

March 23, 2018

Ms. Jennifer H. Wider, Board Chair Democracy Prep Congress Heights Public Charter School 3100 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE Washington, DC 20032

Dear Ms. Wider,

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 reasons:

- School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during 2018-19 school year
- o Tier 3 on school year 2016-17 Performance Management Framework

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Democracy Prep Congress Heights Public Charter School between February 5 – February 16, 2018. 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 Democracy Prep PCS.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux Deputy Director

Enclosures

cc: Shukurat Adamoh-Faniyan, Executive Director

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: March 23, 2018

Campus Information

Campus Name: Democracy Prep Congress Heights Public Charter School

(Democracy Prep PCS)

Ward: 8

Grade levels: PK3-8

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for visit:

o School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during 2018-19 school year

 Tier 3 on school year 2016-17 Performance Management Framework (PMF)

Two-week window: February 5 - February 16, 2018

QSR team members: Four DC PCSB staff members including one special

education (SPED) specialist and one consultant

Number of observations: 31

Total enrollment: 645

Students with Disabilities enrollment: 118 English Language Learners enrollment: 0 In-seat attendance on observation days¹:

Visit 1: February 9, 2018 - 86.8% Visit 2: February 13, 2018 - 92.1% Visit 3: February 15, 2018 - 86.9%

Summary

Democracy Prep PCS' mission is "to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship." While the QSR team did not see evidence of a curriculum that was geared toward active citizenship, Democracy Prep PCS is a college-focused school. Each classroom is named after a college or university and adults refer to students as "scholars."

The QSR team noted strong rapport between parents and school staff. As students and parents entered the building at drop-off, they were greeted with hugs, high-fives, and handshakes by several administrators and teachers. One administrator checked-in with a parent, asking, "How is transportation going? People are invested in your boy here, they really are." Another adult said to a student, "I missed you

DATE QSR Report: Democracy Prep PCS

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¹ The floor for attendance on the PMF is 85% and the target is 95%.

yesterday! I talked to your mom, and I know you went to the doctor. Have a good day!"

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendix I and II). The QSR team scored 56% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the <u>Classroom Environment</u> domain. The highest rated component was *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport* as more than half of observations (67%) were rated as proficient. Most interactions between teachers and students were polite, respectful, and business-like, although there were some notable instances in which classroom interactions with negative and disrespectful. The lowest rated component was *Establishing a Culture for Learning*. Slightly less than half (48%) of observations were rated as proficient or distinguished. Although teachers verbally expressed high expectations for all students, the QSR team saw a trend of students being allowed to disengage from lessons when they were not working directly with the teacher. Compared to other PK-8 schools, the percent of proficient observations in this component is below average.

The QSR team scored 43% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest rated component was Communicating with Students, with just a little over half (54%) of observations rated as distinguished or proficient for clearly communicated lesson instructions. The lowest rated component was Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques as only a third (31%) of observations were rated proficient. Most instruction was geared towards test preparation, making opportunities for genuine discussion among students rare. Although all classrooms had at least two teachers, the effectiveness of the second adult in the room was mixed. In some classrooms both teachers were actively involved in instruction, either pulling small groups or circulating to provide feedback on student work. In some classes, however, the second adult was ineffective. Some teachers simply sat and watched the lead teacher or were entirely focused on behavior management. Compared to other schools, the percent of observations that scored at least proficient is extremely low. We notice a direct correlation between instruction and academic performance and see these results as a warning sign.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

The QSR team observed ISS twice during the observation window. On the first visit there were two adults and two students in the small space called "The Dream Room." One student worked on an assignment with a teacher. The other student refused to complete the behavior reflection and instead sat silently while staring into a computer screen. The second adult was working on a computer and did not engage with either student. On the second visit, one student was in ISS with an aide. The aide facilitated a game by a repeatedly asking, "I am thinking of a word

that starts with the letter [blank]." The student had completed multiplication worksheets that he/she presumably worked on before the game.

On multiple visits observers saw students in hallways outside of classrooms, ostensibly for behavior reasons. Adult supervision in hallways was mixed. One student simply waited outside the classroom without instruction or supervision for as long as 10-15 minutes, while others were immediately approached by a teacher, hallway monitor, or administrator.

Governance

The QSR team reviewed Democracy Prep PCS' minutes from the October 25, 2017 board meeting. A quorum was present. The Executive Director discussed the school's decline to Tier 3 status on the PMF. School leadership explained that midyear teacher turnover and a departure from effective small group math instruction limited growth overall. The Executive Director explained that the school has begun implementing key instructional strategies with fidelity including intensive instructional feedback and coaching. School leaders explained that Democracy Prep PCS is receiving network support, including instructional resources and observation feedback. The school intends to prioritize completion of the Northwest Evaluation Assessment's Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) for all students moving forward. The Executive Director and the school's Family Impact Coordinator shared updates on the Family Leadership Council, which seeks to engage families through events and structured support conversations.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Prior to the two-week window, Democracy Prep PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program. 75% of special education observations scored proficient or distinguished in the <u>Classroom Environment</u> domain of the Danielson rubric, while only 38% of special education observations scored proficient or distinguished in the <u>Instruction</u> domain. Overall special education teachers demonstrated a strong rapport with SWD and facilitated supportive classrooms where students frequently had the opportunity to obtain direct, immediate support from a teacher during independent and small-group activities. However, given many of the activities consisted of content review that required direct communication between the teachers and students, there was limited evidence of opportunities for students to collaborate or engage in rich, meaningful academic discussion.

• The school reported that instructional aides support general education teachers in meeting the individual learning needs of SWD. This was evident in one of the classrooms where there were three adults present for a group

of nine students. While the lead special education teacher facilitated instruction for a small group of three students, the other students in the class were aided by the two additional adults. As a result, all students received immediate support as needed during their independent activities.

- The school also reported in its questionnaire that social workers support general education teachers in understanding and responding to the behavioral needs of SWD. There was little evidence of this, because at least two SWD went into behavioral crisis during the observations. In each instance the students became frustrated or overwhelmed for an unknown reason, which eventually escalated into them exhibiting bouts of crying, screaming, and throwing objects in the classroom. During both instances teachers demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding how to handle the crisis beyond ensuring that the other students in the room stayed back from the child in crisis. Eventually, an administrator came to the aid of the students in crisis, but in both instances other school staff and students stood conspicuously in the halls to observe what was happening.
- To provide modifications according to the IEPs of SWD, the school stated observers would see students receiving different curriculum and materials, as well as special classroom settings. The QSR team saw evidence of teachers working with students in both a self-contained and resource room setting, where students either worked individually with a special education teacher or in small groups of no more than four students. In one observation students were given the same math packet to complete but they were permitted to work at their own pace and select which worksheets they wanted to complete first. In another observation one group of students using manipulative word blocks to practice reading and word recognition, while the other group used a higher-level workbook, BLAST Foundations, to practice similar skills.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT²

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 56% 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	vironment ofproficient and none of distinguished in thisspect andcomponent. In most observations students and		0%
Rapport			67%
	The QSR team scored 26% of the observations as basic in this component. These observations were marked by occasional disrespect and inconsistency. Many students talked back to their teachers after receiving consequences, saying, "What? I wasn't doing anything!" In several middle school observations teachers attempted to recognize hardworking students but spent more time publically condemning misbehavior by narrating deductions and re-directing students in a way that did not respect their dignity. One teacher inaccurately gave a student a consequence for having the sound on his/her computer even though the sound was off. The student started to cry, and the teacher did not apologize for the mistake. Other teacher used a harsh tone and said phrases such as, "This is for you. I already went to school and know how to do this," or "You are wasting my time."	Basic	26%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	7%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 48% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation students themselves led a small group reading discussion using guiding questions from the teacher. In the same classroom students worked on educational laptop activities and progressed attentively without teacher support. In proficient observations students encouraged their struggling peers and teachers held high expectations by ensuring all students participated. Teachers narrated extra effort with phrases such as, "Shout out to Student X who came in late and still finished	Distinguished	4%
	the morning work!" and "If you are still working, work through snack. I know this is hard, but you can do it." Many students were eager to participate and excited when they answered correctly.		44%
	The QSR team scored 33% of observations as basic in this component. In these observations the teachers did not hold high expectations for all students. In many classrooms teachers facilitated small group discussions for a handful of students while the rest of the class worked independently on iReady ³ , a computer based personalized learning program. Students not working directly with the teacher often became off-task or inefficient while the second adult in the room did little to offer feedback or encouragement.		33%

 $^{^{3} \}underline{\text{https://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/iready/diagnostic-instruction.aspx}}$

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored a disturbingly high 19% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In one observation the majority of class time was dedicated to socializing as a teacher was on the telephone several times during the lesson. In another observation some students kept their heads down during the entire observation. In another observation the classroom environment was completely inappropriate. Some students refused to work or copy down anything off the board. The teacher said, "I have the answer on the board, you don't even have to look at your own work." In another observation a student said, "Oh, it's a challenge? Then I'm not doing it." Meanwhile, the assistant teacher refused to help a student who asked a question. At one point the teacher said, "Oh, you got it right? How do you feel about yourself? More importantly, how do you feel about me?"	Unsatisfactory	19%
Managing Classroom Procedures The QSR team scored 55% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In a distinguished observation the teacher provided clear instruction on how to transition between activities; students subsequently moved from an independent classroom set-up to three small groups in less than 30 seconds. In proficient observations the two teachers in the classroom worked together to successfully direct procedures and maximize		Distinguished	7%
	learning opportunities. Students consistently complied with teacher's prompts and rehearsed routines. In PK classrooms students successfully checked themselves in and out of centers and the restroom without teacher direction.	Proficient	48%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 37% of the observations as basic in this component. Instructional time was lost due to inefficient transitions or confusing directions. Several teachers waited for 100% compliance, repeatedly saying, "I'll wait" over and over until all students had their hands folded on their desks, which led to student frustration. In some observations students working on computers independently needed constant reminders to stay on task. In one observation the class became completely disengaged for nearly ten minutes while the teacher stepped away to deal with a student who was in crisis. The assistant teacher was frequently asleep during the observation.	Basic	37%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	7%
Managing Student Behavior The QSR team scored 56% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In about half of observations student behavior was generally appropriate. Teachers used verbal and non-verbal cues to redirect student behavior such as saying, "We're talking too much let's bring it back," or tapping on unfocused		Distinguished	0%
	students' desks to remind them to get back to work. Teachers often corrected student posture and awarded table groups with stars, points, and verbal praise. In these observations teacher assigned "checks" to students who were disruptive and the system successfully deterred further off-task behaviors.	Proficient	56%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 41% of the observations as basic in this component. Often teachers issued consequences inconsistently. In one observation a student was given a consequence for getting out of his/her seat without permission. Two other students were also out of their seats, but the teacher did not address them, prompting objections from the first students. Similarly, some students were issued "checks" for talking while others talked out of turn without consequence. In a few observations students were sent out of class for a behavior infraction. Other students were either ignored or given "checks" for similar infractions. In these observations students were not consistently deterred by the consequence system. Several continued to talk, wasting class time as teachers repeatedly said, "I'll wait," or "I'm still waiting on a few students"	Basic	41%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	4%

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 44% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Communicating with Students	The QSR team scored 54% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observation the teachers invested students in a clear process for peer-editing, which gave students themselves the opportunity to explain the content to their peers. In proficient observations teachers stated instructions clearly, did not have any content errors,	Distinguished	4%
	and ensured students understood directions and processes for the lesson. Some teachers previewed key vocabulary and text features. Others insisted on precise use of language, such as "dividend" when students first referred to the terms as "the number in the box."	Proficient	50%
	The QSR team rated 38% of observations as basic in this component. In these observations teachers attempted to explain the purpose of the lesson with uneven results. In one observation the instructions were unclear, and students repeatedly asked clarifying questions about how to complete a review game. In other observations teachers used correct language but had difficulty scaffolding instructions in a way that was easy for students to understand. As a result, students were confused and started talking about off-topic subjects. One teacher made a content error by telling students that the planet Mercury is always hot because it's closest to the sun. Another teacher had to look up metric conversions on his/her phone in order to help students with their questions.	Basic	38%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	8%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team rated 31% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished, making this the lowest rated component in the review. In proficient observations teachers asked students to support or disagree with one another's arguments. In some observations every student was engaged in the small group discussion. Some students got so	Distinguished	0%
	excited to discuss the content that they talked out of turn. One teacher respectfully facilitated such as conversation by stating, "Pause. I'm excited you want to respond. Just wait for your turn." These teachers used appropriate use of wait time to ensure most students had opportunities to share their learning.	Proficient	31%
	The QSR team rated 46% of observations as basic in this component. While some teachers asked predominantly low-level or fill-in-the-blank questions, some teachers in basic observations did ask students to explain their thinking. However, only a few students responded throughout the observations. In most of the basic observations students not working directly with the teacher because disengaged after time with their online learning programs. Assistant teachers did little in these observations to motivate the class to work independently.		46%
	The QSR team rated a high 23% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations only a few, if any students participated in discussions. In one observation the teacher repeatedly said, "Who can help us out?" but no one participated so the teacher did all of the problems on the board for students to copy. One student found a mistake in the teacher's work, but the classroom was so chaotic, the student decided to keep the finding to him/herself. In another classroom students answered multiple choice questions. The teacher said, "Raise your hand if you got ABCD. The answer is A." This process repeated for each question and there was no discussion. In another observation all of the answers were on the board and the teacher said, "All you have to do it copy this down."	Unsatisfactory	23%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Engaging Students in Learning	lents in distinguished or proficient in this component. Two		8%
			35%
	The QSR team rated 42% of observations as basic in this component. Student engagement was mixed in these observations. Some eagerly participated while others verbally expressed boredom or frustration with an activity. In these observations students had very little choice in how they completed the activities, so once students became frustrated, they challenged the teacher's efforts to move forward with the lesson. In one observation the pacing of the main group activity dragged significantly and resulted in the students losing focus midway through it. In two classes at least one student stated that they were bored or that the work was "too easy," which visibly impacted their level of engagement after a while. In one observation the students working directly with the teacher in a small group were very engaged, while the rest of the class working on iReady began to stare at their screens or put their heads down.	Basic	42%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team rated 15% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations most students were not intellectually engaged during the majority of the lesson. In one observation a student said that h/she was giving up and the teacher replied, "That's ok. It's your education, not mine. I already know this stuff."	Unsatisfactory	15%
Using Assessment in Instruction	essment in proficient and none as distinguished. In these		0%
			44%
			41%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team rated 15% of observations as unsatisfactory in this component. In these observations there was little to no assessment or monitoring of student learning. When a student got up to ask for help, one teacher said, "I can't help you. I have the rest of the class to deal with." In another observation the teacher monitored only for grading: "Raise your hand if you got A. Please mark it wrong." In another observation students were working to fill in the correct adverbs in a sentence, but all of the answers were on the board, and students simply copied them down.	Unsatisfactory	15%

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 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 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	7%	19%	7%	4%	8%	23%	15%	15%
Basic	26%	33%	37%	41%	38%	46%	42%	41%
Proficient	67%	44%	48%	56%	50%	31%	35%	44%
Distinguished	0%	4%	7%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%
Subdomain Average	2.59	2.33	2.56	2.52	2.50	2.08	2.35	2.30

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	56%	43%
Domain Averages	2.50	2.30