



POLICY TITLE: At-Risk Preference Approval and Monitoring Policy	
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: May 17, 2021	

PURPOSE

Beginning in School Year (SY) 2022-23, DC public charter schools may offer an admission preference to students who are at-risk,¹ with prior approval from the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB).² Such “at-risk preference” shall remain in effect for five years and may be renewed an unlimited number of times, each time for an additional five-year period. This policy outlines the process and baseline criteria DC PCSB will use to approve schools to offer an at-risk preference, as well as the standards for renewal of an at-risk preference.³ This policy also outlines how a school that has been approved for an at-risk preference may seek approval from DC PCSB to discontinue the preference, should it choose.

POLICY

Initial Approval to Offer At-Risk Preference

By June 1 of each year, DC PCSB will release an application and evaluation rubric for public charter schools that would like to offer an at-risk preference. This application will be subject to change from year to year, but will ask schools to explain, at a minimum, the following information:

- The school’s rationale for wanting to implement an at-risk preference.
- How the school plans to adjust its current program (e.g., staffing, wraparound services, etc.) to ensure the academic and social-emotional success of at-risk students.
 - In this response, the school should identify and specifically address areas where it has historically struggled to support at-risk students (e.g., academics, exclusionary discipline).
- How the school will adapt outreach and recruitment strategies to attract at-risk families.
- How the school has engaged its community (e.g., current families and staff) about the decision to offer an at-risk preference.

¹ At-risk, for the purposes of this policy, means that a student is homeless, under the care of the District’s foster care system, qualifies for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or that the high school student is overage. See DC Code § 38-2901(2A).

² DC Code § 38-1802.06(c-3).

³ Schools participating in My School DC (MSDC) must implement the preference within the parameters outlined in the MSDC Policy Guide.



- For multi-campus Local Education Agencies (LEAs), whether the at-risk preference will apply to all campuses.

Each school must also submit, along with its application, a letter from the chair of the school's board of trustees and its two parent members confirming that the school's board has deliberated on and approved the preference request. Completed application packages must be submitted to DC PCSB by July 15 of each year.

DC PCSB staff will evaluate each school's application and, if needed, request supplemental information from the school to evaluate its readiness to serve more at-risk students. Once DC PCSB staff has completed its review of applications, it will notify schools whether they have been approved or denied to offer an at-risk preference. Schools will be notified no later than August 15 of each year.

Once a school has been approved to offer an at-risk preference, it must implement the preference within the two school years following approval.⁴ Should a school that is approved to offer an at-risk preference elect not to use the preference within two school years, it must receive approval from DC PCSB again before it may offer the preference.

Renewal of At-Risk Preference

An at-risk preference approved by DC PCSB will remain in effect for five years. The preference may be renewed by DC PCSB for an additional five years, and may be renewed an unlimited number of times. By June 1 of each year, beginning in 2026, DC PCSB will release standards for renewal of an at-risk preference. By July 15, in a school's fifth year of offering⁵ the preference, it must notify DC PCSB whether it wants to continue offering an at-risk preference. The standards for renewal will be subject to change from year to year, but will generally include the following measures:

- The LEA's achievement and/or growth among at-risk students on the state assessment in English language arts (ELA).
- The LEA's achievement and/or growth among at-risk students on the state assessment in Math.
- The LEA's out-of-school suspension rate for at-risk students relative to their non-at-risk peers.
- The LEA's in-seat attendance rate for at-risk students.
- The LEA re-enrollment rate for at-risk students.

⁴ For example, if a school is initially approved to offer the preference in Summer 2021, it must implement the preference in the lottery cycle that takes place during SY 2021-22 or during SY 2022-23. If the school has not implemented the preference by then, it will need to reapply to DC PCSB for approval.

⁵ For example, if a school initially offers the preference during the SY 2021-22 lottery cycle, it must seek renewal of the preference in Summer 2026.



Schools will be notified no later than August 15 of that year whether their request to renew the at-risk preference has been approved or denied.

Discontinuation of At-Risk Preference

If, after two years of implementation of an at-risk preference,⁶ a school would like to stop offering the preference, it may submit such a request to DC PCSB's Executive Director and Chief School Performance Officer by July 15 of the year before the discontinuation would take effect. This request must explain the school's rationale for no longer wanting to offer the preference, and discuss any plans to offer it again in the future. DC PCSB will assess each request on a case-by-case basis, taking into account potential impact on students and families. If a school's request to discontinue the preference is approved, the school may not begin offering an at-risk preference again without approval from DC PCSB.

Notification

Each year, at the September Board Meeting, DC PCSB staff will read into the record a memo containing the list of schools approved or denied to offer, renew, or discontinue an at-risk preference for the upcoming school year. This memo will explain the rationale for approving or denying each school's request. At this time, the DC PCSB Board may request to hear from certain schools about their request to offer, renew, or discontinue an at-risk preference.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Rick Cruz
DC PCSB Board Chair

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⁶ For example, if a school offers the preference for the first time in the lottery cycle that takes place during SY 2021-22, it must offer the preference for at least one additional year before it can request to discontinue it.