

Jack McCarthy, Board Chair AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School – Southeast 2017 Savannah Terrace SE Washington, DC 20020

Dear Mr. McCarthy:

The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews (QSR) to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. Your school was selected to undergo a QSR during the 2013-14 school year for the following reason:

• School is eligible for a 10-year Charter Review during the 2014-15 school year

### **Qualitative Site Review Report**

A QSR team conducted on-site review visits of AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School – Southeast (AppleTree PCS – Southeast) between March 31 and April 11, 2014. The purpose of the site review is for PCSB to gauge the extent to which the school's goals and student academic achievement expectations were evident in the everyday operations of the public charter school. To ascertain this PCSB staff and consultants evaluated your classroom teaching by using an abridged version of the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* observation rubric. Members of the QSR team conducted 30 to 45 minute observations in classrooms. The QSR team scored each observation based on the critical attributes outlined in the *Framework for Teaching*. The team also visited a board meeting in order to observe the school's governance as it relates to fulfilling its mission, and charter goals.

The QSR team's report is attached. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: charter mission and goals, classroom environments, and instructional delivery. The QSR results for the school were exceptionally strong. Congratulations!

We appreciate the assistance and hospitality that you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at AppleTree PCS – Southeast. Thank you for your continued cooperation as PCSB makes every effort to ensure that AppleTree PCS is in compliance with its charter.

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux Deputy Director

Enclosures cc: School Leader

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School – Southeast (AppleTree PCS – Southeast) serves students in pre-kindergarten - 3 (PK3) and pre-kindergarten - 4 (PK4) at the Douglas Knoll and Parklands facilities located in Southeast Washington, DC. Both facilities contain PK3 and PK4 classrooms. The school serves 74 students in PK3 through PK4 and is part of a five campus pre-kindergarten network serving over 600 students. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) at both the Douglas Knoll and Parklands facilities in April 2014 because AppleTree PCS is eligible for a 10-year Charter Review during 2014-15.

The QSR team conducted observations over a two-week window from March 31 through April 11, 2014. A team of one PCSB staff member and one consultant conducted observations of eight classrooms, four at each facility. In each of the classrooms, there was a lead teacher, teaching assistant, and teaching fellow. For the purpose of this report, an adult delivering instruction to students will be referred to as a "teacher." The spirit of the QSR process is to identify the educational experience for all students, inclusive of students with disabilities, at a particular school. The results of this QSR are thus reflective of what the QSR teams observed in all learning environments. Members of the QSR team visited the school on multiple days throughout this two-week window and saw classes in the morning and in the afternoon. In some instances the QSR team may have observed one teacher twice. In addition to this two-week window, a PCSB staff member attended the January 28, 2014 Board of Trustees meeting in order to observe the school's governance as it relates to fulfilling its mission and charter goals.

AppleTree PCS's mission is to provide young children with the social, emotional and cognitive foundations that will enable them to succeed in school. The QSR team saw evidence that the school is fulfilling its mission and meeting its goals throughout AppleTree PCS – Southeast. Students participated in frequent social interaction during the observations. Teachers asked open-ended questions and students discussed what they learned with peers. In several observations teachers worked in small groups and gave students individualized instruction and feedback. Students also tried to solve their own conflicts with teacher guidance.

The QSR team rated 84% of classroom observations as proficient or above in the Classroom Environment domain. The highest rated component within the Classroom Environment domain was Establishing a Culture for Learning with 100% of classroom observations rated as proficient or exemplary. Teachers expressed a high regard for students' abilities. Additionally teachers recognized and expected student effort. Routines and procedures were well established and students transitioned smoothly, even without teacher direction in a couple cases. The lead teachers, teaching assistants, and teaching fellows worked in tandem to monitor student behavior and encourage positive interactions.

The QSR team scored 66% of the observations as proficient or above in the Instructional Delivery domain. The highest rated component within the Instructional Delivery domain was Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques with 75% of the observations scoring proficient. Teachers asked questions that prompted students to give a variety of answers in almost all of the observations. In several cases teachers
Qualitative Site Review Report AppleTree PCS – Southeast May 23, 2014

encouraged student to build on peers' responses. Students were consistently engaged in learning tasks, and teachers provided choice in the learning for students. Teachers presented content to small groups of students and modeled how to complete learning tasks. In the observations scoring below proficient, teachers asked primarily recall questions and did not use appropriate vocabulary or pacing in the lessons.

## CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS, AND BOARD GOVERNANCE

This table summarizes AppleTree PCS's goals and academic achievement expectations as detailed in its charter and subsequent Accountability Plans, and the evidence that the Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team observed of the school meeting those goals during the QSR Visit.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Mission: The mission of AppleTree Early Learning PCS is to provide young children with the social, emotional and cognitive foundations that will enable them to succeed in school.	The QSR team observed evidence that AppleTree PCS – Southeast is carrying out its mission.
	Social and emotional foundation: There was evidence that the school provides students with a social foundation. The students played and worked together in every observation. Teachers reminded students how to share appropriately, when necessary, and the students were generally comfortable completing tasks with each other. The QSR team also observed teachers using a "Sit and Watch" chair. Students were directed to sit in
	this chair and watch other students who were following directions. The classroom environments allowed students to celebrate each other's successes. Teachers encouraged students to keep trying when they made a mistake. In one classroom where parents visited, the students told the parents about how they learned to tell whether things were a "big deal" or a "little deal," as it related to how they learned to address issues that arose in class.
	<i>Cognitive foundation:</i> The QSR team saw evidence that the school provides a cognitive foundation. Teachers asked open-ended questions and created opportunities for students to express their thinking. Students received small group instruction where teachers targeted questions and feedback to students individually. Teachers assessed students individually on skill development.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
PMF Goal # 1: Student Progress – Academic Improvement over time <i>Effective Instruction supporting student academic progress and achievement in reading and math.</i>	Teachers instructed students in phonics where students learned about letter sounds and rhyming words. Classroom activities included students practicing the sounds that individual letters and letter pairings made as well as choosing the rhyming words in a poem. Students also explored literacy within the centers instruction through a variety of activities. Teachers worked with students on counting and foundational
	numeracy. The QSR team observed students doing various counting activities from singing along with a counting video to counting to a certain number in order to be dismissed to snack. Counting numbers were posted on the stairs and in the hallways for students to practice.
PMF Goal #2: Student Achievement – Meeting or exceeding academic standards Moving students to advanced levels of proficiency in reading and math.	Students worked in small groups with a teacher in the majority of observations. Teachers gave students individual attention in the small groups and assessed their work in real-time. In a few observations teachers also gave students feedback on their work quickly and guided students to make adjustments.
	When students were in the whole group setting, teachers asked open- ended questions and encouraged different approaches to responding. One teacher asked the class what they knew about dinosaurs. Students gave answers ranging from their size to their diet to their time period. The teacher reminded the class about a book they had read on dinosaurs when students ran out of ideas.
PMF Goal #3: Gateway – Outcomes in key subjects that predict future educational success <i>Promotion of reading proficiency by third grade and math proficiency</i>	See evidence described in goals #1 and #2 above.

Mission and Goals	Evidence		
by eighth grade			
PMF Goal #4: Leading Indicators – Predictors of future student progress and achievement <i>Culture of learning and support in the classrooms</i>	Teachers promoted a culture of learning and support in classrooms by creating warm and welcoming environments for students in which students help one another. Teachers greeted students and talked to them at eye level. Teachers encouraged students to celebrate peers after a student volunteered to do a job or give an answer. In one observation of a class at Outdoor Play, students rushed in to help when a classmate fell down on the playground. Additionally, teachers gave students strategies to talk to their peers rather than just intervening to solve the dispute when students had disagreements. Please refer to the Classroom Environment domain of Establishing a Culture for Learning for additional information		
Board Governance	Culture for Learning for additional information. Two overlapping governing boards that attend one joint meeting oversee AppleTree Institute and AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School. A PCSB staff member observed the board meeting on January 28, 2014. Both boards carried out business for both entities at this meeting. It was not clear which board members were on which board. At the January 28 <sup>th</sup> board meeting, seventeen board members were in attendance and they voted for Cal Leonard (consultant from the New Schools Venture Fund) to join the board. It was unclear which board he joined, but all 17 members voted, which leads PCSB to believe he is part of the Institute's board but not the charter school's. On May 2, 2014, AppleTree clarified that the eleven members of the AppleTree Early Learning PCS Board are also on the AppleTree Institute board with other members. While on paper there is a distinction, in practice, there still appears to be a conflict of interest. Additionally while not in conflict with the School Reform Act, the board chair of the school is also the President and CEO of AppleTree Early Learning PCS, which is not a best practice.		

Mission and Goals	Evidence
	AppleTree Institute provides services to other DC public charter schools, including CLASS observation evaluations and has proposed to PCSB to conduct the CLASS observations for the AppleTree Early Learning PCS campuses. While the board meeting is divided into two sections and the board chair stopped a vote on charter school finances during the AppleTree Institute portion of the meeting, acknowledging the PCSB observer, this division of the Board's business is not enough to provide sufficient independence between the two entities to allow for AppleTree Institute to evaluate AppleTree Early Learning PCS. During the public charter school portion of the meeting, Anne Malone, Chief of Schools, reported on attendance goals and MySchoolDC applications. Ms. Malone also spoke on teacher retention and school culture. The board approved an amended budget and discussed the upcoming charter 10-year review.

# **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</sup>**

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. PCSB considers any rating below "proficient" to be under the standard of quality expected of DC charter schools. The QSR team scored 84% of the observations as "proficient" or "exemplary" for the Classroom Environment domain.

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wi	de Rating
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team scored 88% of the observations as proficient in Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport. Teachers and students generally had positive interactions throughout the observations. In the rare instances when students behaved disrespectfully toward each other, teachers responded quickly and students changed their behavior. Several teachers connected with students by getting down on the carpet and working with students on their level. In a couple <u>of</u> observations parents visited the classroom for family engagement day. They were welcomed by the teachers and students and invited to explore the classroom	Exemplary	0%
	and participate in activities. Teachers and students engaged in positive interactions through actions and words. Students asked teachers for help with tying shoes and opening snack bags by regularly saying "please" and "thank you." Students called classmates by their first names when speaking to each other. Teachers also used hand motions and signals such as clapping hands, smiling faces, and high fives when students met or exceed expectations to indicate feelings.	Proficient	88%
	Observations scoring below proficient had inconsistent interactions between teachers and students. In one instance a teacher loudly reproached a student for	Satisfactory	12%
	eating out of the trashcan at the end of snack time, which caused the other students to tease that student. The teacher did not redirect the teasing.	Limited	0%

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School W	ide Rating
<b>Establishing a Culture for</b> <b>Learning</b> The QSR team scored 100% of the observations as proficient or exemplary in Establishing a Culture for Learning. Teachers encouraged students to try their best and expressed belief in students' ability to do good work. Teachers continued to work with students who struggled to come up a correct response. Two students took the initiative to correct themselves when they answered a question incorrectly.	Exemplary	12%	
	Teachers recognized students for high quality work in the classroom. They gave students high-fives after responses and encouraged the students to congratulate classmates on good work. Students gave a classmate high-fives as he returned to his seat from the board without any prompting in one observation. Teachers also made frequent comments like, "You guys are so smart."	Proficient	88%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations below proficient.	Satisfactory	0%
		Limited	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 75% of the observations as proficient or exemplary in Managing Classroom Procedures. The classrooms in these observations had established procedures that students executed consistently well. No instructional time was lost during transitions because students knew what to do and did it efficiently. One teacher sang a short song to remind students that one minute remained in the activity, then students cleaned up and prepared to transition on their own. Another teacher rang a bell, and all of the students froze in place to	Exemplary	25%

<b>Classroom Environment</b>	Evidence Observed	School Wi	de Rating
	wait for the next direction. Students initiated classroom procedures in two of the observations; they knew exactly what do and did it without any assistance from the teachers. In the art center the students took charge of putting on smocks, getting out paper and paintbrushes, and starting to paint while the teacher assigned other students to centers across the room.	Proficient	50%
	The observations that scored less than proficient lost instructional time due to uneven transitions. Teachers had established routines, but they were not consistently enforced or followed. For example a teacher had nametags for students to hang next to the centers they wished to attend to help with	Satisfactory	25%
overcrowding. Each center only had four hangers so that no more than four students could work at each center at a time. The students, however, moved freely between centers without moving their nametags causing two centers to become overcrowded and chaotic. In another observation the teacher called on students to choose a center, but once the students chose a center, they did not move to the center immediately. This delay disturbed the other students waiting to be called.	Limited	0%	
Managing Student Behavior		Exemplary	0%
	the issues. A student in one observation tossed a toy car into the air and the teacher immediately approached the student, picked up the toy, and told the student that she would hold it for the student. The student refocused on the lesson without further distractions.	Proficient	75%
		Satisfactory	25%

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	In two observations teachers did not implement standards for student conduct consistently. A teacher in one observation attempted to keep track of poor student conduct saying, "The next time I ask, you're going to Sit and Watch," but the teacher did not have a clear system to keep track of the misbehavior so that when the student misbehaved again, s/he was not sent to the "Sit and Watch" chair. Another teacher did not administer consequences consistently sending one student to the "Sit and Watch" chair for refusing to work with the small group while ignoring other students who were exhibiting similar behavior.	Limited	0%

### **INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY**

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Instructional Delivery elements of the rubric during the unannounced visits. PCSB considers any rating below "proficient" to be under the standard of quality expected of DC charter schools. The QSR team scored 66% of the observations as "proficient" or "exemplary" for the Instructional Delivery domain.

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wi	de Rating
Communicating with Students	Communicating with Students. Teachers in these observations articulated the purpose of the activity to students and students repeated back to her or to one another. Teachers gave explanations using age-appropriate language and clear	Exemplary	0%
directions causing students to engage with the learning activities appropriately and without needing clarification. One teacher modeled a color identification activity for students, and all of the students did it correctly. A teacher in another observation stopped at intentional places in a read aloud to ask questions that pushed students to recall details, make predictions, and use predictive text features. In the observations scoring below proficient, teachers gave directions, which required students to ask clarifying questions in order to do the activities. One teacher gave directions to the whole group on how to do a rhyming words activity; however, every time a new student came up to the chart paper to do the activity, the student asked what to do. One teacher used vocabulary in a poem that was too advanced for the students, so she ended up skipping some words and students became confused.	Proficient	63%	
	Satisfactory	37%	
	the activity, the student asked what to do. One teacher used vocabulary in a poem that was too advanced for the students, so she ended up skipping some	Limited	0%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wi	de Rating
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 75% of observations as proficient in Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Teachers asked open-ended questions and welcomed multiple approaches to answering questions. All of the observations scoring proficient included teachers asking students questions like "What words start with the letter N?" and "Tell me what you mean by 'big'," which prompted students to share ideas and talk freely. One teacher asked students to respond by adding on to what their classmates had said.	Exemplary	0%
	Teachers encouraged student participation. The students were generally eager to answer questions and almost every student raised a hand to be called on after every question. When a student was not getting to the answer quickly in one observation, the teacher waited, allowing the student to collect his thoughts and respond.	Proficient	75%
	In the observations rated below proficient, students did not have opportunities to discuss what they were learning. Teachers asked recall questions about the content, but students were not invited to respond to each other or expand	Satisfactory	25%
	responses beyond the expected answer. Two students in one observation answered the majority of questions asked.	Limited	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 63% of the observations as proficient or exemplary in Engaging Students in Learning. Teachers used activities that kept almost all students intellectually engaged throughout the observation. In several observations students worked in centers where they were able to take multiple approaches to tasks. Students had significant choice and were able to move freely between centers without teacher direction or waiting for peers to be	Exemplary	13%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School Wi	de Rating
	done. Additionally teachers used a variety of materials and resources when working with small and whole groups of students. Virtually all students in the observations scoring proficient or above enthusiastically engaged in the lesson.	Proficient	50%
	The QSR team scored 37% of the observations as below proficient. Students did not have opportunities to be fully engaged in these observations. Teachers primarily modeled the work without including students or students watched their peers solve problems without an invitation to comment.	Satisfactory	37%
	Some teachers did not call on the students who were distracted or sitting improperly, causing only students who could sit quietly to fully participate in the learning task. Some students had trouble keeping the pace with a video of a song, which resulted in about half of the students not participating in that activity.	Limited	0%
Using Assessment in Instruction		Exemplary	0%
	them immediate feedback to help them adjust if they made an error. In two observations teachers assessed students individually where students isolated the number of phonemes in given terms. Teachers also assessed students on using pictures of "rare words," where students produced the name of each picture.	Proficient	63%
	In the observations scoring below proficient, teachers did not consistently provide feedback to students. One teacher watched students working in centers but made no attempt to give students feedback when they were not	Satisfactory	25%

Instructional Delivery	Evidence Observed	School W	ide Rating
	completing the activities at the center properly according to the instructions. Another teacher attempted to assess students' understanding by asking them to identify words and sounds, but the teacher gave students the answer before they could respond.	Limited	12%

## APPENDIX I: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Classroom Environment	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.

Classroom Environment	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.

Instructional Delivery	Limited	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
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.