



January 26, 2018

Ms. Gilda Sherrod-Ali, Board Chair
Dr. Bernida Thompson, Principal
Roots Public Charter School
15 Kennedy St NW
Washington, DC 20011

Dear Ms. Sherrod-Ali,

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. Your school was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2017-18 school year for the following reason(s):

- School eligible to petition for 20-year charter review during 2018-19 school year
- Tier 3 status

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Roots Public Charter School (Roots PCS) between November 27, 2017 and December 8, 2017. Enclosed is the team's report. 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 that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Roots PCS.

Sincerely,


Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures: Dr. Bernida Thompson, Chief Executive Officer

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: January 26, 2018

Campus Information

Campus Name: Roots Public Charter School (Roots PCS)

Ward: 4

Grade levels: Prekindergarten-3 (PK3)-5

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for visit: School eligible to petition for 20-year charter review during 2018-19 school year

Two-week window: November 27, 2017 – December 8, 2017

QSR team members: Three DC PCSB staff members including one special education (SPED) specialist

Number of observations: Six (including one pull-out observation not included in scoring)

Total enrollment: 118

Students with Disabilities enrollment: <10

English Language Learners enrollment: <10

In-seat attendance on observation days:

Visit 1: November 28, 2017 – 92.3%

Visit 1: November 30, 2017 – 95.7%

Visit 1: December 1, 2017 – 94.0%

Visit 2: December 5, 2017 – 97.4%

Summary

Roots PCS' mission is:

To offer a culturally relevant (African-Centered) and academically stimulating curriculum. We seek to promote and secure the connection of mother Africa within our children; Prepare students to break the chains of psychological conditioning that attempts to keep them powerless in all phases of society; Provide students with a strong African-Centered learning environment; Guide students toward academic excellence, exemplary character, and social responsibility; Encourage success leading to self-reliance and economical, social, and political contributions to society.

During the two-week window, the QSR team observed an Afro-centric curriculum in all classes. African artwork and posters of key historical figures were prominently displayed throughout the building. All adults and students in the building refer to adults as "Baba" and "Mama," which respectively mean father and mother in some African languages. Students of all ages spoke fluently about key black political

activists and human rights of Africans and African Americans. Although Roots PCS' main facility is a single-room schoolhouse, students are taught in separate, smaller groups based on grade level and ability. PK students are taught in a separate facility called "The Learning Center." Students worked with one another in a polite manner and often volunteered to help one another. Overall, the school environment was exceptionally warm and nurturing.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environments and instructional delivery (see Appendix I). The QSR team scored 85% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. This score is up from the 2015 QSR in which 68% of the observations scored distinguished or proficient. In the components of *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport* and *Establishing a Culture for Learning*, a perfect 100% of observations were proficient or distinguished. The highest rated component was *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport* where, notably, 80% of observations were distinguished. Overall, classroom interactions among teachers and individual students were highly respectful. The lowest rated component was *Managing Classroom Procedures*. While most observations were marked by clear routines and efficient procedures, in a couple of observations, significant learning time was lost due to ineffective use of materials and classroom space.

The QSR team scored 75% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. This score is significantly up from the 2015 QSR in which only 28% of the observations were proficient. The QSR members on the team noted a significant improvement in instructional quality overall at Roots PCS. The highest rated component was *Using Questioning Prompts/ Discussion Techniques* with 20% of observations scored as distinguished and 60% of observations scored as proficient. Students at Roots PCS took initiative to extend the discussion by posing higher-order questions of both their teachers and their peers. Teachers made good use of wait time and called on all students, even those who did not initially volunteer to participate. The lowest rated component was *Using Assessment in Instruction* with 60% of observations scored as proficient. In some observations feedback from teachers included specific guidance on how students could improve their work.

Governance

DC PCSB reviewed the meeting minutes from Roots PCS' first quarter board meeting which took place on August 17, 2017. A quorum was present. The vice principal reported on enrollment and announced that each grade has a waitlist list. The board reviewed the school's PARCC scores and discussed ways to improve the students' test-taking skills. The principal discussed the DC Public Charter School's

Board's compliance report and upcoming Qualitative Site Review. The board discussed their upcoming retreat and an upcoming cultural activity for students.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Prior to the two-week window, Roots PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD) and reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. Overall, the school program implemented accommodations with fidelity, including allowing students extended time to complete tasks, and providing flexibility in the classroom schedule to ensure students received frequent breaks as needed during various learning activities. In both its prekindergarten learning center and the elementary school, teachers consistently applied strategies to differentiate instruction for students by assigning them to smaller selective groups, using manipulatives and guided practice during math instruction, and offering individualized support when necessary to ensure every child could access the content.

- The school reported that general education teachers and special educators work collaboratively to remain abreast of the needs of its SWD. DC PCSB staff observed evidence of a general education and special education teacher sharing detailed knowledge about the needs of a SWD, based on his in-class performance and academic history. While discussing the student's needs, both teachers offered suggestions for effective practices that have worked to support the child's learning, which the special education teacher proceeded to use during the student's individualized pull-out session. The school also reported that it makes a conscious effort to ensure that SWD fully participate in classroom-based and schoolwide activities alongside their nondisabled peers, so they aren't ever singled out. While observing whole- and small-group instruction at the school's prekindergarten learning center, DC PCSB staff observed SWD and general education students actively participating in learning activities together, including circle time, reviewing letters of the alphabet, and small-group math practice. In some instances students were grouped according to age and ability level, but teachers consistently provided support to all students and ensured that every student had an opportunity to participate.
- To support the learning of SWD, the school reported it offers resources such as computer technology, manipulatives and other aids such as graphic organizers for students to use. While DC PCSB staff did not observe computer technology, prekindergarten students uses guided worksheets to practice tracing the letters of the alphabet; and in both the prekindergarten and upper elementary grades students used manipulatives during math practice. While observing a small group of mixed level students in the

prekindergarten center, DC PCSB observed the general education teacher modeling for students how to use their manipulatives to solve beginner addition problems, before allowing them to independently practice on their own. As students worked independently using manipulatives to solve math problems from a worksheet, the teacher closely observed them and periodically offered support when needed. During an individualized pull-out session, the teacher provided a math worksheet, colored chalk, and a calculator. After modeling for the student how to complete two-digit multiplication problems, the teacher then allowed the student to independently practice solving several problems on his own before checking his work using the calculator. During each observation students were provided a well-balanced combination of independent practice and support.

- To demonstrate evidence of co-teaching strategies, the school stated it primarily uses the "One Teach, One Assist" method. DC PCSB staff observed evidence of this method in the prekindergarten learning center where most of the smaller groups had at least two assigned teachers. As the lead teacher facilitated the lesson, a second adult circulated to ensure students remained on-task and received support as needed. In some instances the second adult pulled one or two students aside to provide one-on-one support during independent practice time.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environments domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 85% 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	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	<p>The QSR team scored a remarkable 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component, with 80% distinguished. Teachers and students acted and spoke respectfully towards one another without exception in a familial tone. Teachers demonstrated knowledge and care about individual students' lives beyond school. One teacher made a connection to a student's pet during a read-aloud, saying "I've met Student X's pet, and it reminds me of this African wildlife!" Another teacher said, "What a beautiful response. I'm going to tell your dad about that." When necessary, students corrected one another in their conduct towards classmates. When a student told his peer his drawing was unrealistic, another</p>	Distinguished	80%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>student chimed in, saying "He can make it however he wants to in pictures."</p> <p>Teachers acted in a loving and respectful way. One student was particularly worried about not getting individual feedback about his project. The teacher said, "I promise. You have my word. If you leave early, I'll do yours first." When one student got up to go into his backpack during centers, the teacher did not reprimand him, but instead asked, "Are you okay? What's going on here?" The student replied, "I want to get my own markers to share with everyone."</p>	Proficient	20%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.</p>	Basic	0%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<p>QSR team scored a remarkable 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers communicated genuine passion for the content, and students asked questions that indicated they had a desire to understand the content. Several students took initiative to help one another when they finished their work. One student said, "Ok, who's stuck? I'm coming over to help"</p>	Distinguished	20%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>without being asked. In another observation the teacher gave the class a choice: "Do you want to stop math here and move on to science?" One student said, "No, I want to get through this book! We gotta get to division!"</p> <p>Teachers demonstrated high regard for students' abilities by intentionally calling on different students to participate during the whole-group discussion. When students worked independently, the teachers sometimes kneeled beside individual students to check their work and assist them when they made a mistake. Students gave one another rounds of applause and fist bumps for correct answers.</p>	Proficient	80%
	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%
Managing Classroom Procedures	QSR team scored 60% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation no instructional time was lost during the lesson, even with students	Distinguished	20%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>were not working directly with the teacher. At the conclusion of the activity, students initiated the clean-up procedure and executed themselves. In the proficient observations teachers effectively used timers and countdowns. Students had labeled bins for their materials and clearly knew how to access them without help from the teacher.</p>	Proficient	40%
	<p>The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. In one observation a significant amount of time was spent determining where students should sit, who had the correct materials, and who had a task to complete from the last lesson. The students were in a small circle and due to space constraints, continuously knocked over materials during the lesson. The teacher asked everyone to go back to their seats and try again.</p> <p>In another observation classroom routines functioned unevenly. Students not working directly with the teacher began to fidget and get off-task, causing the teacher to stop working with one group to check on the off-task group. Most of the time students raised their hands to participate, but occasionally the teachers asked questions globally and allowed students to call out, leading to confusion among students about the procedure for engaging in the discussion.</p>	Basic	40%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	<p>QSR team scored 80% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In distinguished observations behavior was entirely appropriate for the duration of this observation, and students complied with the teacher's instructions at all times.</p> <p>In proficient observations the teachers' responses to student misbehavior was effective and polite, and student immediately redirected themselves. One teacher creatively corrected a student who was whispering to her neighbor instead of listening by saying, "I'm not feeling connected with you right now. Can you move to a spot in the circle where I can see you so I can make sure I feel that connection?"</p>	Distinguished	40%
	<p>In another observation a student began to cry because his partner put away the crayons before he was done with this assignment. The teacher said, "Son, you're a big boy in a big school. If there is a problem you talk it out. I need you to use your words and talk it out."</p>	Proficient	40%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 20% of observations as basic in this component. In this observation the teacher’s implementation of behavior expectations was inconsistent. Some students were reprimanded for talking, while others were permitted to talk without consequence.</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 label definitions for classroom observations of “distinguished,” “proficient,” “basic,” and “unsatisfactory” are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 75% 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>Communicating with Students</p>	<p>The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In these observations the teacher clearly communicated the lesson purpose and students demonstrated understanding by following instructions. Before each transition, the teachers explained what students would be doing and where they were supposed to go, and they provided periodic time checks for students. To ensure directions were clear, the teachers often modeled for students how to complete their assigned task before allowing them to practice it independently or with a small group.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	80%
	<p>The QSR team rated 20% of the observations as basic in this component. In this observation the learning objective was unclear.</p>	Basic	20%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observation students themselves initiated higher-order questions to extend the discussion during a read-aloud. In the proficient observations teachers made effective use of wait-time to ensure students had time to think before offering responses. During every activity where students were permitted to share aloud, students actively engaged in the discussion with little prompting from the teachers.	Distinguished	20%
		Proficient	60%
	The QSR team rated 20% of the observations as basic in this component. In this observation there was minimal questioning that led to greater understanding. The teacher committed a content error, saying, "Come on, what are you going to round this number to? Why would 194 round to 100?" Several students did not understand compatible numbers during the lesson but the teacher's questions did not effectively promote student understanding.	Basic	20%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 80% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In these observations all but one or two students at any given time were engaged in the learning task. In one observation two students played a math game, one student took a test, and the others engaged in a review. Students genuinely helped each other with their independent work, all students were asking questions, eager and excited to do the work. The pacing of the activities was appropriate and teachers allowed students breaks when needed to help students relax and rejoin the group as soon as they were re-focused.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	80%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team rated 20% of the observations as basic in this component. In this observation several students doodled in the back of their workbook while the teacher reviewed the lesson. Most students sat passively and compliantly while the teacher asked a single question of each student one at a time. The considerable downtime led students to become fidgety and off-task.</p>	Basic	20%
	<p>The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.</p>	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team scored 60% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. Prior to having students work independently, the teachers indicated what quality work looks like by providing examples or modeling a few problems for students. As students worked independently or in small groups, the teachers often looked over their shoulders or knelt beside individual students to check their work and provide immediate feedback.</p>	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	60%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide Rating	
	<p>The QSR team scored 40% of observations as basic in this component. In one observation the teacher's academic feedback was opinion-based or global, such as, "I like what you made!" and "Great job, everyone!" In another observation the teacher only checked the spelling of each students work, rather than on their entire work product.</p>	Basic	40%
	<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 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.
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: Score Breakdown by Component

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic	0%	0%	40%	20%	20%	20%	20%	40%
Proficient	20%	80%	40%	40%	80%	60%	80%	60%
Distinguished	80%	20%	20%	40%	0%	20%	0%	0%
Subdomain Average	3.80	3.20	2.80	3.20	2.80	3.00	2.80	2.60

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	85%	75%
Domain Averages	3.25	2.80