DC
PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOL
BOARD

June 12, 2020

John Ingold, Board Chair
The Next Step/El Proximo Paso Public Charter School
3047 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Ingold,

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. The Next Step/ El Proximo Paso Public Charter School (Next Step PCS) was selected to undergo a Qualitative Site Review during the 2019-20 school year for the following reason(s):

▪ School eligible for 20-year Charter Renewal during 2020-21 school year

Qualitative Site Review Report
A Qualitative Site Review team conducted on-site reviews of Next Step PCS between March 2 –13, 2020. The team's report is enclosed. 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 you and your staff gave the monitoring team in conducting the Qualitative Site Review at Next Step PCS.

Sincerely,

Rashida Young
Chief School Performance Officer

Enclosures
cc: School Leader

Qualitative Site Review Report

Date: June 12, 2020

Campus Information
Campus Name: Next Step PCS
Ward: 1
Grade levels: Adult

Qualitative Site Review (QSR) Information
Reason for Visit: School eligible for 20-year Charter Review during the 2020-21 school year
Two-week Window: March 2 – 13, 2020
QSR Team Members: Three consultants, including one English learner (EL) specialist and one special education (SPED) Specialist
Number of Observations: 18
Total Enrollment: 290
Students with Disabilities Enrollment:
English Learners Enrollment:
In-seat Attendance on Observation Days:
Visit 1: March 2, 2020 – 70.5%
Visit 2: March 9, 2020 – 62%
Visit 3: March 12, 2020 – 62.3%
Visit 4:

Summary
Next Step PCS's mission is "to provide students who face extraordinary challenges and who are not supported in traditional high schools with the opportunity to continue their education."

The QSR team observed considerable evidence that Next Step PCS is meeting its mission. Throughout several observations, teachers linked students' classwork to possible questions on the GED exam and other life situations. Students willingly volunteered to help their classmates and encouraged their classmates to persist in answering questions or reading difficult passages aloud. Teachers acknowledged students who had missed several days of class by offering support to help them make-up assignments and inquired about any challenges they may be having outside of school. Throughout the building, relationships between teachers and students and among students reflected genuine warmth and caring.

During the QSR two-week window, the team used the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to examine classroom environment and instruction (see

Appendices I and II). The QSR team scored 99% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Classroom Environment domain. In three of the four components within this domain, the team scored 100% of observations as distinguished or proficient. The components were: *Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport (2a)*, *Managing Classroom Procedures (2c)*, and *Managing Student Behavior (2d)*. In these observations, student behavior was entirely appropriate, and students often volunteered to help their peers by explaining content, passing out materials, and providing suggestions on how they could improve their work. Students led many of the classroom routines, and teachers effectively monitored classroom transitions, which resulted in no loss of instructional time.

The QSR team scored 85% of observations as distinguished or proficient in the Instruction domain. The highest-rated component in this domain was *Communicating with Students (3a)*, with 95% of observations scored as distinguished or proficient. Observers noted that teachers clearly communicated the lesson objective at the start of each assignment and often modeled expectations for students. Students participated freely and gave responses that indicated they understood the content. Notably, there were no unsatisfactory observations in the entire report.

Governance
John Ingold chairs the Next Step PCS Board of Trustees. The School Reform Act requires each DC public charter school to have a majority of DC residents and two parents on its board[1], which the school has been compliant with for the past four years.

Specialized Instruction for Students with Disabilities
Before the two-week window, Next Step PCS completed a questionnaire about how it serves its students with disabilities (SWD). Reviewers looked for evidence of the school's articulated SPED program. DC PCSB completed three SPED observations in a general education inclusion setting.[2] Overall, the school implemented its program with fidelity in most of the observations described below. Key trends from the SPED observations are summarized below.

- The school explained that it employs a full-time SPED teacher who collaborates with instructional coaches and teachers to provide support in and out of the classroom. This collaboration was observed in two classrooms when the SPED teacher pushed in to support students with varying needs. To

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[1] Adult schools may use alumni to fulfill the parent board member requirement.

[2] One special educator was observed three times in different settings.

help SWD access the content, the special education teacher provided students with graphic organizers and individual coaching.

- The SPED specialist observed the special education teacher modeling task expectations and chunking lesson tasks to support SWD within the classroom. As noted in the questionnaire, the teacher referred to EdModify via Schoology as a tool used to collaborate and engage virtually with students.

- As a program that uses co-teaching, the school said reviewers would see the use of station teaching; One Teach, One Assist; and parallel teaching. The SPED specialist observed the One Teach, One Assist model across multiple classrooms. In one observation, a student with a disability worked with the general education teacher to complete a lesson. The special education teacher simultaneously provided additional scaffolds to help the student unpack their questions. The SPED Specialist did not observe co-teaching in either of the other observations.

- The school said it uses small groupings and inclusive classrooms to provide accommodations according to students' individualized education program (IEP). The SPED specialist observed inclusive practices such as peer pairing and mixed-ability classrooms.

- To provide modifications according to IEPs, the school wrote that it typically uses scaffolding, graphic organizers, and supportive technology (e.g., speech-to-text recognition, self-paced online platforms, interpretation of directions in Spanish, etc.). In all observations, teachers used scaffolding as a support strategy for small groups or individual students. Reviewers did not observe teachers using technology as a modification tool. In almost all observations, reviewers saw staff translating directions into Spanish.

Specialized Instruction for English Learners

According to Next Step PCS's English language (EL) questionnaire, the school's language acquisition program places students in "differentiated levels of proficiency" and teachers plan "to teach skills and subskills that the entire class needs (via data from class profiles) and based on individual need." The program focuses on developing students' English skills for use in the community, the workplace, and educational settings. Next Step PCS's model "focuses on the Usage-Based Theory where [students] learn language based on situations and apply it as needed before it becomes automatized." The EL specialist observed consistent implementation of Next Step PCS's EL program across four classes with students ranging from those who have limited English proficiency to those with high English

proficiency. Students had ample opportunities to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, with a strong emphasis on conversation skills.

Students in all four observed classes learned and practiced English necessary for everyday communication in their communities, workplace, and education settings. Students with limited English proficiency learned and practiced basic greetings, like "Hello, my name is… and I am from…" Teachers emphasized conversation by teaching them greetings and asking students to question each other. Students also learned how to fill out basic information like their address. Students with higher English proficiency practiced talking about their weekends and describing peoples' physical traits. They also looked at and described pictures to each other.

Students learned skills necessary for the workplace and educational settings, particularly in the class with the highest English proficiency. Students watched a video of a poor presentation, comparing it against a rubric. They discussed what the presenter could have improved. They then worked on individual projects, preparing their own presentations focused on teaching others a particular skill.

In the computer literacy class, students with limited English proficiency learned and practiced composing emails and writing about themselves, like what they enjoy eating and doing. The teacher read student work and provided individual feedback. The teacher also brought the class together to clarify language concepts after noticing similar adjective placement errors (e.g., "food favorite" as opposed to "favorite food") among students.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT[3]

This table summarizes the school's performance on the Classroom Environment domain of the rubric during the unannounced visits. The ratings for classroom observations—"distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory"—come from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 99% 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[4]	
Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	The QSR team scored 100% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component, with a very high 50% being rated as distinguished. In the distinguished observations, teachers demonstrated knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond school. In one observation, a student shared a picture of their child, and the teacher responded by mentioning how they knew the child's birthday was coming up and wished them well. In another observation, when a student got frustrated while completing a problem, the teacher reminded the student that they had completed similar problems and encouraged them to keep trying.	Distinguished	50%
	In the proficient observations, talk between teachers and students was uniformly respectful. In one observation, the teacher greeted students by saying, "Good morning," as they entered the room. Later, during a warmup activity, the teacher encouraged all students to introduce themselves, talk about their weekend, and share how long they have lived in the area. As each student shared, their peers listened attentively. In another observation, the teacher respectfully helped students with pronunciation as they practiced sounding out words.	Proficient	50%

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[3] Teachers may be observed more than once by different review team members.
[4] DC PCSB does not report out qualitative evidence if less than 10% of observations in any given component earned a "basic" or "unsatisfactory" level of performance.

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[4]	
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The QSR team scored 94% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, the classroom culture was cognitively busy with high expectations for all students. In one observation, the teacher asked students to identify areas for improvement as they watched a short video clip of a presentation. The teacher insisted that all students participate and stressed the importance of avoiding similar mistakes in their own presentations. As students watched the video, they made observations about the presentation and often referred back to their rubric. The teacher encouraged students frequently, saying, "You can do this!" and "I need you to be a little more optimistic. I think you can do this!"	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	94%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	6%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[4]	
Managing Classroom Procedures	The QSR team scored 100% of the observations as distinguished or proficient in this component. In the distinguished observations, students took the initiative to distribute and collect materials efficiently. In one observation, one student distributed folders to each classmate while another sharpened pencils for their peers. During the observation, the teacher was briefly called out of the classroom, and all students continued working independently, resulting in no loss of instructional time.	Distinguished	39%
	In the proficient observations, classroom routines functioned smoothly. In one observation, as students entered the classroom, the teacher asked them to rearrange the chairs for an upcoming classroom discussion. Students quickly and efficiently arranged the chairs and began the discussion with no additional prompting from the teacher. As students joined the discussion late, they quietly found a spot in the circle and joined the discussion. In another observation, there was a "Do Now" written on the white board for students to complete as they entered the classroom. Students immediately gathered their laptops and began working on the assignment.	Proficient	61%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

The Classroom Environment	Evidence	School Wide Rating[4]	
Managing Student Behavior	The QSR team scored 100% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observations, student behavior was entirely appropriate. Throughout these observations, there was no need for teachers to intervene or redirect any student behavior. In the proficient observations, the teacher's response to student misbehavior was effective. In one observation, two students briefly engaged in a side conversation as the teacher lectured. The teacher responded by saying, "Make sure you are all paying attention, I don't want you to miss anything." Both students immediately complied and stopped their conversation.	Distinguished	78%
		Proficient	22%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	0%
	The QSR team scored 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 ratings for classroom observations—"distinguished," "proficient," "basic," and "unsatisfactory"—come from the Danielson framework. The QSR team scored 85% 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 95% of observations as distinguished or proficient in this component, with over half being distinguished. In the distinguished observations, teachers explained content clearly. In one observation, the teacher reinforced the instructional purpose by writing it on the board and referring to it throughout the lesson.	Distinguished	56%
	In the proficient observations, the teacher stated clearly at some point what students would be learning. In one observation, the teacher provided the necessary supports to ensure student understanding by explaining the content in the student's native language. When necessary, the teacher translated unfamiliar words to ensure students could access the content.	Proficient	39%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	6%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as basic in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

Using Questioning/ Prompts and Discussion Techniques	The QSR team scored 73% of observations as proficient and none as distinguished in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers used open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers. In one observation, during the warm-up, the teacher asked simple questions like, "Where are you from?"; "How was your weekend?"; and "How long have you been in the United States?" In another observation, the teacher broke students into two small groups and asked them to evaluate a video they watched. The teacher used discussion prompts to help students get started before allowing them to continue the conversation on their own.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	73%
	The QSR team scored 27% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, the teacher framed some questions to promote student thinking, but most had a single correct answer. In one observation, the teacher asked rapid-fire questions and despite students' attempts to elaborate on their answer, the teacher quickly moved on to other students.	Basic	27%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

Engaging Students in Learning	The QSR team scored 78% of observations as proficient or distinguished in this component. In the distinguished observation, all students intellectually engaged in the learning tasks. Students worked collaboratively with their peers, asked and answered questions, and corrected their work to ensure accuracy. In the proficient observations, almost all students intellectually engaged with the learning tasks. In one observation, the teacher used semantic maps to review vocabulary words with students. Students eagerly participated by providing an antonym, synonym, definition, and example for each word. In another observation, materials and resources supported the learning goal as the teacher projected the warmup questions on the board, gave students sentence starters with options to fill in the blanks, and had students use workbooks with pictures as they launched into the learning task.	Distinguished	6%
		Proficient	72%
	The QSR team scored 27% of observations as basic in this component. In the basic observations, student engagement with the content was largely passive. In one observation, the teacher simply asked students to repeat the questions they wrote on the board without allowing students to participate any further. In addition, the structure of the activity was unclear as the teacher jumped between unrelated questions which led to some student confusion and limited engagement.	Basic	27%
	The QSR team scored none of the observations as unsatisfactory in this component.	Unsatisfactory	0%

Using Assessment in Instruction	The QSR team scored 93% of observations as proficient in this component. In the proficient observations, teachers regularly assessed student learning. In one observation, the teacher read each student's writing and asked guiding questions to help students generate their own ideas. Later, the teacher adjusted the lesson by bringing students back together to clarify the use and placement of adjectives in English.	Distinguished	0%
		Proficient	93%
	The QSR team scored less than 10% of the observations as basic in this component.	Basic	7%
	The QSR team scored 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.
Managing Student Behavior	Student behavior is poor, with no clear expectations, no monitoring of student behavior, and inappropriate response to student misbehavior.	Teacher makes an effort to establish standards of conduct for students, monitor student behavior, and respond to student misbehavior, but these efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is aware of student behavior, has established clear standards of conduct, and responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Student behavior is entirely appropriate, with evidence of student participation in setting expectations and monitoring behavior. Teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive, and teachers' response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs.

APPENDIX II: INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instruction	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Communicating with Students	Teacher's oral and written communication contains errors or is unclear or inappropriate to students. Teacher's purpose in a lesson or unit is unclear to students. Teacher's explanation of the content is unclear or confusing or uses inappropriate language.	Teacher's oral and written communication contains no errors, but may not be completely appropriate or may require further explanations to avoid confusion. Teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success. Teacher's explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	Teacher communicates clearly and accurately to students both orally and in writing. Teacher's purpose for the lesson or unit is clear, including where it is situation within broader learning. Teacher's explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students' knowledge and experience.	Teacher's oral and written communication is clear and expressive, anticipating possible student misconceptions. Makes the purpose of the lesson or unit clear, including where it is situated within broader learning, linking purpose to student interests. Explanation of content is imaginative, and connects with students' knowledge and experience. Students contribute to explaining concepts to their peers.
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low-level questions, limited student participation, and little true discussion.	Teacher's use of questioning and discussion techniques is uneven with some high-level question; attempts at true discussion; moderate student participation.	Teacher's use of questioning and discussion techniques reflects high-level questions, true discussion, and full participation by all students.	Students formulate may of the high-level questions and assume responsibility for the participation of all students in the discussion.
Engaging Students in Learning	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning, as a result of inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure.	Students are intellectually engaged only partially, resulting from activities or materials or uneven quality, inconsistent representation of content or uneven structure of pacing.	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson, with appropriate activities and materials, instructive representations of content, and suitable structure and pacing of the lesson.	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson and make material contribution to the representation of content, the activities, and the materials. The structure and pacing of the lesson allow for student reflection and closure.
Using Assessment in Instruction	Students are unaware of criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and do not engage in self-assessment or monitoring. Teacher does not monitor student learning in the curriculum, and feedback to students is of poor quality and in an untimely manner.	Students know some of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and occasionally assess the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of the class as a whole but elicits no diagnostic information; feedback to students is uneven and inconsistent in its timeliness.	Students are fully aware of the criteria and performance standards by which their work will be evaluated, and frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards. Teacher monitors the progress of groups of students in the curriculum, making limited use of diagnostic prompts to elicit information; feedback is timely, consistent, and of high quality.	Students are fully aware of the criteria and standards by which their work will be evaluated, have contributed to the development of the criteria, frequently assess and monitor the quality of their own work against the assessment criteria and performance standards, and make active use of that information in their learning. Teacher actively and systematically elicits diagnostic information from individual students regarding understanding and monitors progress of individual students; feedback is timely, high quality, and students use feedback in their learning.

APPENDIX III: DOMAIN AVERAGES BY COMPONENT

Percent of	2a	2b	2c	2d	3a	3b	3c	3d
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic	0%	6%	0%	0%	6%	27%	22%	7%
Proficient	50%	94%	61%	22%	39%	73%	72%	93%
Distinguished	50%	0%	39%	78%	56%	0%	6%	0%
Subdomain Average	3.50	2.94	3.39	3.78	3.50	2.73	2.83	2.93

	Domain 2	Domain 3
% of Proficient or above	99%	85%
Domain Averages	3.40	3.00