



November 10, 2014

Alison Mayas, Board Chair  
National Collegiate Preparatory PCS  
4600 Livingston Road, SE  
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Ms. Mayas:

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts “Strategies Visits” 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 Strategies Visit during the 2014-15 school year for the following reason:

School is designated as Focus by Office of the State Superintendent of Education for academic performance of its economically disadvantaged and African American students in SY2012-13.

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](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)

PCSB conducted a Strategies Visit, which included one scheduled day on September 17, 2014 and one unscheduled visit between September 15 and September 26, 2014 to observe how the school’s Focus intervention strategies are being implemented in classrooms. PCSB also conducted QSRs for ESEA monitoring during the following periods: fall 2013 and spring 2014.

The Strategies Visit report is attached. We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that National Collegiate PCS is in compliance with its charter.

Sincerely,

  
Naomi DeVeaux  
Deputy Director

Enclosures  
cc: School Leader

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Collegiate Public Charter School (NCP PCS) is a college preparatory high school, serving over 300 students in grades nine through twelve in Ward 8. NCP PCS is an authorized International Baccalaureate (IB) World School offering an IB diploma program to selected juniors and seniors. The Office of the State Superintendent identified NCP PCS as a Focus school in SY2012-13 based on the low performance of its economically disadvantaged and African American students on the DC CAS, requiring PCSB to conduct two QSRs during the 2013-14 school year.

PCSB conducted a Strategies Visit for ESEA monitoring which contained one scheduled day set by the school and one unannounced visit within a two-week window between September 15 – September 26, 2014. PCSB collected evidence related to the school's Focus strategies. A Strategies Visit, unlike a full Qualitative Site Visit, does not involve scoring using the Danielson Framework. The team gathers evidence based on the Focus strategies provided by the school.

The majority of evidence collected during the scheduled day and the unscheduled observation window centered on the school's effective implementation of strategies for economically disadvantaged and African American students. On the scheduled day, the QSR team observed the implementation of strategies such as SAT practice, small group work in learning communities, and differentiated instruction in the school's AP, College Prep, and IB courses offered to 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders at NCP PCS. The QSR team also saw the teachers' "explicit model" lesson plans. In many observations, students were engaged and worked with the teacher and other students to reach an academic objective. The QSR team saw some negative student behavior in a few classrooms, causing the teachers to use the school's behavior intervention strategy, "discipline ladder", to determine appropriate consequences. This strategy was effective in a few instances and not effective in others. In two observations, teachers had numerous content errors in the delivery of the material.

Teachers and students showed positive relationships in the majority of observations. Students participated in class discussions with ease and usually stayed on task during small group work. One highlight of the visit involved students in the 5<sup>th</sup> Block who explained in detail how they approached SAT math problems. The QSR team found that there was evidence that the school leaders and teachers were implementing the Focus strategies. The team encountered many inspiring classrooms but also found several instances of weak or ineffective teaching, as further described below.

## SCHOOL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

The following table summarizes National Collegiate PCS strategies and evidence collected by PCSB for the purposes of the 2012 ESEA Flexibility Waiver. PCSB observed the school implementing those strategies during both the scheduled day on September 17, 2014 and the observation window from September 15 – September 26, 2014.

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><u>Learning Community</u></p> <p>Learning Communities were reconstituted this school year to allow for greater opportunities to target specific learning goals in a given class and provide greater opportunities to accelerate learning or support students in areas of need.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of grouping students into learning communities through classroom observations that evidence improved instructional practice centered on differentiating instructions to meet each student's present levels of performance.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed students working in small groups in numerous classrooms. Teachers differentiated instruction to some degree through guided practice with each group. There was little differentiation in a few observations. The groups were presented the same material and expected to produce the same products. Students did use their small group time to discuss material and work together to finish assigned tasks.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Explicit Model Lesson Plans</u></p> <p>At National Prep, teachers plan and design lessons using the explicit model lesson plan template. This template scaffolds instruction from Teacher-Led with an Introduction portion for new material, to Guided Practice with teacher support, and leading to Independent Practice by students. This model of planning guides instruction from teacher centered to student centered.</p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of using this model of lesson planning through classroom observations to observe improved delivery of instruction as evidenced by lessons that scaffold instruction and lessons that transition in delivery from teacher centered to student centered.</p>	<p>Lesson plans were available for every observation during the two-week observation window. The explicit model lesson plans call for teachers to provide detailed information about the lessons they are planning to teach. Teacher must define success through the objectives, essential questions, standards, and assessments related to each lesson. Each day is planned out with an opening, introduction, guided practice, critical thinking questions, accommodations, and a closing.</p> <p>On the scheduled day, the school asked the QSR team to observe a science class to see the implementation of an explicit model lesson plan. The lesson plan was made available and did follow the prescribed model, however the teacher did not follow the plan and made content errors when introducing the concept of calculating the net force of an object. Instead of using the diagrams in the lessons, the teacher made diagrams up on the spot and did not mention gravity as a force that is also acting on the object.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Sophomore Seminar (DC CAS)</u></p> <p>This school year National Prep hired a highly qualified English teacher to teach Sophomore Seminar classes. Sophomore Seminar classes are designed to support the instruction of literacy skills for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. The class focuses on skills such as reading and analyzing informational and literary texts, synthesizing information from multiple sources in order to successfully respond to clarifying questions, and teaching reading and comprehension strategies for successfully interacting with texts with higher lexile demands. By having one teacher, the curriculum is implemented with fidelity and instruction is directed by one teacher whose sole responsibility is to teach seminar classes.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will use sophomore students' performance data on 4 interim assessments throughout the academic year to evaluate the effectiveness of this program in supporting its goal of better preparing students to demonstrate mastery on the DC CAS.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed students learning writing skills in a course that focused on African American literature. The class focused on the process of writing an essay. Students used information to write a persuasive essay. The teacher spoke with students about writing outlines, drafts, and thesis statements.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>5<sup>th</sup> Block (DC CAS and SAT)</u></p> <p>The implementation of 5<sup>th</sup> block is an effort to use time in the school day to support school-wide academic interventions in preparation for standardized assessments in grades 10-12. Students in grade 10 take DC CAS prep classes in mathematics and English during the 5<sup>th</sup> block and students in grades 11-12 take SAT prep classes. At the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level, 5<sup>th</sup> block is designed to expose students to classes and experiences they would typically not encounter in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade psychology and STEM classes.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>Measure of success for the addition of 5<sup>th</sup> Block will be evaluated by students' performance on the DC CAS, PSAT, and SAT for SY 2013-14 as compared to performance on the DC CAS, PSAT, and SAT for SY 2012-13.</p> <p>NCP will use students' performance data on 4 interim assessments and DC CAS test data to measure the success of the 5<sup>th</sup> block at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade level.</p> <p>NCP will use student performance data from PSAT and SAT for SY 2013-14 to evaluate the success of the 5<sup>th</sup> block period at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels.</p>	<p>Observing the math portion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Block was a highlight of the observations. The class reviewed SAT type math problems. Students took turns going to the board to figure out the multi-step equations. The students gave detailed descriptions of each step of the equations while they explained their work.</p> <p>The students added humor through mini performances while explaining each problem. The students remained engaged and laughed at appropriate times during each student's turn. The teacher and the other students helped out with suggestions if the person at the board got stuck or made an error in solving the equation.</p>

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<p><u>ANet Partnership (DC CAS)</u></p> <p>This school year NCP partnered with the Achievement Network to provide interim assessments in English and mathematics to students in grades 9 and 10. Through this partnership, NCP is provided a data coach to support with analyzing test data in order to develop action plans for supporting students with attaining proficiency in Common Core State Standards in math and English for grades 9 and 10.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will use students' performance data on four interim assessments in the academic year and DC CAS test data for school year 2013-14 to measure the success of its partnership with the Achievement Network.</p>	<p>5th Block also included a class focused on vocabulary. In this class, there were issues with student behavior. Many students continued to talk while the teacher explained the Do Now. The teacher asked one student to move to another table. When the student refused, the teacher wrote up a level 4 consequence per the discipline ladder and continued to teach. Other students were having side conversations and not engaged in the material.</p>



<b>Strategy Described in Intervention Plan</b>	<b>School's Description of Strategy on the Ground</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<p><u>DC Cooperative Partnership (DC CAS)</u></p> <p>This school year NCP partnered with the DC Cooperative to support with professional development and training for all instructional staff to support the learning of best practices for reaching diverse learners. Through this partnership, instructional staff receives in-house professional development in teaching diverse learners and opportunities to attend outside training sessions around reaching and teaching special education students.</p> <p>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</p>	<p>The success of this partnership will be measured through classroom observations with the purpose of observing for instructional delivery that includes varying classroom activities and instruction that includes appealing to varying learning styles and student ability.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Study Island (DC CAS, SAT, ACT, AP)</u></p> <p>National Prep purchased Study Island, a web based Common Core Standards program designed to support DC CAS preparation in Mathematics, English, and Biology. The Program also provides support for college readiness through SAT, ACT, and AP test prep.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will use student performance data on the DC CAS, PSAT, SAT, ACT, and AP exams for school year 2013-14 to measure the success of Study Island within its academic program.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>
<p><u>Achieve 3000</u></p> <p>National Prep uses Achieve 3000, a web based reading support program that is designed to help students improve their reading fluency and comprehension skills. The program is adaptive and provides reading passages on students' current reading level.</p>	<p>NCP will use student performance data on the DC CAS, PSAT, SAT, ACT, and AP exams for school year 2013-14 to measure the success of Achieve 3000 within its academic program.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not have the opportunity to observe students using Achieve 3000. One teacher took time during a free period to show the program to a QSR team member. Achieve 3000 is a web based program that delivers content at different reading levels. The program assesses students' reading levels. The reading level of the content is adjusted based on the reading level of the user.</p>

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<p><u>College Prep Course</u></p> <p>The college preparation course was redesigned as a full year course offered to seniors and facilitated by instructor with knowledge of college recruitment or college admissions processes. The purpose of this course is to assist students with navigating and completing the required steps to gain admission to college and preparing students academically to meet the rigor of college courses.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>The measure of success for the College Prep course will be 12<sup>th</sup> grade students' preparedness for matriculation to college as evidenced by successful completion of the course, application and acceptances to college, financial literacy certification, improved SAT scores over the course of the school year, and garnering of scholarships to colleges and universities.</p>	<p>The objective of the observed lesson in the college prep course was for each student to create a vision board. The teacher introduced the concept by discussing goals and showed an example of a vision board based on her vision. The teacher's board included multiple references to a specific religion.</p> <p>Students were engaged as they discussed their personal goals. The teacher rotated from group to group while the students cut out magazine pictures for their vision boards. The teacher spoke to one group about good colleges for engineering. At the end of the class, the teacher started to collect the materials and a few students offered to help.</p>

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<p><u>Financial Literacy</u></p> <p>Financial literacy was added to the College Prep Course curriculum. This component of the curriculum is offered to seniors as they prepare to matriculate from high school and enter the world independent of parents. The financial literacy portion the College Prep course offers an opportunity for students to be versed in making wise and responsible fiscal decisions as they prepare to navigate the world independently.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>The success of the acquisition and implementation of this curriculum will be measured by the number of students who participate and successfully complete the program and gain financial literacy certification at the completion of the program.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>

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<p><u>In-House SAT and ACT Preparation Program</u></p> <p>In-House Standardized SAT Prep Program is an addition to NCP's educational program that allows NCP students to prepare to complete SAT and ACT assessments by attending review classes facilitated by members of NCP's instructional staff. Students in grades 11 through 12 will attend SAT prep classes and will receive instruction in strategies for successful completion of SAT assessments and will review for these assessments by completing practice activities. Identified teachers will attend SAT Prep Workshops for Teachers and will use in-house software to support preparation efforts.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of this program by comparison of student performance on the SAT and PSAT for school year 2013-14 as compared to student performance on the SAT and PSAT for school year 2012-13.</p>	<p>Please see the description above provided in the "5<sup>th</sup> Block" section.</p>

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<p><u>Advanced Placement</u></p> <p>This school year National Prep began offering AP classes in the upper grades. Honor students who do not enter the IB program after grade 10 will enroll in AP classes.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of the Advanced Placement program by the percentage or number of students who meet success on the Advanced Placement Exam during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the school year.</p>	<p>The QSR team observed an AP biology class. The students worked in groups to complete five hands-on science stations. At each station, the students constructed a paper macromolecule. The teacher moved from group to group assisting the students, asking them questions related to the tasks, and giving them time warnings.</p>

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<p><u>Discovery Education 11<sup>th</sup> Grade College Readiness Assessments/ACT Preparation</u></p> <p>This school year NCP began administering College Readiness Assessments in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. CRA assessments are provided by Discovery Education. These interim assessments assess students' readiness for college. Each assessment has four sections: English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. The benchmarks report a scale score of 1 to 36. These scale scores have been shown to predict performance on the ACT College Admissions.</p> <p>By offering College Readiness Assessments in the junior year, students build and review skills that are assessed on the ACT and learn where they are weakest and strongest. These assessments support preparation and instructional efforts for maximum success on the ACT exams that students will complete in the Fall of senior year.</p> <p><i>Note: This is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of this program by analyzing student performance on the ACT for this current school year compared to students' performance on the ACT for school year 2012-13.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Introduce PSAT</u></p> <p>Revised Standardized Assessment Schedule for SY 2013-14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10<sup>th</sup> Grade Fall: PSAT</li> <li>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Fall: PSAT</li> <li>11<sup>th</sup> Grade Spring: SAT</li> <li>12<sup>th</sup> grade Fall: SAT</li> </ul> <p>NCP revised the standardized assessment schedule to include 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. Students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade completed PSATs in the Fall with 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. The benefits of students completing the PSAT in their sophomore year are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience/Encounter with Test</li> <li>• Risk free exposure to test questions, format, content</li> <li>• Practice for the SAT</li> <li>• Opportunity to identify students' areas of strength and weakness and design appropriate preparatory strategies</li> <li>• Students can take the test multiple times.</li> <li>• Students who take the PSAT in their sophomore year must take the test again in their junior year to enter national Merit Scholarship Corporation programs.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Assessing 10<sup>th</sup> grade students is a change from school year 2012-2013.</i></p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT administration by analyzing the performance of this year's 10th grade students on the PSAT as 11<sup>th</sup> grade students (SY2014-15) in order to compare results to the previous years' 11<sup>th</sup> grade students to determine if early exposure to the PSAT positively affects performance on the PSATs in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>



Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Math Seminar SY2014-15</u></p> <p>For school year 2014-15, NCP added a support math course for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students to its academic program (in addition to required 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade math classes). The goal of this math seminar course is to reinforce math strategies and mathematical foundations for algebra I and geometry.</p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of this math course addition at the end of the school year based on the percentage of students who meet success in algebra I and geometry and meet benchmark on math PARCC assessments.</p>	<p>During the math seminar, the teacher tried to explain a grocery store challenge where students had \$200 to spend the money based on the grocery store flyers. The teacher made frequent mistakes on the board while subtracting numbers including not lining up the decimal points of the two numbers. When multiplication problems were involved in the problems, the teacher insisted a student with a calculator figure it out, telling the students that he “got his degree in the mail.” A few students had their heads down on the desks in the back of the classroom. During the report out with school leaders, the QSR team learned that this teacher is no longer with the school.</p>

Strategy Described in Intervention Plan	School's Description of Strategy on the Ground	Evidence
<p><u>Graduate course SY2014-15</u></p> <p>As part of NCP's Professional Development for instructional staff for school year 2014-15, NCP along with the DC Cooperative for Special Education have partnered with Catholic University to offer an in-house graduate course to regular education teachers around special education and meeting the needs of our diverse student population. This in-house semester long course will begin on September 4<sup>th</sup> and end on December 11<sup>th</sup> 2014. In addition, teachers will earn 3 graduate credits from Catholic University to use toward recertification or furthering of academic pursuits.</p>	<p>NCP will measure the success of this partnership by assessing and measuring the academic performance of its special education students. The goal of this partnership is to equip teachers with a means of learning best practices and strategies for meeting the needs of all learners thus garnering improved academic performance among special education students.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not look for or record evidence related to the implementation of this strategy.</p>