



May 4, 2020

Anthony King, Board Chair
Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School
1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017

Dear Mr. King,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews (QSR) to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, DC PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School (Shining Stars Montessori PCS) was selected to undergo a QSR during the 2019-20 school year for the following reason(s):

- School eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2020-21 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A QSR team conducted on-site reviews of Shining Stars Montessori PCS between February 3, 2020 – February 14, 2020. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the QSR Report focuses primarily on the following areas: classroom environment and instruction.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the QSR at Shining Stars Montessori PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young
Chief School Performance Officer

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: May 4, 2020

Campus Information

Campus Name: Shining Stars Montessori PCS

Ward: 5

Grade levels: Pre-kindergarten 3 – Fifth

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for Visit: School eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2020-21 school year

Two-week Window: February 3, 2020 – February 14, 2020

QSR Team Members: Two DC PCSB staff including an English Learner (EL) and special education (SPED) specialist, and one consultant

Number of Observations: 14

Total Enrollment: 290

Students with Disabilities Enrollment: 37

English Language Learners Enrollment: 85

In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:

Visit 1: February 7, 2020 – 96%

Visit 2: February 11, 2020 – 97%

Visit 3: February 12, 2020 – 98%

Visit 4: February 13, 2020 – 96%

Summary

The mission of Shining Stars Montessori PCS is “to offer a quality Montessori education infused with culturally inclusive principles to guide children to develop to their fullest potential.” The Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team observed strong evidence that Shining Stars Montessori PCS is fulfilling its mission. Teachers (referred to as “guides”) interacted warmly with students and encouraged student exploration and independence. Students worked collaboratively with their peers to create pictographs, care for plants, and retell fictional stories using picture cards. When necessary, guides provided support to help scaffold student understanding as they completed works of varying levels of difficulty. Classrooms had a variety of well-organized Montessori materials placed at child-level, which allowed for maximum participation across most classrooms.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine Classroom Environment and Instruction (see Appendices I and II). The QSR team scored 93% of observations as distinguished or

proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest-rated components in this domain were *Managing Classroom Procedures (2c)* and *Managing Student Behavior (2d)*, with 100% of observations scored as distinguished or proficient in each of these components. Students across all observations took responsibility for leading classroom transitions and ensuring all classroom routines functioned smoothly. Guides provided minimal guidance as students cleaned placemats and set the table for lunch, selected books to read independently, and led activities during morning circle time. In all observations, student behavior was almost entirely appropriate, and minor instances of student misbehavior were swiftly and respectfully corrected by the guides. The QSR team scored 80% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Engaging Students in Learning (3c)*, with 92% of observations scored as distinguished or proficient. In these observations, student engagement was high, and students often had the opportunity to engage in child-led activities using a variety of materials. Students independently used counting rods, selected guided readers, used nails to practice hammering, and matched cursive sandpaper letters to objects. Guides used a variety of instructional groupings and allowed students to work independently or in pairs, as they read books, represented number sentences through graphing, and wrote their own creative stories.

Governance

Anthony Brown chairs the Shining Stars Montessori PCS Board of Trustees. The School Reform Act requires each DC public charter school to have a majority of DC residents and two parents on its board, which the school has been compliant with for the past five years

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Prior to the two-week window, Shining Stars Montessori PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). The QSR team looked for evidence of the school's articulated SPED program. According to the school, the goal of the SPED program is to provide access to the general education curriculum by equipping students with the skills and strategies to make progress in their Individualized Learning Programs (IEPs). Therefore, learning specialists, service providers, and general education guides collaborate to align students' IEP goals with classroom objectives. DC PCSB observed two SPED environments, one was an inclusion classroom environment, and the other was a pull-out session. Overall, the school succeeded in engaging students with disabilities by providing them with differentiated instruction aligned to their academic needs.

- In the inclusive classroom, differentiated assignments allowed students to engage with challenging material appropriately. Students assigned themselves worksheets on which they practiced math skills that they had yet

to master, according to a tracker posted in the room. While many of these questions required only a single correct answer, they still required students to demonstrate an understanding of multi-step processes and show their thinking. In this classroom, students used resources like whiteboards and markers, calculators, and posters of different math concepts. Throughout the observation, the special education guide and aide circulated the room, providing feedback when necessary.

- In the pull-out observation, the special education guide provided direct instruction on a student's IEP goal. Using a whiteboard marker, and a laminated tracing sheet, the guide helped the student trace the letter "I" and write it in cursive with and without guide assistance. The guide recorded these attempts, then shared the results with the student. The guide said, "Look at all of the plus signs. That shows how much your brain grew!" Later in the observation, the guide and the student read a book together, while the guide asked the student to identify text features like the title and asked them prediction questions.

Specialized Instruction for English Learners

Prior to the two-week window, Shining Stars Montessori PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its English Learners (ELs). According to the school, the EL guide provides language instruction within the Montessori context by using English language arts, social studies, science, and math content as the medium for building language skills. The goal of this model is to prepare students to meet academic achievement standards while simultaneously gaining proficiency in English. Often, instruction is delivered by an EL specialist for short periods in a pull-out setting.

The EL reviewer conducted two observations within the pull-out setting. Overall, guides implemented content-based EL instruction with fidelity, successfully integrating language and content goals in their lessons. In one classroom, students participated in a grocery shopping simulation in which students practiced addition and subtraction skills by purchasing items from the class's bodega. Later, students created a comic strip with written captions to illustrate what happened during their trip. The guide reinforced students' understanding of key vocabulary like 'inventory,' 'generic,' and 'produce' by writing them out and encouraging students to use these words during turn-and-talks and in their writing. In another observation, the guide used culturally inclusive content to promote language learning by having students compose sentences about what Black History Month meant to them. The guide emphasized writing and reading proficiency skills by having each student evaluate their work against a checklist and read it aloud. Students engaged consistently with language and content learning across both observations.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The ratings for classroom observations—“distinguished,” “proficient,” “basic,” and “unsatisfactory”—come from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 93% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	<p>The QSR team scored 86% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component, with a very high 56% rated as distinguished. In the distinguished observations, students respectfully corrected one another when necessary. In one observation, the guide asked students to sit in an alternating pattern by gender. When one student misunderstood the instructions, one of their peers helped them by saying, “You need to move over there please because the guide said that we need to be in a pattern.” The student thanked their peer and moved to the correct spot on the carpet. Guides in these observations demonstrated knowledge and caring about individual students’ lives beyond the classroom. In one observation, a student asked if the class could practice counting in French. The guide acknowledge that the student had been learning French from a caregiver and allowed them the opportunity to practice for their classmates.</p>	Distinguished	57%

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

² DC PCSB does not report out qualitative evidence if less than 10% of observations in any given component earned a “basic” or “unsatisfactory” level of performance.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
	<p>In the proficient observations, guides respectfully responded to disrespectful behavior among students. In one observation, a few students laughed mockingly after one of their peers sneezed loudly. The guide immediately and gently corrected the students by giving them a non-verbal cue which prompted the students to apologize to their peer. In another observation, students loudly transitioned to the line before the guide asked them to return to the carpet and repeat the transition. The guide reoriented the students by saying, "You guys are too noisy," and "I don't want to have to talk over you, can you come back?" All students returned to the carpet and sat down before being redirected back to the line. After this attempt, all students complied.</p>	Proficient	29%
	<p>The QSR team scored 14% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, interactions between guides and students were uneven. In one observation, at times a guide used a harsh tone when redirecting students who used the materials inappropriately. For example, the guide said to one student, "Look what you did, now this is all tangled." The student's body language indicated hurt feelings. In another observation, one student openly mocked a student who misplaced a work packet saying, "That's why you are behind in mastery, you always lose your stuff." The guide did not address this comment.</p>	Basic	14%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<p>Establishing a Culture for Learning</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 85% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, students took initiative in improving the quality of their work. In one observation, students assigned themselves different tasks based on the math skills they had not yet mastered. Students used their peers as a resource asking questions like, “How did you get that answer?” and “Can you help me?” In another observation, as students played a stamp game on the floor, one student said to a peer, “I don’t know how to do this.” Another student responded by saying, “Come on let me show you.”</p> <p>In the proficient observations, guides demonstrated the importance of the content and the conviction that with hard work all students could master the content. In one observation, the guide said, “We are going to keep practicing counting to ten in English because the little ones are still learning.” Guides in these observations expected students to put forth the effort to produce high-quality work. For example, one student attempted to use the counting rods inappropriately by swinging them around the room before admitting to the guide that they did not know what to do. The guide reset the materials and</p>	Distinguished	21%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
	presented a mini lesson for the student to help them understand the concept and complete the work.	Proficient	64%
	The QSR team scored 14% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, guides only conveyed high expectations for some students. In one observation, the guide sat and worked with a small group of students, while other students wandered the room or interacted with the materials inappropriately. While the guide briefly attempted to redirect those students, for much of the observation they sat idle or engaged in off-task behavior.	Basic	14%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, students took initiative to distribute and collect materials efficiently. In one observation, a few students washed each placemat and set the table before mealtime. In another observation, one student served as the leader during morning circle time. The student helped students as they walked through the day's	Distinguished	14%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
	<p>activities, led them in answering a central question, and helped to transition the class to the line.</p> <p>In the proficient observations, students productively engaged during small-group or independent work. In one observation, pairs of students worked together using a variety of materials to make a pictograph based on a number story. Students worked collaboratively with their peers to organize the materials, solve the problem, and check their charts for accuracy. In another observation, after students finished an independent coloring and cutting activity, they independently went to select a guided reading text based on their reading level. Students in these observations transitioned quickly and quietly between activities with minimal prompting or support from the guides.</p>	Proficient	86%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>The QSR team scored 100% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the large number of distinguished observations, student behavior was almost entirely appropriate. In one observation, each guide worked with a small group of students on different activities. As the students in one group</p>	Distinguished	57%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating ²	
	<p>used story cards to make up a fictional story about a robot, they took turns sharing their ideas and waited patiently as their classmates shared.</p> <p>In the proficient observations, guides responded to student misbehavior effectively. Guides in these observations corrected minor instances of student misbehavior with grace and courtesy. For example, multiple students attempted to crowd around a small white board to show their work. The guide quickly reminded them to take turns and that only two students could write at a time. Students immediately complied. In another observation, when students got loud while completing an activity, the guide reminded them to quiet down by saying, "Let's quiet down a bit," and "We're getting a little too loud." All students immediately complied and quieted down.</p>	Proficient	43%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

INSTRUCTION

This table summarizes the school’s performance on the Instruction domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The ratings for classroom observations—“distinguished,” “proficient,” “basic,” and “unsatisfactory”—come from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 80% of classrooms as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Instruction domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	<p>The QSR team scored 86% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation, students used academic language correctly. As they completed graphs, students used related terminology like “pictograph,” “most,” “least,” “object,” and “display” as they worked independently with their peers.</p> <p>In the proficient observations, guides stated what students would be learning clearly. In one observation, the guide modeled how to create a graph by drawing a large version on the white board. As the guide modeled, they did a think-a-loud to describe each step. During the explanation, the guide frequently paused to check for student understanding. In another observation, the guide introduced a story telling activity by quickly going around the table and asking each student to share their ideas. Each student gave a related response that indicated they understood what to do.</p>	Distinguished	7%
		Proficient	79%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>In the basic observations, guides had to clarify learning tasks so students could complete them. In one observation, the guide asked students to respond to a writing prompt. After a few students gave responses that indicated confusion, the guide attempted to clarify by using a student exemplar. However, students still could not complete the prompt without significant scaffolding from the guide. In another observation, one student had to be redirected several times to complete the work they selected. At times the student interacted with the material inappropriately by swinging and tossing it around the room. At other times, the student incorrectly labeled the item despite several redirections from the guide. The guide attempted to support the student by providing a mini lesson, but the attempt was unsuccessful, and the student continued to either sit idle or engage with the material incorrectly.</p>	Basic	14%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<p>Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 64% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, students extended the discussion. In one observation, the guide asked a student which item on their chart had the largest amount. The student answered the</p>	Distinguished	14%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>question, and without prompting, explained how they knew the answer. The student said, "I know because this one has 8 and these only have 5."</p> <p>In the proficient observations, guides asked a mix of open-ended and closed ended questions. In one observation, the guide asked, "How much money do we need for the carnival?" and "How will we earn it?" In another observation, the guide worked with a student one-on-one to use figurative language while writing a sentence. The guide helped them to correct their writing by saying, "I'm not sure about this sentence." The guide later asked the student, "How can you correct this?" The student and the guide talked through how to correct the sentence and the student was able to finish independently.</p>	Proficient	50%
	<p>The QSR team scored 36% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, the guide framed some questions to promote student thinking, but many questions had a single correct answer. In one observation, the guide asked one student a question to which the student responded by shrugging their shoulders. The guide responded by simply giving the student the answer.</p>	Basic	36%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Engaging Students in Learning	<p>The QSR team scored 92% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, all students intellectually engaged with the lesson. Students in these observations worked in a variety of instructional groupings to create charts, shop at a pretend store while applying math and practical life concepts, and retell familiar stories using pictures.</p>	Distinguished	21%
	<p>In the proficient observations, materials supported lesson outcomes. In one observation, the guide used sandpaper number cards to trace and later identify the numeral on the card. Students took turns engaging with this activity with only minimal prompting from the guide, when appropriate. In another observation, students wrote Black History Month essays and used a variety of materials such as sentence starters, charts, and related texts to support them in completing the task.</p>	Proficient	71%
	<p>The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	7%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team scored 78% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, guides gave high-quality, individualized feedback to students regarding their work. Guides often asked students to explain their thinking and students built on their peers' responses.</p>	Distinguished	21%
	<p>In the proficient observations, guides elicited evidence of student understanding. Guides in these observations checked student work against a checklist that detailed the parts of a sentence (e.g., capitalizing the first letter, using punctuation, and finger spacing between words). In another observation, the guide constantly asked students questions as they pretended to run a store while practicing language techniques for English learners.</p>	Proficient	57%
	<p>The QSR team scored 21% of the observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, feedback to students was global and did not focus on future improvement. Global indicators included, "Good job" and "That's it." In these observations, guides did not provide any additional guidance to support student understanding.</p>	Basic	21%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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 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 of 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.
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.

APPENDIX III: DOMAIN AVERAGES BY COMPONENT

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic	14%	14%	0%	0%	14%	36%	7%	21%
Proficient	29%	64%	86%	43%	79%	50%	71%	57%
Distinguished	57%	21%	14%	57%	7%	14%	21%	21%
Subdomain Average	3.43	3.07	3.14	3.57	2.93	2.79	3.14	3.00

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	93%	80%
Domain Averages	3.30	2.96