

March 31, 2016

Melanie Bowen, Board Chair Creative Minds Public Charter School 3700 North Capitol Street NW Washington, DC 20011

Dear Ms. Bowen:

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducts Qualitative Site Reviews to gather and document evidence to support school oversight. According to the School Reform Act § 38-1802.11, PCSB shall monitor the progress of each school in meeting the goals and student academic achievement expectations specified in the school's charter. Your school was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2015-16 school year for the following reason:

o School eligible for 5-year Charter Review during 2016-17 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report

A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Creative Minds Public Charter School between February 1 and February 12, 2016. Enclosed is the team's report. You will find that the Qualitative Site Review Report focuses primarily on the following areas: charter mission and goals, classroom environments, and instructional delivery.

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

Sincerely,

Naomi DeVeaux Deputy Director

Enclosures cc: Golnar Abedin

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: March 31, 2016

Campus Name: Creative Minds Public Charter School

Ward: 1

Grade levels: PK3 - 5 **Enrollment:** 237

Reason for visit: School eligible for 5-year Charter Review in SY2016-17

Two-week window: February 1-12, 2016

Number of observations: 17

Summary

Creative Minds Public Charter School is designed to provide a supportive and positive environment for learning. This design includes the use of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) for part of the day in all grade levels. The school's mission states: "The goal of Creative Minds Public Charter School is to offer students a positive learning experience within a comprehensive education program that involves a highly engaged international, project-based curriculum, includes the arts, and integrates standards-based literacy and math instruction in supportive small classrooms." All members of the Qualitative Site Review (QSR) team noted the positive and respectful interactions throughout the school and amongst all members of the school community.

The QSR team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to score two domains: Classroom Environment and Instruction. The QSR team scored 88% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. None of the observations were rated as unsatisfactory. Almost half of the observations in the domain of, "Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport" were rated as distinguished, the highest rating on the rubric. In these observations teachers demonstrated a high level of care and concern for individual students and students exhibited high levels of respect for their peers and teachers. The QSR team scored 82% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. Students were given choices, both in terms of the center-time work they engaged in, as well as how they wanted to demonstrate their learning. Most students were intellectually engaged in openended learning tasks throughout the grade levels.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Per the school's responses to the *Special Education Questionnaire*, the Creative Minds PCS staff takes "a collaborative approach in determining instructional outcomes for students with disabilities." The QSR team observed four different classrooms where students with disabilities were present, including: 1) a one-on-one pull-out session for literacy with a fifth grade student; 2) an inclusion class of 15 kindergarten students where both a general education teacher and a special education teacher monitored the class; 3) a small-group pull-out session for second grade reading, and 4) a self-contained class of seven fifth grade students during their daily math lesson. In these observations teachers implemented various instructional supports to enhance and support students' learning during instruction. Students demonstrated evidence of prior knowledge at the start of

each lesson before the teachers proceeded to introduce new content. Observers noted differentiation of learning in both inclusion and self-contained instructional settings. Students were given a great deal of choice regarding which activities they would participate in for that day, and how they chose to complete some of their assigned tasks and activities.

The quality of instruction for students with disabilities was strong in most of the observations, however observers also noted that many questions had a single path of inquiry or pre-determined correct answers, teachers did not facilitate discussions among students about the content and did not assess student understanding during the lesson. In one Special Education observation, the teacher mismanaged instructional time, which resulted in them not having enough time to fully explain and facilitate the lesson. Overall students and staff appeared to have a positive rapport with one another. Their communication was respectful and the students with disabilities appeared to be comfortable in their learning environment.

Instruction for English Language Learners

Prior to the two-week window, Creative Minds PCS submitted answers to a questionnaire developed by DC PCSB related to the school's provision of services for the school's English Language Learner (ELL) population. In its responses the school explained that it offers an English as a Second Language (ESL) program that includes Content-Based ESL (CBE) and Pull-out ESL (POE). Creative Minds PCS described co-planning between general educators and the ELL teacher to help focus their instruction on the academic vocabulary students need, as well as their needs in reading comprehension and writing.

The QSR team observed tailored support for ELLs in both CBE and POE. The ELL teacher had a positive rapport with her students and created an environment where students worked respectfully with one another. Students had ample opportunities to practice their oral English language skills, engaging in informal conversations about their families, their hobbies, and recess plans. Students were also given assignments that incorporated the four language domains – reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In one pullout session, students shared screenplays they had written with one another and offered feedback and suggestions to one another.

The ELL teacher used frequent repetition and incorporated key academic vocabulary in her speech to build and correct students' speech and writing. The teacher introduced each session with the purpose and explanation of that day's assignment, thus providing students with clear connections between the student's general education classroom lesson and the POE. The ELL teacher continued to review and informally assess students throughout the task. In one observation the teacher demonstrated high regard for the students' abilities, noting challenging tasks and the students' positive determination to accomplish the assignment. Supports came in the form of sufficient wait time, context clues highlighted in reading exercises, and scaffolding from higher-level comprehension questions. Questions were developed based on student responses and ideas in order to monitor student understanding as well as to increase academic language in students' writing, such as adjectives and metaphors. There were high levels of student participation



CHARTER MISSION, GOALS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS

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

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Mission: The goal of Creative Minds Public Charter School is to offer students a positive learning experience within a comprehensive education program that involves a highly engaged international, project-based curriculum, includes the arts, and integrates standards-based literacy and math instruction in supportive small classrooms.	The QSR team saw strong evidence that Creative Minds PCS is meeting its mission in the vast majority of its classrooms. Throughout the observations, students and teachers worked together on projects connected to the themes from the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). Positive attitudes towards learning, high levels of engagement, numerous opportunities to make choices, and various projects that focus on the arts, literacy, and math were evident. The bulletin boards and work displayed in the hallways explained the themes, the unit questions the students were focusing on, and the work they were doing to investigate the questions. Student work or pictures of students working were often accompanied by quotes from the students. Students led many of the classroom activities and worked in a lively, focused manner during centers. Most classrooms had more than one adult, thus providing students with access to additional support if needed.
Goals: Reading - students will demonstrate strong English language arts and literacy skills, as indicated by: Teaching Strategies GOLD, the developmental reading assessment, and State assessments in reading.	The QSR team observed reading instruction in several settings, including a Special Education pullout, a reading/writing block, and literacy centers. During classroom literacy instruction times, students were reading and writing, but at times without needed support or guidance.

Mission and Goals	Evidence
Math - students will demonstrate a solid foundation in mathematics concepts, computations, and problem solving, as indicated by: Teaching Strategies GOLD, Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation, and the State assessment in mathematics.	In many math observations, teachers and students built a solid understanding of mathematical concepts and problem solving through the use of manipulatives. In upper grades students represented place value on paper with drawings and discussed how they arrived at their answers.
Arts and Foreign Languages - students will actively engage in visual, performing arts, and foreign language based learning, as indicated by class schedules, IPC unit plans, and sample work.	The QSR team observed the arts in specials classes, integrated into centers and IPC units, and throughout the hallways. Students sang and danced in music class. The teacher showed students different instruments including a piccolo, flute, and a ukulele. Students also participated in miming activities in the drama class. Students practiced mirroring the teacher and pretended to go up and down elevators and escalators.
International - CMI will successfully implement the International Early Years and Primary Curriculum (IPC), as indicated by: IPC self-review and IPC External Review Rating of developing or mastering.	Observers noted that the school effectively implements IPC as evidenced by student work and posters about current themes displayed throughout the building, as well as in class discussions. Staff and students work on thematic project-based activities and infuse personal goals (integrity, respect, cooperation, resilience, communication, adaptability, thoughtfulness, inquiry) in all aspects of the curriculum and school culture. Teachers referred to these personal goals during whole group instruction, centers, classroom management, and one-on-one when consoling a child, "You are resilient, right?"
Governance	DC PCSB staff reviewed the school's board minutes from December 14, 2015. A quorum was present. The board

Mission and Goals	Evidence
THE STATE OF THE S	discussed middle school planning, including securing an architect and the phases of the proposed renovation. The board also approved the budget for the upcoming renovation.
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THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT¹

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environments domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The label definitions for classroom observations of "distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory" are those from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 88% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Classroom Environment domain.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide l	Rating
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team rated 94% of the observations as either distinguished or proficient in this component. High levels of civility, respect, and care characterized the interactions between nearly all staff and students. Teachers praised effort. In most observations there were few to no incidents of disrespectful behavior. In one distinguished observation, two primary students were arguing over a book. The teacher asked them, "Can you guys work this out? I'll hold the book until you work it out." The teacher left the table and one student said, "I didn't like it	Distinguished	47%
	when you took the book." The other student said, "I didn't like it when you grabbed the book." The teacher came back and asked if the students had worked everything out together. This time the students nodded "yes," got the book back, and began to read together. Teachers and students shared personal anecdotes and played a class game where all students participated and appeared comfortable taking risks. There was clear evidence in this and many other classrooms that teachers knew their students well and connected to their lives outside of school.	Proficient	47%
	The QSR team rated less than 10% of observations as basic in this component.	Basic	6%

¹ Different review team members may observe teachers more than once.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Students appeared to be invested in the quality of their work and teachers communicated high expectations for the vast majority of students. These teachers asked students to correct their work, explain their work, and look for resources to help them when they needed it. One student asked how to spell something, and a teacher reminded them of	Distinguished	6%
	ways they could look it up and find out. In one observation the teacher provided multiple opportunities to practice challenging sounds until the student correctly pronounced the words. Students also expressed enthusiasm in another activity and took pride in their work, requesting time to think about their next paragraphs and stating "I thought it would be nice to write a story that happened in the future," in addition to their current work.	Proficient	82%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 12% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations the teachers both were neutral about the content and the students' learning, as evidenced by a lack of explanation of purpose for the tasks. In one observation the teacher appeared to be only "going through the motions." The teacher	Racio	12%
	did not engage with students to inquire about or support their learning. Students spent the majority of the observation independently reading with little to no guidance from each other or the teacher. The scheduled word work time lasted only a few minutes for many students who seemed more interested in task completion than grasping the content.	Basic	12%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In these observations students transitioned well into centers or small groups. Teachers had routines for lining up, getting materials, putting things away and moving	Distinguished	12%
	from center to center. In a distinguished observation the students participated in managing materials by distributing and collecting them effectively and efficiently. The teacher also maximized transition times by playing word games and singing songs.	Proficient	71%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team rated 17% of the observations as basic in this component. Instructional time in these observations was often lost due to ineffective routines, procedures, and management. In one observation a technical glitch left the teacher with no other evident plan for instructional time. In another observation, classroom routines were not well established. Multiple students could not find their materials for the lesson and the routine for collection of materials at the end of the lesson was not clearly established.	Basic	17%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the majority of classrooms, student behavior was appropriate and redirection, when needed, was consistent and respectful to students. If a child had an issue, a teacher promptly addressed it through questioning, redirection to an alternative, or providing the child with a break. Positive rules of conduct were posted in all classrooms with students' signatures.	Distinguished	35%
	Common rules included: pay attention, be safe, be respectful and thoughtful, use IPC personal goals, have fun! In a distinguished observation the teacher noted, "I can tell you are really excited and have a lot of ideas about how to fix this. One student has a good idea, so let's listen." In another distinguished observation, after a scuffle between two students, a third student came to see if they were ok and then pointed to the class rules and asked them, "Did you use our number one rule (safe and gentle bodies)?"	Proficient	53%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School Wide Rating	
	The QSR team scored 12% of the observations as basic in this component. In these observations monitoring and responding to student misbehavior was inconsistent. In one observation the teacher lost learning time trying to redirect students from talking out of turn, getting up without permission or being off-task. Although the teacher attempted to use a call and response strategy, it was ineffective at getting the students back on task.	Basic	12%
	The QSR team rated 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 81% of the observations as "distinguished" or "proficient" for the Instruction domain.

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide I	Rating
Communicating with Students	The QSR team rated 83% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. Teachers presented material in clear and concise ways and many of them modeled the skill or concept for small groups of students. Some teachers used hands on materials such as dimes, pennies, snap cubes and base ten blocks to explain place value. Students later used these math manipulatives in centers. Teachers used high-level vocabulary with the majority of students, often prompting the use of the	Distinguished	12%
	same vocabulary by students. These teachers also explained what the words meant through the context of the material. In one distinguished observation, the objective was posted on the board and the teacher began the lesson by asking, "What are we working on today? What are we learning how to do?" Many students responded and were then probed further by the teacher with questions such as, "So what does that mean?" and "What are we doing today to learn that?"	Proficient	71%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide I	Rating
	The review team rated 17% of observations as basic in this component. In these observations, lessons were procedural and students appeared to be copying the work from the teacher. Some teachers provided little to no explanation about what students would learn either at the onset of the lesson or in a closure. One teacher kept urging students to add more detail in their writing, for example, but did not ever elaborate or provide examples for what that might look like.	Basic	17%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques	Questioning/Prompts observations as distinguished or proficient in this common at Taschers asked questions	Distinguished	6%
	ended questions to prompt student thinking. One teacher noted, "That's interesting, why do you think that? Can you explain how you got your answer?" In another observation the teacher would develop questions based on student responses and ideas. After one student shared her Cinderella adaptation of the ball, the teacher asked what would happen next, if some dialogue would happen, if she could incorporate some adjectives to describe the music, the dresses, etc.	Proficient	71%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide	Rating
	The QSR team scored 23% of the observations as basic in this component. During these observations the teachers' questions were often along a single path of inquiry and did not prompt students to explain their thinking. In one observation the teacher attempted to engage students in the discussion but only a few students participated. One teacher sometimes rushed to respond for the student rather than wait a little longer to see if the student could determine the correct response. In several observations, students with special needs were not provided with or supported to have opportunities to engage in discussion with their peers.	Basic	23%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team rated 88% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in terms of engaging students in learning. Students in these observations were challenged and intellectually engaged by the teacher and by the content. Students were provided choice in materials and tasks were open-ended enough to provide multiple pathways and responses.	Distinguished	6%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide l	Rating
	Primary students engaged in play in centers. Students chose their centers, how long to stay in that center, and in many cases, what to do in that center. The parameters of noting when a center was closed due to capacity was clear to the majority of students and they then had the freedom to make another choice. In one observation students could even choose when to take a quiz on the content. Students had a place to sign up when they felt ready to take the assessment and were given a choice of activities to help them practice the problems before taking the quiz.	Proficient	82%
	The QSR team scored 12% of the observations as basic. In these situations, students were more passive or compliant with the requests of the teachers. The pace of the lesson in one observation was uneven. Students read independently or with a buddy for extended periods of time, but were never asked about their thinking or learning, either in writing or verbally. In another basic observation, students copied what the teacher wrote on the white board. One of the students asked, "Why are you showing us [what to write]?" The teacher replied, "Because we're brainstorming today."	Basic	12%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

Instruction	Evidence Observed	School Wide I	Rating
Using Assessment in Instruction	T THE CAN TEATH SCOTED 7/70 OF THE		12%
	In several observations, students would bring completed work to the teacher for checking. Some teachers praised correct answers and re-taught a skill for incorrect responses. In a distinguished observation, a student had the role of director and gave feedback to the actors. The teacher also guided the small group to be reflective and plan next steps through questioning.	Proficient	65%
	The QSR team scored 23% of the observations as basic. In some of these observations, there was little evidence during the activity how students' work would be evaluated and the teachers made minimal attempts to engage students in self or peerassessment. The criteria for assessment were not evident and feedback often was not oriented to future improvement. One teacher told a student to please fix his work but did not indicate what parts to correct or what to do differently.	Basic	23%
	The QSR team rated none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

APPENDIX I: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The Classroom				
Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	Classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are negative or inappropriate and characterized by sarcasm, putdowns, or conflict.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict but may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring, and are respectful of the cultural and developmental differences among groups of students.	Classroom interactions are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and caring toward individuals. Students themselves ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among member of the class.
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The classroom does not represent a culture for learning and is characterized by low teacher commitment to the subject, low expectations for student achievement, and little student pride in work.	The classroom environment reflects only a minimal culture for learning, with only modest or inconsistent expectations for student achievement, little teacher commitment to the subject, and little student pride in work. Both teacher and students are performing at the minimal level to "get by."	The classroom environment represents a genuine culture for learning, with commitment to the subject on the part of both teacher and students, high expectations for student achievement, and student pride in work.	Students assumes much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning in the classroom by taking pride in their work, initiating improvements to their products, and holding the work to the highest standard. Teacher demonstrates as passionate commitment to the subject.
Managing Classroom Procedures	Classroom routines and procedures are either nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function unevenly or inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and function smoothly for the most part, with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are seamless in their operation, and students assume considerable responsibility for their smooth functioning.

The Classroom Environment	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Managing Student Behavior	Student behavior is poor, with no clear expectations, no monitoring of student behavior, and inappropriate response to student misbehavior.	Teacher makes an effort to establish standards of conduct for students, monitor student behavior, and respond to student misbehavior, but these efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is aware of student behavior, has established clear standards of conduct, and responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Student behavior is entirely appropriate, with evidence of student participation in setting expectations and monitoring behavior. Teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive, and teachers' response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs.

APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Communicatin g 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.

Instruction	Umaatiafaatawy	Dasia	Duoficiont	Distinguished
Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
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.