



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: SC Charter School Leaders and Sponsors

FROM: Molly M. Spearman
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: Monday, March 23, 2015

RE: South Carolina Public Charter School Accreditation

A central purpose of public charter schools in South Carolina is to establish new forms of accountability for schools and help create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system, with the goal of closing achievement gaps between low-performing student groups and high-performing student groups.

Recently, there have been concerns raised about whether public charter schools are or are not accredited.

Accreditation for traditional public schools provides a way to ensure those schools are recognized by all stakeholders as meeting operational expectations. For a public charter school, those expectations are defined by its charter school contract. Each year, a public charter school's sponsoring agency must agree that the school has followed through on the responsibilities and performance expectations set forth in its charter school contract. If the sponsor agrees, then that public charter school has a "valid charter" and is recognized and approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). The SCDE will continue to work with sponsoring districts to ensure that all public charters maintain a high level of educational quality.

A public charter school is to be considered an accredited school so long as its charter is valid and is not in revocation or non-renewal status. South Carolina public charter schools are authorized to issue valid South Carolina diplomas, provided students meet all academic requirements.