



Lea Crusey  
Board Chair

Michelle J. Walker-Davis, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

February 5, 2024

***Via Electronic Mail***

Mary Wells  
Board Chair

Mashea Ashton  
Chief Executive Officer

Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School  
400 Virginia Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20024

**Re: Five-Year Charter Review of Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School**

Dear Ms. Wells and Ms. Ashton:

As you know, the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) must conduct a high-stakes review of a public charter school at least once every five years to determine whether the school's charter should be continued or revoked.<sup>1</sup> During the 2022 – 23 school year, DC PCSB conducted such a review of Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School (Digital Pioneers PCS). DC PCSB staff prepared a comprehensive review report to assess the performance of the school according to the standard required by the School Reform Act.<sup>2</sup>

On January 31, 2023, DC PCSB staff provided the school with a draft version of this report and allowed an opportunity for the school to respond. DC PCSB staff considered the school's feedback and incorporated it where staff determined appropriate to create a preliminary charter review report. Based on the findings in the preliminary charter review report, staff developed a proposal to present before the DC PCSB Board recommending the school's charter be continued with the following conditions:

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<sup>1</sup> See DC Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3).

<sup>2</sup> See DC Code § 38-1802.13(a)-(b).



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- 1) Digital Pioneers PCS shall develop and implement an academic improvement plan.
  - a. By April 3, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a draft plan for DC PCSB's review. At a minimum, the plan must include a) specific strategies the school will use to improve academic outcomes for all students, and b) a description of how the school will measure its progress toward meeting the goals and strategies outlined in its improvement plan.
  - b. By May 1, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a final improvement plan that incorporates and addresses, to DC PCSB's satisfaction, any feedback provided by DC PCSB.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Digital Pioneers PCS must report on its progress implementing the plan in its annual report every year leading up to its 10-year review, displaying student achievement data, and explaining specific strategies the school is using to improve student outcomes. DC PCSB will consider the school's progress as reported in its annual reports at its 10-year charter review.
- 2) Each Digital Pioneers PCS campus must undergo a QSR every year of the next review period.
  - a. If the QSR team rates fewer than 50.0% of observations as “proficient” or “distinguished” in either domain of the QSR rubric at either campus, DC PCSB may recommend an immediate high-stakes review.
  - b. If a Digital Pioneers PCS campus earns “proficient” or “distinguished” rates in each domain of the QSR rubric within 5.0% of the two-year weighted average of comparable public charter school classrooms for two consecutive years,<sup>4</sup> then DC PCSB will cease conducting condition-related QSR visits at that campus.

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<sup>3</sup> DC PCSB will evaluate the school's plan to determine whether it clearly articulates strategies that address the areas of deficiency. It will also evaluate whether the school has articulated how it will measure progress.

<sup>4</sup> DC PCSB will calculate a two-year weighted average for each QSR domain and grade band (e.g., grades pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 and grades 9 – 12). DC PCSB will use SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data to calculate these averages, where SY 2021 – 22 QSR data has 40.0% weight and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data has 60.0% weight. Over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 classrooms. Likewise, over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among 9 – 12 classrooms.



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At its public board meeting on February 27, 2023, the DC PCSB Board voted to continue the school's charter for the reasons outlined in the review report and accompanying proposal, incorporating and adopting the staff's findings and staff recommendations for conditions 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b. The Board adjusted condition 1c and approved it to read as follows:

Digital Pioneers PCS must report on its progress implementing the plan in its annual report every year leading up to its 10- year review, displaying student achievement data, and explaining specific strategies the school is using to improve student outcomes. DC PCSB will consider the school's progress as reported in its annual reports at its 10-year charter review.

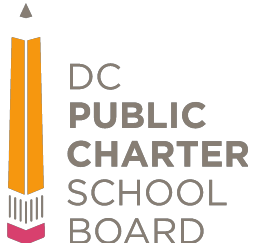
If Digital Pioneers PCS reports—or DC PCSB identifies—concerning academic outcomes, DC PCSB staff may conduct an out-of-cycle review ahead of the school's 10-year review.

Representatives from the school were in attendance at the meeting and were provided an opportunity to address the DC PCSB Board prior to this vote. Members of the public were also allowed an opportunity to provide public comment prior to the vote.

In April 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS requested an extension to submit their academic improvement plan. DC PCSB staff granted the school an extended timeline as follows.

- By May 1, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a draft plan for DC PCSB's review. At a minimum, the plan must include a) specific strategies the school will use to improve academic outcomes for all students and b) a description of how the school will measure its progress toward meeting the goals and strategies outlined in its improvement plan.
- By June 1, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a final improvement plan that incorporates and addresses, to DC PCSB's satisfaction, any feedback provided by DC PCSB.

Digital Pioneers PCS submitted drafts of its academic improvement plan to DC PCSB on May 1, 2023, July 1, 2023, and December 4, 2023. DC PCSB approved the plan on January 19, 2024.



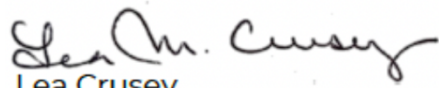
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Please see the following signed copy of the accompanying staff proposal, which outlines the basis upon which the DC PCSB Board voted to continue the school's charter along with the finalized version of the charter review report.

Thank you for your continued efforts in service of the students of the District of Columbia.

Sincerely yours,

  
Lea Crusey  
Board Chair

  
Michelle J. Walker-Davis, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

### Charter Actions Requiring a Vote

- Approve a Charter Application (15 yrs)
- Approve a Charter Renewal (15 yrs)
- Approve Charter Continuance
- Approve a Charter Amendment Request
- 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 an Amendment to an Existing Policy

**PREPARED BY:**      **Nada Mousa, Senior Specialist, School Performance Department**

**SUBJECT:**            **Charter Review: Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School**

**DATE:**                **February 27, 2023**

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### **Recommendation**

District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) staff recommends that its Board vote to conditionally continue the charter of Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School (Digital Pioneers PCS). This recommendation aligns with DC PCSB's Strategic Roadmap Priority of Excellent Schools.<sup>1</sup>

### **Charter Review Findings**

DC PCSB staff conducted a five-year charter review of Digital Pioneers PCS, as required by the School Reform Act (SRA).<sup>2</sup> The review includes an evaluation of the school's 1) progress toward meeting its goals and academic achievement

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<sup>1</sup> DC PCSB is creating the policy and conditions to support a network of public charter schools in Washington, DC, offering families quality, equity, and diverse educational choices. See the Strategic Roadmap here: <https://bit.ly/3EVeKYg>.

<sup>2</sup> D.C. Code §§ 38-1802 *et seq.*

expectations (charter goals); 2) compliance with its charter and applicable federal and local laws; and 3) fiscal management. The chart below summarizes DC PCSB staff's findings in these three areas over the review period.

Charter Review Findings					
<b>Review Period</b>	School year (SY) 2018 – 19 through SY 2021 – 22				
<b>Charter Goals</b>	DC PCSB staff did not render a goals attainment determination for Digital Pioneers PCS.				
<b>Compliance</b>	Digital Pioneers PCS <b>did not</b> violate the law or materially violate its charter.				
<b>Finance</b>	Digital Pioneers PCS <b>did not</b> commit fiscal mismanagement.				
Performance Management Framework (PMF) Outcomes					
Campus	2018 – 19	2019 – 20	2020 – 21	2021 – 22	Average
Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning	56.0%	Not applicable (NA) <sup>3</sup>			NA
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	NA <sup>4</sup>		NA		NA

Digital Pioneers PCS adopted the PMF as its charter goals in accordance with DC PCSB's *Elect to Adopt the PMF as Charter Goals Policy (PMF as Goals Policy)*.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, Digital Pioneers PCS committed to achieving an average PMF score equal to or exceeding 40.0% at its five-year review. As the chart above reports, DC PCSB staff did not render a goals attainment determination for Digital Pioneers PCS. The school opened its first campus, Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning, in SY 2018 – 19. It only has one year of data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the school opened its Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill campus in SY 2021 – 22; thus, there are no PMF data to report for this campus. Per DC PCSB's *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, DC PCSB will not make a determination of goal attainment for schools with one or fewer years of pre-pandemic data.

<sup>3</sup> As written in DC PCSB's *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, the "COVID-19 public health emergency resulted in all DC public charter schools physically closing and implementing distance learning programs." Consequently, per the policy, DC PCSB ceased collection, aggregation, and publication of SY 2019 – 20 academic data and did not produce the SY 2019 – 20 PMF. Similarly, though DC PCSB resumed collection of a limited set of SY 2020 – 21 PMF data, it did not produce the SY 2020 – 21 PMF. In September 2021, DC PCSB announced its plan to develop a new accountability framework. Consequently, DC PCSB did not produce the SY 2021 – 22 PMF. For details, see the *COVID-19 Impact Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/3fy5zDo>. Also see DC PCSB's September 2021 public meeting materials and recorded discussion here: <https://bit.ly/3JpiB2x>.

<sup>4</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill did not open until SY 2021 – 22. As such, there are no PMF data to report for the review period.

<sup>5</sup> See the *PMF as Goals Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/2PTj7fL>.

To support evaluation during the COVID-19 recovery period, DC PCSB staff collected SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data from all schools.<sup>6</sup> Per the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, for schools with one or fewer years of charter goals data before the COVID-19 pandemic, DC PCSB staff will propose that its Board use transitional goals data to develop and impose improvement conditions as needed.<sup>7</sup>

Digital Pioneers PCS's SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data includes the following outcomes: growth on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment,<sup>8</sup> Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) proficiency, 9<sup>th</sup> grade on track,<sup>9</sup> attendance, and re-enrollment. As shown in Section One of the attached Preliminary Charter Review Report,<sup>10</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS's NWEA MAP growth outcomes were well below the median,<sup>11</sup> particularly among 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Further, fewer than 10.0% of Digital Pioneers PCS students scored proficient in math on PARCC, and fewer than 5.0% of the school's 9<sup>th</sup> graders are on track for graduation in four years.

In addition to collecting transitional goals data, DC PCSB staff conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) at each Digital Pioneers PCS campus during SY 2022 – 23. DC PCSB uses the QSR to evaluate schools across two domains—classroom environment and instruction, as defined in the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.<sup>12</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS campuses scored below average in both domains compared to relevant public charter schools that recently received a QSR. The school's performance in the instruction domain is particularly concerning: Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning and Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill underperformed all other comparable campuses in the instruction domain.

DC PCSB staff also evaluated the school's compliance with applicable federal and local laws, compliance with its charter, and fiscal management. DC PCSB staff determined Digital Pioneers PCS has not committed a violation of law or a material violation of its charter, and has not committed fiscal mismanagement, meaning the school has adhered to generally accepted accounting principles, has not engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement, and is economically viable.

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<sup>6</sup> See DC PCSB's transitional goals description in the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, <https://bit.ly/3JCFwIQ>, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See details here: <https://bit.ly/2PTj7fL>.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the NWEA MAP assessment, please see: <https://bit.ly/3VZHdFt>.

<sup>9</sup> "9<sup>th</sup> grade on track" is the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who earned enough credits in freshman year to graduate from high school in four years.

<sup>10</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS's SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data performance on pages 19 through 21 of the attached Preliminary Charter Review Report.

<sup>11</sup> The median, 50, indicates that a school's students have average year-to-year growth when compared to students nationwide in the same grades and with the same initial assessment performance.

<sup>12</sup> Danielson, Charlotte. *The Framework for Teaching: Evaluation Instrument*. Princeton, NJ: Danielson Group, 2013.

Based on these findings, DC PCSB staff recommends the Board vote to continue the school's charter with the following conditions:

1. Digital Pioneers PCS shall develop and implement an academic improvement plan.
  - a. By April 3, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a draft plan for DC PCSB's review. At a minimum, the plan must include a) specific strategies the school will use to improve academic outcomes for all students, and b) a description of how the school will measure its progress toward meeting the goals and strategies outlined in its improvement plan.
  - b. By May 1, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a final improvement plan that incorporates and addresses, to DC PCSB's satisfaction, any feedback provided by DC PCSB.<sup>13</sup>
  - c. Digital Pioneers PCS must report on its progress implementing the plan in its annual report every year leading up to its 10-year review, displaying student achievement data, and explaining specific strategies the school is using to improve student outcomes. DC PCSB will consider the school's progress as reported in its annual reports at its 10-year charter review.
2. Each Digital Pioneers PCS campus must undergo a QSR every year of the next review period.
  - a. If the QSR team rates fewer than 50.0% of observations as “proficient” or “distinguished” in either domain of the QSR rubric at either campus, DC PCSB staff may recommend an immediate high-stakes review.
  - b. If a Digital Pioneers PCS campus earns “proficient” or “distinguished” rates in both domains of the QSR rubric that fall within 5.0% of the two-year weighted average of comparable public charter school classrooms for that domain for two consecutive years,<sup>14</sup> then DC PCSB will cease conducting condition-related QSR visits at that campus.

DC PCSB staff's complete findings are detailed in the school's Preliminary Charter Review Report (Attachment A), which forms the basis of staff's recommendation

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<sup>13</sup> DC PCSB will evaluate the school's plan to determine whether it clearly articulates strategies that address the areas of deficiency. It will also evaluate whether the school has articulated how it will measure progress.

<sup>14</sup> DC PCSB will calculate a two-year weighted average for each QSR domain and grade band (e.g., grades pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 and grades 9 – 12). DC PCSB will use SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data to calculate these averages, where SY 2021 – 22 QSR data has 40.0% weight and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data has 60.0% weight. Over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 classrooms. Likewise, over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among 9 – 12 classrooms.



along with this proposal. The report will be finalized following the Board's vote on the school's continuance.

### **Rationale**

Digital Pioneers PCS's SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals outcomes indicate opportunities for improvement. As previously noted, Digital Pioneers PCS's NWEA MAP growth outcomes were below the median. Further, fewer than 10.0% of Digital Pioneers PCS students scored proficient in math on PARCC. The school's English language arts (ELA) proficiency rates are not much higher; 14.6% of Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning students scored proficient in ELA on PARCC in SY 2021 – 22, and 16.7% of Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill students scored proficient. Additionally, fewer than 5.0% of the school's 9<sup>th</sup> graders are on track for graduation in four years.

The proposed academic improvement plan condition encourages Digital Pioneers PCS to interrogate its program and academic outcomes and then identify and implement improvement strategies. The condition also asks the school to report on its progress in realizing its improvement plan every year leading up to its 10-year charter review in SY 2027 – 28. If Digital Pioneers PCS reports—or DC PCSB identifies—concerning academic outcomes, DC PCSB staff may conduct an out-of-cycle review ahead of the school's 10-year review.<sup>15</sup>

The school's QSR performance also indicates areas for growth. DC PCSB staff conducted QSR visits at Digital Pioneers PCS campuses from September 19 – 30, 2022.<sup>16</sup> The chart below details the percentage of Digital Pioneers PCS classrooms, by campus, the QSR team rated as proficient or distinguished in each domain. It also reports the average percentage of comparable public charter school classrooms that received proficient and distinguished ratings in each domain. As previously stated, Digital Pioneers PCS campuses scored below average in both domains compared to relevant public charter schools that recently received a QSR.

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<sup>15</sup> The SRA requires that DC PCSB review a school's charter at least once every five years; it does not limit the ability of DC PCSB to conduct additional reviews at the Board's discretion.

<sup>16</sup> DC PCSB typically conducts QSR visits one year before a school's charter review. DC PCSB postponed Digital Pioneers PCS's QSR visits until SY 2022 – 23 because the school did not respond to DC PCSB staff's requests to schedule an observation during SY 2021 – 22.

<b>Campus/Sector</b>	<b>Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Instruction</b>
Percentage Rated Proficient or Distinguished		
<b>Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning</b>	<b>73.7%</b>	<b>45.2%</b>
Average score for pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 public charter schools	89.0%	80.0%
<b>Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill</b>	<b>57.1%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
Average score for 9 – 12 public charter schools	90.0%	85.0%

The proposed QSR condition will provide DC PCSB with greater evidence of school quality ahead of Digital Pioneers PCS’s 10-year review. Conducting additional QSR visits also provides the school with multiple opportunities to engage with DC PCSB in an independent, qualitative assessment designed to support the school in identifying its environmental and instructional strengths and weaknesses.

**Charter Review Standard**

The SRA stipulates that DC PCSB "shall review [a school's] charter at least once every [five] years."<sup>17</sup> As part of this review, DC PCSB must determine whether:

1. The school committed a violation of applicable law or a material violation of the conditions, terms, standards, or procedures set forth in its charter, including violations relating to the education of children with disabilities; and/or
2. The school failed to meet the goals and student academic achievement expectations set forth in its charter.<sup>18</sup>

If DC PCSB determines that a school has committed a violation of applicable law or a material violation of the terms of its charter, or has not met its goals and academic achievement expectations, it may, at its discretion, revoke the school’s charter, or grant the school a continuance.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, there is a fiscal component to the charter review. DC PCSB is required by the SRA to revoke a school's charter if DC PCSB determines in its review that the school: 1) has engaged in a pattern of nonadherence to generally accepted accounting principles, 2) has engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement, and/or 3) is no longer economically viable.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3).

<sup>18</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.13(a).

<sup>19</sup> DC PCSB may impose conditions of continuance if it deems such conditions appropriate.

<sup>20</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.13(b).

**Background**

Digital Pioneers PCS began operation in 2018 under authorization from DC PCSB. The school currently educates 511 students in grades 6 – 10; it is approved to educate students in grades 6 – 12 at capacity. The school operates two campuses located in Wards 6 and 8.<sup>21</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS’s mission is:

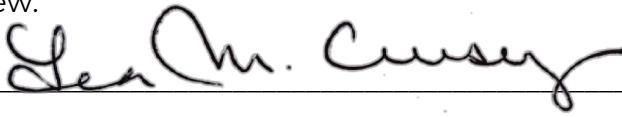
to develop the next generation of innovators. We prepare students to meet or exceed the highest academic standards, while cultivating the strength of character necessary to both graduate from four-year colleges and thrive in 21st century careers.

**Notification**

On January 9, 2023, DC PCSB staff notified Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners Edward Ryder (6B08) and Kendall Simmons (8E04) of the school's five-year charter review. DC PCSB staff also posted a notice for public comment on the charter review in the DC Register and on the DC PCSB website.<sup>22</sup>

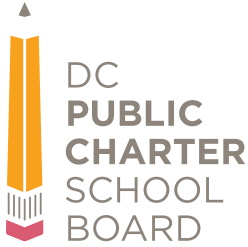
**Attachment to this Proposal**

Attachment A: Digital Pioneers PCS Five-Year Preliminary Charter Review Report

<p>Date: <u>2/27/2023</u></p> <p>DC PCSB Action: _____ Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved with Changes _____ Rejected</p> <p>Changes to the Original Proposal:          Condition 1c is adjusted to read as follows: Digital Pioneers PCS must report on its progress implementing the plan in its annual report every year leading up to its 10-year review, displaying student achievement data, and explaining specific strategies the school is using to improve student outcomes. DC PCSB will consider the school's progress as reported in its annual reports at its 10-year charter review. If Digital Pioneers PCS reports—or DC PCSB identifies—concerning academic outcomes, DC PCSB staff may conduct an out-of-cycle review ahead of the school’s 10-year review.</p> <p>Signature: _____ </p>
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<sup>21</sup> This enrollment figure is based on preliminary, unvalidated data as of October 5, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> See the notice here: <https://bit.ly/3WBSOKT>.



# **2022 – 23 Five-Year Charter Review Report Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School**

**February 27, 2023**

DC Public Charter School Board  
3333 14th Street NW, Suite 210  
Washington, DC 20010  
(202) 328-2660  
[www.dcpccb.org](http://www.dcpccb.org)

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## **BOARD VOTE AND KEY FINDINGS<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Digital Pioneers Academy Public Charter School (Digital Pioneers PCS)<sup>2, 3</sup></b>					
<b>Review or Renewal</b>	Five-year charter review				
<b>Review Period</b>	School year (SY) 2018 – 19 through SY 2021 – 22				
<b>Charter Goals</b>	DC PCSB did not render a goals attainment determination for Digital Pioneers PCS.				
<b>Compliance</b>	Digital Pioneers PCS <b>did not</b> violate the law or materially violate its charter.				
<b>Finance</b>	Digital Pioneers PCS <b>did not</b> commit fiscal mismanagement.				
<b>Board Vote</b>	The board voted 6 – 0 to conditionally continue Digital Pioneers PCS's charter.				
<b>Performance Management Framework (PMF) Outcomes<sup>4</sup></b>					
Campus	2018 – 19	2019 – 20	2020 – 21	2021 – 22	Average
Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning	56.0%	Not Applicable (NA) <sup>5</sup>			NA
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	NA <sup>6</sup>				NA

Pursuant to the School Reform Act (SRA), the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) “shall review [a school’s] charter at least once every [five] years.”<sup>7</sup> As such, DC PCSB conducted a five-year charter review of Digital Pioneers PCS, evaluating the school’s progress toward meeting its goals and academic achievement expectations (charter goals). Digital Pioneers PCS adopted the PMF as its charter goals in accordance with DC PCSB’s *Elect to Adopt the PMF as Charter Goals Policy (PMF as Goals Policy)*.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, Digital

<sup>1</sup> To request a text-only and/or a black and white version of this report, please contact [communications@dcpcs.org](mailto:communications@dcpcs.org).

<sup>2</sup> See the appendices to this report here: <https://bit.ly/3i18bhw>.

<sup>3</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS’s Charter Agreement and Amendments, Appendices A1 – A6.

<sup>4</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS’s PMF scorecard, Appendix B.

<sup>5</sup> As written in DC PCSB’s *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, the “COVID-19 public health emergency resulted in all DC public charter schools physically closing and implementing distance learning programs.” Consequently, per the policy, DC PCSB ceased collection, aggregation, and publication of SY 2019 – 20 academic data and did not produce the SY 2019 – 20 PMF. Similarly, though DC PCSB resumed collection of a limited set of SY 2020 – 21 PMF data, it did not produce the SY 2020 – 21 PMF. In September 2021, DC PCSB announced its plan to develop a new accountability framework. Consequently, DC PCSB did not produce the SY 2021 – 22 PMF. For details, see the *COVID-19 Impact Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/3fy5zDo>. Also see DC PCSB’s September 2021 public meeting materials and recorded discussion here: <https://bit.ly/3JpiB2x>.

<sup>6</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill did not open until SY 2021 – 22. As such, there are no PMF data to report for the review period.

<sup>7</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3).

<sup>8</sup> See the *PMF as Goals Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/2PTj7fL>.

Pioneers PCS committed to obtaining an average PMF score equal to or exceeding 40.0% at its five-year review. As the chart above reports, DC PCSB did not render a goals attainment determination for Digital Pioneers PCS. The school opened its first campus, Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning, in SY 2018 – 19. It only has one year of data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school opened its second campus, Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill, in SY 2021 – 22; thus, it does not have any pre-pandemic data to report. Per DC PCSB's *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, DC PCSB will not make a determination of goal attainment for schools with one or fewer years of pre-pandemic data.

To support evaluation during the COVID-19 recovery period, DC PCSB collected SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data from all schools.<sup>9</sup> Per the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, for schools with one or fewer years of charter goals data before the COVID-19 pandemic, DC PCSB proposed that its Board use transitional goals data to develop and impose improvement conditions as needed.<sup>10</sup>

Digital Pioneers PCS's SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data include the following outcomes: growth on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment,<sup>11</sup> Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) proficiency, 9<sup>th</sup> grade on track,<sup>12</sup> attendance, and re-enrollment. As shown in Section One of this report, Digital Pioneers PCS's NWEA MAP growth outcomes were well below the median,<sup>13</sup> particularly among 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Further, fewer than 10.0% of Digital Pioneers PCS students scored proficient in math on PARCC, and fewer than 5.0% of the school's 9<sup>th</sup> graders are on track for graduation in four years.

In addition to collecting transitional goals data, DC PCSB conducted a Qualitative Site Review (QSR) at each Digital Pioneers PCS campus during SY 2022 – 23. DC PCSB uses the QSR to evaluate schools across two domains—classroom environment and instruction. Digital Pioneers PCS campuses scored below average in both domains compared to relevant public charter schools that recently received a QSR. The school's performance in the instruction domain is particularly concerning: Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning and Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill underperformed all other comparable campuses across the charter sector in the instruction domain.

DC PCSB also evaluated the school's compliance with applicable federal and local laws, compliance with its charter, and fiscal management. DC PCSB determined the school has

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<sup>9</sup> See DC PCSB's transitional goals description in the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, <https://bit.ly/3JCFwIQ>, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> See details here: <https://bit.ly/2PTj7fL>.

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the NWEA MAP assessment please see: <https://bit.ly/3VZHdFt>.

<sup>12</sup> "9<sup>th</sup> grade on track" is the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who earned enough credits in freshman year to graduate from high school in four years.

<sup>13</sup> The median, 50, indicates that a school's students have average year-to-year growth when compared to students nationwide in the same grades and with the same initial assessment performance.

not committed a violation of law or a material violation of its charter, has adhered to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), has not engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement, and is economically viable.

However, DC PCSB recognizes an opportunity for operational improvement at Digital Pioneers PCS. As noted in the QSR section and Section Two of this report, Digital Pioneers PCS failed to effectively communicate with DC PCSB regarding its QSR visits and procurement requirements. DC PCSB typically conducts QSR visits one year before a school's charter review. DC PCSB postponed Digital Pioneers PCS's QSR visits until SY 2022 – 23 because the school did not respond to DC PCSB's requests to schedule an observation during SY 2021 – 22. Further, Digital Pioneers PCS repeatedly failed to submit procurement contracts on time. DC PCSB will continue to monitor the school's operational performance closely.

On February 27, 2023, the Board voted 6 – 0 to continue the school's charter with the following conditions:

- 1) Digital Pioneers PCS shall develop and implement an academic improvement plan.
  - a. By April 3, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a draft plan for DC PCSB's review. At a minimum, the plan must include a) specific strategies the school will use to improve academic outcomes for all students, and b) a description of how the school will measure its progress toward meeting the goals and strategies outlined in its improvement plan.
  - b. By May 1, 2023, Digital Pioneers PCS shall submit a final improvement plan that incorporates and addresses, to DC PCSB's satisfaction, any feedback provided by DC PCSB.<sup>14</sup>
  - c. Digital Pioneers PCS must report on its progress implementing the plan in its annual report every year leading up to its 10-year review, displaying student achievement data, and explaining specific strategies the school is using to improve student outcomes. DC PCSB will consider the school's progress as reported in its annual reports at its 10-year charter review.
- 2) Each Digital Pioneers PCS campus must undergo a QSR every year of the next review period.
  - a. If the QSR team rates fewer than 50.0% of observations as “proficient” or “distinguished” in either domain of the QSR rubric at either campus, DC PCSB may recommend an immediate high-stakes review.
  - b. If a Digital Pioneers PCS campus earns “proficient” or “distinguished” rates in each domain of the QSR rubric within 5.0% of the two-year weighted average of comparable public charter school classrooms for two consecutive years,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> DC PCSB will evaluate the school's plan to determine whether it clearly articulates strategies that address the areas of deficiency. It will also evaluate whether the school has articulated how it will measure progress.

<sup>15</sup> DC PCSB will calculate a two-year weighted average for each QSR domain and grade band (e.g., grades pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 and grades 9 – 12). DC PCSB will use SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data to calculate these



then DC PCSB will cease conducting condition-related QSR visits at that campus.

The following report includes a school background section followed by analyses of the school's academic performance, charter and legal compliance, and fiscal management.

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averages, where SY 2021 – 22 QSR data has 40.0% weight and SY 2022 – 23 QSR data has 60.0% weight. Over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among pre-kindergarten 3 – 8 classrooms. Likewise, over the next five years, DC PCSB will compare Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill's QSR performance to the two-year (e.g., SY 2021 – 22 and SY 2022 – 23) averages among 9 – 12 classrooms.

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Digital Pioneers PCS			
<b>Year Opened</b>	2018 – 19	<b>Ward(s)</b>	6, 8
<b>Number of Campuses</b>	2	<b>Year(s) of Previous Review</b>	NA
<b>Current Enrollment Ceiling</b>	600	<b>Current Enrollment</b>	511 <sup>16</sup>
Current Grade Span by Campus			
Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning		Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	
6 – 8		9 – 10	
Mission Statement			
The mission of Digital Pioneers PCS is to develop the next generation of innovators. We prepare students to meet or exceed the highest academic standards, while cultivating the strength of character necessary to both graduate from four-year colleges and thrive in 21st century careers.			

### School Overview

Digital Pioneers PCS began operation in 2018 under authorization from DC PCSB to educate students in grades 6 – 8. In December 2020, DC PCSB conditionally approved the school to expand to include grades 9 – 12. By April 2021, Digital Pioneers PCS satisfied its conditions, and the school began enrolling 9<sup>th</sup> graders in SY 2021 – 22. The local education agency (LEA)<sup>17</sup> is expected to reach maturation in SY 2024 – 25 with a maximum of 840 middle and high schoolers.<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with its mission, Digital Pioneers PCS focuses its educational model on computer science and offers a program in which every student “builds on computer literacy, educational technology, digital citizenship, and information technology.”<sup>19</sup> The school aims to prepare its students for college and future success by emphasizing character development and supporting students’ natural ability to be innovators.<sup>20</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS strives to provide a supportive learning environment with two teachers in each classroom.

### Enrollment and Demographic Data

The table below shows the school’s enrollment history during the review period.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This enrollment data is based on preliminary, unvalidated data as of October 5, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> An “LEA” is any individual or group of public charter schools operating under a single charter.

<sup>18</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS’s Expansion Amendment, Appendix A3.

<sup>19</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS’s 2021 – 22 Annual Report, Appendix C.

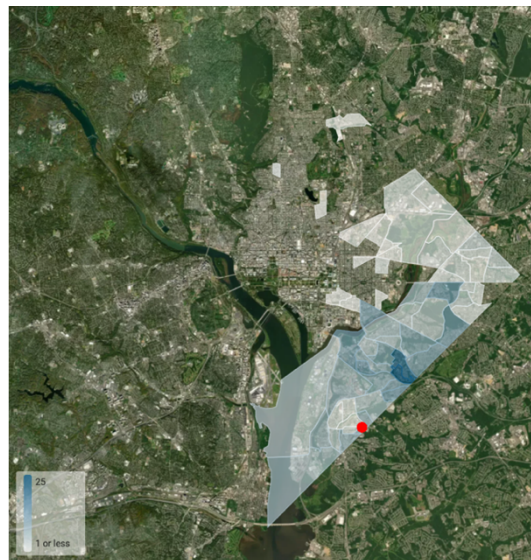
<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The “–” symbol indicates the school does not or did not enroll students in the corresponding grade(s) or student group(s).

School Year	2018 – 19	2019 – 20	2020 – 21	2021 – 22
<b>Audited Enrollment</b> <sup>22</sup>	120	242	337	459
<b>Enrollment Projections</b> <sup>23</sup>	120	240	360	450
<b>Enrollment Ceiling</b> <sup>24</sup>	120	240	360	480

School Year	2018 – 19	2019 – 20	2020 – 21	2021 – 22
<b>Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning</b>				
<b>6</b>	120	119	97	115
<b>7</b>	–	123	120	113
<b>8</b>	–	–	120	112
<b>Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill</b>				
<b>9</b>	–	–	–	118
<b>10</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>11</b>	–	–	–	–
<b>12</b>	–	–	–	–

The map below shows where SY 2021 – 22 Digital Pioneers PCS students live in relation to the school’s two facilities, which are marked by red dots. The blue gradient represents the density of students. As the map shows, Digital Pioneers PCS enrolls students from every ward in the District, though most of its students come from Ward 8.



<sup>22</sup> The DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) conducts an annual enrollment audit to determine the number of students at each public school in the District.

<sup>23</sup> Each year, charter LEAs, DC PCSB, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) must project student enrollment for the following school year. The enrollment projections displayed are determined by DME and DC PCSB and may be different than the LEA’s projections.

<sup>24</sup> Each charter LEA has an enrollment ceiling in its charter agreement, designating the maximum number of students the school can receive per pupil funding for each school year.

The table below shows the LEA's SY 2021 – 22 student demographics.

Student Group	Percentage Enrolled
<b>At-Risk Students</b> <sup>25</sup>	72.8%
<b>English Learners</b> <sup>26</sup>	0.2%
<b>Students with Disabilities (SWD)</b> <sup>27</sup>	15.5%
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	–
<b>Asian</b>	–
<b>Black or African American</b>	96.9%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	1.3%
<b>Multiracial</b>	0.4%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</b>	0.2%
<b>White</b>	–

### **School Climate**

The charts below report Digital Pioneers PCS's performance across three school environment measures: out-of-school suspension (OSS) rates, mid-year withdrawal (MYW) rates, and in-seat attendance (ISA) rates. DC PCSB presents these measures by applicable student groups and compares them to the relevant student groups within the DC public charter sector. These data do not factor into DC PCSB's continuance determination. Still, isolating school environment measures by student groups helps to identify whether there may be access and opportunity disparities.<sup>28</sup>

### **OSS Rates**

An OSS is when a school temporarily removes a student from school grounds for disciplinary reasons. The OSS rate is the percentage of students who received an OSS. The charts below detail Digital Pioneers PCS's average OSS rates by grade band and student group compared to the DC public charter sector's average OSS rates.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> D.C. Code § 38–2901(2A) defines “at-risk” as a DCPS student or a public charter school student who is identified as one or more of the following: a) homeless; b) in the District’s foster care system; c) qualifies for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; or d) a high school student who is one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the student is enrolled.

<sup>26</sup> English learners are students whose native language is a language other than English. An English learner may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language.

<sup>27</sup> SWD are students identified as having an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that details the special education services the students must receive. For demographic data, DC PCSB counts any students who were identified as SWD through the year in the final calculation.

<sup>28</sup> The rates for SY 2019 – 20 include data from August 2019 through February 2020. DC PCSB ceased collecting OSS, MYW, and ISA data after March 2020 in response to the pandemic.

<sup>29</sup> For SY 2020 – 21, DC PCSB determined the number of students suspended across the charter sector, including Digital Pioneers PCS, is too small to report.

Key for OSS and MYW Rates	
Green	Equal to or less than the sector rate
Red	More than the sector rate
Grey	n < 10; the number of students (n-size) is less than 10 <sup>30</sup>

SY 2018 – 19 Average OSS Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	12.7%	n < 10	18.8%
Sector		16.9%	7.8%	21.0%

SY 2019 – 20 Average OSS Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	16.4%	n < 10	23.8%
Sector		10.4%	4.6%	13.2%

SY 2021 – 22 Average OSS Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	13.5%	n < 10	12.5%
Sector		10.0%	3.9%	9.9%
Digital Pioneers PCS	9 – 12	29.8%	n < 10	17.9%
Sector		13.4%	6.2%	13.6%

#### MYW Rates

The MYW rate is the percentage of students who have withdrawn from school during the school year. The charts below detail Digital Pioneers PCS's average MYW rates by grade band and student group compared to the DC public charter sector's average MYW rates.

SY 2018 – 19 Average MYW Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	2.5%	n < 10	0.0%
Sector		5.1%	3.7%	4.8%

<sup>30</sup> DC PCSB does not report on values when the n-size is less than 10.

SY 2019 – 20 Average MYW Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	6.1%	n < 10	4.8%
Sector		3.3%	1.4%	3.7%

SY 2020 – 21 Average MYW Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	0.4%	n < 10	1.6%
Sector		3.6%	3.7%	3.2%

SY 2021 – 22 Average MYW Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	4.0%	n < 10	3.6%
Sector		4.4%	3.0%	3.7%
Digital Pioneers PCS	9 – 12	7.4%	n < 10	3.6%
Sector		7.8%	4.5%	7.5%

#### ISA Rates

The ISA rate is the percentage of students who were present each day. The charts below detail Digital Pioneers PCS's data by grade band and student group compared to the DC public charter sector's average ISA rates.

Key for ISA Rates	
Green	Equal to or more than the sector rate
Red	Less than the sector rate
Grey	n < 10; the n-size is less than 10

SY 2018 – 19 Average ISA Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	91.3%	n < 10	93.5%
Sector		92.5%	94.4%	91.9%

SY 2019 – 20 Average ISA Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	92.1%	n < 10	92.4%
Sector		88.6%	91.5%	90.3%

SY 2020 – 21 Average ISA Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	93.9%	n < 10	91.8%
Sector		89.6%	93.5%	90.1%

SY 2021 – 22 Average ISA Rates				
School/Sector	Grade Band	At-Risk Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
Digital Pioneers PCS	6 – 8	69.3%	n < 10	66.6%
Sector		82.8%	89.8%	84.2%
Digital Pioneers PCS	9 – 12	81.1%	n < 10	70.8%
Sector		81.9%	85.6%	81.2%

### **Qualitative Site Reviews**

As previously noted, DC PCSB uses QSR visits to assess schools across two domains—classroom environment and instruction, as defined in the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.<sup>31</sup> From September 19 – 30, 2022, in anticipation of this review, DC PCSB conducted QSR visits at Digital Pioneers PCS campuses.<sup>32</sup> In the classroom environment domain, observers noted that talk between teachers and students was generally respectful at both campuses. Across some classrooms, student behavior was generally appropriate and teachers’ responses to misbehavior were effective. However, in some classrooms, the teachers attempted to maintain order, but with varied success. In the instruction domain, observers noted that Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning teachers clearly communicated the lesson purpose to students. At Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill, teachers had to explain learning tasks several times before students could complete them. Across both campuses, teachers mainly posed closed-ended questions with a single path of inquiry. Most tasks

<sup>31</sup> Danielson, Charlotte. *The Framework for Teaching: Evaluation Instrument*. Princeton, NJ: Danielson Group, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> As previously noted, DC PCSB typically conducts QSR visits one year before a school’s charter review. DC PCSB postponed Digital Pioneers PCS’s QSR visits until SY 2022 – 23 because the school did not respond to DC PCSB’s requests to schedule an observation during SY 2021 – 22. See Digital Pioneers PCS’s SY 2022 – 23 QSR Reports, Appendices D1 – D2.

were procedural, requiring minimal critical thinking and resulting in passive student engagement.

After conducting unannounced observations, the QSR team rates the classroom environment and instruction as “unsatisfactory,” “basic,” “proficient,” or “distinguished.” The following chart details the percentage of Digital Pioneers PCS classrooms, by campus, the QSR team rated as proficient or distinguished in each domain. It also reports the average percentage of comparable public charter school classrooms that received proficient and distinguished ratings in each domain.

Campus/Sector	Classroom Environment	Instruction
Percentage Rated Proficient or Distinguished		
Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning	73.7%	45.2%
Average score for pre-kindergarten (PK) – 8 public charter schools	89.0%	80.0%
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	57.1%	10.7%
Average score for 9 – 12 public charter schools	90.0%	85.0%

Digital Pioneers PCS campuses scored below average in both domains compared to PK – 8 and 9 – 12 public charter schools that received a QSR during SY 2021 – 22.<sup>33</sup> The school’s performance in the instruction domain is particularly concerning: Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning and Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill underperformed all other comparable campuses across the charter sector in the instruction domain.

In addition to conducting classroom observations, DC PCSB and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) consultants reviewed sample ELA and math assignments Digital Pioneers PCS students received. Evaluators used TNTP’s *Assignment Review Protocol* in assessing whether the assignments: 1) aligned with grade-appropriate standards, 2) provided students with meaningful practice opportunities, and 3) gave students an opportunity to connect academic standards to real-world issues.<sup>34</sup> Upon review, evaluators rated each assignment as “sufficient,” “minimal,” or “no opportunity,” describing the opportunity students had to meaningfully engage in worthwhile grade-level content.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Again, DC PCSB did not conduct QSR visits at Digital Pioneers PCS until SY 2022 – 23. Given that SY 2022 – 23 QSR visits are still underway, DC PCSB is unable to report QSR averages from the current school year. As such, DC PCSB compares Digital Pioneers PCS’s QSR performance to SY 2021 – 22 QSR averages.

<sup>34</sup> See the protocol here: <https://bit.ly/3PfYLKH>.

<sup>35</sup> Specifically, assignments that satisfied TNTP’s *Assignment Review Protocol* criteria were deemed “sufficient.” Assignments that partially satisfied the criteria were deemed “minimal.” Assignments that did not satisfy the criteria were deemed “no opportunity.”



Of the 10 ELA samples Digital Pioneers PCS submitted, five assignments received an overall rating of “sufficient.” These assignments were based on a high-quality, grade-appropriate text, reached the full depth of the targeted standard, and provided students with an opportunity to use their personal voice. One assignment received an overall rating of “minimal.” This assignment was based on a high-quality, grade-appropriate text, but it did not allow students to use their personal voice. Four assignments received an overall rating of “no opportunity.” These assignments were either not aligned to a grade-level standard or more than half of the questions on the task did not reach the depth of the targeted standard.

Of the 10 math samples Digital Pioneers PCS submitted, five assignments received an overall rating of “sufficient.” These assignments reached the full depth of the targeted standard and mathematical practice, while also connecting academic content to real-world experiences. Three assignments received an overall rating of “minimal.” These assignments were only partially aligned to a grade-level standard and did not allow students to connect academic content to the real world in an authentic way. Two assignments received an overall rating of “no opportunity.” These assignments did not reach the full depth of the targeted standard and did not connect academic content to the real world.

Given Digital Pioneers PCS’s concerning performance in the instruction domain, along with its weak assignment review results, DC PCSB recommends that its Board require the LEA to undergo a QSR every year of the next review period until the school demonstrates that it has remedied all concerns related to classroom environment and instruction. Additional QSR visits provide DC PCSB with greater evidence of school quality ahead of Digital Pioneers PCS’s 10-year review. Conducting additional QSR visits also provides the school with multiple opportunities to engage with DC PCSB in an independent, qualitative assessment designed to support the LEA in identifying its environmental and instructional strengths and weaknesses.

### **Communication with the School**

In July 2022, DC PCSB staff met with members of Digital Pioneers PCS’s staff to discuss the school’s five-year review. DC PCSB staff provided the school with a chart similar to the one in Section One of this report, showing the school’s charter goals performance during the review period.

## **CHARTER REVIEW STANDARD**

The SRA stipulates that DC PCSB "shall review [a school's] charter at least once every [five] years."<sup>36</sup> As part of this review, DC PCSB must determine whether:

- 1) The school committed a violation of applicable law, or a material violation of the conditions, terms, standards, or procedures set forth in its charter, including violations relating to the education of children with disabilities; and/or
- 2) The school failed to meet the goals and student academic achievement expectations set forth in its charter.<sup>37</sup>

If DC PCSB determines that a school has committed a violation of applicable law or a material violation of the terms of its charter, or has not met its goals and academic achievement expectations, it may, at its discretion, revoke the school's charter, or grant the school a continuance.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, there is a fiscal component to the charter review. DC PCSB is required by the SRA to revoke a school's charter if DC PCSB determines in its review that the school: 1) has engaged in a pattern of nonadherence to GAAP, 2) has engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement, and/or 3) is no longer economically viable.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3).

<sup>37</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.13(a).

<sup>38</sup> DC PCSB may impose conditions of continuance if it deems such conditions appropriate.

<sup>39</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.13(b).

## **SECTION ONE: GOALS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS**

Per the SRA, DC PCSB must review whether a school has met its charter goals at least once every five years. Charter goals are part of the review analysis only if they were included in a school's charter or charter amendment.

In June 2018,<sup>40</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS adopted the PMF as its charter goals in its initial charter agreement. In doing so, the school agreed to the review standard recorded in the chart below. This chart also reports that DC PCSB did not render a goals attainment determination for Digital Pioneers PCS.

<b>Charter Goals</b>	
<b>Review Standard:</b> At its fifth-year charter review, [the school] obtains an average PMF score for school years 2018 – 19, 2019 – 20, 2020 – 21, and 2021 – 22 equal to or exceeding 40.0%.	
Campus	Met?
Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning	<b>Unable to Determine</b>
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	

<b>PMF Outcomes</b>					
Campus	2018 – 19	2019 – 20	2020 – 21	2021 – 22	Average
Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning	56.0%	NA <sup>41</sup>			NA
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	NA <sup>42</sup>				NA

**Determination: Per the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, DC PCSB will not make a determination of goal attainment for schools with one or fewer years of data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>43</sup>**

The remainder of this section contains a description of the PMF and an analysis of Digital Pioneers PCS's performance in each PMF category during the review period, excluding school years 2019 – 20, 2020 – 21, and 2021 – 22, per footnote 41. This section ends with a review of supplemental academic data, separate and apart from the school's charter goals.

<sup>40</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS's Charter Agreement, Appendix A1.

<sup>41</sup> DC PCSB ceased collection, aggregation, and publication of SY 2019 – 20 academic data and did not produce the SY 2019 – 20 PMF. Similarly, though DC PCSB resumed collection of a limited set of SY 2020 – 21 and SY 2021 – 22 PMF data, it did not produce the PMF for either school year. Consequently, DC PCSB assesses schools under review in SY 2022 – 23 using data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For details, see the *COVID-19 Impact Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/3fy5zDo>.

<sup>42</sup> Again, Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill opened in SY 2021 – 22; as such, there are no PMF data to report during the review period.

<sup>43</sup> See the *COVID-19 Impact Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/3fy5zDo>.

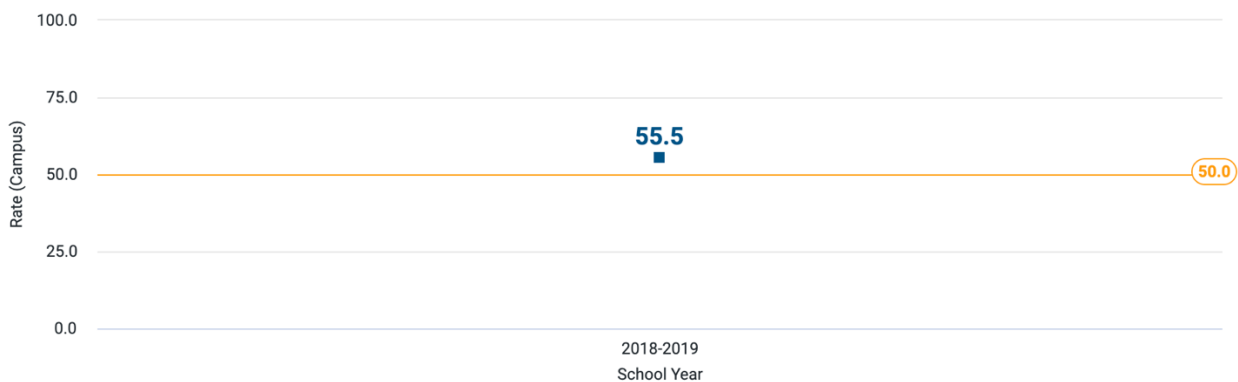
## **PMF Overview**<sup>44</sup>

DC PCSB evaluates all public charter schools according to a PMF. There are four separate PMF frameworks; DC PCSB evaluates Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning under the Early Childhood, Elementary School, and Middle School PMF (PK – 8 PMF).<sup>45</sup> DC PCSB divides the PMF into four categories: student progress, student achievement, gateway, and school environment. Using a 100-point scale, the PMF framework identifies PK – 8 schools as Tier 1 (high-performing), Tier 2 (mid-performing), or Tier 3 (low-performing) based on their overall performance in the categories. See below for a summary of Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning’s performance on the PMF categories, including charts detailing the school’s performance compared to the sector.<sup>46</sup>

## **Student Progress**

Student progress is a measure of student growth over the course of a year. For schools ending in grades 4 – 8, DC PCSB uses the median growth percentile (MGP) on the PARCC, DC’s state assessment, as the growth measure.<sup>47</sup> An MGP of 50 indicates that a school’s students have average year-to-year growth, as compared to other DC students in the same grades and with the same initial state assessment performance. The charts below detail the school’s MGP performance compared to the standard of 50.

### ELA MGP



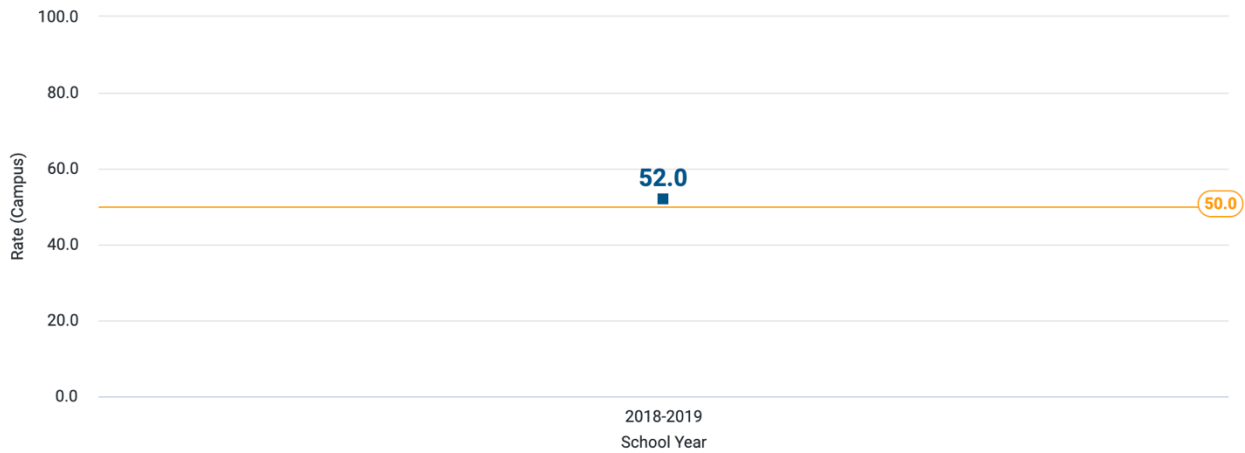
<sup>44</sup> For details, see the *2019 – 20 PMF Policy and Technical Guide* here: <https://bit.ly/2D2lvqc>.

<sup>45</sup> Had Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill opened before the COVID-19 pandemic, DC PCSB would have evaluated the campus under the High School PMF.

<sup>46</sup> The phrase “compared to the sector” here and throughout this section of the report refers to the average performance achieved by all DC public charter schools evaluated under the corresponding PMF.

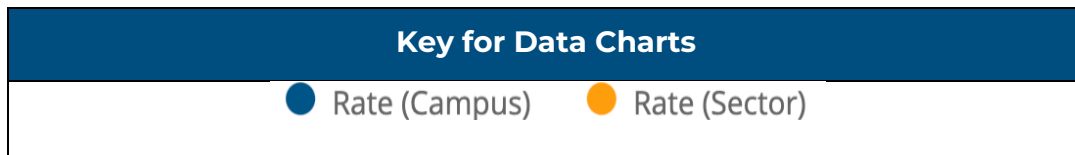
<sup>47</sup> For middle schools, MGP measures growth across all grade levels. For high schools, MGP measures growth from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in ELA and geometry.

## Math MGP

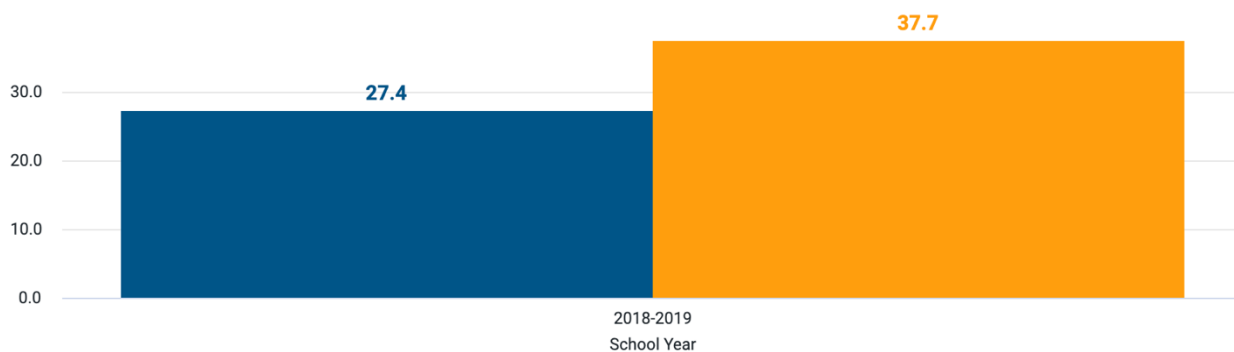


## Student Achievement

The student achievement category captures overall student performance on the PARCC assessment, with level 4+ considered proficient and advanced.<sup>48</sup> This category includes overall performance in both ELA and math as compared to the sector average for students in the same grade band. The charts below detail Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning’s ELA and math achievement performance compared to the sector.

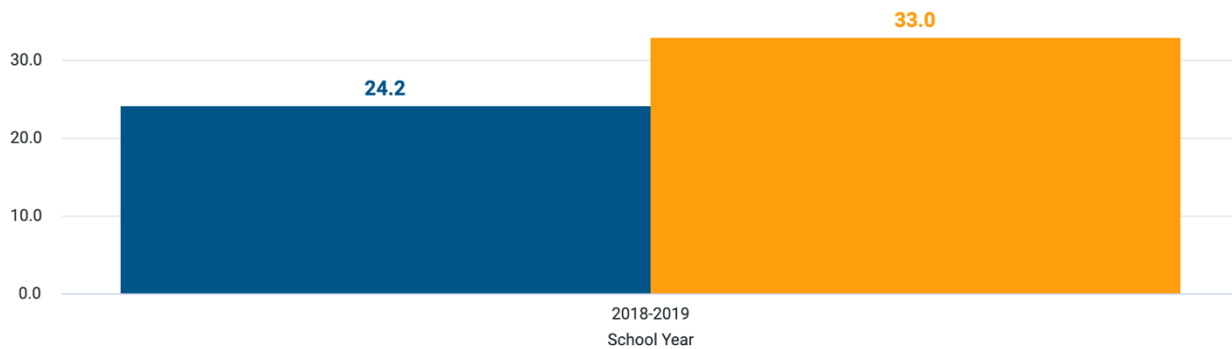


## ELA Proficiency (Overall)



<sup>48</sup> The term “4+” refers to level 4 and level 5 PARCC scores. A student who earns a level 4 is considered proficient. A student who earns a level 5 is considered advanced.

### Math Proficiency (Overall)



### **Gateway**

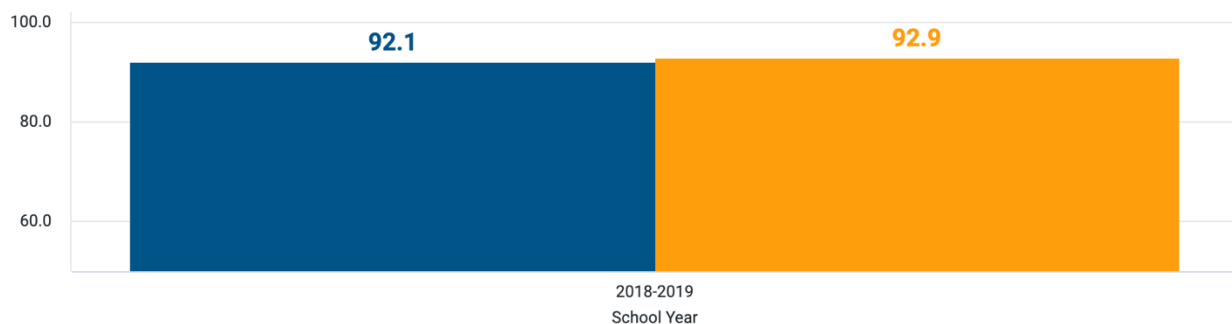
The gateway category includes grade-specific measures that predict students' future academic performance. Under the PK – 8 PMF, this category only applies to schools enrolling students in grades 3 or 8. Digital Pioneers PCS does not serve third graders and only began enrolling eighth graders in SY 2020 – 21. Consequently, there is no gateway data to report for Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning.

### **School Environment**

The school environment category includes in-seat attendance rates and re-enrollment rates. Charts detailing the school's performance on each of these measures can be found below. Though DC PCSB resumed collection of a limited set of SY 2020 – 21 and SY 2021 – 22 data, it did not calculate or publicly report any PMF measures, including ISA and re-enrollment.

### ISA

The ISA rate measures the percentage of students who were present each day. The chart below details the Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning's ISA performance compared to the sector.



## Re-enrollment

The re-enrollment rate measures the percentage of eligible students who return to the school the following year.<sup>49</sup> The LEA opened in SY 2018 – 19 and only has enrollment data for one year prior to the pandemic; thus, there is no re-enrollment data to report for Digital Pioneers PCS.

## **Additional Academic Data**

### Student Group Academic Data

The academic data below is presented by student group. Student group academic performance does not individually factor into the school's PMF score, and it does not factor into DC PCSB's charter goals analysis. However, it provides additional context, showing how the school is serving different student populations. The student group charts below show the school's academic data in both growth and achievement as compared to the sector average for that student group. The following charts do not display student group categories that were not part of the Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning's overall student population, or that had less than 10 test takers in SY 2018 – 19.

<b>Key for Student Group Data Charts</b>	
Green	Greater than the charter sector average for the same grade band
Red or <5.0%	Less than the charter sector average for the same grade band or the data is suppressed in cases of sensitive and negative rates less than 5.0%
Blue	Equal to the charter sector average for the same grade band
Grey	The number of test takers (n-size) is less than 10

### *ELA MGP Growth Rates by Student Group*

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2018 – 19</b>	
	<b>School Rate</b>	<b>Sector Rate</b>
At-Risk	55.0%	47.4%
SWD	57.0%	43.5%
Black or African American	56.5%	48.9%
Female	62.0%	54.0%
Male	51.5%	47.0%

<sup>49</sup> For eligibility criteria, see the 2019 – 20 PMF Policy and Technical Guide here: <https://bit.ly/3aRYFW2>.

*Math MGP Growth Rates by Student Group*

School Year	2018 – 19	
Student Group	School Rate	Sector Rate
At-Risk	38.0%	46.0%
SWD	58.0%	44.5%
Black or African American	52.0%	47.5%
Female	62.0%	51.5%
Male	48.5%	47.0%

*ELA PARCC (4+) Proficiency Rates by Student Group*

School Year	2018 – 19	
Student Group	School Rate	Sector Rate
At-Risk	15.5%	25.0%
SWD	<5.0%	9.0%
Black or African American	25.3%	32.6%
Female	31.3%	44.9%
Male	23.4%	30.3%

*Math PARCC (4+) Proficiency Rates by Student Group*

School Year	2018 – 19	
Student Group	School Rate	Sector Rate
At-Risk	19.0%	22.6%
SWD	<5.0%	8.9%
Black or African American	23.1%	28.7%
Female	27.1%	35.5%
Male	21.3%	30.7%

**Transitional Goals Data**

Per the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, DC PCSB collected SY 2021 – 22 transitional goals data from all schools to support evaluation during the COVID-19 recovery period.<sup>50</sup> For schools serving K – 8 students, as well as schools serving 9 – 12 students, transitional goals data includes results from a school-selected, nationally normed growth assessment; PARCC (4+); various high school gateway metrics (e.g., 9<sup>th</sup> Grade on Track); ISA; and re-enrollment.<sup>51</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS elected to administer NWEA MAP as its growth assessment. The charts below show the school’s overall and student group performance on the available transitional goals measures.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See DC PCSB’s transitional goals description in the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, <https://bit.ly/3JCFwIQ>, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> This measure was optional for high schools.

<sup>52</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS started enrolling ninth grade students in SY 2021 – 22. As such, the LEA does not have data to report for all of the high school gateway metrics DC PCSB typically reports.



6 – 8 ELA and Math NWEA MAP Growth by Student Group

Campus	Student Group	2021 – 22 Median Conditional Growth Percentile (CGP) <sup>53</sup>		
		n-size	ELA	Math
Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning	<b>All Students</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>35.0</b>
	At-Risk	239	32.0	32.0
	SWDs	53	19.0	26.0
	Black or African American	313	34.0	35.0
	Hispanic/Latino	n < 10	n < 10	n < 10
	Other Races	n < 10	n < 10	n < 10
	Female	141	34.0	30.0
	Male	176	33.0	39.0

9<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA and Math NWEA MAP Growth by Student Group

Campus	Student Group	2021 – 22 CGP		
		n-size	ELA	Math
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	<b>All Students</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>28.0</b>
	At-Risk	87	22.0	29.0
	SWDs	27	26.0	26.0
	Black or African American	105	26.0	28.0
	Hispanic/Latino	n < 10	n < 10	n < 10
	Other Races	n < 10	n < 10	n < 10
	Female	51	10.0	28.0
	Male	57	34.0	28.0

ELA and Math PARCC (4+) Proficiency Rates by Student Group

Campus	Student Group	2021 – 22 Proficiency Rates	
		ELA	Math
Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning	<b>All Students</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>
	At-Risk	11.7%	6.9%
	SWDs	<5.0%	<5.0%
	Black or African American	14.1%	9.2%
	Hispanic/Latino	n < 10	n < 10
	Other Races	n < 10	n < 10
	Female	20.3%	10.1%
	Male	10.0%	8.7%
	<b>All Students</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>

<sup>53</sup> CGP typically assesses the relative year-to-year progress made by individual students at a school. Each student's CGP is set by the publisher's norms, based on the student's initial assessment score and grade-level. A median CGP of 50 indicates that a school's students have average year-to-year growth when compared to students nationwide in the same grades and with the same initial assessment performance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DC PCSB calculated CGP for SY 2021 – 22 using students' fall-to-spring scores.

Campus	Student Group	2021 – 22 Proficiency Rates	
		ELA	Math
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	At-Risk	14.8%	8.5%
	SWDs	<5.0%	<5.0%
	Black or African American	16.2%	8.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	n < 10	n < 10
	Other Races	n < 10	n < 10
	Female	19.1%	8.5%
	Male	14.5%	7.1%

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade on Track*

Campus	Student Group	2021 – 22 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade on Track Rates	
		n-size	Rate
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	<b>All Students</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>&lt;5.0%</b>
	At-Risk	90	<5.0%
	SWDs	28	<5.0%
	Black or African American	110	<5.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	n < 10	n < 10
	Other Races	n < 10	n < 10
	Female	54	<5.0%
	Male	59	<5.0%

*ISA*

Campus	2021 – 22 ISA Rates
Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning	70.8%
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	72.5%

*Re-enrollment*

Campus	2021 – 22 Re-enrollment Rates
Digital Pioneers PCS – Jochenning	85.9%
Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill	NA <sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Digital Pioneers PCS – Capitol Hill opened in SY 2021 – 22; as such, there is no re-enrollment data to report.

## **SECTION TWO: COMPLIANCE WITH CHARTER AND APPLICABLE LAWS**

Per the SRA, when reviewing a charter, DC PCSB must determine whether a school has "committed a violation of applicable laws or a material violation of the conditions, terms, standards, or procedures set forth in its charter, including violations relating to the education of children with disabilities."<sup>55</sup> The SRA contains a non-exhaustive list of applicable laws, which DC PCSB monitors in its annual compliance reviews. Since SY 2018 – 19, Digital Pioneers PCS has been compliant with all applicable laws as captured in DC PCSB's compliance reviews.<sup>56</sup>

DC PCSB also monitors schools' compliance with the procurement requirements in the SRA, and supports OSSE, as the state education agency (SEA), in its monitoring of compliance with special education laws.

The remainder of this section examines the school's compliance in these two areas over the review period.

### **Procurement Contracts**

D.C. Code § 38-1802.04(c)(1) requires DC charter schools to use a competitive bidding process for any procurement contract valued at \$25,000 or more. Within three business days of awarding such a contract, schools must submit to DC PCSB all bids received, the contractor selected, and the rationale for which the contractor was selected. To ensure compliance with this law, DC PCSB requires schools to report key contract information specifying any qualifying procurement contract that the school has executed.<sup>57</sup>

During fiscal year (FY) 2019, Digital Pioneers PCS submitted 11 procurement contract packages, eight of which the school reported late. During DC PCSB's annual procurement contract reconciliation process, DC PCSB found that the school did not report four contracts. After communicating with the school, Digital Pioneers PCS properly submitted all outstanding documentation. In FY 2020, the school submitted 10 procurement contract packages, nine of which it reported late. As a result, the school received an Early Warning Notice for failure to report contracts in a timely manner. In FY 2021, the school reported 44 procurement contract packages, 25 of which it reported late. Again, the school received an Early Warning Notice for failure to report contracts in a timely manner.<sup>58</sup> DC PCSB

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<sup>55</sup> D.C. Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3).

<sup>56</sup> Every winter, DC PCSB produces a Compliance Review Report for each public charter school in its portfolio. The report summarizes a school's year-to-date compliance status; it does not include a conclusive compliance determination. See Digital Pioneers PCS's Compliance Review Reports, Appendices E1 – E4.

<sup>57</sup> Further information on DC PCSB's oversight of procurement contracts can be found in its *Procurement Contract Submission and Conflict of Interest Policy* here: <https://bit.ly/3R5Mitl>.

<sup>58</sup> Per the *COVID-19 Impact Policy*, DC PCSB relaxed its threshold for sending Early Warning Notices during FY 2021. This explains why the school only received one such notice during FY 2021.

attributes the increase in procurement contracts to the school’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between FY 2019 and FY 2021, the school only reported 23 out of 65 procurement contracts in a timely manner, which is concerning. While recent conversations with the school and current submission trends suggest that the school has improved its internal processes, DC PCSB will continue to closely monitor the school’s compliance with the procurement policy and recommends the school continue to strengthen its internal bidding and reporting processes to ensure trends of noncompliance do not continue.

**Special Education Compliance<sup>59</sup>**

Charter schools are required to comply with all federal and local special education laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)<sup>60</sup> and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.<sup>61</sup> As the SEA, OSSE monitors charter schools’ compliance with special education laws and shares detailed findings in eight areas captured in the table below.<sup>62</sup>

Of the eight monitored areas, Digital Pioneers PCS was found compliant in all areas. Further information on OSSE’s special education compliance findings is reported in the remainder of this section.

OSSE Special Education Compliance Review Areas	Digital Pioneers PCS Compliant All Years of the Review Period	Status of Corrective Action
1. Annual Determinations	Yes	NA
2. On-Site Monitoring	Yes	NA
3. IDEA Procedural Timeliness Monitoring a) Initial Evaluation b) Reevaluation	Yes	NA
4. Secondary Transition Monitoring	Yes	NA
5. Child Find Monitoring	Yes	NA
6. Disproportionate Representation and Significant Discrepancy Review	Yes	NA
7. Significant Disproportionality Review	Yes	NA

<sup>59</sup> See OSSE’s Glossary of Special Education Compliance Terms, Appendix F.

<sup>60</sup> 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 *et seq.* See 20 U.S.C. § 1413(a)(5).

<sup>61</sup> 29 U.S.C. § 794.

<sup>62</sup> For a description of each review area, see the Special Education Factsheet, Appendix G.

OSSE Special Education Compliance Review Areas	Digital Pioneers PCS Compliant All Years of the Review Period	Status of Corrective Action
8. Hearing Officer Determination and State Complaint Implementation Review	Yes	NA

1. Annual Determinations

Each year, OSSE analyzes each LEA’s compliance with special education requirements and issues its findings in an Annual Determination report to the LEA. As the table below shows, Digital Pioneers PCS received a “Meets Requirements” designation in its 2018, 2019, and 2020 Determinations.

Year	Percent Compliant with Audited Special Education Federal Requirements	Determination Level
2018	87.5%	Meets Requirements
2019	100%	Meets Requirements
2020	88.1%	Meets Requirements

2. On-Site Monitoring Report

OSSE conducts on-site monitoring visits at select LEAs to determine whether they are compliant with federal and local laws and regulations (including special education and related service requirements). OSSE has not flagged Digital Pioneers PCS for on-site monitoring during the review period.

3. IDEA Procedural Timeliness

OSSE monitors schools in two areas related to the timeliness of creating and maintaining compliant Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students: Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation.

*Initial Evaluation*

An initial evaluation is a process used to determine whether a student has a disability and, if so, the nature and extent of the special education and related services the student needs. OSSE has not flagged Digital Pioneers PCS for initial evaluation timeliness noncompliance during the review period.

*Reevaluation*

A reevaluation is used to determine whether a student with an identified disability still has a disability. Schools must conduct a reevaluation for each student with a disability

once every three years. OSSE has not flagged Digital Pioneers PCS for reevaluation timeliness noncompliance during the review period.

4. Secondary Transition Monitoring

The IDEA requires that transition planning (including the development of a plan with transition goals) for students who receive special education services and have an IEP must begin by age 16. OSSE has not flagged Digital Pioneers PCS for secondary transition requirements during the review period.

5. Child Find Monitoring Report

Child Find is a set of policies, procedures, and public awareness activities designed to locate, identify, and evaluate students who may require special education and related services. OSSE has not flagged Digital Pioneers PCS for Child Find monitoring activities during the review period.

6. Disproportionate Representation Review and Significant Discrepancy Review

OSSE annually reviews whether LEAs have overidentification or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of their identified students with disabilities. OSSE determined Digital Pioneers PCS does not have disproportionate representation during the review period.

Significant Discrepancy Review

OSSE annually reviews LEAs' rates of suspension and expulsion for students with disabilities as compared to their non-disabled peers. OSSE determined Digital Pioneers PCS does not have significant discrepancy during the review period.

7. Significant Disproportionality Review

OSSE annually reviews LEAs for significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in an LEA with respect to the identification of children as children with disabilities, the identification of children in specific disability categories, the placement of children with disabilities in particular educational settings, or the taking of disciplinary actions. OSSE determined Digital Pioneers PCS does not have significant disproportionality during the review period.

8. Hearing Officer Determination (HOD) Implementation Review

Parents of students with disabilities may file complaints with OSSE as it relates to student-specific issues and systemic issues. Student-specific complaints are known as due process complaints, and systemic complaints are known as state complaints. When necessary, OSSE conducts hearings to resolve disagreements identified via parent complaint. OSSE issues a written HOD after each due process hearing, detailing its findings along with any actions the LEA must fulfill. OSSE then oversees

the timely implementation of actions required by HODs. No HODs have been issued against Digital Pioneers PCS during the review period.

### State Complaints

Any individual or organization may submit a written complaint that claims that any District of Columbia public agency has failed to comply with a requirement of Part B or Part C of the IDEA or the District's laws and regulations regarding special education. Such laws include the identification, evaluation, educational placement of the child, and the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to such child. No state complaints have been filed against Digital Pioneers PCS during the review period.

## **SECTION THREE: FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY**<sup>63</sup>

The SRA requires DC PCSB to revoke a school's charter if DC PCSB determines that the school:

- has engaged in a pattern of nonadherence to GAAP;
- has engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement; and/or
- is no longer economically viable.<sup>64</sup>

DC PCSB collectively and holistically assessed the school's financial performance and condition by reviewing:

- the school's audited financial statements for FY 2019 through FY 2021;
- the school's unaudited financial statements for FY 2022;
- the school's annual budgets for FY 2021 and FY 2022; and
- DC PCSB's Financial Analysis Report (FAR) of Digital Pioneers PCS for FY 2019 through FY 2021.<sup>65</sup>

### **Summary of Findings**<sup>66</sup>

Digital Pioneers PCS has demonstrated adequate fiscal performance during the review period. Its financial audits confirm 1) the school's financial statements comply with GAAP, 2) the school has adequate internal accounting controls, and 3) the school is financially solvent and able to pay its outstanding obligations if the school's charter were to be revoked or not renewed. The school is economically viable and has not engaged in a pattern of fiscal mismanagement.

### **Strengths and Deficiencies**

- Most of the school's FY 2021 key performance indicators were at or above target. This is particularly positive for a school in its first years of operation.
- The unaudited FY 2022 financial statements show the school's performance, liquidity, and sustainability measures have deteriorated at fiscal year-end (FYE) 2022. This is not concerning, as the main reason for the worsening measures is the delay in the federal grants application and reimbursement process. Mainly due to this delay, budgeted FY 2021 federal funding was partially awarded and received after FYE 2022.
- The school demonstrated healthy re-enrollment rates in the three-year period between FY 2020 and FY 2022.
- In its first three years of operation, the school has demonstrated good financial health, as shown by the 6% aggregated three-year change in net assets margin in FY 2021, mainly achieved due to enrollment growth.

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<sup>63</sup> Each percentage in Section Three of this report has been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

<sup>64</sup> See D.C. Code § 38-1802.13(b).

<sup>65</sup> See Digital Pioneers PCS's FAR Reports, Appendices H1 – H3.

<sup>66</sup> See Financial Definitions and Examples, Appendix I.



- Adequate liquidity measures indicate the school generates sufficient cash flow from its operations to meet its obligations.
- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were noted by the auditor between FY 2019 and FY 2021.

<b>Key for Finance Data</b>	
<b>Comparison to FAR Benchmarks</b>	<b>What This Means in the Following Tables</b>
Within target range	Generally strong financial position
Outside of target range	Possibly more imminent financial concerns; operations may not be adequately managed, sustainable, and/or economically viable; closer monitoring warranted

Definitions and examples for each key performance indicator used herein are provided in Appendix I.

### **Key Metrics and Comparisons**

#### Enrollment and Operations

Per the school's FY 2021 FAR,<sup>67</sup> the school's financial performance measures indicate a healthy financial situation. Except for its first year of operations, the school has had positive changes in net assets of \$0.1M and \$1.7M in FY 2020 to FY 2021, respectively, and an aggregated three-year change in net assets margin of 6%, above the 0% target and close to the 8% sector median. The school has expanded by one grade level each year. Consequently, enrollment increased 95 (39%) from FY 2020 to FY 2021 with the addition of grade eight, and 122 (36%) from FY 2021 to FY 2022, demonstrating the school's strong re-enrollment rates, especially from grade seven to grade eight.

#### Liquidity

The school's 10 days of cash on hand and the 0.8 current ratio at FYE 2019, its first year of operation, were below the 45-days and 1.0 target, respectively. This was not concerning as the school had \$0.3M in grants and accounts receivable, and the current ratio was impacted by a short-term maturity of a promissory note that was refinanced in FY 2020. Driven by the enrollment increases in the subsequent two FYs, liquidity measures rose above target at FYE 2020 and FYE 2021. At FYE 2022 (unaudited), the school had a healthy 2.9 current ratio but only 20 days of cash on hand, below the 30-day floor for this measure. This is not a short-term cause for concern, as the school had \$1.7M in grants and accounts receivable at FYE 2022 (unaudited), \$0.7M of which were collected in July and August 2022. Additional \$0.5M Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) III

<sup>67</sup> See the school's Enrollment, Operations, and Working Capital chart in the first page of the school's FY 2021 FAR Report, Appendix H3.

allotment, outstanding as receivables at FYE 2022, are expected to be collected in September 2022.

Working capital increased each year in the two-year period from FYE 2019 to FYE 2021, mainly due to the high cash flow from strong operating margins, but declined \$0.7 (29%) from FYE 2021 to \$1.7M at FYE 2022 (unaudited). This decline was due to the \$0.7M increase in grants and accounts receivable from FYE 2021 to FYE 2022, and the combined effect of \$0.3M below-budget operating revenues, mainly due to the delays in the federal grants application and reimbursement process, and the \$0.2M above-budget operating expenses. Operating expenses increased mainly due to increased occupancy expenses as the school depreciated the remaining leasehold improvements of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street SE facility upon relocating its Johenning campus to its new 908 Wahler Place SE facility.

### Facilities and Occupancy

In its first three years of operation, Digital Pioneers PCS's occupancy expenses as percentage of DC facilities funding remained above the 117% sector median. This is typical for new schools, as occupancy expenses may include a large portion of fixed costs. Occupancy expenses per student for new schools are expected to decrease as enrollment grows and fixed costs remain stable. The school has a lease agreement for the rental of two buildings located at 709 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE that will expire in June 2034. Additionally, the school had a lease agreement for the rental of a portion of a building located at 4025 9<sup>th</sup> Street SE that expired in June 2022. In July 2022, the school received approval from DC PCSB to relocate its Digital Pioneers PCS – Johenning campus from 4025 9<sup>th</sup> Street SE to 908 Wahler Place SE, where it is co-located with Achievement Preparatory Academy Public Charter School. The rent on this new lease is based upon the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) allocation, with certain minimum enrollment thresholds for grade six through grade eight. Since there are 240 budgeted enrolled students in FY 2023, and the threshold is 285 students, the extra rent cost will be \$0.2M. The LEA's five-year budget assumes enrollment will be sufficient to meet the thresholds beginning in FY 2024. The budgeted enrollment for these grades is assumed to remain constant, substantially consistent with prior years.

Sustainability: Net Assets, Primary Reserve Ratio, and Debt Ratio

Fiscal Year	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2021 Target	FY 2021 Sector Median	Multiyear Trend
<b>Net Assets</b>	\$0.1M	\$0.2M	\$1.9M	NA	\$6.0M	
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	\$4.3M	\$6.5M	\$8.4M	NA	\$10.6M	
<b>Primary Reserve Ratio</b> (Higher is better)	0.0	0.0	0.2	<b>&gt;= 0.2</b>	0.6	
<b>Debt Ratio</b> (Lower is better)	0.8	0.9	0.5	<b>&lt;= 0.5</b>	0.4	

At FYE 2019 and FYE 2020, the primary reserve ratio was above target. This is not concerning for a school in its first two years of operation. The 0.2 primary reserve ratio at FYE 2021 reflected strengthening sustainability as the school grew its enrollment and operations. The school’s sustainability indicator slightly decreased to 0.1 at FYE 2022 (unaudited), as the school decreased its net assets \$0.2M. The debt ratio demonstrated a positive trend, decreasing from 0.9 at FYE 2019 to 0.5, close to the target, at FYE 2021. The debt ratio slightly rebounded upwards to 0.7 at FYE 2022 (unaudited). This increase reflects a \$0.4M increase in accounts payable from FYE 2021 to FYE 2022.

Audit Findings

The school’s independent auditor’s reports for FY 2019 to FY 2021 reflected clean opinions, as financial statements fairly presented the school’s financial position and results in all material respects. Additionally, no audit findings on the internal controls over financial reporting were noted in the three-year period from FY 2019 to FY 2021, evidencing the school’s strong internal accounting controls.