February 1, 2013

Mr. John Goldman, Executive Director
IDEA Public Charter School
1027 45th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20019

Dear Mr. Goldman:

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document authentic evidence to support the oversight of all PCSB schools. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting student academic achievement expectations specified in the charter granted to such school. Your school was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2012-2013 school year for the following reason(s):

- o School eligible to petition for 15-year Charter Renewal
- o School had a Tier 3 rank on the Performance Management Framework during the 2010-11 or 2011-12 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report
On October 3rd and 15th, a Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Integrated Design and Electronics Academy Public Charter School (IDEA PCS). 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. We also visited a board meeting, a parent event, and conducted focus groups with a random selection of students, a group of teachers, and your administrators.

Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report is focused primarily on the following areas: mission/goals of the schools charter, classroom environments, instructional delivery, meeting the needs of all learners, professional development, school climate, and governance/management.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at IDEA PCS. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that IDEA PCS is in compliance with its charter.
Sincerely,

Scott Pearson
Executive Director

Enclosures
cc: Board Chair

CHARTER GOALS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes IDEA PCS' 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 the goal during the Qualitative Site Visit.

Goal as Identified by the School	Evidence
Ensure graduation rates are over 90%.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.
Students will improve on their standardized test scores. [PSAT, SAT, ASVAB, and DC-CAS]	The QSR team did not review student achievement data. However, the team did note that IDEA has implemented a new instructional program and a new master schedule as part of the restructuring. The master schedule was developed based on a new course sequence, revised graduation requirements, and a revised promotion plan. According to school leaders, the newly revised course sequence is designed to ensure that all students are on-track to graduate in four years and move ahead to post-secondary opportunities.
Create an environment that encourages attendance and reduces absenteeism.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal. However, students in focus groups said that they wanted to attend the school and that they felt safe at the school. The QSR team noted improved behavior and culture, in comparison to previous years prior to restructuring.
Improve student citizenship. [through JROTC program]	The QSR team observed multiple NJROTC classes being held during the QSR visits. According to the school leaders, a service learning curriculum is built into the NJROTC program, though the QSR team did not observe evidence of this.
Receive more than a high school diploma. [technical and/or career certificates; internships]	The school has an Information Technology Career Tech Ed program. However, only 2 industry-related certifications have been awarded within the past year.
IDEA students will reenroll at IDEA to complete the course of study.	The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.

SCHOOL MISSION

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on aligning its operations with the mission and goals of its charter.

School Mission	Limited	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary
The school's mission and educational goals as articulated in the charter application and subsequent amendments are implemented in the day to day operations of the school.	Limited observations of day to day observations as aligned with mission and educational goals by any school stakeholders.	Day to day operations and activities as aligned with mission and educational goals are demonstrated by some staff members.	Day to day operations and activities as aligned with mission and educational goals are demonstrated by nearly all staff members.	Day to day operations and activities as aligned with the mission and educational goals are demonstrated by students throughout the school building.
The Board and school administrators govern and manage in a manner consistent with the school's design and mission.	Administrators and Board members demonstrate a limited understanding of the school's design. Evidence of its use in the management and governance of the school is substantially lacking.	Administrators and Board members demonstrate an adequate understanding of the school's design. There is evidence that understanding of the design is sometimes used to effectively manage and govern the school.	Administrators and Board members demonstrate a good understanding of the school's design. There is evidence that understanding of the design is used to effectively manage and govern the school.	All key administrators and Board members demonstrate an excellent understanding of the school's design. There is significant evidence that understanding of the design is used to effectively manage and govern the school.
The school's curriculum and instruction are aligned with the school's mission and educational goals.	School curriculum and instruction are not aligned with the mission and educational goals and/or are utilized in limited/no classrooms.	School curriculum and instruction are aligned with the mission and educational goals and are utilized in some classrooms.	School curriculum and instruction are aligned with the mission and educational goals and are utilized in most classrooms.	School curriculum and instruction are aligned with the mission and educational goals and are utilized in all classrooms.
The school has met or is making progress toward meeting the educational goals of its charter.	The school demonstrates limited evidence of progress towards monitoring and making progress towards few of the goals of its charter.	The school demonstrates adequate evidence of progress towards monitoring and making progress towards some of the goals of its charter.	The school demonstrates proficient evidence of progress towards monitoring and making progress towards most of the goals of its charter.	The school demonstrates exemplary evidence of progress towards monitoring and making progress towards all of the goals of its charter.

School Mission Summary

According to the charter application, the mission of IDEA PCS is to develop young people with the academic, social, leadership, and occupational skills to compete successfully in post-secondary education/training and enter challenging careers in the technical fields of work. The school wishes to prepare its students for competitive high-tech careers now required in the 21st century. The school will develop students who will not only have improved test and aptitude scores but will work more cohesively as team members. This will be achieved through a unique learning environment and enhanced career opportunities that include effective integration of academic and technological career training in

electronics and engineering design and the leadership skills training of the military Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs. Students will graduate, go on to college, or obtain employment in a needed career in the Washington, DC area. This is what PCSB staff looked for when visiting the classrooms, attending a parent meeting and board meeting, and conducting the focus groups.

The QSR team's October visits were the first formal PCSB visits to the school since its restructuring began in the summer of 2012. The restructuring included an overhaul of the school's leadership team, with a new executive director, new deans, and a reformed Board. Many of the QSR team members, which included a combination of PCSB staff and educational consultants, had visited the school in prior years; the observers noted several discernible changes in the school's operations and culture. The effects of the restructuring were possibly most evident in the school's climate: students were polite and helpful to the QSR team, and exhibited good behavior in the hallways and most classrooms. In focus groups, students indicated that they wanted to be at school and meet their teachers' expectations.

The restructuring also included a significant overhaul of the teaching staff; the QSR team observed many teachers who were new to teaching and new the school. The QSR team noted improvements in instructional quality compared to pre-restructuring observations, but noted that many teachers were still struggling with certain elements of classroom management and instructional delivery. The new leadership has emphasized professional development, though the effects of these trainings were not apparent during the QSR team's visit.

PCSB visited the IDEA PCS board meeting on October 25, 2012. There were nine people in attendance, including the Executive Director. Two other board members were expected but did not attend. There were a sufficient number of board members present to constitute a quorum. The agenda included enrollment and staffing, the 15 year charter renewal review, and a report on the Quality Site Review conducted on October 15th. The board has four committees to address the school's operations, including: the Executive Committee, the Academic Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Governance Committee. Committee Reports included the following: academic excellence, finance, development, governance, and a report by the parent representative.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environments elements of the rubric during the scheduled and unscheduled visits.

Class Environment	Limited	Satisfactory	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.
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.

Class Environment	Limited	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary
Organizing Physical Space	Teacher makes poor use of the physical environment, resulting in unsafe or inaccessible conditions for some students or a serious mismatch between the furniture arrangement and the lesson activities.	Teacher's classroom is safe, and essential learning is accessible to all students, but the furniture arrangement only partially supports the learning activities.	Teacher's classroom is safe, and learning is accessible to all students; teacher uses physical resources well and ensures that the arrangement of furniture supports the learning activities.	Teacher's classroom is safe, and students contribute to ensuring that the physical environment supports the learning of all students.

Classroom Environments Summary

While most classrooms were scored as proficient on elements of the Classroom Environment Rubric, there were significant inconsistencies in teachers' abilities to fulfill the expectations for the five elements of the rubric, which include: Environment of Respect, Culture of Learning, Managing Classroom Procedures, Managing Student Behavior, and Organization of Physical Space.

In most classrooms, student-teacher interactions were generally respectful, appropriate, and conflict-free. However, in a small number of classrooms, teachers were distant.

In most classrooms, the QSR team noted teachers employing key elements of the Establishing a Culture of Learning domain, including conveying the importance of the content, setting expectations for learning and achievement, and displaying pride in student work. Several teachers emphasized their pleasure in seeing the students make progress on their work and exhibited a passion for the lesson content.

Many teachers appeared to have procedures in place for individual student involvement during class discussion or group exercises, such as using talking sticks. The QSR team also observed most teachers using standard procedures, such as "All eyes on me once you are finished," to facilitate smooth transitions between exercises. However, it was not clear to the observers what procedures were in place to minimize the frequency of students' requests to leave classes for unscheduled personal breaks, resulting in some disruptions and lost instructional time.

Effective management of student behavior was inconsistent across the classrooms observed. On several occasions, students self-regulated misbehaving classmates when the teacher made known their disapproval of student behavior. However, several students were observed roaming the halls without written passes. In some classrooms, students did not comply with teacher requests to perform work or to relinquish distracting items.

In general, the classrooms observed used the available space effectively, though one classroom was small and cluttered with furniture. Some classrooms featured displays of student work and inspirational signs and posters. The QSR team observed some teachers using technology to aid instruction, such as projectors and computer labs.

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on the Instructional Delivery elements of the rubric during the scheduled and unscheduled visits.

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Satisfactory	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 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.

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Satisfactory	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.
Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness	Teacher adheres to the instruction plan in spite of evidence of poor student understanding or of students' lack of interest, and fails to respond to students' questions; teacher assumes no responsibility for students' failure.	Teacher demonstrates moderate flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs and interests, and seeks to ensure success of all students.	Teacher seeks ways to ensure successful learning for all students, making adjustments as needed to instruction plans and responding to student interest and questions.	Teacher is highly responsive to students' interests and questions, making major lesson adjustments if necessary, and persists in ensuring the success of all students.

Instructional Delivery Summary

Almost all classrooms observed were rated as satisfactory in most areas of Instructional Delivery, including: Communicating with Students, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, Engaging Students in Learning, Using Assessment in Instruction, and Demonstrating Flexibility. However, some teachers struggled with specific elements of this rubric.

Most teachers consistently explained the lesson objectives and how classroom activities supported those objectives. However, some teachers gave substantive instruction without providing follow-up explanations, only following up later after students expressed confusion. The QSR team observed almost all teachers using correct grammar, with one exception.

Some teachers asked questions requiring higher-order thinking skills, whereas others never ventured beyond calling for recall questions by relying on exercises like fill-in-the-blank or reading passages from a book. Teachers often circulated around the room during small group exercises, testing individual student understanding and answering student questions. A few teachers posed alternative-consideration questions to foster critical thinking.

The QSR team observed several teachers working to thoroughly engage students in the lessons and content. A few teachers used games and competitions to attract student attention and interest. Teachers called on students who had yet to participate in a discussion or exercise before calling on those that were already engaged. However, teachers did not always seek out participation by all members of a team in a group competitive game. The QSR team did not observe any clear procedures for ensuring students' engagement or for individual student assessment.

Some teachers used small group exercises as opportunities to circulate throughout the classroom and check individual student understanding. In some classes, the teachers did not assess student learning at all; in others, the only assessments were through choral responses, allowing for no individual assessments. One teacher asked students to raise their hands if they were unsure or confused by the lesson.

The QSR team did not review teachers' lesson plans in advance and thus was unable to compare observed instruction to lesson plans. As such, the team could not identify real-time adjustments based on student needs. One teacher observed clearly did not adjust the lesson plan when the time allotted for different learning stations was insufficient for students to finish the activities; the teacher simply moved students on to the next stations.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on the elements of the rubric related to meeting the needs of all learners.

All Learners' Needs	Limited	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary
The school has strategies in place to meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure.	The school has implemented a limited number of programs to help students who are struggling academically to meet school goals. Resources for such programs are marginal; or the programs experience low participation given the students' needs.	The school has implemented programs and provided adequate resources to help students who are struggling academically to meet school goals. Based on individual needs, student participation is moderate.	The school has implemented special programs and provided significant resources to help students who are struggling academically to meet school goals. Based on individual needs, student participation is moderate to high.	The school has implemented research- based and/or special programs and provided a full complement of resources to help students who are struggling academically to meet school goals. Based on individual needs, student participation is high.
The school has strategies in place to meet the needs of English Language Learners ("ELLs").	The school has a program in place to meet the needs of English Language Learners who enroll at the school. In order to comply with federal regulations, however, the program could benefit from increased staffing, improved staff qualifications and/or additional resources.	The school has a program in place to meet the needs of English Language Learners who enroll at the school. The services are in keeping with federal regulations, which include sufficient staffing with requisite training and resources.	The school has a successful program in place to meet the needs of English Language Learners who enroll at the school. The services are in keeping with federal standards for sufficient staffing with requisite training, qualifications and resources.	The school has a successful program(s) in place to meet the needs of any English Language Learners who enroll at the school. The services are in keeping with, and in some ways, exceed federal standards for staffing with requisite training, qualifications and resources.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners Summary

According to school leaders, the school is in the process of developing a curriculum which incorporates explicit strategies for differentiating learning and incorporating reading and writing for all of its learners. These efforts were partially confirmed by classroom observations; there were several examples noted of teachers incorporating accommodations and modifications for diverse learners. There was also evidence of the teacher actively monitoring struggling students' progress. In one classroom observation, for example, the teacher clearly worked more closely with a small group of apparently struggling learners than with other, more advanced groups.

There are currently no English Language Learners ("ELLs") enrolled at the school, thus the school's performance on this criterion was not assessed.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on the Professional Development elements of the rubric during the scheduled and unscheduled classroom observations and as discussed during the focus groups with administrators, faculty, and staff.

Professional Development	Limited	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary
Time is made available throughout the year.	The school offers very few professional development days throughout the school year, and teachers indicate that they do not have enough time for ongoing professional development and planning.	The school offers several professional development activities throughout the school year, although teachers indicate they could use more time for planning.	The school day and the annual calendar reflect a strong focus on professional development and planning. Most teachers agree that they are given sufficient time for professional development and planning.	The school day and the annual calendar reflect a high priority given to professional development and planning. All teachers agree that they are given sufficient time for a variety of professional development opportunities and planning.
Extra support is in place for novice teachers.	The school offers limited formal or informal support and guidance for novice teachers. These teachers do not think that the support is adequate.	The school offers formal or informal support and guidance to novice teachers. These teachers think that the support is adequate.	The school has implemented a support system that is effective in meeting the needs of novice teachers.	The school has implemented a highly structured support system that is highly effective in meeting the needs of novice teachers.

Professional Development Summary

According to the administrator and teacher focus groups, the school has a comprehensive professional development plan. Two weeks before the school year began, teachers started the process of creating a school culture of continuing professional improvement and collaboration. Every Wednesday during the school year, the faculty is scheduled to meet for 90 minutes to address the following topics:

1) Identifying, planning, and implementing best reading, writing, and organizational strategies across content and grade levels
2) Aligning curriculum to the Common Core State Standards, and using protocols to provide and receive feedback on curriculum
3) Grading and analyzing student work for evidence of learning strengths and gaps
4) Identifying, planning, and implementing best reading, writing, and organizational strategies across content and grade levels
5) Aligning curriculum to the Common Core State Standards, and using protocols to provide and receive feedback on curriculum
6) Grading and analyzing student work for evidence of learning strengths and gaps
7) Analyzing student data to plan and implement content-based interventions to improve learning outcomes of the curriculum and for individual students

Additionally, during the unscheduled visit, the QSR team observed a professional development workshop, which included a team-building exercise and an activity to assess and change both student and teacher attitudes toward student failure, such as building a greater focus on engineering student success rather than blaming teachers or students for a lack of success. The staff engaged in feedback and reflection on student progress during the first quarter of the school year. Grade-level teams created the list of next steps for after the professional development activity. The leadership team, in support of teachers, created a Teacher Survivor Kit.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

This rubric summarizes the school's performance on the School Climate elements of the rubric during the scheduled and unscheduled classroom observations and as discussed during the focus groups with students, faculty, and staff.

School Climate	Limited	Satisfactory	Proficient	Exemplary
The school is a safe and orderly learning environment.	The school's discipline policies and practices are not well-articulated or understood by most of the staff, students and parents. Such policies and practices are partially implemented due to the lack of clarity or understanding and, as a result, the learning environment provides limited safety and order.	The school's discipline policies and practices are adequately articulated and understood by the administration and by most of the staff, students and parents. Such policies and practices may not be fully implemented, due to a lack of clarity or understanding. The learning environment, however, is relatively safe and orderly.	The school's discipline policies and practices are clearly articulated and understood by the administration, staff, students and parents. Such policies and practices are consistently implemented, providing for a safe and orderly learning environment.	The school's discipline policies and practices are clearly articulated and understood by the administration, staff, students and parents. Such policies and practices are fully implemented by students and staff, providing for a consistently safe and orderly learning environment.

School Climate Summary

The effects of the restructuring were possibly most evident in the school's climate; many members of the QSR team had visited the school in previous years and noted a marked improvement. The school was calm and clean. Teachers referred to consistency in disciplinary procedures and support provided by the administrative team. Class transitions were efficient; students were orderly in classes and in the hallways, not yelling or cursing. In the student focus groups, students indicated that they felt safe at school.