard science course as well as STEM courses and STEM Literacy courses, in which they completed hands-on projects and learned math and science vocabulary. Students used laptop computers, calculators and other manipulatives to enhance their learning and worked in small groups to complete problems during the math observations.</p> <p><i>Intellectual, Social and Emotional growth; Appreciation for diversity and sensitivity</i> The students were polite and courteous to one another in nearly all of the observations. In several observations students praised each other without prompting from the teacher, giving each other winks, thumbs up or even cheers. Most of the teachers used encouraging words when speaking to students and maintained high expectations for learning and</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>communicating with other students. There were posters around the school with positive inspirational messages and anti-bullying messages created by the students. While the QSR team did not observe any evidence of students being taught or appreciating diversity, this does not indicate that the school is failing to meet this aspect of the mission.</p> <p><i>Enriched educational environment preparing students for high school and beyond</i></p> <p>Teachers used Promethean Boards to project information and to promote student interaction with content. Students used laptops and iPads to research information in social studies classes or get additional support with their math work. The teachers were often overheard discussing college with their students, were knowledgeable about their content, and made outside connections to history and social justice. The school held a science fair during the observation window where students shared presentations within their science classes. However, only half of the classrooms scored proficient or exemplary in using questioning/prompts and discussion techniques which are skills necessary to compete in high school and beyond.</p>
Students will demonstrate annual improvement in reading.	The QSR team observed evidence of efforts to improve reading skills. The Literacy classes are 90-minute blocks each consisting of a daily objective, learning goals, and a Do Now. The students used authentic texts in these classes – such as <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> , or excerpts from a larger book. The teachers integrated technology into the lessons and also focused on teaching explicit reading comprehension strategies and vocabulary instruction. The teachers used data to tier students in need of additional support within their literacy blocks and during a unique intervention block.
Students will demonstrate annual improvement in mathematics.	The QSR team observed evidence of efforts to improve math skills. Students learned about computing complementary angles, evaluating

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>the perimeters and areas of parallelograms, and identifying the perimeter and area of right triangles. Some students worked in small groups on solving word problems while others worked collaboratively with their laptops using an online math program. In several of the math classes, students were not only asked to state answers to problems, but were also asked to defend their thinking. Teachers taught math vocabulary in some of the STEM literacy courses. In one of the math observations, there was a content error made by the teacher that left students confused. One of the classes was extremely challenged with one and two-digit division problems, a concept typically mastered in elementary school.</p>
<p>Students will demonstrate achievement in science.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed evidence that students are demonstrating achievement in science. For information about science instruction, please see the Mission section of this report.</p>
<p>Students will demonstrate science mastery through the presentation of a science project.</p>	<p>There were several posters around the school promoting a science fair on February 19th. The teachers discussed science projects with their students in some of the classes and the team was able to observe a few of the science project presentations. However, students seemed unsure of their understanding of the science concepts while presenting their science projects with the class.</p>
<p>Special education students will make progress toward attainment of goals as outlined in Individual Education Plans (IEPs).</p>	<p>The QSR team did not review IEPs and cannot comment on progress towards attainment of students' goals. The team observed the two Special Education teachers providing support to students while pushing into classrooms and during pull-outs.</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Students will participate in extracurricular activities related to mathematics/science/technology.	The master schedule provided to PCSB includes time for students to attend extended enrichment from 3:30 – 4:30 PM, but there are no classes listed. The QSR Team did not observe any classes held during this time of day.
Full time academic faculty will participate in professional development training based on the Howard University School of Education teacher needs assessment, classroom observations, academic data and best practices.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal. Please see the Board Governance section of this report for discussions about upcoming professional development for teacher.
To recruit and retain a highly qualified professional staff of key administrators, teachers, and support personnel.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal. However, the QSR team scored 83% of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Classroom Environment domain and just over half (51%) of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Instructional Delivery domain.
Parents will express satisfaction with the Howard University Mathematics and Science Middle School Program.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
Students will maintain a 90% attendance rate.	Most of the classrooms seemed full, with many seemingly at capacity. Very few students arrived late to school or to any classes.
To exercise fiscal responsibility with regard to all budgetary matters in ways that ensure the Middle School has adequate funds to support the school and implement all of its programs and services.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Board Governance	<p>A PCSB staff member also attended the Howard University PCS Board Meeting, which occurred on January 24th at 1:00pm. Eight board members were present at the meeting. The Board has an effective committee structure in place with the academic, data, and finance committees sharing their work to the whole board. Board members discussed an upcoming professional development focused on the Common Core State Standards, the students' performance on the most recent interim assessment, student grades during Quarter 1, the search for a new Principal and the status of the current budget. The school also reported on two open parent board positions, preparation for the upcoming charter review and a possible amendment to their charter.</p>

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. PCSB considers any rating below proficient to be under the standard of quality expected of DC charter schools. The QSR team scored 83% of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Classroom Environment domain.

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	Approximately 90% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. The teacher and student interactions were very respectful, reflecting warmth and caring. The teachers often referred to students as “sir” or “ma’am.” Students were respectful to their peers even when they disagreed with their answers. The teachers often displayed excitement for students’ responses to questions and made personal connections with students during the lesson.	Exemplary	16%
		Proficient	74%
	Only 10% of the observations were below proficient in Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport.	Satisfactory	5%
		Limited	5%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	79% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Establishing a Culture for Learning. Students were eager to complete tasks and often recognized the efforts of their classmates. Teachers used language to help students identify ways to improve their responses such as, “Think about it from this perspective.” Some teachers created opportunities for students to turn-and-talk and/or work collaboratively in small groups. Teachers shared expectations with students for small group collaboration prior to the transition to small group work.	Exemplary	16%
		Proficient	53%

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

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	21% of observations were below proficient in Establishing a Culture for Learning. Several of the teachers only referenced scoring high on the DC CAS as the reason for learning the material. Some teachers did not recognize student effort, and a few of the students exhibited little to no pride in their work.	Satisfactory	21%
		Limited	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	79% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Managing Classroom Procedures. There was little to no loss of instructional time in most of the observations. Students followed classroom expectations with minimal to no prompting. There were some attention-getters used school wide to garner student attention, such as “Ago....Amay.” The students in most classes used technology with ease and there was little time lost when students transitioned from one activity to another.	Exemplary	16%
		Proficient	63%
	21% of observations were below proficient in Managing Classroom Procedures. Examples include instructional time lost due to inefficient systems and directions when transitioning activities and handing out laptops and/or materials and small groups that were only partially engaged when not working with the teacher,	Satisfactory	11%
		Limited	11%
Managing Student Behavior	84% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Managing Student Behavior. Several teachers paused the lessons to globally address misbehaviors with positive results. The standards of conduct were posted in many hallways and classrooms. In these observations teachers rarely needed to redirect students and, did so respectfully. Teachers were mobile, circulating the room to ensure that students were on task.	Exemplary	11%
		Proficient	74%
	Only 16% of observations were below proficient in Managing Student Behavior. During a few of the observations, the team saw teachers who were unable to find	Satisfactory	16%

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	the students' classwork, not responding respectfully to students needing help, unresponsive to misbehaviors, and not effectively establishing rules and expectations for students to follow in advance of activities.	Limited	0%

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Instructional Delivery elements of the rubric during the unannounced visits. PCSB considers any rating below proficient to be under the standard of quality expected of DC charter schools. The QSR team scored just over half (51%) of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Instructional Delivery domain.

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	74% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Communicating with Students. These teachers posted the learning outcomes on the Smart Board or on whiteboards and referred to them throughout the lesson. Teachers communicated their expectations for each learning task and students appeared to be clear on their work. Teachers used rich vocabulary appropriate for middle school students and nearly all delivered content was free of error.	Exemplary	21%
	26% of observations were below proficient in Communicating with Students. In these observations the objective was not stated or posted and the focus of the lesson was unclear to the observer and the students causing teachers to restate directions multiple times. This caused misunderstanding, confusion, and valuable instructional time to be lost.	Proficient	53%
		Satisfactory	16%
	Limited	11%	
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	Only 39% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. These proficient and exemplary teachers primarily used questions to check for understanding to large groups of students and they built on student responses to probe deeper. A few teachers used open-ended questions to push students to make inferences and use evidence from the text to support their responses.	Exemplary	6%
		Proficient	33%
	The majority of observations (61%) were below proficient in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. There was limited conversation or	Satisfactory	50%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	discussion among students about academic matter in these observations. Some of the teacher-student dialogue was not productive and at times got off task. Most of the questioning required one-word answers and did not push student thinking or challenge them to evaluate or synthesize information.	Limited	11%
Engaging Students in Learning	Fewer than half (47%) of observations were proficient or exemplary in Engaging Students in Learning. Most of the teachers' assignments were aligned with the goals and objectives of the lesson. The students were engaged using a variety of technology mediums and tasks. Student motivation was high in most of the observations. Some students were engaged in turn-and-talk activities and worked in small groups. Students often entered the classroom immediately and got to work with little direction from the teacher.	Exemplary	5%
		Proficient	42%
	53% of observations were below proficient in Engaging Students in Learning. All of the students worked on the same task with the QSR team only noting a few examples of differentiation. The pacing of lessons were often ineffective because teachers went off topic during class discussions or the length of warm-ups went on longer than twenty minutes. During observations where student presentations were taking place, other students were doing other work and responded minimally to their classmates' work.	Satisfactory	53%
		Limited	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	Fewer than half (42%) of observations were proficient in Using Assessment in Instruction. In these observations teachers used questioning to check for understanding and adjusted instruction accordingly. The teachers circulated	Exemplary	0%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	around the classrooms to offer feedback and in some cases provided specific feedback to students. Several teachers used exit tickets or another type of end of class review to assess their students.	Proficient	42%
	58% of observations were below proficient in Using Assessment in Instruction. In several observations the teachers relied primarily on global student feedback. There was no evidence of rubrics or criteria for how student work should be assessed in some observations. A majority of the feedback given to students was not specific or substantive.	Satisfactory	42%
		Limited	16%

APPENDIX I: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Classroom Environment	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.

Classroom Environment	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.