

April 23, 2018

Charles Warner, Board Chair Bridges Public Charter School 100 Gallatin Street, NE Washington, DC 20011

Dear Mr. Warner,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, DC PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. Your school was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2017-18 school year for the following reason:

• School earned a Tier 3 rating in school year 2016-17

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Bridges PCS between February 26 – March 9, 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 Bridges PCS.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux Deputy Director

Enclosures cc: Olivia Smith, Founder/Director

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: April 23, 2018

Campus Information

Campus Name: Bridges Public Charter School (Bridges PCS) Ward: 5 Grade levels: PK3 - 5

Qualitative Site Review Information

Reason for visit: Tier 3 in school year 2016-17 Two-week window: February 26 – March 9, 2018 QSR team members: Two DC PCSB staff members and two consultants, including one special education specialist and one English Learner specialist Number of observations: 22 Total enrollment: 399 Students with Disabilities enrollment: 131 English Language Learners enrollment: 144 In-seat attendance on observation days: Visit 1: February 27, 2018 – 95.4% Visit 2: February 28, 2018 – 96.9% Visit 3: March 1, 2018 – 94.1% Visit 4: March 6, 2018 – 93.6%

Summary

Bridges PCS's mission is "to provide an exemplary educational program that includes all students." As part of its mission, Bridges PCS commits to deliver developmentally appropriate, student and family-centered educational approach nurtures students to expand their developmental skills, in order to build a foundation for life-long learning.

The Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team found Bridges PCS to be a safe and supportive environment. Observers noted that teachers at Bridges PCS demonstrated strong personal rapport with their students. In most observations student participation was high during whole group instruction, small group work, and centers. The QSR team observed that having multiple adults in each classroom often allowed for personalized attention and instruction, which facilitated strong student engagement. However, some instructional tasks were singularly focused with only one correct answer, leading to some missed opportunities for students to stretch their thinking. Many class discussions were narrowly focused or included only a small number of student participants.

Multiple teachers effectively used the same strategies, such as a musical cue to focus students' attention or referring to prominent, student-appended "REACH" (Responsible, Engaged, Acceptance, Creativity, Honesty) displays on each classroom's wall.

During the QSR two-week window, the QSR team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see Appendix I and II). The QSR team scored 79% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the <u>Classroom Environment</u> domain, which is up slightly from the 76% the school earned in this domain during their last QSR in 2014. ¹ The highest rated components in this domain were *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport* and *Managing Student Behavior* with each rated as 86-87% distinguished and proficient. In these observations students and teachers demonstrated warm and caring relationships in well-managed classrooms.

The QSR team scored 66% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the <u>Instruction</u> domain, which is down slightly from the 68% the school earned in this domain during their last QSR in 2014. The highest rated components in this domain were *Communicating with Students* and *Using Assessment in Instruction* with each rated as 73% distinguished and proficient. In these observations teachers articulated learning objectives clearly, and students demonstrated understanding of what quality work looked like for their assigned tasks.

Concerning is the QSR observation results broken down by type of observation. Bridges PCS prides itself on being a school that serves students with disabilities. It implements a preference in the lottery for students with high levels of needs (e.g., require 16+ hours of specialized services) to enroll in their emotional disability and non-categorical self-contained classrooms. However, just half of the observations of these self-contained special education classrooms earned a score of proficient or distinguished in the Classroom Environment domain of the Danielson rubric and just over a third (39%) earned this score in the Instruction domain. More details of these observations can be found below.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

Bridges PCS informed the QSR team that it does not always have students in ISS, but it may be attended by one staff member as needed. No students were in ISS at the time of the QSR team's visit.

<u>Governance</u>

A DC PCSB staff member reviewed the minutes from Bridges' August 29, 2017 board meeting. A quorum was present. The board discussed enrollment, activity on the parent listserv, and communication with families. The board also planned the upcoming board

¹ http://www.dcpcsb.org/qualitative-site-review/2014-15-bridges-qsr

retreat. The Bridges Board of Trustees has not yet submitted any other board meeting minutes to DC PCSB in school year 2017-18.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

The QSR team scored 53% of the special education observations as proficient or distinguished in the Classroom Environment domain of the Danielson rubric and 39% in the Instruction domain. Prior to the two-week window, Bridges PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated program across its continuum of educational settings. Overall the school program implemented co-teaching and resources to support the needs of SWD across settings with uneven success.

- To promote student learning, the school reported that they provide resources such as assistant teachers, dedicated aides, assistive technology, manipulatives, and other instructional materials. Although all five observations featured aides and/or assistant teachers, they only actively supported student learning and behavior in two out of five observations. In these same proficient observations, materials, including stamps, flashcards, puzzles, clocks, iPads, and augmentative and alternative communication devices, enhanced each lesson's instructional purpose. However, in other observations, manipulatives and visuals were not used, or their implementation did not engage students intellectually.
- To provide accommodations according to the IEPs of SWD, the school stated that reviewers might see: small groups, frequent breaks, repetition of directions, proximity to the teacher, calculators, and visual organizers. The use of accommodations depended on the setting, with more found in self-contained rooms, and their effectiveness varied. Across the continua, there were many examples of small-group learning opportunities; however, students not working with the teacher were not always engaged in the task at hand.
- To provide modifications according to the IEPs of SWD, the school wrote that some students complete fewer problems or work on differentiated assignments based on their readiness level. In self-contained classrooms that implement modified curricula, students engaged inconsistently. Students at many stations produced high-quality work and demonstrated high motivation. Some teachers visibly tracked student progress on IEP goals. At other times students disengaged or did not have a follow-up activity if they finished early.

Specialized Support for English Learners (ELs)

Prior to the two-week window, Bridges PCS outlined their model of instruction for ELs. The school explained that their approach is based on Stephen Krashen's theory of

comprehensible input, which emphasizes making content understandable. The school provides visuals including objects and materials from everyday life, scaffolding supports, connections to personal experiences, and previewed vocabulary. Their English Language Acquisition model is based on a combination of pull-out and push-in services. The EL specialist on the QSR team observed the EL teacher effectively scaffolding grade level material to make it accessible through the use of visual aids, direct questioning, and focused vocabulary. The EL teacher supported the English language acquisition of the EL students with fidelity to the model and theoretical framework outlined in the EL questionnaire.

During the two-week window, the EL specialist observed best practices to support English literacy and fluency. In one observation the teacher used sight word vocabulary cards to engage the students in a speed reading game. In another, the teacher used visuals of key vocabulary words. Teachers engaged students one-on-one and in small groups, using questioning (e.g., "So what did we just read? How many chicks were there?") and informal assessments (e.g., "How are we doing?" "Did you get that?"), and visual checks to gauge the progress and needs of each student. The EL teacher used specific language objectives to drive the instruction, appropriate language-leveled materials and activities, and allowed sufficient wait-time for students to answer questions. Students were engaged and eager to participate, even when they were reluctant to speak. The teacher valued and respected the students' contributions by offering verbal and non-verbal encouragement and support.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT²

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environment 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 79% of classrooms as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Classroom Environment domain. Please see Appendix III for a breakdown of each subdomain score.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team scored 87% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Interactions in these observations were warm and respectful. Students were typically eager to participate and take academic risks. Teachers also demonstrated interest in their students' lives outside of school. In one observation the teacher celebrated	Distinguished	32%
	Proficient	55%	
	The QSR team scored 13% of the observations as basic in this component. These observations were characterized by neutral or uneven interactions between students and teachers. In classrooms with a lead teacher and aides present, some adults spoke to students with occasional disrespect or insensitivity, while others attempted to make positive connections with students. Students rarely demonstrated disrespect towards another, but when they did, teachers attempted to respond with uneven results. In one observation during multiple instances a student made a noise, and a classmate asked him/her to stop. The teacher reiterated the need for the noisy student to stop, but the student continued.	Basic	13%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

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

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating	
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 73% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers demonstrated enthusiasm for the content and used precise academic language, often successfully encouraging students to do the same. Students showed excitement as they made progress towards their goals, and teachers praised students for their efforts ("You're doing great, and this is a relatively new skill!"). In one distinguished observation the teacher communicated enthusiasm	Distinguished	9%	
	Proficient	64%		
	The QSR team scored 27% of the observations as basic in this component. In several observations student participation was limited, and teachers demonstrated minimal interest in the subject matter. In multiple observations teachers at various stations appear to be only "going through the motions," and did not consistently correct students when they provided partially right answers or did not demonstrate consistent effort.			
	The QSR team score none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%	
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 71% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component Students transitioned efficiently among a range of activities, including centers, whole-group activities at desks and on the carpet, and independent or group work with minimal or no instructional time lost. Classroom materials were clearly organized in labeled bins on shelves around the room and on	Distinguished	33%	

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	students' tables. Students were able to access everything they needed to effectively complete their assignments. In distinguished observations students often helped one another in managing classroom procedures. In one observation two students took on the assigned and clearly understood role of computer distributor during group activity work time. This created a quick transition in which all students received laptops, took them to their tables, opened them, and activated the appropriate applications. Both the students distributing computers and the students receiving them moved purposefully as the teacher provided specific encouragements such as, "I see [Student X] is moving quickly to get to work." In another observation the students happily sang a "standing in line" song before walking out of the classroom in an orderly fashion.	Proficient	38%
	The QSR team scored 29% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations teachers' mismanagement of materials led to lost instructional time. In one observation the teacher spent approximately ten minutes of the observation sitting at their table on the laptop or outside of the classroom getting supplies. In another observation the teacher had to interrupt the one-on-one assessment they were doing several times to get additional materials. The students responded slowly to the teachers' instructions, leading to lost instructional time. In multiple observations the teacher had to put materials away themselves because students did not complete the tasks as directed. In station activities where a teacher worked intensively with one group while other students worked independently, the students who were supposed to work independently were often confused or off-task. In one observation instead of transitioning appropriately to independent work a group of five students talked and played on the carpet for more than five minutes before the teacher reminded them to follow the classroom procedures of discussing the assignment for independent work.	Basic	29%
	The QSR team score none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Unsatisfactory	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Managing Student Behavior	udent proficient or distinguished in this component.		27%
	Proficient	59%	
	The QSR team scored 14% of the observations as basic in this component. Although classroom expectations (e.g., listening, learning, looking eyes, calm bodies) appear to have been established, teachers and aides referenced them with uneven success. In one observation a teacher's response to student behavior was inconsistent. Although many students were off-task, talking among themselves, and not participating, the teacher only publicly redirected one student, asking her to leave the carpet. The student groaned, then moved back to her seat. In one observation the classroom had a clearly defined but inconsistently used behavior chart on the wall. The teacher prompted some students to use the behavior chart repeatedly but did not prompt other students in the class who were off-task to use it once.	Basic	14%
	The QSR team score none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

INSTRUCTION

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Instruction domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 66% 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 73% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers delivered lessons with clear and concise purposes, they effectively delivered step-by-step	Distinguished	9%	
	directions with appropriate modeling. In one observation the teacher anticipated potential areas of difficulty and helped students talk through a series of strategies "if you get stuck." Teachers' language was consistently appropriate and free of errors.	Proficient	64%	
	The QSR team scored 23% of the observations as basic in this component. Teachers provided unclear or limited explanations of the purposes of assigned tasks. In one observation while reviewing spelling rules for verbs and irregular plural nouns, the teacher moved quickly through more than ten concepts without checking for understanding. In another observation both the teacher and the assistant had to clarify directions several times in their small groups. The teacher did not give a purpose for assignments. For example, when students were told to paint around their traced silhouette one student asked, "But why?" and the assistant responded, "Just trust me."	Basic	23%	
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	4%	

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 47% of the observations as proficient in this component and none as distinguished. Teachers provided multiple opportunities for all students to engage in a mix of open-ended questions (e.g. "Why do you think that is true?") and peer-to-peer dialogue. In one	Distinguished	0%
	observation the teacher provided significant wait time and spoke about sending a hesitant student "positive vibes" until the student constructively contributed to the discussion. While students only occasionally built upon one another's comments, teachers frequently repeated, affirmed, and discussed students' contributions during class discussions.	Proficient	47%
	The QSR team scored 53% of the observations as basic in this component. Many teachers moved through entire lines of closed-ended questioning in which there was only a single correct answer to every question. In some observations discussions involved only a small number of students while others sat silently for the entirety of the discussion.	Basic	53%
	The QSR team score none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	dents in distinguished or proficient in this component. Learning tasks were open-ended and allowed students to engage in multiple ways. Teachers made effective use of centers, where students		9%
	actively engaged in a range of tasks using different materials. The instructional materials such as magnetic letters, number boards, and tablets enhanced instructional purposes and appropriately supported students' learning.	Proficient	59%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 32% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations teachers offered a range of tasks and materials, but rarely included opportunities for students to explain their thinking. In some observations participation and engagement was inconsistent. In one observation two out of seven students finished the assigned worksheet quickly and did not have a follow-up activity. They sat and talked to each other while the teacher repeatedly asked them to be quiet while others were working. Lesson pacing was uneven; teachers would move very quickly though large amounts of content before shifting quickly into lengthy independent work times in which not all students were engaged.		31%
	The QSR team score none of the observations as unsatisfactory.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction	distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations close monitoring of student progress was evident as teachers employed a range of strategies including questioning and conferencing after checking students' written work. Teachers made a point to recognize students' successes in addition to identifying errors or opportunities to provide a better answer.		18%
	In one observation the teacher said, "I'm so proud of you. You did 24. Do you feel good? You've been learning and growing!" In another observation student were invited to share their thinking with the whole class after working on an activity when the teacher asked, "What made you put that answer?" Students understood assignment criteria and what they needed to do in order to earn a top score.	Proficient	55%

Instruction	Evidence	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 18% of the observations as basic in this component. Students received limited criteria or clarity for the learning tasks. In one observation the teacher did not engage with students during independent work time and did not attempt to monitor student understanding or provide feedback. In other observations feedback was frequently general (e.g. "Good job") rather than specific, and not often oriented towards future improvement of work.	Basic	18%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	9%

APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	nt of d Rapportboth between the teacher and students and amongare generally appropriate and freereflect general warmth and caring, and are		reflect general warmth and caring, and are respectful of the cultural and developmental differences among	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.

Percent of:	2a	2b	2c	2d	3α	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	9%
Basic	14%	27%	29%	14%	23%	53%	32%	18%
Proficient	55%	64%	38%	59%	64%	47%	59%	55%
Distinguished	32%	9%	33%	27%	9%	0%	9%	18%
Subdomain Average	3.18	2.82	3.05	3.14	2.77	2.47	2.77	2.82

Appendix III: SCORE BREAKDOWN BY COMPONENT

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	79%	66%
Domain Averages	3.05	2.71