



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

To: Tony Schwartz, Board Chairperson, Sports Leadership and Management Academy
Dan Triana, Principal, Sports Leadership and Management Academy
From: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, State Public Charter School Authority
CC: Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Date: June 14, 2019
Re: Site Evaluation Report for Sports Leadership and Management Academy

SITE EVALUATION REPORT **Sports Leadership and Management Academy**

Site Evaluations are a critical accountability component to the oversight of schools by the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) and are fundamental to charter schools' autonomy. As approved by the Legislature [NRS-388A.150] the Authority is to *“provide oversight to the charter schools that it sponsors to ensure that those charter schools maintain high educational and operational standards, preserve autonomy and safeguard the interests of pupils and the community.”*

Site Evaluations allow the SPCSA to assess schools' student achievement, progress to goals, and fulfillment of their mission, vision, and educational program outlined in their charter. Improving the learning of pupils, and, by extension, the public education system; increased opportunities for learning and access to quality education; and a more thorough and efficient system of accountability for student achievement in Nevada are all foundational elements of the SPCSA's mission, the legislative intent of charter schools and are central elements of the Authority's on-going evaluation of charter schools.

The SPCSA conducts multiple visits and evaluations throughout schools' charter terms. The cumulative evidence through multi-year oversight measures become part of the record that help inform recommendations put forth by SPCSA staff, specifically renewal recommendations to the Authority Board. The Board of the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority makes all final charter renewal decisions. Site Evaluations are just one criteria considered for renewal; student achievement, financial prudence, and fulfillment of the program outlined in the approved charter are also evaluated by the Authority when making renewal decisions.

Attached is the Site Evaluation Report for Sports Leadership and Management Academy which was conducted by Mike Dang and Dr. Selcuk Ozdemir on April 24, 2019. The school is currently in its 3rd year of its 1st charter term, which expires on June 30, 2022.

Please contact the Team Lead for this Site Evaluation, Mike Dang, with any questions.

SITE EVALUATION REPORT: SPORTS LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ACADEMY

Campus Name: Sports Leadership and Management Academy

Grade Levels: 6-11

School Leader: Dan Triana, Principal

Purpose of Site Evaluation: 3rd Year Site Evaluation

Date of Authorization: June/2016

Conducted Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2019

Conducted By: Mike Dang, Selcuk Ozdemir

SUMMARY OF SITE EVALUATION

The mission of Sports Leadership and Management Academy (SLAM) is to prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers through an engaging educational program emphasizing sports leadership and management career preparation.

During our Site Evaluation, the team observed this mission being lived out on campus, including in the following ways:

- Common trends relating to the sports leadership emphasis of career and postsecondary studies.
- Teachers and facilitators consistently providing direct instruction.
- Demonstrated commitment to continued improvement and consistent learning to prepare students for college and careers as evidenced by increasing UNLV dual credit enrolment, providing CTE programs and sports infusion curriculum.
- Encouraged appropriate and responsible use of technology in all classrooms.

The team conducted 12 classroom observations across all grade levels at SLAM Academy in both middle school and high school classrooms. On average, the observation time in each classroom was 20 minutes. Evaluators were able to observe lessons in the beginning, middle, and end of each class period.

Observers noted consistent schoolwide expectations, procedures, and practices throughout the school; daily objectives in all classes; and similar CHARGE posters. As has been a trend for the Authority in Site Evaluations, an over-arching observation at SLAM Academy was of limited rigor and engaging questions within classes and class discussions. The observers noted significant questioning by teachers of students in discussions. However, as noted below in the recommendations, the great proportion of questions were DOK Level 1 (Depths of Knowledge)- largely recall questions, some DOK Level 2 -skill/concept questions and few DOK Level 3 - strategic thinking questions and were asked by the teacher rather than by students in student-based discussion situations.

Common trends from stakeholders noted in focus groups were the family-feel of the school, support for the teachers, and strong communication among the school and families.

Lastly, the SPCSA Team noted that staff handled any behavior issues in a calm and warm manner. Classroom were generally free of any behavior management issues.

While the SPCSA team identified some opportunities for continued development, overall, the school’s culture and the commitment to the mission were clear, strong, and present. Our identification of strengths of SLAM Academy program, as well as recommendations for continued growth, are below.

I. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

| Classroom Environment | Evidence Observed | School-wide Rating |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport | Classroom interactions between students and teachers were generally respectful and positive. While there were examples of students engaging in off-task behaviors, particularly in high school classes, there is a proficient environment of respect and rapport across the campus | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Establishing a Culture for Learning | In general, there was a proficient culture established throughout the school to ensure learning occurs. For example, in one middle school class students were making presentations. One student struggled reading parts of his presentation. The teacher encouraged him to slow down. He still struggled. The teacher encouraged him to remember what he learned and to read even slower. The student tried again and succeeded. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Managing Classroom Procedures | For the most part, the procedures in each classroom were consistent and uniform throughout the school. Overall, there are clear, established routines and procedures that are regularly followed. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Managing Student Behavior | Teachers were aware of student behavior, and there were clear, established standards of conduct. Teachers’ approaches were always respectful of students. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |

II. INSTRUCTIONAL OBSERVATION

| Instructional Observation | Evidence Observed | School-wide Rating |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communicating with Students | Teachers' communications with students were clear and accurate. Communication occurred in whole groups, small groups, and individualized settings. Teachers were positive and demonstrated a strong capacity to make content engaging and informative. In general, proficiency was demonstrated in this category. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques | While there were a few examples of teachers attempting high-level questions, there was evidence in several classes of low-level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions grounded in recall questions. In general, the teachers explain most of the concepts, rather than soliciting students' responses. Teachers often gave the correct response and followed up with a "Right?" or "Is this correct?" | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Engaging Students in Learning | In some classrooms, students were not actively participating, and were disengaged with the tasks. Classroom activities appeared appropriate and material to the learning objectives within each subject matter and generally topics were generally relevant and relatable for students. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Using Assessment in Instruction | Observers did not observe this criterion significantly enough to rate it. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |

III. OPERATIONS

| Observations | Evidence Observed | School-wide Rating |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mission driven operations | Operations, procedures, and practices supported mission-driven operations. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |
| Managing Schoolwide Procedures | In general, there were clear schoolwide procedures, including transitions and common instructional practices. Students show a clear understanding of procedures (please see recommendation #2), operations, and expectations, including with transitions | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | and instruction as well as how to conduct themselves during their time on campus. | |
| Maintaining a Safe Environment | The team noted that students and staff demonstrated a concern for maintaining a safe student environment, evidenced in part by the posted emergency exits and plans for evacuation. | Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed |

IV. FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

| Group | No. of Participants | Duration of Focus Group |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Governing Board¹ | 3 | 50 min |
| Parents/Families | 6 | 50 min |
| Students | 6 | 45 min |
| Staff | 12 | 45 min |

Governing Board

- The three board members participating in this focus group were familiar with the key design elements of the school, including the school’s mission and its methods of realizing that mission.
- One board member described the school’s mission to motivate kids to learn and to be self-sustaining, to set and meet goals and to prepare for their roles in the future. Another board member described their relationship to their Miami offices and how the SLAM Academies are a tight knit group, working to improve the success of their students.
- In terms of key design elements, board members mentioned that while they’re known for sports, their program design elements include a wide range of activities providing services to the sports industry, such as marketing, media, training, and medicine and that the kids find they are interested in these elements. They said the school works to convey the balance of sports related activities to their students and that it’s not just about the athletics. In fact, one board member mentioned that 25%-30% of the students don’t play a sport there, but they see benefits to the school’s design elements. The school emphasizes that you don’t have to be athletic-minded to succeed.

Parents/Families

- Parents discussed what they liked about the SLAM Academy, stating topics such as using sports as a vehicle while focusing on an academic, welcoming school environment. One parent said, *“Whenever I come in, staff always smile and help me. They are really approachable, and all of the teachers are accommodating and help parents understand what is going on.”*

¹ Three members of the seven-member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.
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June 14, 2019

- When discussing communication by the school to the parents a parent said, “We always know what’s going on.” Also, parents spoke about positively communication via Facebook, email, and the school newsletter.
- In discussing whether the kids are challenged or not in their class the a few parents said in accelerated classes, “Yes, they are challenged but in regular classes they are not challenged enough.” One parent said, “Teachers are so accessible. If I see my daughter not challenged, I can talk with the teacher.” Overall, the parents agreed their children should be challenged in class, and they believe teachers are assigning different work to challenge the kids and keep them engaged.
- In discussing the parent involvement one parent discussed that sports events and festivals are great way to get engaged. However, another parent said, “I am busy with my work, if you are working during school week, it is hard to participate. Schools can consider different times and days for activities.”
- In general, a parent said, “The school focus is academic, sports has its place but everybody’s focus is academic.” While another parent added, “I like the one-to-one attention. Teachers pay attention and take initiative. Even when they see me while I am picking up my kids, they tell me how my kids are doing and chat about their academic situation.” A parent also stated, “Staff is always looking at better ways to educate the students. There is a lot of effort at or above typical levels.”

Students

- One student mentioned they liked how lesson related academics to sports, making it easier to understand the topic. One example we were given was of a math discussion showing how a math principle they were studying applied to a certain sport. Another example was that in health class students were assigned a project to develop a healthy menu which they could recommend as trainers to athletes, based in part on their own personal special dietary needs, if any, in developing the menu. This meant students that were vegetarian would develop menus including vegetarian appropriate protein sources for their athletes which the athletes would support.
- Students’ least favorite thing about the school is limited discipline. Students said they’d like to see stronger levels of discipline enforced. One example they gave was that some students don’t follow the dress code. Students felt other students received warnings but there wasn’t follow through on the warnings when the behavior persisted. The result was “several times kids do whatever they want, and it makes it annoying for kids that follow the rules.” They wished there was a prominent discipline figure, one that “would punish” but, they thought, that just one person wouldn’t be enough.
- That said, they expressed love for Mr. Triana and for how much he cares about them. But they said they would be open to him being stricter. This includes enforcing rules about not playing sports if grades aren’t meeting standards.

Staff/Teacher Focus Group

- Regarding their mentoring program members of the staff/teacher focus group discussed how the group consisted of the half-seasoned and half-new staff working together.

- All of the teachers note the different types of bonds they can form with students on the field versus in the classroom, and they view this as an opportunity to help the students by developing stronger relationships with them.
- Staff see their mission and key design elements to include various elements. One is to teach and work with students in such a way so as to prepare them for post-secondary careers. One of the helpful activities they encourage students to do is to engage with productive organizations and people outside of their school. For example, they encouraged them to participate in a breast cancer walk.
- That said, staff also described their core curriculum activities to help students in developing marketing knowledge and to develop a basic understanding in areas like sports medicine, college preparatory classes, anatomy, and physiology. They also strive to related aspects of the curriculum, so students can see how developing English skills can help them in a sports career.
- Staff also mentioned their efforts to help their students prepare to enter the world outside the campus. This included consciously striving the help them be emotionally ready and well-grounded. It also included trying to help them deal with incidents. They also referred them to school counselors.

V. OVERALL STRENGTHS OF PROGRAM

1. Shared, common expectations throughout the school

Throughout the campus there are common practices, procedures, and school-wide systems that are evident. SPCSA staff noted strong commonalities and unified systemic operations throughout the school. Evaluators noticed that school-wide procedures, from the time students entered classrooms, during instructional periods, to transition times between periods, students were always acting in accordance with established routines and procedures.

2. School culture

SLAM Academy's culture was identified as a strength. All stake holders – parents, staff, students, and governing board members actively expressed pride in the school and its mission. Teachers are open and appeared eager to identify their weaknesses and problem-solve collaboratively for the betterment of students and the school. Staff identified the strong culture as a major reason for their continued retention. Parents stated the 'family feel' of the school and their continued, welcomed presence on the campus.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS

1. Push for more rigorous instruction and higher-level questioning and student-centered instruction

In many classrooms, the Authority team found notable examples of low-level DOK questions based in factual/recall. In several instances, teachers provide information through instruction and simply ask students "Is this right?" with little discussion. Evaluators also noted that most classrooms provided direct instruction to students with few opportunities for student discussion among their peers. While teachers did a strong job calling individuals instead of relying on choral responses, they seemed reluctant to turn over the discussion to students and tended to lead the conversation. Discussions were universally led by teachers, rather than students.

RECOMMENDATION

Collectively review the DOK levels and/or Blooms' Taxonomy to push for higher-level, more rigorous questioning throughout all grade levels. We encourage the school through school based professional development, revisiting DOK levels and/or Blooms' Taxonomy to push for higher level, more rigorous questioning throughout all grade levels. SPCSA staff recommend teachers craft questions, related to the instructional delivery and mastery of objectives, as a part of lesson planning process so that teachers may be intentional in their questioning of students to informally assess understanding. Teacher coaches can also work with teachers to help them develop essential questions to better support staff with scaffolding and rigorous instruction.

2. Review the implementation of the school's plan of discipline and consider whether it could be applied more consistently.

During the focus group sessions, multiple students voiced their desire for stronger discipline policies at the school, mentioning that the level of discipline currently implemented affected their ability to be successful, if only because of the levels of distraction caused by it. This included their description that some students do not following the plan and disregard it completely. Students also mentioned the discipline plan seemed to apply to some students and not to others.

RECOMMENDATION

We encourage the school to consider student input regarding consistent implementation of the school's discipline policy in the area of implementation of the discipline. It was mentioned that one of the problems may be that there are not enough staff focused on discipline. SLAM Academy should re-examine the discipline policies of the school and determine if changes need to be made for the 2019 – 2020 school year.

During back-to-school professional development, review with the staff the expectations of students and process for student discipline, as well as expectations for staff's consistent enforcement of the school procedures. Include ongoing review at various staff professional developments throughout the school year.

Note

SPCSA School Support Team members will follow up on each of these recommendations during their next site visit, unless otherwise noted.

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