

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Charter Actions Requiring a Vote

- ☐ Approve a Charter Application
- ☐ Approve a Charter Renewal (15 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve Charter Continuance (5 or 10 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve a Charter Amendment Request
- ☐ Approve a Charter Agreement
- ☐ Give a Charter Notice of Concern
- ☐ Lift the Charter Notice of Concern
- ☐ Commence Charter Revocation Proceedings
- ☐ Revoke a Charter
- ☐ Board Action, Other _____

Non-Voting Board Items

- ☐ Public Hearing Item
- ☐ Discussion Item
- ☐ Read into Record

Policies

- ☒ Open a New Policy or Changes to a Policy for Public Comment
- ☐ Approve a New Policy
- ☐ Approve Revisions to an Existing Policy

PREPARED BY: Kristie Dennis, Manager, School Performance Department

SUBJECT: Revisions to the *Accreditation Policy*

DATE: August 19, 2024

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) is creating the policies and conditions to support a network of public charter schools in Washington, DC, offering families quality, equity, and diverse educational choices. This request aligns with DC PCSB's Strategic Roadmap Priority of Excellent Schools.¹

Recommendation

DC PCSB staff recommends its Board open the proposed revisions to the *Accreditation Policy* for public comment from August 19, 2024 (after the public meeting) through September 16, 2024 at 5:30 pm. DC PCSB will consider any public comment received during the public comment period before the final vote.

Written comments may be submitted by mail or email to:

DC Public Charter School Board

¹ See the Strategic Roadmap here: <https://bit.ly/3EVeKYg>.

100 M Street SE, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20003
public.comment@dcpcsb.org

Anyone wishing to provide testimony before the Board may do so during the public hearing on September 16, 2024. The Board is scheduled to vote on the proposed revisions to the *Accreditation Policy* at the October 28, 2024 public meeting. Additional details will be posted on the DC PCSB website.

Proposal

DC PCSB staff seeks to revise the *Accreditation Policy* by changing the name of AdvancED, a DC PCSB-approved accrediting body, to Cognia. AdvancED became Cognia in 2019, and the organization requests that its name be updated in DC PCSB's policy. Additionally, DC PCSB staff proposes adding the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to the list of approved accrediting agencies.

In its application (Attachment A), NEASC describes the organization's mission and how it aligns with DC PCSB's criteria for adding an accrediting body to the policy's approved list. NEASC is:

An independent, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization which partners with over 1500 public, independent, and international schools in the US and worldwide to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices (Attachment A, p. 3).

In addition, NEASC collaborates with the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB) to align IB authorization and the NEASC accreditation process.² Several DC public charter schools offer IB programming, including the District of Columbia International School (DCI). DCI reached out to NEASC about its accreditation process. Should the organization be added to the *Accreditation Policy*, then it "can serve [DCI] or any other similar schools [in DC]" (Attachment A, p. 4).

Standard for Approval

Per DC PCSB's *Accreditation Policy*,³ an accrediting agency must establish standards, require a self-study, conduct an on-site evaluation, monitor accredited institutions, and periodically reevaluate accredited institutions to be

² IB offers four international education programs for students aged three – 19. To learn more about IB, visit <https://bit.ly/4dIIKPP>.

³ See the policy here: <https://bit.ly/4bKTGFe>.

included on the list of approved accrediting agencies. DC PCSB staff preliminarily finds that NEASC **meets** the criteria to be added to the list. See the preliminary analysis below.

Standard	Evaluation	Notes
1. Standards	Met	NEASC states in its application that it works in partnership with schools to develop standards and research best practices. NEASC indicates the standards are consistently reviewed to ensure the institution is meeting the differentiated needs of the schools it works with.
2. Self-Study	Met	Per NEASC's application, all schools seeking accreditation must prepare a self-study as part of the process. During this self-study, schools must reflect on their practices and provide themselves with a rating for each applicable standard.
3. On-Site Evaluation	Met	NEASC requires all schools to host a series of visits as part of the accreditation process. In the application, NEASC shares that visiting teams "are selected from accredited member schools and are chosen based on their expertise and the needs of the school being visited" (Attachment A, p. 5). After each visit is complete, NEASC develops a report for each school consisting of major and standard-specific recommendations.
4. Monitoring	Met	In the application, NEASC writes that it monitors accredited schools on an ongoing basis. Additionally, schools must submit reports to NEASC annually to ensure they continue to meet the standards for accreditation.
5. Reevaluation	Met	NEASC reevaluates schools every five years. The NEASC and IB accreditation cycles are each five years.

Background

The School Reform Act (SRA) requires public charter schools to "seek, obtain and maintain accreditation" from the agencies listed in the statute or others "deemed appropriate by the eligible chartering authority."⁴ DC PCSB first approved the *Accreditation Policy* on December 20, 2010 to establish a timeline for accreditation and set consequences for noncompliance.

⁴ D.C. Code § 38-1802.02(16).

DC PCSB has since revised the policy on October 14, 2014, December 17, 2017, and September 17, 2018. Past updates include clarifying the timeframe, adding accrediting agencies to the approved list, creating standards for such inclusion, and establishing accreditation requirements for schools with residential programs.

Attachments to this Proposal

Attachment A: NEASC Application

Attachment B: Redlined *Accreditation Policy*

Date: _____

DC PCSB Action: _____Approved _____Approved with Changes _____Rejected

Changes to the Original Proposal:
