

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Charter Actions Requiring a Vote

- ☐ Approve a Charter Application
- ☐ Approve a Charter Renewal (15 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve Charter Continuance (5 or 10 yrs.)
- ☐ Approve a Charter Amendment Request
- ☐ Approve a Charter Agreement
- ☐ 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 Revisions to an Existing Policy

PREPARED BY: **Hannah Cousino, Director, School Performance Department**

SUBJECT: **Revisions to the Accreditation Policy**

DATE: **September 28, 2026**

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) is creating the policies and conditions to support a network of public charter schools in Washington, DC, offering families quality, equity, and diverse educational choices. This request aligns with DC PCSB's Strategic Roadmap Priority of Excellent Schools.¹

Recommendation

DC PCSB staff recommends its Board open the proposed revisions to the *Accreditation Policy* for public comment from September 28, 2026 (after the public meeting) through October 25, 2026 at 11:59 pm. DC PCSB will consider any public comment received during the public comment period before the final vote.

Written comments may be submitted by mail or email to:

¹ See the Strategic Roadmap here: <https://bit.ly/3EVeKYq>.

DC Public Charter School Board
100 M Street SE, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20003
public.comment@dcpcsb.org

Members of the public may also testify during the public hearing on October 26, 2026. The deadline to sign up is noon on October 26, 2026. The Board is scheduled to vote on the policy at the November 30, 2026 public meeting. More details will be posted on the DC PCSB website.²

Proposal

DC PCSB staff seeks to revise the *Accreditation Policy* by adding Momentum Strategy & Research (Momentum) to the list of approved accrediting agencies.

In its application (Attachment A), Momentum describes the organization's mission and how it aligns with DC PCSB's approval criteria. Momentum is:

A national organization focused on advancing the quality, effectiveness, and accountability of Alternative Education Campuses (AECs). ...
Momentum's focus is to strengthen alternative education by ensuring schools are evaluated using fair, relevant, and mission-aligned measures that accurately reflect student progress, instructional quality, and program impact (Attachment A, p. 1).

DC PCSB evaluates six campuses under its Alternative Accountability Framework (AAF).³ In its application supplement (Attachment B), Momentum clarified that it seeks approval only to accredit AAF schools. Its "Accreditation Framework Rubric, performance database, and improvement model are calibrated to the unique populations, mission variance, and performance patterns of alternative schools" (Attachment B, p. 4). Momentum would not be an appropriate accreditor for traditional schools.

Standard for Approval

Per DC PCSB's *Accreditation Policy*, an accrediting agency must establish standards, require a self-study, conduct an on-site evaluation, monitor accredited institutions, and periodically reevaluate accredited institutions to be included on the list of approved accrediting agencies. DC PCSB staff

² Visit the "Public Comment" page on DC PCSB's website here: <https://bit.ly/4rrpTZB>.

³ To be deemed eligible for the AAF, a school must meet the criteria outlined in the *ASPIRE Policy & Technical Guide*, submit an AAF eligibility application following the process set by DC PCSB staff, and be approved for AAF status by the DC PCSB Board in a public vote. See the *ASPIRE Policy & Technical Guide* here: bit.ly/3SuF6wQ (pp. 43–44, 204).

preliminarily finds that Momentum **meets** these criteria, as described in the table below.

Standard	Evaluation	Notes
1. Standards	Met	In its application, Momentum provides its Accreditation Framework Rubric for Alternative Schools, which articulate the standards for accreditation. Momentum developed these standards in collaboration with education leaders, state agency personnel, and alternative school practitioners, as required by the policy. They build off the Colorado Department of Education Diagnostic Rubric and the National Association for Alternative Education Standards,⁴ Over the past four years, Momentum has used this framework for diagnostic reviews, “providing a proven and practical foundation for accreditation” (Application, p. 3).⁵ Momentum has not yet issued a formal accreditation decision using the framework, but prior experience is not a criterion in DC PCSB's <i>Accreditation Policy</i>.⁶
2. Self-Study	Met	Schools seeking accreditation will complete a three-month self-study prior to the site visit, similar to how Momentum conducts its diagnostic reviews. Schools convene an evaluation team, gather evidence against Momentum's standards, review performance data prepared by Momentum, assign themselves indicator scores, and identify priority areas for improvement (Application, p. 4).
3. On-Site Evaluation	Met	Following its existing practice as a diagnostic reviewer, Momentum will assemble evaluation teams with alternative education expertise. During the visit, the team conducts observations, holds interviews, and reviews instructional practices to validate the schools' self-study against the standards (Application, p. 5). The team also takes into

⁴ See the Colorado Department of Education Diagnostic Rubric here: <https://bit.ly/4dHhGvS>. See the National Association for Alternative Education Standards here: <https://bit.ly/4rgAmbs>.

⁵ In 2022, Colorado Department of Education approved Momentum to offer external diagnostic reviews of alternative schools. In 2023, Colorado also approved Momentum as an “accountability pilot program,” operating the Balanced Accountability & School Improvement Cycle (BASIC). These approvals allow Momentum to provide alternative schools with diagnostic review, support, evaluation, and improvement services, which inform the proposed DC accreditation plan (Attachment B, p. 1).

⁶ In Colorado, where Momentum is based, the State Board of Education accredits school districts, which then accredit individual schools. There are no third-party accrediting bodies.

Standard	Evaluation	Notes
		consideration the school's performance data and progress in the improvement areas identified in the self-study when making a final determination. In addition, Momentum has adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy to ensure reviewer objectivity. The policy requires reviewer screening and bars individuals who provided paid consulting, technical assistance, or support to a school within the prior two years from participating in that school's accreditation process (Attachment A, pp. 2–3).
4. Monitoring	Met	Momentum's existing school support services emphasize continuous improvement through monitoring. The organization intends to monitor accredited schools throughout the accreditation period, as the policy requires. Across multiple check-ins each year, the team will examine implementation of improvement strategies, progress on identified areas for growth, and performance data. Momentum's monitoring tool, which it uses for diagnostic reviews, will also track stakeholder engagement, professional development, and sustainability planning (Attachment A, pp. 6, 26–30). The organization plans to share monitoring findings with DC PCSB (Attachment B, p. 3).
5. Reevaluation	Met	In alignment with the policy requirements, Momentum will periodically reevaluates accredited institutions, typically within a three- to five-year cycle (Attachment A, p. 7). The specific term will depend on the school's prior review history, performance data, and authorizer expectations. The accreditation decision will state the term and rationale, and Momentum will share this information with DC PCSB (Attachment B, p. 4). This satisfies the policy criterion requiring periodic reevaluation to determine whether continued accreditation is warranted.

Background

The School Reform Act (SRA) requires public charter schools to “seek, obtain and maintain accreditation” from the agencies listed in the statute or others “deemed appropriate by the eligible chartering authority.”⁷ DC PCSB first

⁷ D.C. Code § 38-1802.02(16).

approved the *Accreditation Policy* on December 20, 2010 to establish a timeline for accreditation and set consequences for noncompliance.

DC PCSB has since revised the policy on October 14, 2014, December 17, 2017, September 17, 2018, and October 28, 2024. Past updates include clarifying the timeframe, adding accrediting agencies to the approved list, creating standards for such inclusion, and establishing accreditation requirements for schools with residential programs.

Attachment(s) to this Proposal

Attachment A: Momentum Application

Attachment B: Momentum Supplement to the Application

Attachment C: Redlined *Accreditation Policy*

Date: _____

DC PCSB Action: ____Approved ____Approved with Changes ____Rejected

Changes to the Original Proposal:
