



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Definition of Alternative Schools Accountability Policy

October 16, 2017

The Every Student Succeeds Act, specifically 20 U.S.C. 6311, requires the District of Columbia to develop a single state accountability system that measures the performance of all public elementary schools and secondary schools in all local education agencies. This includes alternative schools or those schools that are designed to serve students of special populations.

In its ESSA plan, OSSE states that the approved accountability system may not ensure meaningful differentiation for a subset of schools that serve special populations. In that case, OSSE may develop an alternative methodology for this set of schools. In order to determine whether these schools are meaningfully differentiated by the approved accountability system and to implement an alternative accountability system, if necessary, OSSE hereby adopts this Definition of Alternative School Accountability Policy.

OSSE recognizes the following core principles for defining alternative schools and implementing an accountability system that meaningfully differentiates all schools including alternative schools:

- i. The system should be narrowly tailored and not be based on definitions that exempt large numbers of schools from the traditional accountability system.
- ii. The system should not uniformly relegate alternative schools that serve unique populations and achieve results to comprehensive or targeted improvement status.
- iii. The system should ensure that the maximum number of alternative schools (as defined) earn accountability ratings.
- iv. The system should ensure that alternative schools are held to a comparable level of rigorous standards as the traditional system.
- v. The system should ensure some consistency in measurement across alternative schools.

The Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), will submit a letter to the State Superintendent of Education that proposes a definition of alternative schools used to comply with federal accountability requirements. In addition, the letter should include a complete list of schools corresponding to the proposed definition.

The definition of alternative schools should meet the following criteria:

- a. The definition of alternative schools should reflect the aforementioned core principles for defining alternative schools and implementing an alternative accountability system.
- b. The definition of alternative schools should not include narrowly tailored programs within a larger school.
- c. The definition of alternative schools must only include schools that have a mission to serve special populations of students at risk requiring additional services and programs that address behavioral and academic needs.
- d. The definition of alternative may include set demographic thresholds for populations described above.
- e. The schools identified as alternative schools must have enrollment demographics that reflect their mission.

OSSE reserves full discretion to approve or disapprove proposed definitions. OSSE will review proposed definition and provide approval or disapproval in writing. In instances where OSSE disapproves alternative school accountability definitions, OSSE will provide an opportunity for DCPS and PSCB to resubmit their definition within 10 business days of receiving the initial disapproval.

Approved definitions will be valid for a time period of three years (beginning with the accountability system published in December 2018), or for the full time period in which schools are identified for comprehensive improvement under the District of Columbia State Plan required by the Every Student Succeeds Act. OSSE reserves the right to reevaluate the alternative criteria and definition as necessary to ensure meaningful differentiation.