DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

November 29, 2016

Jason Andrean, Board Chair
Achievement Prep Public Charter School – Wahler Place Elementary School
908 Wahler Place SE
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Mr. Andrean:

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 2016-17 school year for the following reason:

o School eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2017-18 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report
A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Achievement Prep Public Charter School – Wahler Place Elementary School between September 26 and October 7, 2016. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: charter mission and goals, classroom environments, and instruction.

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Achievement Prep PCS.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux
Deputy Director

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: November 29, 2016

Campus Information
Campus Name: Achievement Prep Public Charter School – Wahler Place
Elementary School
Ward: 8
Grade levels: Prekindergarten-3 through 3rd grade

Qualitative Site Review Information
Reason for visit: School eligible for 10-year Charter Review during 2017-18 school
year
Two-week window: September 26, 2016 through October 7, 2016.
QSR team members: 3 DC PCSB staff members including a special education specialist,
and one consultant
Number of observations: 23
Total enrollment: 466
Students with Disabilities enrollment: 43
English Language Learners enrollment: 3[1]

Summary

The mission of Achievement Prep PCS is to prepare students in grades four through eight
to excel as high achieving scholars and leaders in high school, college and beyond and the
school chose to use the Performance Management Framework as its goals and student
academic achievement expectations.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for
Teaching* to examine classroom environments and instruction (see Appendix I). The QSR
team scored 62% 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 with 74% of observations rated proficient or
distinguished. Teachers and students demonstrated mutual respect and teachers gave
students specific language to use to speak respectfully to their classmates. The lowest
rated component in this domain was Managing Student Behavior with 52% of
observations rated as proficient or distinguished. In a number of observations, teachers
spent the entire class attempting to manage student behavior without success.

The QSR team scored 43% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction
domain. The highest rated component was Communicating with Students with 52% of
observations rated proficient. In half of the observations, teachers presented content
clearly with rich vocabulary, modeled academic procedures effectively, and encouraged
students to use academic language. The QSR team rated less than 40% of observations
as proficient in both Questioning and Discussion and Engaging Students. Questioning
generally led students on a single path of inquiry and students had few opportunities to

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[1] The school identified these students as ELL after DC PCSB conducted the QSR.

discuss academic content with each other. The QSR team rated 26% of observations as unsatisfactory in the Questioning and Discussion component, and 22% of observations as unsatisfactory in Engaging Students.

A DC PCSB staff member joined the Achievement Board of Trustees meeting in person on November 2, 2016. Several members of the board and staff were present, including Shantelle Wright, Nikki Diamantes, Barbara Nolphin, Jason Andrean and Maia Blankenship. They also welcomed two new board members: Harlyn Pacheco and Stephanie Oliveras. The focus of the meeting was the school's PARCC performance and the impact on the school's PMF ranking. They also discussed the school's PARCC scores relative to the city, other charters and other schools in Ward 8. The staff discussed in detail its plans for improving PARCC scores and its PMF ranking for Achievement Prep students going forward. The board transitioned into Executive Session after the meeting.

Prior to the two-week window, Achievement Prep PCS–Elementary provided answers to specific questions posed by DC PCSB regarding the provision of instruction to students with disabilities. The reviewer who conducted special education-specific observations noted the following evidence:

- The school claimed that they used the following types of resources to support the learning of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms: math manipulatives, access to leveled text, and assistive technology devices.
  The special education specialist did not see the use of any of these tools in the general education classrooms.

- In the self-contained setting, the observer saw a student wearing a weighted vest and students responded to questions in small groups using individual white-boards, allowing the teacher and aide to observe student responses quickly and provide direct feedback to students.

- The school described differentiation with such examples as ongoing formative assessments, recognition of diverse learners, group work, and problem solving. The observer saw small group and partner work, but saw neither the use of ongoing formative assessments nor problem solving techniques.

- In the one-on-one pull-out and self-contained observations, the observer saw teachers providing timely feedback to students and recording student understanding in these settings. The observer did not see specific feedback to students, as teachers provided feedback to the whole class, or the use of exit tickets and weekly assessments.

CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

This table summarizes qualitative evidence related to the goals and academic achievement expectations as detailed in the school's charter and subsequent charter amendments. Some charter goals can only be measured quantitatively. The QSR team recorded evidence of what the school is doing on the ground to meet these quantitative goals. During the 5-year charter review, 10-year charter review, or 15-year charter renewal process, DC PCSB staff will use quantitative data to assess whether the school met those goals.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Mission: Achievement Preparatory Academy prepares students in grades four through eight to excel as high achieving scholars and leaders in high school, college and beyond.	The QSR team saw mixed evidence that the school was meeting its mission. The school promotes a college-going culture, with classrooms named after colleges, teachers referring to students as the college mascot, and teachers consistently referring to students attending college. As described later in this report, 43% of observations scored proficient or distinguished in the Instruction domain. Many teachers spent the majority of instructional time on classroom management and were not able to teach academic material. Student engagement was inconsistent across classrooms, with some students participating enthusiastically in read-alouds and class discussions, and others engaged in off-task behaviors. Students had few opportunities to discuss academic content with each other, and most instruction was teacher-led. Learning tasks in most classrooms were the same for all students with little choice in how students completed the task, though observers saw some student choice in prekindergarten classrooms as students chose their centers and their jobs for the day.

Goals:	
PMF Indicator #1: Student Progress – Academic Improvement over time *Effective instruction supporting student academic progress in reading.* PMF Indicator #2: Student Achievement – Meeting or exceeding academic standards *Moving students to proficient and advanced levels in reading.*	The QSR team observed mixed evidence of effective instruction supporting student academic progress in moving to proficient and advanced levels in reading. The team saw pre-teaching of vocabulary in preparation for a read-aloud, students making predictions about stories, teachers assessing learning through comprehension questions, and student turn-and-talks and whole-class share-outs about plot. In most English observations, however, the instructional purpose was not clear.
PMF Indicator #1: Student Progress – Academic Improvement over time *Effective instruction supporting student academic progress in math* PMF Indicator #2: Student Achievement – Meeting or exceeding academic standards *Moving students to proficient and advanced levels in math.*	The QSR team observed mixed evidence of effective instruction supporting student academic progress in moving to proficient and advanced levels in math. In a few observations teachers asked students to justify their responses. Teachers also provided opportunities for independent practice counting and writing numbers. Teachers supported individual students as they completed their work.
PMF Indicator # 3: Gateway – Outcomes in key subjects that predict future educational success *Promotion of reading proficiency by third grade and math proficiency by eighth grade*	Third grade teachers promoted reading proficiency through a variety of learning tasks. Teachers and students discussed the structure of a poem to find a pattern in words, and discussed parts of the poem through turn-and-talks with partners. All students participated in the same activity in the same way and the teacher circulated and commented on individual student work. In a pull-out session, the teacher asked students to read a leveled text and the teacher helped them with challenging words.
PMF Indicator #4: School Environment – Predictors of future student progress and achievement	**In-seat attendance on the days the QSR team conducted observations:** **Visit 1:** September 26, 2016- 93.8% **Visit 2:** September 27, 2016- 90.6% **Visit 3:** September 28, 2016- 92.6%

	Visit 4: October 5, 2016- 91.8%

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT[2]

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 62% of classrooms 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 scored 74% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Students congratulated each other for completing their work and for participating. Teachers respected student dignity when they got an incorrect answer by recognizing student effort and encouraging students to keep thinking. In most observations students showed respect for the teacher by fixing behavior immediately after prompts from the teacher. Teachers helped students talk to each other respectfully by giving examples and thanking students for being good friends. Students tried to help each other with learning tasks. Teachers and students demonstrated genuine warmth with each other by joking around playfully.	Distinguished	9%
		Proficient	65%
	The QSR team scored 13% of the observations as basic in this component. The teachers' attempts to respond to students talking out of turn and moving around the classroom without permission were ineffective. Students did not respond to the teacher's request to commend each other for their efforts in a number of classrooms. Sometimes teachers ignored disrespectful behavior among students, as when a student kicked another student.	Basic	13%

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[2] Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 13% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. The QSR team saw patterns of disrespectful behavior among students. In these observations students insulted the teacher, grabbed each other's materials, teased and yelled at each other, or threw materials. In one observation students clapped and laughed as the teacher appeared helpless to refocus the class.	Unsatisfactory	13%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 61% of the observations as proficient in this component. Teachers demonstrated high regard for student ability, constantly praising them for putting forth effort to answer questions. Teachers gave students clear expectations for how they should participate as learners, by using their "listening ears," tracking the teacher, and following directions. Teachers encouraged students to use academic language in their responses to explain mathematical thinking. Students put forth good effort to complete tasks and the teacher praised or rewarded them.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	61%
	The QSR team scored 22% of the observations as basic in this component. In some observations students put forth little effort to complete academic tasks, spending most of the time talking or moving around the room, despite the teacher's requests to stay on track. Teachers had high expectations only for some students, as some in the class could not keep up with the learning task and teachers moved on without helping students get back on track.	Basic	22%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. The teacher did not correct student incorrect answers or encourage all students to participate in the learning task. Students showed little commitment to learning as they stayed off-task for most of the class and did not attempt to complete learning tasks, with ineffective intervention from the teacher.	Unsatisfactory	17%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 61% of the observations as proficient in this component. Students were productively engaged during small group work. Teachers used chants, timers, and count-downs to transition students effectively to the next activity. Students played a role in transitions, passing out materials, cleaning up and collecting materials without prompting. Teachers used independent work time efficiently to assess students and distribute materials for the next lesson.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	61%
	The QSR team scored 22% of the observations as basic in this component. In some observations classroom routines functioned unevenly, with students calling out that they do not have materials without the teacher addressing them, and the teacher constantly having to remind students what they should be doing during transitions (without universal success).	Basic	22%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Some classrooms were chaotic with students missing their books, graphic organizers, or pencils so they could not complete the learning task. In a few observations instructional time was lost during transitions. One teacher worked to get all students the materials they needed (but did not end up reaching all students). Students did not refocus after snack, start on independent work or come to the carpet despite the teacher's prompting..	Unsatisfactory	17%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 52% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Student behavior was generally appropriate with minor incidents of misbehavior (like talking out of turn or moving around the classroom without permission) handled immediately and effectively. Teachers pre-empted negative behavior by telling students exactly what they should be doing (tracking their teacher, bubbles in their mouths, bottoms on the rug, scholar position) and the majority of students complied.	Distinguished	4%
	Teachers also used proximity to prevent negative behavior, circulating throughout the room to monitor student behavior. Teachers rewarded positive behavior by narrating specific on-task actions, giving smiley faces to students on-task, putting tally marks next to students following directions, and stating explicitly that they will only call on students with a silent raised hand. Some teachers used color charts moving students' colors with both positive and negative behaviors and explaining to students what they were doing.	Proficient	48%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 30% of the observations as basic in this component. Instances of misbehavior like students fighting over materials were largely ignored. The teachers' attempts to refocus students were ineffective, with students continuing to engage in off-task behavior despite countdowns, encouragement to make the right decision, or the teacher's references to a negative change on the color chart.	Basic	30%
	The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Students continuously talked out of turn or played during silent work time and walked in and out of classrooms. Teachers attempted to refocus them without success. In one observation the teacher eventually had to call for Scholar Support, which is when a teacher asks for another adult in the room. This resulted in a dean of students coming into the room to try to control the class. Teachers did not monitor student behavior during independent work time or did so ineffectively. Some students continued to violate classroom rules without teacher awareness or despite the teacher's attempts to stop negative behavior. Teachers made negative changes on color charts without telling students that they were doing so.	Unsatisfactory	17%

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 43% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored 52% of the observations as proficient in this component. Teachers' explanations of vocabulary were rich and clear, giving students different ways to remember new words, like motioning (as in showing students what "nibble" looks like) or by tying the new vocabulary to examples from their own lives. In a few classrooms teachers clearly explained the procedures for a learning task and modeled the process students should follow. Students demonstrated understanding by completing the learning task without needing clarification. Teachers also encouraged students to use academic language in their responses.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	52%
	The QSR team scored 30% of observations as basic in this component. In some observations, the instructional purpose was unclear. In others, students failed to engage in the learning tasks after the teacher explained it multiple times. In still others, the teacher's explanations of what to do in some classrooms was purely procedural with little focus on the academic content or purpose of learning.	Basic	30%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 17% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In a couple of observations, teachers made content errors without correction. In another observation the teacher did not explain to students what they would be learning at any time during the lesson.	Unsatisfactory	17%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 35% of the observations as proficient in this component. Teachers asked students a combination of questions requiring recall and deeper thinking. Teachers asked students to make predictions in a story, use context clues to determine the meaning of words, and justify their responses to math problems. Some teachers invited students to discuss academic content with each other.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	35%
	The QSR team scored 39% of observations as basic in this component. Questioning led students along a single path of inquiry with pre-determined answers, mainly requiring recall. All questions and discussion were solely between the teacher and students. Teachers did not give students opportunities to explain their thinking. In the few instances of teachers attempting to initiate whole group discussion, few students participated.	Basic	39%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 26% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Questions did not invite student thinking, as the vast majority of teacher-talk was focused on redirecting off-task behavior. Questions in some observations were rapid-fire, with single correct answers and no opportunities for students to explain thinking. In one observation the teacher did not engage in any discussions with the students.	Unsatisfactory	26%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored just 39% of the observations as proficient in this component. In these observations, students had choice in how they spent their time: choosing their jobs for the day, picking words that make certain sounds, or choosing which center to play in, while a small pre-determined group of students worked with the teacher. Learning tasks challenged student thinking and gave students the opportunity for multiple correct responses, as when students analyzed the structure of a poem for patterns or showed their mathematical problem-solving skills by drawing out quantities or writing numbers. Students were highly engaged during learning tasks, completing tasks enthusiastically or asking questions throughout the teacher's explanation of content.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	39%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 39% of observations as basic in this component. Learning tasks were a mix of those requiring thinking and recall. Students had no choice in activities, as all students completed the same worksheet in the same way for the duration of the class. Student engagement was inconsistent across and within classrooms, with some students not participating in classroom discussions or not completing independent work.	Basic	39%
	The QSR team scored 22% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Few students were intellectually engaged in the lesson as they walked around during independent work, walked out of the classroom, bickered with each other, or socialized, and produced few or no responses to worksheets during independent work time. Pacing was ineffective in a couple of observations, as when a teacher rushed through a lesson without ensuring all students knew what to do resulting in students not working on the assignment In another observation students completed learning tasks and had nothing to do after they were done with significant time left in the lesson.	Unsatisfactory	22%

Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team scored 48% of the observations as proficient in this component. Teachers walked around the classroom, constantly gauging understanding as they looked at students' independent work and gave individual feedback tailored to improvement, noting where they saw	Distinguished	0%
	correct punctuation, full sentences, and details from a text, and helping students to improve work by asking them to trace a number correctly that the student had written incorrectly. Teachers assessed learning informally as they read aloud, gauging comprehension and pushing student thinking to use context clues to answer questions, by listening to each student make the appropriate letter sound, and by looking at individual student responses on white boards.	Proficient	48%
	The QSR team scored 22% of observations as basic in this component. Teachers in some classrooms walked around to gauge understanding, but offered no feedback, either globally or individually, and did not adjust the lesson after seeing a lack of participation by students (though it was unclear if students did not participate because they did not understand or because they were not motivated to do so).	Basic	22%

	The QSR team scored 30% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. Teachers asked some questions to gauge understanding but did not acknowledge student responses or provide individual feedback to students. In these observations most of the time was spent on behavior redirection. In a teacher's assessment of student understanding, students gave incorrect answers and the teacher said it was correct. Teachers did not give students opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of their classmates.	Unsatisfactory	30%

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.

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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 may 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	Students are intellectually engaged only partially, resulting from activities or	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson, with	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson and make material contribution to the representation

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
	learning, as a result of inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure.	materials or uneven quality, inconsistent representation of content or uneven structure of pacing.	appropriate activities and materials, instructive representations of content, and suitable structure and pacing of the lesson.	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.