



June 17, 2020

Jolene Slotter, Board Chair  
Rocketship Public Charter School - Legacy Prep  
4250 Massachusetts Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20019

Dear Ms. Slotter,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews 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. Rocketship Public Charter School - Legacy Prep (Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS) was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2019-20 school year for the following reason(s):

- School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during the 2020-21 school year

### **Qualitative Site Review Report**

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS between March 2 – 13, 2020. The team's report is enclosed. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review 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 Qualitative Site Review at Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young  
Chief School Performance Officer

Enclosures  
cc: School Leader

## Qualitative Site Review Report

**Date:** June 17, 2020

### **Campus Information**

**Campus Name:** Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS

**Ward:** 7

**Grade levels:** Pre-kindergarten 3 – Fourth

### **Qualitative Site Review (QSR) Information**

**Reason for Visit:** School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during the 2020-21 school year

**Two-week Window:** March 2 – 13, 2020

**QSR Team Members:** One DC PCSB staff member and two consultants, including one who served as the special education (SPED) specialist

**Number of Observations:** 15

**Total Enrollment:** 596

**Students with Disabilities Enrollment:** 56

**English Language Learners Enrollment:** 2

**In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:**

**Visit 1:** March 9, 2020 – 84.4%

**Visit 2:** March 10, 2020 – 86.1%

**Visit 3:** March 11, 2020 – 88.7%

**Visit 4:**

### **Summary**

Rocketship Education DC PCS's mission is “to eliminate the achievement gap by graduating our students at or above grade level in Language Arts and Math.”

The QSR team observed much evidence Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS is meeting its mission. Throughout several observations, teachers demonstrated that they expected students to put forth good effort to create high-quality work. Teachers often used open-ended questions to engage students in content-related discussions and to check for student understanding. In most observations, student behavior was generally appropriate; however, in some observations, students exhibited unsafe or off-task behavior that either went unaddressed or required several redirections. In one outlier observation, students received harsh reprimands from a teacher.

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 88% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport (2a)*, with 93% of

observations scored as proficient or distinguished. In these observations, teachers and students interacted respectfully with one another, and teachers often encouraged students to persist with motivating statements like “Be a risk taker” and “You’re brilliant.”

The QSR team scored 77% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Communicating with Students (3a)*, with 87% of observations scored as distinguished or proficient. Observers noted that teachers often clearly stated the lesson purpose to begin each lesson and used modeling to demonstrate lesson expectations.

### Governance

Jolene Slotter chairs the Rocketship Education DC 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 four years.

### Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Before the two-week window, Rocketship Legacy Prep PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school’s articulated SPED program. Overall, the school implemented its program with fidelity as evidenced by students engaged in learning in all of the observations. Key trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- To demonstrate that co-planning occurred, the school explained the QSR team would see SWD receiving accommodations, modifications, and embedded universal design for learning (UDL) strategies. The SPED specialist observed UDL strategies such as activation of background knowledge, highlighting patterns and big ideas of the text, giving explicit instruction for processes, offering opportunities for movement, and allowing students to read aloud, silently, with headphones or with a read-to-self-phone. The school also stated co-planning would be demonstrated through small group targeted instruction for SWD. In three out of the four SPED observations, the SPED specialist observed the Integrated Special Education (ISE) teacher working with individual or pairs of students to develop specific skills.
- To support the learning of SWD, the school said it provides instructors with professional development, common planning time, and coaching. While the QSR team could not observe professional development or common planning time, the SPED specialist did observe the use of coaching.

- As a program that uses co-teaching, the school said reviewers would observe alternative and station teaching. The team observed alternative teaching in three out of the four SPED observations and the One Teach, One Assist model in the fourth classroom. The SPED specialist did not observe station teaching.
- To provide accommodations according to students' individualized education program (IEP), the school stated it employs a variety of accommodations. The QSR team observed the use of graphic organizers, manipulatives, review of directions, visual and verbal cues, prompts, and modeling for their students. Overall, these accommodations allowed most students to remain engaged with the learning tasks.
- To provide modifications according to students' IEP, the school said it would provide modified amounts of work, simplified language, alternate assignments, tasks broken into smaller steps, and pre-teaching of concepts. The SPED specialist did not observe alternate assignments or pre-teaching, but noted that teachers made the content and skills accessible for SWDs. In one observation, the ISE teacher broke up math tasks into small steps, starting with identifying the numeric place values. Later, students progressed to reading the number aloud before they lined up the numbers in preparation for completing an addition problem.

## THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</sup>

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 88% 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 <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	The QSR team scored 93% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, talk between teachers and students was uniformly respectful. In one observation, after a student said they felt tired, the teacher responded by saying, “I see you’re sluggish, let’s perk up.” In another observation, a student respectfully shared their frustration with the teacher and the teacher replied, “Thank you for advocating for yourself.” Teachers across classrooms referred to students as “Friends,” “Legacy Scholars,” and “Rocketeers.”	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	93%
	The QSR team scored none of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	7%

<sup>1</sup> Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

<sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 94% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation, the teacher encouraged students to take risks and praised their efforts. The teacher tracked student risks on a chart and asked students to name them. For example, one student said, "I took a risk by naming the genre of the text."</p> <p>In the proficient observations, teachers demonstrated a high regard for students' abilities. In one observation, the teacher told students to annotate the text as they read, reread to understand new vocabulary, and check their work before submission. Students in these observations paid attention to detail and often made connections between assignments and texts they read.</p>	Distinguished	7%
	<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%
	<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 87% of the observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, classroom routines functioned smoothly. In one observation, the teacher used chants like, "Everyone tracking me," and "1,2,3 eyes on me," to maintain student engagement and minimize loss of instructional time. In another observation, the teacher quickly transitioned students from whole group back to their tables by calling each group by their table number. Students transitioned immediately and sat in "Legacy position." Across all classrooms, teachers used countdowns and visual timers to maintain appropriate pacing of each lesson.</p>	Distinguished
Proficient		87%	

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating <sup>2</sup>	
	<p>The QSR team scored 13% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, classroom routines functioned unevenly. In one observation, the teacher had to redirect students several times before transitioning them from teaching stations to their original seats. Some students wandered the room, engaged in unsafe behavior like running, or remained at their station despite the teacher's attempts to redirect them. In these observations, long transitions and inefficient lesson pacing led to significant loss of instructional time.</p>	Basic	13%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, the teacher's response to student misbehavior was effective. In one observation, a student loudly entered the classroom and was gently redirected by the teacher who said, "Please go back and try that again," and "I'll wait." Teachers across all classrooms used shared language by asking students to maintain "Zone Zero."</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	80%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating <sup>2</sup>	
	<p>The QSR team scored 20% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, teachers' response to student misbehavior was ineffective and sometimes harsh. In one observation, the teacher sarcastically asked students, "What are y'all doing?" and "What are you really doing right now?" As students continued to talk, the teacher loudly called students by name to redirect them, and many still did not comply. In response, the teacher loudly repeated the directions. Eventually, some students started their work. The teacher removed one student from the classroom (and an administrator later returned the student to the class). Throughout this observation, the teacher warned students that misbehavior would result in a "clip down" and possibly the loss of recess.</p>	Basic	20%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	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 77% 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	
<p><b>Communicating with Students</b></p>	<p>The QSR team scored 87% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, the teacher stated clearly at some point what students would be learning. In one observation, the teacher began the lesson by telling students, “When you share out, I want you to tell me what your partner shared.” The teacher reinforced the lesson expectations by later asking individual students to restate the lesson objective. In another observation, the teacher told students, “We’re going to be creating a plan for our writing,” and “This is our goal for the week.” Teachers in these observations often modeled student expectations at the start of the lesson and gave students specific strategies they could use to complete the learning tasks.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	87%
	<p>The QSR team scored 13% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, teachers had to repeat the learning tasks several times so that students could complete them. In one observation, many students sat idle during stations or engaged in off topic conversations with their peers. The teacher attempted to reorient them to the lesson purpose by simply pointing at the directions on the page. However, many students continued to sit idle or engage with the materials inappropriately.</p>	Basic	13%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
<b>Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 60% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers used open-ended questions that encouraged students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers. In one observation, the teacher asked questions like, "What made you think that genre was informational?" and "Why is it important to follow your reading plan?" In another observation, the teacher facilitated a classroom discussion by prompting students with the question, "Have we completely addressed the prompt?" The teacher encouraged multiple students to respond by saying things like, "Does someone want to build on those thoughts?" and "Build on what [they] said by adding more detail."</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	60%
	<p>The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, the teacher framed some questions to promote student thinking, but most had a single correct answer. In one observation, the teacher solely asked questions like, "Who are they?" and "Who is she?" when asking students to recall detail from the text. The teacher asked questions quickly, and often received a response from the same student.</p>	Basic	40%
<p>The QSR team scored none of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%	

<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	<p>The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observation, all students intellectually engaged in the learning tasks. In the distinguished observation the teacher used a variety of methods such as video, movement, and games to keep students engaged in a phonics-based lesson. After watching a video on compound words, students got into teams to compete against one another. All students actively participated and cheered for their peers when they responded correctly.</p>	Distinguished	7%
	<p>In the proficient observations, most students intellectually engaged. In one observation, teachers used turn-and-talks and cold calling as strategies to encourage all students to engage. In another observation, the teacher used movement breaks and allowed for flexible seating to maintain student engagement over extended periods of time. Teachers across all classrooms used a variety of materials such as white boards, manipulatives, and laptops to engage students with varying learning styles.</p>	Proficient	73%
	<p>The QSR team scored 20% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, student engagement with the content was largely passive. In one observation, during teaching stations, many students disengaged with the materials and the teacher did not encourage them to participate. At times, students tossed materials or engaged in other unsafe behaviors like, tossing letter tiles and rolling around on the carpet.</p>	Basic	20%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%

<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers checked for student understanding using a variety of methods. In one observation, the teacher asked students, “What important information did we get about our main topic?” and “What strategies did you use?” Multiple students gave detailed explanations about their responses.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	80%
	The QSR team scored 20% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, feedback was general and not oriented towards future improvement. For example, teachers gave feedback like “Good job” and “Fix it,” but did not provide additional guidance. Teachers in these observations often gave feedback solely based on behavior guidance and not focused on academic content.	Basic	20%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

**APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC**

<b>The Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>	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.
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	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.
<b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	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.
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	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
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	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.
<b>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</b>	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.
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	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.
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	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
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Basic</b>	0%	7%	13%	20%	13%	40%	20%	20%
<b>Proficient</b>	93%	87%	87%	80%	87%	60%	73%	80%
<b>Distinguished</b>	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%
<b>Subdomain Average</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>2.80</b>

	Domain 2	Domain 3
<b>% of Proficient or above</b>	88%	77%
<b>Domain Averages</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.78</b>