



April 7, 2014

Mark Jordan, Board Chair
YouthBuild Public Charter School
3014 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Jordan:

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

Qualitative Site Review Report

A QSR team conducted on-site review visits of YouthBuild Public Charter School (YouthBuild PCS) between February 3 and February 14, 2014. 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*. A member of 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 environment, 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 YouthBuild PCS. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that YouthBuild PCS is in compliance with its charter.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YouthBuild Public Charter School (YouthBuild PCS) is a bilingual adult education with students ages 16 to 24. The school serves 97 students at its facility located in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Ward 1. Some classes are held off-site at Spanish Catholic Charities and a construction site in Southeast Washington, DC. YouthBuild PCS follows a national model to re-engage youth in education by offering traditional and non-traditional classes to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workplace. DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) staff and consultants conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) at the main campus and construction site in February 2014 because YouthBuild PCS is undergoing its 10-year Charter Review during the 2014-15 school year.

The QSR team conducted observations over a two-week window, from February 3 through February 14, 2014. A team of two PCSB staff members, including PCSB's Special Education Specialist, and one consultant conducted observations of 12 classrooms, including classrooms where the instruction was in Spanish. The QSR team visited the school on multiple days throughout this two-week window and saw classes in the morning and in the afternoon as well as at the construction site. 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 team observed in all learning environments, including the Special Education teacher observed in the self-contained setting. In some instances the review team may have observed a teacher 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 two-week window, a member of the QSR team attended a Board of Trustees meeting to observe the school's governance as it relates to fulfilling its mission and charter goals.

There is evidence that the school is meeting its mission and goals in most areas. However, there were concerns about YouthBuild PCS's attendance and board member participation. The QSR team did not see evidence that YouthBuild PCS is on track to having excellent attendance. Class sizes on average during the visits were half the size of the school reported 14-student average, and many students arrived late to school and classes in many instances. The QSR team noted an additional concern about the school's Board of Trustees failing to meet quorum at the December board meeting.

The QSR team scored almost three-quarters of observations as proficient or exemplary in the domain of Classroom Environment. The highest rated component within the Classroom Environment domain was Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport, with 92% of the observations rated proficient or exemplary. Classroom activities in several instances involved students' interests (e.g. sports analogies and music), and

students engaged positively with their peers. The lowest rated component in the Classroom Environment domain was Managing Classroom Procedures, with just over half (58%) of the observations rated as proficient or exemplary.

The QSR team scored fewer than half of observations as proficient or exemplary in the domain of Instructional Delivery. The highest rated components within the Instructional Delivery domain were Communicating with Students and Engaging Students in Learning. The QSR team scored 50% of the observations as proficient or exemplary in both components. However student engagement was inconsistent in the other half of observations with only a few students participating in the lesson and worksheets. While teachers in many cases presented content clearly with no errors, one teacher made serious content errors that led to student confusion and misinformation. The lowest rated element within the Instructional Delivery domain was Using Assessment in Instruction with only 33% of observations scoring proficient and none exemplary. Teachers did not consistently give feedback to students or check for understanding during the lesson. None of the teachers gave students an indication of what high quality work looks like in any of the observations.

PCSB's Special Education Specialist observed students learning content through a variety of modalities, including visually and through song. These strategies helped to facilitate scaffolding of complex topics and to engage students throughout the lesson. However the observer noted multiple, notable content errors (e.g., grammatical and spelling) in the presentation of material in the special education classroom. The teacher did not clearly communicate how students' work would be assessed. Teacher asked the students if they had questions but failed to conduct any other checks for understanding during the lesson. The QSR team did not see evidence that the teacher knew if the students understood the content.

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

This table summarizes YouthBuild PCS’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: YouthBuild PCS will transform the lives of out-of-school youth in the District of Columbia by offering a bilingual educational option that combines an academic program with vocational training, employability skill-building, and community service—a program designed to prepare young people for college or the workplace while they work to create housing for the city's low-income residents.</p>	<p>The QSR team saw some evidence of YouthBuild PCS meeting components of its mission.</p> <p><i>Bilingual education</i> The team observed substantial evidence that the school is a bilingual educational program. The school offered classes in both English and Spanish, has staff members who are mostly bilingual, and information is posted in both languages.</p> <p><i>Academic program and vocational training</i> The school offers an academic program that culminates in earning a General Educational Development Credential (GED) as well as vocational education classes in computers, childhood development, construction math, electrical training, and introduction to blueprints. Students also work at a construction site for field experience. However, fewer than half of the observations (43%) scored proficient or advanced in instructional strategies, putting into question the effectiveness of the academic program and vocational training.</p> <p><i>Employability skill-building and community service</i> The QSR team also observed evidence of employability skill building and preparation for the workplace or college. Students worked with teachers on writing resumes and identifying good references for jobs. Several teachers discussed how the content on the GED might be assessed. The QSR team saw signup sheets in the hallway for a school-</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	<p>sponsored college club. At the biweekly Morning Meeting, the employment placement specialist offered afterschool opportunities for students to get additional help with resumes and job applications.</p> <p>The QSR team saw indications of a commitment to community service through a posted school calendar in the hallway that indicated designated community service days and events. Students work on a construction site where they build low-income housing in Southeast Washington, DC. A QSR team member observed students hanging drywall and doing other interior work at the construction site.</p>
<p>1. 65% of the students who enter the school year with at least an eighth grade reading level as measured by the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and complete the school year will pass the official GED exam.</p>	<p>While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed specific reading levels of students and their pass rates on the GED exam, the team gathered evidence on general literacy and English language development. Observers saw students read aloud in history and ELA classes while teachers actively assisted them with pronunciation and minor errors, teachers use and define vocabulary that students would see on the GED exam. Academic instruction was weak across all subject areas, as detailed in the Instructional Domain portion of the Danielson Rubric.</p>
<p>2. 85% of the students that enter the school with less than an eighth grade reading level and complete the school year will progress at least two grade levels in reading.</p>	
<p>3. 12% of the students who enter the school year with a reading level between 4 and 7.9 as measured by the TABE and complete the school year will pass the official GED exam.</p>	
<p>4. Students who complete the school year will complete all the work requirements for our housing related community service project each year.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not observe direct evidence of this goal. However the team observed community service opportunities posted in a main hallway on the school calendar and a poster with pictures of students performing community service. It was not clear how many students</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	participated in the community service projects.
<p>5. 75% of students who graduate will be successfully placed either into the workforce or a postsecondary institution within three months of completing the school year.</p>	<p>While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed where students were placed after completing the school year, the team gathered evidence on how the school attempts to accomplish this goal.</p> <p>Students receive hands-on experience working at the construction site. The QSR team observed several teachers making reference to preparing students for job applications.</p>
<p>6. 50% of students who take the pre- and post-assessment for EQ-I will advance at least 10 points in the effective range in at least two of the three identified low subscale areas according to the Five Areas of interest from the initial Student Summary Report.</p>	<p>The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.</p>
<p>7. Demonstrate sound financial practices and management and a stable foundation for the school.</p>	<p>The QSR team neither looked for nor observed any evidence related to this goal.</p>
<p>8. Develop partnerships with real estate agents, local developers, and other nonprofits to locate and secure construction projects.</p>	<p>While the QSR team neither looked for nor observed YouthBuild PCS developing partnerships to secure construction projects, the team observed that the school currently has a construction project in partnership with Manna Inc.</p>
<p>9. The school will have an excellent attendance rate that demonstrates</p>	<p>The QSR team saw no evidence that the school is prioritizing excellent attendance. In all of the observations, the average class size was about</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>that students want to come to school and have had success in overcoming barriers that have kept them away from school.</p>	<p>seven students. The school reports average class sizes of about 14 and notes that some students have alternative schedules. Students entered class late in more than half of the observations; some entered more than 20 minutes late. Teachers and students made reference to absences in several observations. In one instance a teacher did not respond to a student's question about making up missed work. At the Morning Meeting, faculty and staff appeared to outnumber students due to absences and tardies.</p>
<p>Board Governance</p>	<p>On December 12, 2013, a member of the QSR team observed a YouthBuild PCS board meeting. A quorum was not present at the meeting; only four board members attended. The board discussed the new GED and some of the challenges for the school, including increased costs and ensuring that the school is still able to meet their pass rate goals.</p> <p>The board discussed board member attendance and finances and the consulting firm, Compass, shared progress on an analysis of what is valuable to employers in terms of the GED and a college degree.</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 73% 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	The QSR team scored 92% of observations as proficient or exemplary in Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. The QSR team noted that teachers greeted all students warmly, often by name, and many teachers had positive relationships with students where they comfortably joked back and forth. Teachers asked students about their interests and activities outside of the classroom.	Exemplary	17%
	The QSR team did not observe any negative interactions between teachers and students. The team saw two instances where students interacted negatively with each other, and teachers quickly addressed the situations.	Proficient	75%
	The QSR team scored fewer than 10% of the observations as below proficient.	Satisfactory	8%
		Limited	0%

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

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>Three-quarters of observations scored proficient or exemplary in Establishing a Culture for Learning. Several teachers encouraged students, expressing that they believed in the students' ability to succeed. One teacher told the class, "You are so smart. I am going to give you a very hard problem," and the students responded by eagerly working on the problem together. Another teacher encouraged the class to extend their answers.</p>	Exemplary	8%
	<p>Teachers recognized student effort and success by posting exemplary student work on the walls in several observations. One teacher worked with students who were less confident in answering questions. The teachers gave the students freedom to work independently and in different parts of the facility. At the construction site teachers made it clear that they expected students' best effort.</p>	Proficient	67%
	<p>The QSR team noted uneven expectations for student participation in a few observations. For example a teacher stated, "You guys can be taking notes, you know," after seeing that less than a sixth of students had paper or a pen on their desks. Only one student responded to this comment by getting out materials, and the teacher did not say anything to the remaining students. In another observation more than half of the class had their heads down with no redirection from the teacher.</p>	Satisfactory	25%
		Limited	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	<p>The QSR team scored 58% of the observations as proficient and none as exemplary in Managing Classroom Procedure. The teachers scored as effective used effective classroom procedures to maximize instructional time. Teachers</p>	Exemplary	0%

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>passed out worksheets and materials quickly, and transitioned their classes between activities smoothly. Students entering the classroom late quickly involved themselves in the lesson. In a vocational education class and at the construction site, students used tape measures appropriately in conjunction with the lesson according to routines that appeared to have been pre-established.</p>	Proficient	58%
	<p>Over 40% of classrooms did not have clear expectations in place for managing procedures and transitions. Students in several classrooms did not have pens or pencils and the teachers did not seem to have a clear system for distributing or collecting loaner writing utensils. In one observation there was no evidence of an established routine for students to gain permission to use the bathroom; when a student asked, it disrupted the lesson. When students transitioned between classes without incident, it seemed to be more a function of the small number of students in the class than the presence of clear procedures.</p>	Satisfactory	42%
		Limited	0%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>About two-thirds of observations were proficient or exemplary in Managing Student Behavior. Student behavior was generally appropriate. Teachers monitored students' progress and behavior. Teachers also redirected disengaged students.</p>	Exemplary	25%
		Proficient	42%
	<p>In one third of the observations, enforcement of behavioral standards was inconsistent. In the computer lab the teacher told one student that the internet would be turned off if the student visited non-related websites to the lesson. Two</p>	Satisfactory	33%

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	other students logged into social networking sites during the class and did not receive a reprimand from the teacher. Additionally, teachers did not reference the rules that were posted in several classrooms.	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 only 43% of the observations as proficient or exemplary for the Instructional Delivery domain.

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored just half of the observations as proficient or exemplary in Communicating with Students. Teachers posted or articulated the objective for the day. Observations included one teacher telling the class on multiple occasions that the work they were doing was important and useful for finding a job, multiple teachers asking students to go to the board to explain problems to the class, teachers reinforcing the correct parts and effectively explaining misconceptions to the class using real-life examples, and one teacher using several different strategies to communicate the content: direct instruction, questioning, and video/songs.	Exemplary	8%
		Proficient	42%
	For the remaining half of the observations, some or all elements of affecting communication were missing. For example, while several teachers posted objectives, they did not consistently reference them or teach to them. One class discussion was only tangentially related to posted objective. In another observation, students asked the teacher to clarify several times what they needed to consider when drawing conclusions from a paragraph but the teacher did not change the approach resulting in the students not understanding. In one class, the teacher made spelling errors and significant content mistakes. For example, while teaching the idiom “my word is my bond,” the teacher said, “my word is my bone.” When corrected by a student, the teacher said that the student was incorrect.	Satisfactory	42%
		Limited	8%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	<p>Only 36% of observations were proficient or exemplary in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Teachers asked open-ended questions and engaged students in a discussion by randomly calling on them. One teacher held a brainstorming session encouraging discussion by writing down all student answers and then narrowing the list with input from the class.</p>	Exemplary	9%
	<p>Teachers in about two-thirds of the observations did not ask open-ended questions. Teachers instead tended to ask questions that required recall or yes/no answers. When a teacher did ask an open-ended question, there was very little participation from the class in answering the question. A student in one class responded, “Because it is,” to a teacher’s question, and the teacher moved on. When students did not respond to questions, teachers often just answered the questions for students.</p>	Proficient	27%
		Satisfactory	64%
	Limited	0%	
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored half of the observations as proficient or exemplary in Engaging Students in Learning. One teacher used football analogies and another used a handout and video to engage students in the lesson. The QSR team observed several instances at the construction site where students took the initiative to begin a task or prepare for an upcoming task.</p>	Exemplary	17%
		Proficient	33%
	<p>The QSR team observed inconsistent engagement among students in half of the observations. Some teachers exclusively prescribed many of the lesson activities with almost no evidence of choice for students. Students engaged in intellectual inquiry in very few instances.</p>	Satisfactory	42%
		Limited	8%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>Only one-third of observations were proficient in Using Assessment in Instruction with none of the observations scoring exemplary. Teachers checked for understanding consistently during the lesson and provided students with feedback. In one observation a teacher collected real-time assessment data by marking in her text when students struggled with vocabulary. At the construction site, teachers circulated to groups of students, providing feedback, and helping students be more efficient with their techniques.</p>	Exemplary	0%
		Proficient	33%
	<p>The majority of observations in using assessments were below proficient. Teachers frequently asked, “Are there any questions?” to the whole class as the only check for understanding. Few teachers gave individual feedback to students despite the very small class sizes. One teacher asked several recall questions as a check for understanding, but the teacher called on the same two students to answer every question. The QSR team did not see any evidence of rubrics or other established criteria for quality work.</p>	Satisfactory	67%
		Limited	0%

APPENDIX I: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

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.

APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY OBSERVATION RUBRIC

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 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	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.