



July 9, 2014

Chris Siddall, Board Chair
Meridian Public Charter School
2120 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Siddall:

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews (QSR) to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the 2014 Memorandum of Understanding that PCSB has with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) around implementation of the 2012 Waiver to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, PCSB must “Ensure that public charter schools identified as Focus or Priority are providing interventions and supports to students and their teachers consistent with that school’s Intervention and Support Plan” (p.5). Your school was selected to undergo a QSR during the 2013-14 school year for the following reason(s):

- School is designated as Focus by Office of the State Superintendent of Education due to the academic performance of the school’s Hispanic students.

Please see the following link for information about the requirements for exiting Focus status:

http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/release_content/attachments/OSSE_Revisions%20-%20Executive%20Summary%20-%20All%20Principles%20-%205%2017%2012%20FINAL.pdf

Qualitative Site Review Report

A QSR team conducted on-site review visits of Meridian Public Charter School (Meridian PCS) between May 12 and May 23, 2014. School leadership also asked the QSR team lead to attend the school on April 24, 2014 in order to observe how the school’s Focus intervention strategies are being implemented in classrooms.

The QSR team’s report is attached. We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Meridian PCS. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that Meridian PCS is in compliance with its charter.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures

cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Meridian Public Charter School (Meridian PCS) serves approximately 586 pre-kindergarten – 3 (PK3) to eighth grade students in Ward 1. PCSB voted to renew the charter of Meridian PCS in June 2014. Meridian PCS earned a Tier 2 designation on the Public Charter School Board’s (PCSB) Performance Management Framework (PMF) for all three years of the PMF’s publication, scoring 62.8% overall in school year 2012-13. PCSB conducted a modified Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in May 2014 because the campus was designated “Focus” under the Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE) accountability system as designed in its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver due to the academic performance of its Hispanic students.

PCSB conducted QSRs for ESEA monitoring requirements during the following periods: fall 2013 and spring 2014. Meridian PCS received a modified QSR as opposed to a full QSR in spring 2014 as a result of earning more than 50 % of the possible points on the 2013 PMF. A modified QSR contains one scheduled day, set by the school, and six unannounced classroom observations within a two-week window between May 12 and May 23, 2014. PCSB staff conducted a scheduled visit on April 24, 2014 to observe classes the school felt would demonstrate the intervention and support strategies the school has implemented to support differentiated, tiered instruction. PCSB collected evidence related to the school’s Focus strategies, including: 1) differentiated instruction, 2) common planning time, and 3) a Response to Intervention (RTI) Committee. Throughout the course of these visits, the QSR team visited 11 classrooms, six that were assessed using the full *Framework for Teaching* rubric. Observations from the *Framework for Teaching* rubric were used to support the school’s implementation of the Focus strategies.

The majority of evidence collected during the scheduled day and the unscheduled observation window centered on the school’s effective implementation of strategies to engage students in small, cooperative learning groups; engage teachers in common planning; and data analysis during the RTI Committee meetings. Throughout the mathematics classes observed, teachers differentiated during small group instruction with multiple adults present during the math block. PCSB also observed three separate common planning meetings and one RTI Committee meeting. PCSB concluded that the school is implementing strategies for differentiated instruction in small groups, common planning among teachers, and the operation of the RTI Committee.

SCHOOL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

The following table summarizes Meridian PCS’s strategies and evidence collected by the QSR team. Members of the QSR team observed the school implementing those strategies during both the scheduled day on April 24, 2014 and the observation window from May 12 through May 23, 2014. The QSR team collected evidence provided in the following table for the Spring 2014 QSR for the purposes of the 2012 ESEA Flexibility Waiver.

PCSB leaves it to the discretion of school leadership to determine the best use of time during the scheduled day of observations for the purposes of Focus intervention strategies. Therefore it may not be possible to observe certain strategies chosen by the school. In cases where PCSB did not have the opportunity to observe the strategy, we will use the following statement: “While this strategy may be in place, PCSB neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this strategy.” Different language is used to indicate poor implementation of a given strategy.

Strategy Described In Intervention Plan	School’s Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p>1. Use of common assessments (ANet) with measurable learning targets using Hess matrix</p>	<p>Data Cycle: Analysis, Action Planning and Adjusting Practice. Addressed through A-Net support, training and support from Instructional Coaches and PLCs.</p> <p>Three step data cycle process seen in classroom, PLC and grade level planning.</p>	<p>Teachers mentioned Achievement Network (ANet) data during common planning meetings. The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) met to discuss student intervention strategies. The QSR team saw an ANet chart in one of the classrooms with student results for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2. The majority of classrooms displayed some data charts documenting student scores and progress.</p> <p>While this strategy related to support from instructional coaches, may be in place, PCSB neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this strategy.</p>
<p>2. Common planning time</p>	<p>Schedule allows for grade levels to meet during a common time.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed three separate teacher planning meetings. Two of the groups were referred to as PLCs and one was called a grade-level planning team. The meeting processes (described below) were similar across all three meetings.</p>

Strategy Described In Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
		<p>During the grade-level planning team, six teachers worked together to plan English Language Arts (ELA). The agenda named a facilitator, timekeeper, and scribe for the meeting. The facilitator began the meeting by reviewing the norms/rules for each meeting. Next each teacher shared an achievement or academic high point related to student and or teacher success. The facilitator provided each teacher with a packet outlining the skills that should be taught. The teachers discussed students who would need help with the various skills. All of the teachers took notes during the meeting and the facilitator created a list of next steps for the next meeting. As a group, the teachers planned out the dates for assessments. The meeting ended with a designated open session during which teachers could discuss anything they needed to about the upcoming weeks.</p> <p>A PLC met with the Guidance team to discuss student interventions and how to help students focus. Teachers discussed how they could get help from the students' families or if the school needs to take more responsibility in that area. The group also discussed who might be attending summer school.</p> <p>Another PLC met to plan middle school ELA lessons. The teachers used the interactive whiteboard to display potential graphic organizers they will use. The facilitator took notes on the interactive white board while members of the PLC shared thoughts about the lessons.</p> <p>Overall teachers seemed to have a good rapport with each other – laughing during discussions and exhibiting interest in each other's ideas.</p>

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<p>3. RTI</p>	<p>Response to Intervention and the fidelity to it takes a several year approach to build institutionally. Year 1 (2013-14) will center around Tier 1 interventions in the classroom. Our Tier 1 academic program is built around identifying targeted student needs and addressing the targeted area both by improving weak academic areas and supporting IEP goals. Differentiation within our classroom allows the teacher to respond to student need through continuous assessment and flexible grouping. Continuous assessment includes checks for understanding, entry/exit slips, "Do Nows," common assessments and student interviews. Flexible grouping allows students to benefit from differentiated content (what), process (how) and/or result (product).</p> <p>Tier 2 is addressed through Day 6: Saturday Academy and Rise Academy for after school tutoring.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed a full Response to Intervention (RTI) Committee meeting on April 24, 2014. The meeting followed a similar protocol to the common planning time meeting. School leadership and support personnel met to discuss specific students. The discussion focused academic data, attendance data, and/or discipline incidents. Teachers also provided ideas for next year's needs regarding professional development for Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Each member of the committee had a printed copy of the agenda, which identified the facilitator, timekeeper, and scribe for the meeting.</p> <p>Regarding Tier 1 interventions, the QSR team observed students completing "Do Nows" in multiple classes at various grade levels. Teachers differentiated instruction through working with small groups of students and individual students.</p> <p>The QSR team did not observe the Tier 2 intervention, which the school addresses through the Saturday Academy and the Rise Academy, which occurs after school.</p>

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<p>4. Marzano model of teacher evaluation and support</p>	<p>The evaluative process should be a collaborative process between the administrator and the evaluate- evaluations should be used to inform instruction and improve the instruction of the teachers to impact student achievement. The reflective practice is in alignment with Marzano's framework of becoming a reflective teacher.</p> <p>The Evaluation Process</p> <p>Step-1 Professional Responsibilities Form</p> <p>Step 2- Goal Setting Conference, Goal Setting Form, and Pre-Conference</p> <p>a. collect lesson plan and assessment</p> <p>b. plan date and time for evaluation</p> <p>Step 3- Evaluation</p> <p>Step 4- Post Conference- within 5 days unless there is a concern- (24 hours)</p> <p>Step 5- Summative Conference or Plan</p> <p>Step 6- Adhere to all timelines- see evaluation calendar and dates</p> <p>Teacher evaluation folder contains the following: all forms mentioned above for the year</p>	<p>While this strategy may be in place, PCSB neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this strategy. On the day of the scheduled visit, the peer reviewer was absent and evidence of the school's evaluation process could not be observed.</p>

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5. Hiring of specific personnel to support populations of students: ELL Coordinator, special education coordinator	One new SPED faculty hired and interviewing currently to put a SPED/ELL faculty member at the 3rd grade where we see heavy needs.	While this strategy may be in place, PCSB neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this strategy.
6. Increased instructional time	Saturday School (6th day) After-School Tutoring (RISE Academy), Intervention Time added to classroom schedule	The QSR team noted that the class schedule indicates a seven-hour school day, from 8 am to 3 pm, which is an hour longer than the minimum required by OSSE's Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013. The QSR team did not observe the Saturday School or the afterschool-tutoring program.
7. Differentiated, tiered instruction based on assessment data	Computer based assessment/diagnostic reading test for ELL and special education students. Sub-groups created in benchmark testing data base to review individual, class, sub-group and teacher results, co-teaching, small group instruction,	<p>The QSR team observed differentiated, tiered instruction in multiple classrooms and in multiple grade levels. Teachers used small groups, cooperative tasks, centers, and teacher assistants to implement this strategy. Students worked on different levels of math puzzles in a computer lab at their own pace. The computer teacher circulated to assist each student as needed. A few students helped other students with getting the headphones to work and switching puzzles.</p> <p>In common planning meetings, teachers discussed the needs of specific students and discussed potential interventions and ways to help the students focus. Teachers discussed assessment data included ANet data during the planning meetings.</p>

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<p>8. Reteach time in scheduled to review areas where students struggled</p>	<p>There is a two-week reteach window.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed an entire class period that was devoted to a review for an upcoming test. The students participated in various small group and individual activities related to subject matter.</p>
<p>9. Professional development around SIOP model for second language learners</p>	<p>SIOP is a researched based lesson delivery model that links Content Objectives to Language Objectives. There are 8 components to SIOP along with 30 SIOP features. The 8 components of the SIOP lesson protocol are similar to a lesson plan format you may have learned in college education courses but keep in mind the varying levels of English Language Proficiency levels of the ELL students (English Language Learners). The components are as follows: 1. Lesson Preparation- Lesson Preparation is basically gathering the necessary parts of the lesson before implementing the lesson. Therefore we need to do the following: Identify and display content and language objectives, which are reviewed with the learners. Language</p>	<p>During one whole-group reading block, a second teacher worked with three ELL students. The teacher helped the ELL students as they followed along with the whole-group lesson on cause and effect. The teacher (leading the whole group) and the students gave examples of cause and effect from the story. The students took turns reading a related story aloud from a basal reader. The lesson ended with students using folded index cards to create a cause and effect chart. The teacher working with the ELL students talked quietly to them while helping them complete the class work.</p>

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	<p>objectives can be as simple as key vocabulary to grammar and language structures, functions, or skills. Identify Content Concepts that are appropriate for the student's age, background, and readiness levels. Provide supplementary materials- EX: hands on manipulative, realia (real life objects), pictures, visuals, multimedia, demonstrations, related literature, varying levels of reading materials about the same content, and adapted text. Adapt text so that all levels of ELLs have access to the same information and not a watered down version of the same thing. Ex: graphic organizers, outlines, study guides, highlighted text, taped text, adapted text, jigsaw, marginal notes, and native language texts. Meaningful activities that allow for practice using language in the content areas either through, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Preferably teachers should use all 4 domains during each class period/lesson.</p> <p>2. Building Background- teachers must teach concepts linked to</p>	

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	<p>student's background. They must discuss links between previously learned and new concepts. Teachers must ensure that key vocabulary is clearly emphasized and repeated throughout the learning of the content.</p> <p>3. Comprehensible input is the use of teaching techniques that ensure each student, regardless of English Language Proficiency Level, will understand each part of the lesson. This means using speech appropriate for the levels of the students, clear explanations of tasks, and techniques to make the lessons clear.</p> <p>4. Strategies- Teachers use learning strategies that are best practice for ELLs and allow ELLs to have enough time to use them. Teachers use scaffolding techniques to assist the ELLs in their learning and vary questions so that ELLs can use higher order and critical thinking skills.</p> <p>5. Interaction- We learned through our SIOP training that the best way for ELLs to learn is through constant oral participation. If they can say something and explain it, they have learned</p>	

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	<p>it. Therefore, students need to be given in class time to talk about their learning. This can be done through grouping strategies, wait time for thinking, and time to clarify key concepts.</p> <p>6. Practice and Application</p>	
<p>10. Increased student engagement as a result of cooperative learning strategies</p>		<p>Teachers engaged students in learning activities, which required the students to work together. Eighth grade students sat in pairs with their desks facing each other for one vocabulary activity. The lesson required the students to preview the vocabulary for a novel. Approximately 70% of the students appeared to be on task during this lesson. Many students were talking to each other about other things and were not completing the work for the lesson. Two teachers circulated from pair to pair to assist the students in defining the new vocabulary words. After the students had time to define the words in their pairs, one teacher lead the class in reviewing each word. Students were asked to give a thumbs-up if their pair came up with a similar definition for the word. Some students also wrote the words on the Word Wall.</p> <p>Kindergarten students worked in centers, which included an ABC center, a math center, a writing center, and a guided reading group. Teachers led the math center and the guided reading. Students worked together without a teacher at the other students. Students were engaged in their tasks and raised a quiet hand if they had a question. The teachers praised students for work in the teacher-led centers. Students transitioned from center to center without losing instructional time.</p>

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		<p>Second grade students worked together in small groups to complete tasks at numerous math stations. Some of the math stations were teacher directed. In other math stations the students worked together in small groups or on their own. The stations included flash cards, word problems, workbooks, whiteboards, and notebooks. Students engaged in teacher-led discussions about the steps to solve word problems. Teachers used the interactive white board to organize student names in the centers. Before each transition, a teacher moved the names on the interactive white board and directed the students to move to the next center.</p> <p>In addition teachers used a variety of cooperative learning strategies to engage students. These included games, manipulatives, music, group, and book clubs.</p>
<p>11. Increase home-school connection</p>	<p>Parent engagement support specialist assists with this.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed teacher/student interactions that mentioned the students' home or families. A teacher stated to a student, "You're having a great day today, I can't wait to tell your mom!" A PreK teacher asked one student, "Do I need to call Mommy?" in response to the student's misbehavior.</p> <p>During a common planning meeting, teachers discussed contacting parents and asking them to help their children with homework. Other evidence includes the school calendar, which showed a monthly Parental Involvement Committee Meeting and a Family Fun night.</p>

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<p>12. Minimize the impact of non-academic factors impacting student achievement</p>	<p>Character education: Each morning the Head of School describes a vignette of character building from Project Wisdom curriculum over the speaker to the student body signed off by, "Make it a good day or not, the choice is yours" Also, the ISS rooms has students review their behavior and make plans to adjust their personal responsibility in the future</p>	<p>While this strategy may be in place, PCSB neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this strategy.</p>