

Attachment C
Working Group Feedback on the *School Expansion Policy*

DC PCSB staff convened a working group comprised of seven school leaders to discuss the proposed *School Expansion Policy*. Those who participated represented a cross-section of the sector and had prior experience with expansions. The working group met on November 21, 2025, December 12, 2025, and January 20, 2026. The following table summarizes the feedback leaders shared at these meetings and DC PCSB’s response.

School Feedback	DC PCSB Response
A. The current expansion process can be confusing and time intensive. DC PCSB decision-making can be unpredictable.	The proposed multi-stage review process improves transparency by establishing clear expectations. The Notice of Exploration and Letter of Intent stages help schools decide whether to proceed with an application before investing significant resources.
B. Schools want to understand the “why” behind each requirement and how they relate together.	DC PCSB commits to making clear its approach to responsible growth and consolidation across its “suite” of sector-planning policies. DC PCSB revised the initial “Purpose” section to highlight how it will value quality and sustainability in expansion approval. The proposed guiding principles drive DC PCSB evaluation of expansions, new schools, mergers, and acquisitions. DC PCSB added language to state that it is setting a high bar for expansions given their difficulty and citywide impact.
C. The policy feels overly restrictive and may limit family choice, especially for grade-level expansions that do not increase total enrollment.	DC PCSB acknowledges this concern, and the suggestion remains under consideration. The <i>School Expansion Policy</i> aims to increase student access to high-performing schools while encouraging sustainable growth. These goals align with DC PCSB’s sector planning approach and the <i>ASPIRE Policy and Technical Guide</i> . Any changes to the proposed eligibility criteria must allow for proportional review without undermining these goals.
D. Schools under the Alternative Accountability Framework (AAF) that have substantially met their charter goals over	DC PCSB is conducting further analysis to explore this suggestion. DC PCSB may expand the eligibility criteria if there is not parity between AAF and non-AAF schools.

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time should be eligible to expand.	
E. There should be clearer definitions for “need,” “demand,” and “key financial indicator (KFI) expectations.”	<p>The draft policy now explicitly defines “need” and “demand.” DC PCSB clarifies what evidence it will consider when evaluating demand (i.e., enrollment trends, re-enrollment, intent-to-enroll forms). It commits to releasing an updated enrollment analysis.</p> <p>In addition, the policy now references DC PCSB’s upcoming school finance policy, while explaining how it will evaluate three important KFIs in the interim before that policy takes effect.</p>
F. Schools wonder if there will still be flexibility for considering small or “de minimis” expansion requests.	<p>The current <i>Enrollment Ceiling Increase Policy</i> allows for the Board to waive some criteria (e.g., performance) in evaluating very small requests. DC PCSB plans to customize the application for such requests to reduce the burden on schools. However, it will still apply the Standard for Approval in all decision-making.</p>
G. The policy should further clarify the Letter of Intent outcomes and how they relate to the application phase.	<p>The Letter of Intent is designed for DC PCSB and the school to assess feasibility prior to the school developing the full application. To make a final approval decision, DC PCSB will evaluate the totality of evidence presented in the application review process.</p> <p>Consistent with the School Reform Act, a public charter school may submit a request to amend its charter; DC PCSB cannot prohibit a school from doing so. However, staff will recommend that the Board deny applicants who received “Objections to Proceeding” on the Letter of Intent.</p>
H. Schools want more transparency about capacity interviews and planning-year expectations.	<p>The policy now clarifies the purpose of a capacity interview and when DC PCSB would require one. New language states expectations for the planning year.</p>
I. Visual tools would help schools understand timelines, requirements, and decision points.	<p>DC PCSB agrees and commits to developing accompanying guidance to support understanding and implementation.</p>