



POLICY TITLE	Accreditation Policy
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE	December 20, 2010
MOST RECENTLY UPDATED	September 28, 2026 October 28, 2024 September 17, 2018 December 17, 2017 October 14, 2014

PURPOSE

The *Accreditation Policy* applies to all public charter schools authorized by the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB).

POLICY

Every charter school must obtain accreditation from an accrediting body approved by DC PCSB by the end of its ninth year of operation. Additionally, a school must, at minimum, be in the candidacy phase with an approved accrediting agency by December 31 of its seventh year of operation.¹

Schools with residential education programs must also obtain accreditation for their residential education programs in addition to their day programs, following the timeline established under this policy.

Failure to Comply

A school will be considered “out of compliance” and may be subject to board action if it fails to enter the candidacy phase with an approved accrediting agency by December 31 of its seventh year of operation or fails to secure accreditation by the completion of the school’s ninth year of operation. Failure to have or maintain accreditation for the entire school program, including the residential education program, is grounds for charter non-continuance or non-renewal at a school’s ten-year review and all subsequent reviews and renewals, respectively.

¹ Or its equivalent—candidacy processes may vary among accrediting agencies (example here: <https://bit.ly/4cNPTYr>).



References

The DC School Reform Act of 1995, DC Code § 38-1802.02, requires that the petition to establish a public charter school include "an assurance the proposed school will seek, obtain, and maintain accreditation" from at least one of the following organizations:²

- A. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools;
- B. The Association of Independent Maryland Schools (no longer active);
- C. Cognia (*formerly AdvancED and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools*);
- D. The Virginia Association of Independent Schools (no longer active);
- E. American Montessori Internationale (no longer active);
- F. The American Montessori Society;
- G. The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (also known as National Association for the Education of Young Children);
- H. American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE);
- I. KIPP Foundation;
- J. National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES);
- K. International Primary Curriculum (IPC);
- L. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC);
- L.M. Momentum Strategy & Research (Momentum); or
- M.N. Any other accrediting body deemed appropriate by the eligible chartering authority that granted the charter to the school.³

Standards for Adding Additional Agencies ~~to Add~~ to the List

Each agency on the approved list must meet the standards below. Schools may request to have an agency added to the approved list, and DC PCSB's Board will use the criteria below to determine approval.

1. Standards: The accrediting agency, in collaboration with educational institutions, establishes standards.

² These organizations also provide accreditation for schools offering residential education programs: The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Cognia, American Academy for Liberal Education, and the National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services.

³ Per its policy, DC PCSB deemed the following agencies appropriate accrediting bodies, in the year noted: AALE (2003), KIPP Foundation (2013), NCASES (2014), IPC (2014), ~~and~~ NEASC (2024), and Momentum (2026).



2. Self-Study: The institution or program seeking accreditation prepares an in-depth self-evaluation study that measures its performance against the standards established by the accrediting agency.
3. On-site Evaluation: A team selected by the accrediting agency visits the institution or program to determine first-hand if the applicant meets the established standards.
4. Monitoring: The accrediting agency monitors each accredited institution or program throughout the period of accreditation granted to verify that it continues to meet the agency's standards.
5. Reevaluation: The accrediting agency periodically reevaluates each institution or program that it lists to ascertain whether continuation of its accredited or pre-accredited status is warranted.