

## **Notes for Completing the Governance Structure Charter Agreement Amendment Application**

### *Overview*

This application is for a school seeking approval from the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) to amend the governance structure established in charter agreement attachments A and B. Attachment A is a description of the rules and policies for governance and operation of the school. Attachment B includes the school's articles of incorporation and bylaws. If the school only aims to amend Attachment A and does not have the document in its current charter, it should provide a new one. The document should include a comprehensive description of the board's relationship to school personnel, any school management organization (SMO) with which it is contracting or seeks approval to contract,<sup>[1]</sup> and any policies or procedures related to these relationships. This description should elaborate on the structure established in the school's articles of incorporation and bylaws. DC PCSB can provide a template upon request.

### *Standard for Approval*

DC PCSB staff will generally recommend that its Board approve governance changes if the school's board members act as fiduciaries of the school and operate according to the school's articles of incorporation and bylaws. Schools seeking approval to contract with an SMO must demonstrate that the SMO has a track record of success with DC students or students from a similar population. DC PCSB may review the school's Financial Analysis Report and current financials to assess the school's financial health. DC PCSB will consider the school's financial health when approving a significant departure from the existing governance if the change will impact the school's financial health.

### *Submission Deadlines*

Per DC PCSB's *Charter Agreement Amendment Petition Submission Policy*,<sup>[2]</sup> a school must submit its governance structure amendment application within three months of the effective date of material change.

### *Contact*

Before completing the application, please contact Karlo Silbiger at [ksilbiger@dcpcsb.org](mailto:ksilbiger@dcpcsb.org) to discuss the proposed change. Contact Bijon Lane at [blane@dcpcsb.org](mailto:blane@dcpcsb.org) if you have general questions about the charter agreement amendment process.

**LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) NAME:** LEARN DC Charter School

**BOARD CHAIR NAME:** Troy Prestwood

**SUBMISSION DATE:**

**SUBJECT:** Governance Structure Amendment Request

## **SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

**Campus name(s):** LEARN DC Charter School

**Year(s) opened:** Opened in 2021.

**Grades served:** K-5

**Year the school will undergo its next charter review or renewal:** 2031

### **Proposal summary:**

LEARN DC proposes to fully integrate its Pre-K program into the school's existing K–5 structure beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. This change is intended to strengthen alignment between Pre-K and the elementary grades, create a more cohesive experience for students and families, and reduce transition challenges as students move into Kindergarten. By bringing Pre-K under LEARN DC's governance and leadership model, the school will ensure clearer, stronger instructional coherence, and a consistent school culture from a student's first year onward.

**Year the school plans to implement the proposed changes:** 2026/2027

**When did the school's board approve the proposed changes?** This issue was discussed in executive session on September 12, 2025.

## **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

### **1. Describe the school's current and proposed governance structure.**

#### **Current Governance Structure**

LEARN DC currently operates as a K–5 charter school led by a Principal and two Vice Principals. The Principal holds primary responsibility for instructional leadership, operations, and school culture, while Vice Principals support instruction, operations, and student services across grade levels. Pre-K programming has historically operated under a separate partner model with AppleTree and is not fully integrated into the school's core leadership or governance structure.

#### **Proposed Governance Structure**

Under the proposed structure, Pre-K will be fully integrated into LEARN DC and aligned within the school's existing leadership framework. LEARN will add centralized early childhood leadership through a Director of

Early Childhood at the network level, who will provide expertise, oversight, and support for Pre-K programming across the network.

At the school level, the Principal and Vice Principals will maintain accountability for schoolwide culture, instructional alignment, and family experience, ensuring Pre-K is treated as a core entry point into the LEARN DC school community rather than a separate program. The LEARN DC Board will continue to provide governance and oversight for the school, including the integrated Pre-K program, through regular reporting on enrollment, program implementation, and academic outcomes. This structure ensures that Pre-K is both supported by specialized early childhood expertise and fully aligned with the broader strategic direction and accountability structures of LEARN DC.

## **2. What is the rationale for these changes?**

Pre-Kindergarten is a critical entry point into LEARN DC and plays an essential role in building academic readiness, social-emotional development, and strong partnerships with families. For many families, including military-connected families served at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Pre-K is often a child's first sustained experience in a new school community. A cohesive and well-aligned early learning experience helps establish trust, stability, and a strong foundation for long-term success.

This change also deepens LEARN DC's original founding vision in Washington, DC. LEARN was selected through the Ward 8 Parent Operator Selection Team (POST) process because it aligns with families' priorities, including whole-child development, strong family partnerships, a safe and nurturing environment, and responsiveness to the needs of military-connected and Ward 8 students. Bringing Pre-K fully in-house allows LEARN DC to deliver on that vision from a child's first entry point into the school community

Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, LEARN DC proposes to fully integrate Pre-K into the school's governance, leadership, and instructional framework. This integration will strengthen alignment across grade levels and ensure that Pre-K is fully embedded within the school's academic and cultural vision. Clear leadership accountability, supported by centralized early childhood expertise at the network level, will allow Pre-K to function as a core component of the school's program rather than a separate entry point.

Instructionally, this integration supports alignment between Pre-K and Kindergarten in early literacy, early mathematics, and social-emotional learning through normed curriculum and assessments. Students will experience consistent routines, expectations, and instructional approaches, while educators across Pre-K and early elementary grades will collaborate around shared priorities and student readiness benchmarks. This coherence allows teachers to build seamlessly on students' early learning experiences and strengthens continuity in the early grades.

For students, particularly those who experience frequent transitions due to military relocation, a fully integrated Pre-K program provides predictability, emotional security, and a smoother transition into the K-8 experience.

For families, integration offers a clearer and more unified experience, with consistent communication, aligned expectations, and a strong sense of belonging to the LEARN DC community from the first year of enrollment.

Overall, these changes are designed to enhance continuity across the Pre-K through elementary continuum, strengthen schoolwide coherence, and support positive academic and social-emotional outcomes in the early grades. By fully integrating Pre-K into LEARN DC, the school reinforces its commitment to providing a high-quality, connected educational experience for students and families from the very beginning.

### **3. How did the school's board of trustees evaluate and approve the decision to terminate or transition away from the SMO?**

The Board of Trustees considered the benefits of the existing partnership alongside the long-term goals of LEARN DC, particularly the importance of instructional and cultural alignment from Pre-K through elementary grades during their September 2025 Board Meeting.

The Board reviewed data from LEARN's Chicago-based early childhood programs, including enrollment growth, instructional quality, compliance performance, and longitudinal student outcomes. As LEARN successfully scaled Pre-K internally and demonstrated the ability to operate high-quality early childhood programs, it became clear that the network had both the expertise and operational capacity to manage Pre-K independently.

Operating Pre-K in-house allows for stronger vertical alignment in curriculum, instructional practices, professional development, and family engagement.

After weighing all of the implications, the Board determined that transitioning away from the Appletree partnership would better position LEARN DC for long-term success.

### **4. How is LEARN DC PCS prepared to assume responsibility for functions previously managed by the SMO? In your response, please include data from existing early childhood programs at LEARN schools.**

Over the past five years, LEARN has intentionally built and scaled a high-quality, high-impact Pre-K model across the Chicagoland area. What began as a 40 student Pre-K pilot in Chicago, has grown into a network serving nearly 400 students next year, with additional expansion planned.. This growth has not been opportunistic. It has been deliberate, data-driven, and grounded in the belief that when early childhood programs are joyful, instructionally rigorous, and deeply supported by strong adult systems, student outcomes accelerate and sustain over time.

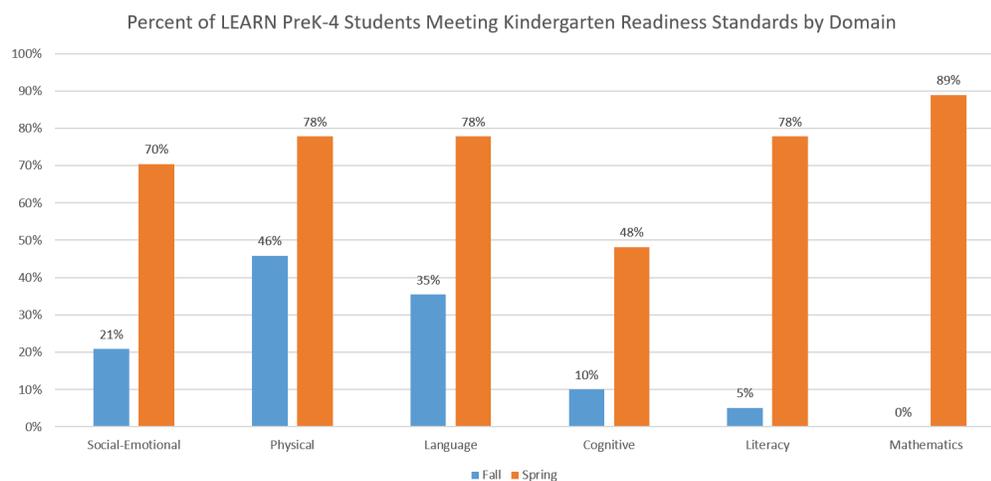
LEARN DC is prepared to assume full responsibility for functions previously managed by Appletree because we are already successfully managing those functions across four campuses in Chicago and Lake County, Illinois. This includes curriculum implementation, assessment systems, compliance management, staffing and

development, family engagement, enrollment processes, and continuous improvement structures. Our Chicago-based programs operate under strict regulatory environments, including state licensing, ISBE oversight, and PFA/PFAE compliance. We have built internal systems capable of meeting and exceeding those expectations, and we will replicate those structures at LEARN DC.

Our instructional model is anchored in Creative Curriculum, implemented with fidelity and paired with a strong commitment to joyful, play-based learning. However, joy does not come at the expense of rigor. We supplement Creative Curriculum with Heggerty to build phonological awareness and early literacy fluency, and we are implementing Eureka Math to ensure strong early numeracy foundations. This ensures students receive both developmentally appropriate learning experiences and explicit skill instruction that prepares them for Kindergarten and beyond.

We do not rely on curriculum alone. We invest deeply in teacher development and instructional quality. LEARN Pre-K classrooms operate within a structured coaching model that includes regular classroom observations, actionable feedback cycles, and data reflection protocols. Our instructional leaders conduct informal CLASS observations and use that data to guide coaching. Formal CLASS observations are being implemented network-wide in Chicago this spring to ensure consistency and accountability even though not required. Additionally, teachers participate in bi-weekly professional development sessions focused on CLASS domains, instructional language, and high-leverage interaction strategies. This consistent focus on adult practice ensures that instructional quality is not dependent on individual teachers but embedded within the system.

Our investment in systems and adult development translates into measurable student outcomes that persist well beyond Pre-K. Internal longitudinal data demonstrates that students who attended LEARN Pre-K significantly outperform peers who did not attend in later grades as shown by the Teaching Strategies GOLD, NWEA MAP and IAR data.



**Percent of Students Rated Proficient on 2024-25 IAR - LEARN PreK Graduates vs. All Other Chicago LEARN Students**

3rd	Math		ELA	
	PreK	Non-PreK	PreK	Non-PreK
	66.7	39.3	53.8	30.8

**Percent Scoring at or Above National Average on Spring 2024-25 MAP - LEARN PreK Graduates vs. All Other Chicago LEARN Students**

	Math		ELA	
	PreK	Non-PreK	PreK	Non-PreK
K	75.6	72	61.9	59.5
1	64.8	59.8	52.3	42.3
2	42.5	37	43.8	38.3
3	60	39.8	66.7	34.9

Students who begin at LEARN in Pre-K are more prepared, more confident, and better positioned to access grade-level content in elementary school.

Beyond academics, our programs prioritize social-emotional development and strong family engagement. We utilize tools such as ESI, ASQ, and family questionnaires at enrollment to inform rostering, pre-planning, and proactive support structures before the first day of school. This allows school leaders to anticipate needs rather than react to them. Our model emphasizes clear communication with families, early identification of developmental supports, and strong transition planning into Kindergarten.

Operationally, LEARN has demonstrated the ability to manage growth responsibly. We have secured public funding, raised private philanthropy, developed sustainable multi-year budgets, managed licensing processes, bought facilities, hired and trained staff, and scaled enrollment systems. We are also building a leadership pipeline that supports early childhood site leaders with the same rigor and accountability expected across our K–8 network.

LEARN DC is not proposing to build capacity while simultaneously transferring responsibility. The capacity already exists. The systems are built. The curriculum is normed. The coaching structures are in place. The data demonstrates impact. Our approach is to adapt proven, scalable model with fidelity to match the needs of our DC students, families, staff and authorizers.

**5. How will this change impact the following:**

- a. **the educational program,**
- b. **operations and staffing,**
- c. **and families’ experiences?**

The proposed integration of Pre-K into LEARN DC will strengthen educational programming by creating more intentional alignment across early learning and elementary grades. Instructional practices in Pre-K will be aligned with Kindergarten expectations in early literacy, early mathematics, and social-emotional learning, including shared routines, instructional approaches, and expectations for student engagement and independence. Curriculum planning and assessment practices will be coordinated to ensure continuity in how foundational skills are introduced, reinforced, and built upon as students transition into Kindergarten. This alignment supports smoother transitions for students and allows educators in subsequent grades to build on established skills and habits rather than reteaching expectations or routines.

Operationally, integrating Pre-K into LEARN DC will improve coherence and efficiency across schoolwide systems. Pre-K will be incorporated into existing structures for scheduling, professional development, family communication, and student support services. School leaders will have greater visibility into Pre-K operations and instructional practice, enabling more consistent decision-making, clearer accountability, and stronger coordination of resources. Centralized early childhood leadership at the network level will provide expertise, guidance, and oversight related to early learning standards, compliance, and best practices, while school-based leaders will retain responsibility for day-to-day operations and the overall school experience. This structure ensures clarity in roles, streamlined communication, and alignment between Pre-K and the rest of the school.

From a staffing perspective, Pre-K educators will be fully integrated into LEARN DC's staffing model and professional learning community. Teachers will participate in schoolwide professional development, instructional planning, and collaboration alongside Kindergarten and early elementary educators, strengthening vertical alignment and shared ownership for student outcomes. Coaching and support structures will be aligned to reflect both early childhood best practices and schoolwide instructional priorities. Staffing levels, licensure, and credentialing requirements will continue to meet all OSSE and early childhood education standards. No reductions in staffing are anticipated as a result of this change. Instead, the integration is intended to provide clearer supervision, stronger instructional coaching, and more consistent professional support, which are expected to improve educator retention and instructional quality over time.

From a family experience perspective, integrating Pre-K into LEARN DC will create a more cohesive and transparent experience from a child's first year of school onward. Families will engage with a single school community, leadership team, and communication structure rather than navigating separate systems or external partners. Enrollment, onboarding, family communication, and ongoing engagement practices will be aligned with the broader LEARN DC model, ensuring clarity around expectations, supports, and school culture from the outset.

Families will benefit from consistent messaging around academic goals, behavioral expectations, and school values beginning in Pre-K and continuing through elementary grades. Early family engagement efforts will intentionally prepare caregivers for long-term partnership with the school, including clear guidance on literacy development, math readiness, attendance expectations, and social-emotional growth. By integrating Pre-K into existing family engagement structures, including conferences, workshops, community events, and regular

communication platforms, families will experience continuity rather than transition disruption as students move into Kindergarten.

In addition, centralized early childhood leadership will ensure that family-facing practices remain developmentally appropriate while aligned to schoolwide systems. This balance allows LEARN DC to honor the unique needs of Pre-K families while reinforcing a shared vision for student success. Overall, integration is expected to strengthen trust, simplify processes, and create a seamless Pre-K through elementary experience for families.

**6. How will the transition impact the school's financial health? Provide financial statements and projections if applicable.**

LEARN DC has strong operating margins and liquidity as shown on the attached audited financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025. LEARN DC proposes to fully integrate its Pre-K program into the school's existing structure beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. We believe that this transition will result in slight improvements in the school's continued financial health given the higher funding per student for Pre-K.

**7. What is the school's transition plan and timeline for fully exiting the SMO relationship?**

LEARN DC formally notified AppleTree of the decision in December 2025. In January 2026, families were informed of the transition via multiple outlets with a town hall held shortly after to address any questions and concerns.

Beginning in February 2026, LEARN DC will host monthly town halls for current AppleTree and prospective families to provide updates, answer questions, and ensure a smooth transition process. In March 2026, LEARN DC school leaders will begin structured learning walks alongside AppleTree leaders to support knowledge transfer, alignment of instructional expectations, and continuity of classroom practices during the final semester of the partnership.

Throughout Spring 2026, LEARN DC will complete any required accreditation and compliance processes necessary to independently operate the Pre-K program. The current lease and formal SMO agreement will conclude in June 2026.

While the formal partnership will end, we anticipate maintaining a professional relationship with AppleTree, particularly around CLASS observation support and instructional best practices, to ensure continuity and ongoing collaboration that's ultimately beneficial to students.

**8. If the school plans to engage consultants or vendors in place of the SMO, describe their scope of work and how the board will oversee these relationships.**

We do not plan to engage with consultants or vendors in place of AppleTree. LEARN DC will in-house services previously managed by AppleTree. The Board's Academic Achievement Committee will also continue to receive

regular updates on staffing, academic outcomes, parent engagement and all other aspects of LEARN DC's operational and academic outcomes.

### **9. How will you communicate the transition to families?**

We will communicate the transition to families early, clearly, and consistently. We view families as partners in this work and are approaching the transition as a co-building process, not simply an announcement. While we bring a strong, proven model, we also want to understand what families value and ensure the transition feels thoughtful and steady, not disruptive.

We are holding monthly town halls for current AppleTree and prospective families to provide transparent updates, share timelines, answer questions, and gather input. These sessions create space for families to voice concerns and help shape elements of the program, while ensuring communication is proactive rather than reactive.

In addition, we will provide clear written updates at key milestones, including FAQs and enrollment guidance, through multiple channels such as email, text, and school platforms. Once families are matched through MySchool DC, we will conduct direct outreach to support them through the in-house enrollment process and ensure they have a clear point of contact.

Our goal is for families to experience this transition with trust and confidence.