



**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY**

1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40  
Carson City, Nevada 89706-2543  
(775) 687 - 9174 • Fax: (775) 687 - 9113

---

---

**BRIEFING MEMORANDUM**

---

---

**TO:** SPCSA Board  
**FROM:** Patrick Gavin  
**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item 8--Beacon Academy Graduation Rate Performance Improvement Plan  
**DATE:** August 26, 2016

---

Pursuant to [NRS 388A.330](#), as amended by Section 27 of [SB509](#) of the 2015 Legislative Session, a graduation rate below 60 percent is grounds for termination of a charter, or the revocation of a written charter, or the reconstitution of the governing body of a charter school.

Beacon Academy of Nevada was approved by the State Board of Education in 2008 and was renewed by the Authority in 2014. It currently operates pursuant to a charter contract. The charter contract expires in 2020.

For each of the past five years, Beacon's graduation rate has been below 60 percent.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	16.38%	14.30%	37.61%	56.52%	52.63%
<b>Rank in State</b>	104/106	108/110	100/111	104/117	104/117
<b>Position from Bottom</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> lowest in state	3 <sup>rd</sup> lowest in the state	12 <sup>th</sup> lowest in the state	14 <sup>th</sup> lowest in the state	14 <sup>th</sup> lowest in the state
<b>Percentile Rank</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>

While Beacon saw a significant increase between 2012 and 2013 in its performance relative to the rest of the state, the school has remained at the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> percentile since then. Moreover, a review of the first extended cohort data for Beacon, a 5<sup>th</sup> year graduation rate<sup>1</sup> for the class which was scheduled to graduate in 2013, indicates that graduation rate of students who graduated within five years was actually lower than 4 year rate: 32.97 percent. In contrast to the arguments made by

---

<sup>1</sup> Extended cohort graduation rates require additional time and resources to validate and calculate. The Department of Education expects to release an official 5<sup>th</sup> year cohort graduation rate for those students who were scheduled to graduate in 2014 sometime in the fall of 2016.

many advocates for schools classified as underperforming, additional time does not appreciably alter the performance record of such schools. Indeed, in the case of Beacon, the school’s performance actually declines to even less acceptable levels.

Based on a review of [data](#) submitted to the Agency by the school, Beacon is ineligible for the alternative state performance framework authorized under [SB460](#) of the 2015 Legislative Session, as it has a 48.48 percent unduplicated count of [eligible students](#). That unduplicated count is well below the 75 percent minimum in such categories of students set forth in statute. Put simply, there is little difference in the observable characteristics—special education eligibility, over-age, under-credit status, adjudicated youth status, etc.—of students at Beacon than at high need high schools across the state, including many in Clark County. Pursuant to statute, traditional public schools with graduation rates similar to Beacon are eligible for inclusion in the Achievement School District. As a charter school, this graduation rate renders Beacon eligible for authorizer intervention, including termination of its charter contract or reconstitution of its governing body.

Based on the school’s history of poor graduation rates, the Authority directed staff to engage in discussions with the Agency regarding its plan for improvement. The school has made multiple presentations to the Authority since February 2016, including an extensive dialogue with members in June of this year. The most recent plan, submitted to the Agency on July 24, 2016, incorporated the school’s most recent written proposal. Based on discussion at the table during the July 29, 2016 Authority meeting, school leader Tambre Tondryk proposed the following measurable graduation rate targets:

Year	2016	2016	2017
4 Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation	52%	55%	60%

Based on that proposal, staff recommended that the Authority accept those targets and require that they be memorialized in an amended charter contract. In recognition of the school’s willingness to set annual adjusted cohort graduation targets for the next three years, staff recommended that the contract provide that the Authority would not terminate the charter contract based on not meeting those targets, but that reconstitution and receivership could be imposed by the Authority. In exchange for taking closure off the table, the school would agree to limit any potential judicial review of a reconstitution or receivership decision to the question of whether the school had or had not met the targets. The recommendation was also that the contract provide that the school could provide, and the Authority would be required to consider, additional evidence submitted by the school, but that the Authority retained the sole discretion to determine how or whether to weigh that evidence in any accountability decision. The Authority approved the goals proposed by the school and the staff recommendation, requiring that the school and the Agency negotiate a contract acceptable to both parties.

Agency counsel has been in contact with school counsel over the past month and will report out on the progress of those discussions.