



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Explore Academy – Contract Terms
DATE: July 26, 2019

Explore Academy was approved by the Nevada Achievement School District on October 1, 2018 and was initially expected to open in the fall of 2019. However, Explore Academy ultimately decided to delay opening until the fall of 2020. The remainder of this memo outlines background information about Explore Academy and the recommended contract terms.

Background Information about Explore Academy

Explore Learning Network, a non-profit Charter Management Organization (CMO), applied to open a school under the Nevada Achievement School District on July 31, 2018 to be called Explore Academy. Under the Achievement School District Statutes (NRS 388B), an Education Management Organization (EMO) a Charter Management Organization (CMO) or an individual could apply to the Achievement School District to operate an achievement charter school.

Explore Learning Network aims to “provide all students, regardless of background, with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a personalized and engaging educational pathway in preparation for college.” The school model is based on the “choice theory model of education...putting each student in charge of his or her own education by providing them increased choice in the manner in which they are educated.” The school model utilizes “shorter periods of study, compounded with increased academic support, students are pushed to elevate their learning.”¹

Explore Learning Network is a relatively new CMO growing out of a high-performing charter school in Albuquerque, New Mexico also named Explore Academy. Explore Academy, New Mexico has been rated as “A,” the highest rating possible by the State of New Mexico, for each of the last three years.

¹ Explore Academy Application to Nevada ASD, July 2018

Explore Academy in Nevada will be the first expansion of the Explore Learning Network model. The school will ultimately serve 700 students in grades 6-12 but plans to open with 330 students in grades 6, 7 and 9, and add grade levels as students matriculate at the end of each school year. The staff of Explore Learning Network and founding board members have identified a facilities development organization and several prospective locations in North Las Vegas in the 89030, 89031 and 89032 zip codes. Based on the identified locations and the research conducted by Explore Learning Network prior to applying to the Achievement School District, they predict the school will serve a student population in which 72% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 16% of students will be English learners and ten percent will be students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The Explore Learning Network staff and founding board members conducted significant community outreach in the North Las Vegas community in the fall of 2018 and winter of 2019, including several informational parent events. However, following to the decision to delay opening, these efforts were put on pause with plans to relaunch these efforts in the fall of 2019 once a contract is secured.

Staff Recommendation

In order to ensure that the school is prepared to successfully serve students in the fall of 2020, staff recommends that the board approve a contract for Explore Academy and that the school satisfy the following condition prior to opening:

1. Explore Academy High School in New Mexico maintains a “C” or better rating on the 2019 New Mexico School Ratings.
2. Explore Academy shall locate in one of the following zip codes: 89030, 89031 or 89032. If Explore Academy intends to locate outside of the three approved zip codes, the school’s governing board must request and be granted a contract amendment by the Authority.
3. Explore Academy must complete all pre-opening requirements for new schools.