

# COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2013

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### The Issues:

- **The federal school accountability system is not sufficient to trigger much-needed school improvement in the District.**

For the 2010-11 school year, only 45 percent of public school students in the District of Columbia were proficient or advanced in reading, and only 47 percent were proficient or advanced in mathematics.<sup>1</sup> That same year, 87 percent of schools in the District of Columbia failed to demonstrate adequate yearly progress, while nationally, 48 percent of schools failed to do so.<sup>2</sup>

*In 2011-12, **100** of the **115** DCPS schools participating in the Comprehensive Assessment System (“DC-CAS”) fell below the District’s identified goal of 75 percent proficiency in mathematics and reading.*

The District has no local sanctions for underperforming schools. To encourage improvement in student achievement and school performance, the District needs a robust accountability system that identifies underperforming schools, requires targeted interventions and annual goals, and holds schools accountable for meeting those goals.

- **The District needs a strong accountability system for all public schools, including public charter schools.**

The flexibility and autonomy granted to public charter schools must be balanced by clearly demonstrated positive effects on student achievement.

### Under this Act:

- **The Office of the State Superintendent (“OSSE”) will evaluate each DCPS school using a framework that includes multiple measures of school performance.**

The foundation of a school accountability system is a comprehensive performance framework that indicates whether a school is fulfilling the educational needs of students. This Act requires OSSE to implement a performance framework for DCPS schools that includes, among other things, student academic achievement and growth, attendance rates, and, for high schools, graduation rates.

- **DCPS schools that are underperforming for two consecutive years will require a turnaround plan or will be designated as an Innovation School.**

Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, when a DCPS school fails to meet the targets in the performance framework for two consecutive years, the Chancellor must either (1) develop a turnaround plan for the school, which includes focused community input or (2) designate the school as an “Innovation School”. Innovation Schools are DCPS schools under the direction of the Chancellor that will be afforded extraordinary autonomy and flexibility to identify the interventions that will most effectively meet the specific needs of a given school. Whether schools have turnaround plans or become Innovation Schools, this Act grants them the tools and time to improve.

- **Turnaround plans will require stakeholder input and will be formally approved and made publicly available by the Chancellor.**

If the Chancellor chooses to develop a turnaround plan for an underperforming school, a team of stakeholders, including an administrator, teacher, parent, and DCPS staff member, will make recommendations for the interventions that will meet that school's needs. The turnaround plan may include interventions such as expanding or replacing curricula, reallocating school funds, providing additional funds to the school, extending the school day or year, adding prekindergarten, requiring administrators and teachers to reapply for their positions, and increasing opportunities for teacher planning and collaboration. All turnaround plans must be made publicly available. OSSE will be afforded the opportunity to comment on the turnaround plan.

- **Innovation Schools would be eligible for greater flexibility from municipal regulations and collective bargaining agreements.**

*The Chancellor has indicated that certain regulations and work rules impede schools' ability to meet the needs of students.<sup>3</sup>*

The Act would permit the Chancellor to designate an underperforming school as an Innovation School and grant it greater autonomy and flexibility from these restrictions. Innovation Schools will be exempt from municipal regulations and aspects of collective bargaining units that are believed to impede student achievement.

Innovation Schools will operate under a performance improvement plan. Innovation Schools would have more freedom to utilize innovative curricula and programming, greater flexibility with respect to staffing and unprecedented autonomy. Other systems have taken a similar approach to introducing greater flexibility and autonomy in traditional schools, such as Denver and Massachusetts, where 18 Innovation Schools operate.

- **Schools that continue to underperform will face additional consequences.**

The Chancellor remains accountable for the performance of all Innovation Schools and all schools operating under turnaround plans. A school that consistently fails to meet its goals even after the interventions required under this Act will face sanctions. If a school fails to substantially meet the goals of its turnaround plan after three years, the Chancellor will take one of the following actions: (1) convert it into an Innovation School, (2) replace the administrators and staff, (3) contract with an independent organization to operate the school, or (4) close the school. If an Innovation School fails to meet its goals after five years, it will either lose its status as an Innovation School or close.

*In the 2011–12 academic year, 18 states included closure as a sanction for consistently underperforming schools.*

- **Charter authorizers must review the performance of each public charter school annually.**

This Act grants charter authorizers the flexibility to develop their own performance frameworks, as the Public Charter School Board ("PCSB") currently does, or to use the framework developed by Office of the State Superintendent of Education for DCPS. In addition, the Act includes provisions requested by the PCSB aimed at strengthening its ability to hold charter schools accountable for student performance.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the State Superintendent, 2011 State Report Card, [http://nclb.osse.dc.gov/dccas\\_reportcards.asp](http://nclb.osse.dc.gov/dccas_reportcards.asp).

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- <sup>2</sup> Center on Education Policy, *AYP Results for 2010-11—November 2012 Update 7*, available at <http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=414>.
- <sup>3</sup> “D.C. Mayor to seek chartering authority for schools chancellor,” *Washington Post*, 6/1/2013.