



June 9, 2015

Kannon Shanmugam, Board Chair
Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS
2427 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20020

Dear Mr. Shanmugam:

The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews 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 Qualitative Site Review during the 2014-15 school year for the following reason:

- School eligible to petition for 15-year Charter Renewal during the 2015-16 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School between April 20 and May 1, 2015. 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. PCSB staff and consultants evaluated your classroom teaching by using an abridged version of the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* observation rubric. We also visited a board meeting.

You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses on the following areas: charter mission and goals, the classroom environment, and instruction.

We appreciate the help and hospitality that staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS.

Sincerely,



Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School (TMA PCS, Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS) serves 366 students in grades 9 through 12 in Ward 8. Its mission is to prepare students to succeed in college and to actively engage in our democratic society. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) in April 2015 because Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS is eligible to petition for 15-year Charter Renewal during the 2015-16 school year.

The QSR team conducted unannounced observations over the course of a two-week window, from April 20 through May 1. A team of two PCSB staff members and two consultants (including a Special Education Consultant) conducted 24 observations. A member of the QSR team also attended a Board of Trustees meeting on February 18, 2015. The QSR team used Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* Rubric throughout the observations and observed classrooms in mornings and afternoons. In some instances a QSR team member may have observed a teacher twice. The QSR team also collected evidence regarding the school's stated mission and goals.

The QSR team scored 77% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. Teachers and students had a good rapport with each other and students adhered to clear standards of conduct. The QSR team scored 61% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. Most classrooms were intellectually engaging. In these observations teachers asked open-ended questions and students participated in discussions with peers. In just over one third of the observations, however, the instruction was primarily lecture and did not include student input or feedback to students.

Prior to the two-week window, Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS provided answers to specific questions posed by PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities in the Special Education Questionnaire. The QSR team member who conducted special education-specific observations noted the following based on the answers provided by the school:

- On "A" days special education teachers provided support to students with disabilities separate from the general education classroom. On "B" days special education teachers provided inclusionary support either by co-teaching with the general education teacher or as an instructional support to designated student(s).
- Teachers worked with their students in small groups/stations or individually, which were in most cases conducive to the provision of direct and timely feedback to students.
- Several of the observable interventions described in the Special Education Questionnaire were apparent through the observations, including leveled readers, special education teachers, graphic organizers, timers, and ClassDojo for behavior.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes Thurgood Marshall Academy 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 Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>Mission:</p> <p>Our mission is to prepare students to succeed in college and to actively engage in our democratic society.</p>	<p>The evidence gathered during this QSR shows that Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS is working to meet its mission.</p> <p><i>Prepare students to succeed in college</i></p> <p>The school has a college preparatory curriculum and offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses in English, math, computer science, and social studies. The QSR team observed rigorous instruction in the AP classes that included higher-order questioning, and students engaged in discussions with each other. In the non-AP classes the level of instruction was mixed. Students in one observation were actively engaged throughout the lesson and the teacher invited student input and encouraged students to respond to one another. In another observation, however, the teacher asked low-level questions and the work was formulaic requiring little intellectual engagement from students.</p> <p>Posters and bulletin boards around the building reflected a college-going culture. The data wall in the lobby included student SAT and college enrollment data. Bulletin boards showed the colleges to which students in past years have been accepted. Additionally the school hosted a college fair during the QSR window.</p> <p><i>Actively engage students in democratic society</i></p> <p>Observations of social studies classes revealed engaged students in conversations about civic participation. One observation of a law class, for example, discussed recent protests in Baltimore and</p>

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	explored connections between the protests and the Bill of Rights. Students in several observations respectfully debated each other and shared ideas on topics such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Middle Eastern Conflict.
Students will reach standard grade level skill ability, and many students will achieve above-average capability in all academic subjects throughout the high school years.	The QSR team saw effective instruction in the majority of observations. As further detailed in the Instruction section of the Danielson Framework, 61% of the observations scored proficient or distinguished in the Instruction domain. Teachers in these observations asked high-level, open-ended questions and students engaged in discussions with peers.
Over 75% of the students entering the Academy will graduate in five years or less.	PCSB will review validated quantitative data for the school's renewal report to determine if the school met this goal. The QSR team only collected and reviewed qualitative evidence for this report.
Over half of all students will enroll in a post-secondary institution after graduation, including at a two- or four-year college, trade school, technical college, or conservatory.	PCSB will review validated quantitative data for the school's renewal report to determine if the school met this goal. The QSR team only collected and reviewed qualitative evidence for this report.
Students will build strong character and moral values and will learn to treat fellow students, faculty, and family with respect.	The school had a positive culture overall. As further detailed in the Classroom Environment section of the Danielson Framework, 77% of the observations scored proficient or distinguished in the Classroom Environment domain. Students treated each other and their teachers with respect in almost all observations.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
<p>The Academy will develop a unique four-year law-related education curriculum with high academic standards to serve as a national model.</p>	<p>The school offers law classes, such as Intro to Law and Street Law. The QSR team observed students engaged in discussions about current events and connected them to criminal procedures and elements of the law curriculum. Students also worked on a portfolio project related to the First Amendment of the Constitution.</p> <p>During the QSR window ninth grade students attended an off-site law class at a law firm on Friday afternoons. The QSR team observed posters about legal skills (research, argumentation, critical thinking, advocacy, and negotiation) around the building.</p>
<p>Parents and community members will be involved in the long-term success of both the school and the students and will participate in informational forums, monthly community meetings, and on the Academy's Board.</p>	<p>The QSR team did not collect any evidence related to this goal.</p>
<p>Low student absenteeism and tardiness</p>	<p>The classrooms the QSR team observed were generally full, with few empty desks. In most observations three to five students entered the room after class had started.</p>
<p>Governance:</p>	<p>A PCSB staff member attended the Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS Board of Trustees meeting on February 18, 2015. A quorum was present. The school's executive director gave an update on seniors' college acceptances, enrollment projections, discipline hearings, and the ongoing reaccreditation process through the Middle States Association. The school's chief operating officer provided an update on tax filings and budget projections. The board also discussed board recruitment efforts with a focus on adding a board member with financial expertise.</p>

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 77% of observations as “distinguished” or “proficient” for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team rated 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. These classrooms were friendly and joyful. In one observation students asked the teacher to teach them again next year. Many teachers praised and encouraged their students saying thing like, “I know you’ll be right,” and “I have a feeling you will be good at this.”	Distinguished	17%
		Proficient	71%
	The QSR team rated 12% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in this component. There were a few isolated incidents of students behaving disrespectfully toward teachers and classmates in these observations. In a couple of instances, students entered the classroom late and were disruptive. In one observation a student danced to his seat after entering several minutes into the class period and the teacher did not address it. One teacher told students to “get your butts in seats” on two occasions. However students continued to have trouble settling in and focusing on their work.	Basic	8%
		Unsatisfactory	4%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team rated 75% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Establishing a Culture for Learning. Teachers in these observations explained the significance of the lesson and involved <u>all</u>	Distinguished	13%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	students. In several instances teachers praised students' persistence and effort. Students got excited about the material. One student said, "That is so amazing!" after a classmate solved a math problem.	Proficient	62%
	The QSR team rated 25% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers ignored students with their heads down in a few classes. A couple of teachers sat at their desks for the majority of the time and did not encourage students, who were visibly not on task, to participate in the lesson.	Basic	25%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team rated 67% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Classroom Procedures. In these observations there were clear systems in place for students entering class late and reporting out information after small group work. Transitions from whole group to small group activities were smooth. A few teachers used timers or gave verbal time warnings to keep the class on pace.	Distinguished	13%
		Proficient	54%
	The QSR team rated 33% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Routines, procedures, and transitions in these observations did not run smoothly resulting in a loss of instructional time in these observations. Some transitions between activities were noisy and inefficient. One teacher did not pace the lesson well and called out time warnings at 40 minutes, 30 minutes, etc. but did not intervene when students got off task.	Basic	33%
Unsatisfactory	0%		
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team rated 79% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Managing Student Behavior. Student behavior was entirely appropriate in the majority of classrooms. Several classrooms had standards of	Distinguished	29%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>conduct posted and teachers referenced those standards. In a few instances teachers had systems in place to monitor student behavior, such as ClassDojo, a behavior-tracking app. When teachers gave redirections, students responded by changing their behavior right away.</p>	Proficient	50%
	<p>The QSR team rated 21% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations teachers' attempts to correct student behavior were largely ineffective. Students in one class exhibited silly behaviors, such as hiding a classmate's pencil, and the students ignored the teacher's interventions. In one observation students watched music videos on computers rather than making the poster they were assigned, and the teacher was sitting at a desk not monitoring student behavior.</p>	Basic	13%
		Unsatisfactory	8%

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 61% of observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 71% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Communicating with Students. Teachers shared the objective for the day and placed the lesson in a broader context of what students were learning. Most teachers gave directions and students got right to work without clarification on what they were supposed to do. One teacher explained a pun used in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and students participated in the conversation about different meanings of words. Another teacher explained the unit circle to students and pointed out common mistakes students make when working with the unit circle.	Distinguished	21%
		Proficient	50%
	The QSR team rated 29% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. Students in these observations required clarification on teacher directions before they could get to work which led to off task behavior. In one observation the teacher had to walk around to each group of students to re-explain the vocabulary activity before students could begin. A few teachers made content errors in math and science classes. In one observation a teacher mixed up the cube of a number and the cubed root of a number, which resulted in student confusion later in the lesson.	Basic	29%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 57% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques. In these observations teachers asked a mix of lower- and higher-order thinking questions. Most questions did not have one right	Distinguished	9%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	answer and teachers welcomed different responses from students. Teachers asked questions in a few observations that challenged the students to think beyond the material and come up with new ideas. In one class students led their own discussions in small groups and the teacher provided support as needed.	Proficient	48%
	The QSR team rated 43% of the observations as basic and none as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations questions were primarily recall and did not promote student thinking. Teachers answered their own questions in a few of instances. Some teachers only lectured during the lesson and gave few to no opportunities for student participation.	Basic	43%
		Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team rated 63% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Engaging Students in Learning. Students in these observations were intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. There were multiple approaches to the work and students participated in problem solving. In one observation the teacher asked students about the order in which they wanted to run the class and students had choice in their learning. Materials such as graphic organizers and interactive whiteboards enhanced the learning by allowing students to organize their ideas or try different approaches to problems.	Distinguished	13%
		Proficient	50%
	The QSR team rated 37% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in this component. Students spent time on activities not aligned to the lesson objective or were not intellectually engaged. In one observation of a 10 th grade English class, students spent 10 minutes making words out of the	Basic	33%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	<p>phrase “Romeo and Juliet” rather than learning about the subject matter. A couple of lessons students had more time to complete a task then needed resulting in their disengaging with the content. Students in one class had the entire period to make a poster and several students finished with 40 minutes remaining in the period and no other work to do.</p>	Unsatisfactory	4%
Using Assessment in Instruction	<p>The QSR team rated 52% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in the component of Using Assessment in Instruction. Teachers in these observations gave students feedback on their work that led to students making corrections. Several teachers circulated the classroom and stopped to give students advice on how to make improvements in their work. One teacher walked around to individual students asking recall questions to gauge understanding and quickly re-teach as needed. A few teachers modeled tasks or showed exemplars to convey what high quality work looks like.</p>	Distinguished	4%
		Proficient	48%
	<p>The QSR team rated 48% of the observations as basic or unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers only monitored student understanding through simple response questions and did not provide feedback leading to students improving their work. In one observation the teacher asked the students if soil is alive. Many students said, “Yes,” and the teacher said, “No, it is not alive” without offering any further explanation. Students worked on projects in a few observations and the QSR team did not observe any rubrics or means of assessing quality.</p>	Basic	44%
		Unsatisfactory	4%

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.

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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 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.

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>Using Assessment in Instruction</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>