

POLICY TITLE: Emergency Policy on Charter Renewal and Review Criteria	
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: June 25, 2015	MOST RECENTLY UPDATED: N/A

BACKGROUND

The District of Columbia, through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”), is currently the recipient of a \$5mm competitive charter schools grant from the U.S. Department of Education (“ED”) which provides startup funds for most new charter schools approved by PCSB. This grant expires in 2015. As a result, the District must apply this year for a new grant if it wishes to continue providing startup grants to new charter schools.

On June 15, 2015, ED issued application guidelines for this grant. These guidelines include two “absolute priorities” that were not in the guidelines when DC applied for its last grant. An “absolute priority” means that if the state does not meet the criteria, it is ineligible for the grant. Both absolute priorities are shown in Appendix A.

PCSB staff believes that DC meets all of the terms of the absolute priorities with the exception of the following:

To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:

...

(b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(C)(v))¹ as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.

Failure to demonstrate that PCSB has such a policy would render DC ineligible for this grant. This policy must be in place by July 16, 2015 to be incorporated in the state’s application. Further, should the state receive the grant, the grant’s continuance could be in jeopardy if the board were to rescind the policy.

¹ The groups of students referred to in this section of the ESEA are: Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners



POLICY

Subject to the provisions and requirements of the School Reform Act, increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(C)(v)) are one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.”

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Darren Woodruff
DC PCSB Board Chair

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APPENDIX A: Absolute Priorities in the 2015 Charter Schools Program SEA Grant Competition

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1

To meet this priority, the applicant must demonstrate that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school at least once every five years, unless required more frequently by State law, and takes steps to ensure that such reviews take place.

The review and evaluation must serve to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter and meeting or exceeding the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth in the school's charter or under State law, a State regulation, or a State policy, provided that the student academic achievement requirements and goals for charter schools established by that policy meet or exceed those set forth under applicable State law or State regulation. This periodic review and evaluation must include an opportunity for the authorized public chartering agency to take appropriate action or impose meaningful consequences on the charter school, if necessary.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2

To meet this priority, an application must demonstrate that State law, regulations, or other policies in the State where the applicant is located require the following:

(a) That each charter school in the State—

- (1) Operates under a legally binding charter or performance contract between itself and the school's authorized public chartering agency that describes the rights and responsibilities of the school and the public chartering agency;*
- (2) Conducts annual, timely, and independent audits of the school's financial statements that are filed with the school's authorized public chartering agency; and*
- (3) Demonstrates improved student academic achievement; and*

(b) That all authorized public chartering agencies in the State use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(C)(v)) as one of the most important factors when determining whether to renew or revoke a school's charter.