



December 10, 2020

State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA)
1749 N. Stewart Street, Suite 40
Carson City, NV 89706

Dear Authority Board Members:

The Girls Athletic Leadership School Las Vegas (GALS LV) team met with Executive Director Rebecca Feiden and Director of Authorizing Mark Modrcin on November 22, 2019 regarding their recommendation of denial. GALS LV appreciates the dedication and thoughtfulness Directors Feiden and Modrcin displayed as they shared their concerns. This letter responds to the concerns shared with us at this meeting and those detailed in the SPCSA Charter Application Report (SPCSA Report) published December 6, 2019. GALS LV requests the Board consider our response and grant a conditional approval that is contingent upon staff's review of detailed supporting documentation that supplements this letter. GALS LV will submit the detailed supporting documentation to Director Modrcin by December 17, 2019.

The GALS LV team has developed a solid plan to provide an education uniquely designed to meet the needs of adolescent middle school girls in an area in Las Vegas that needs it most¹. GALS LV meets the requirements of Assembly Bill 462 by creating a high-quality school to intentionally serve students that currently attend 1-and 2-star schools². GALS LV will open school at a Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) of Southern Nevada facility located near the University of Nevada LV (UNLV) campus for school operations in the first year³. Based on data from surrounding schools, GALS LV expects to serve a population of at least 80% Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students, 25% English Language Learners (ELL), and 12% special education (SPED). The GALS model is well-designed to serve this population as it addresses the whole child's needs including academic, physical, and social emotional needs, and includes uniquely targeted programming for adolescent girls. To gain trust in the community GALS LV will serve, GALS has built considerable relationships with families and organizations like BGC and the Clark County Community Center in the area. GALS LV has worked to resolve the concerns expressed in the SPCSA Report in a timely fashion as described below.

¹ While GALS LV provides a tailored education for girls, GALS LV is open to students from all backgrounds including socioeconomic, religious, ethnic, gender identify, sexual orientation and special learning needs.

² GALS LV intends to reach a 4- or 5-star rating in year 6 of operation following a steady annual growth plan.

³ The Facilities section of the GALS LV application contains details and letters of commitment.

1. What GALS LV has learned and can build on due to GALS Denver recent weak track record with ELL, SPED and FRL students.

The SPCSA Report included concerns about recent weak performance at GALS Denver with FRL and ELL students and how this has informed the academic model and the GALS LV implementation of the model to serve these subgroups. This response will focus first on describing GALS track record at the Denver and Los Angeles schools and then on demonstrating how this informs the implementation of the school model in Las Vegas.

GALS Denver operates under a charter managed by Denver Public Schools (DPS) district. DPS conducts an annual performance review and assigns a rating based on a 5-level system. Between 2011 and 2017, the school rated Green or 4-star equivalent and between 2018 and 2019, Yellow or 3-star equivalent in 2018-2019⁴. A contributing factor for the drop in rating starting in 2018 was a change made by DPS to the system. In an effort to increase focus on closing academic gaps, DPS implemented a new policy in which a school could not receive an overall green rating if any historically underserved student subgroup received a Yellow or lower rating. Many Denver schools' overall ratings also dropped at this time and DPS is re-evaluating this policy and its performance system as a whole. They have formed a workgroup led by the state Department of Education with participation from schools across the district to "re-imagine" the performance system. GALS Denver is participating in this workgroup.

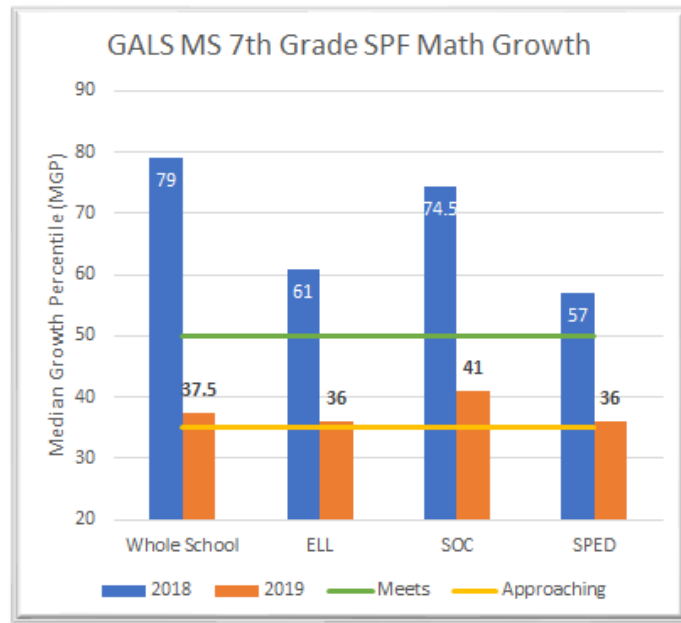
While GALS Denver recognizes the performance system is evolving, the school is proactively working to close academic gaps identified by the new reporting process. Jennifer Holladay, Associate Chief, Portfolio Management of DPS provided a letter of reference acknowledging the "significant efforts GALS is making to improve academic outcomes for all students" and their "steadfast commitment" to the community (Attachment 1).

In 2018, GALS Denver increased professional development on differentiating instruction and implemented a strategy to provide instruction and assessments based on standards that run parallel to grade level standards, in order to support student's progression toward grade level content. The following year, the school saw measurable progress in students with disabilities and received a Green rating for this subgroup.

In 2019, GALS pinpointed a performance problem contributing to declines in ratings for ELL and FRL students attributed to 7th grade math performance. Given the school is a relatively small (327 students), one class/teacher can have broad impacts. The problem impacted all students but ELL students slightly more. The chart below shows the median growth percentile decrease in 7th grade math between 2018 and 2019 for all students, ELL, students of color (SOC), and SPED students. Please note that problem impacted all students. FRL students are not included

⁴ DPS defines Green as Meets Expectations and Yellow as Accredited on Watch. Within the context of DPS middle schools overall, GALS Denver students outperform their district counterparts for academic growth in ELA and Math. The school ranks 4th in Literacy Performance and 8th in Math performance out of 28 district middle schools.

in this chart because GALS Denver does not receive FRL data from the district. In an effort to protect families' privacy, the DPS food program is online and confidential.



After a full assessment of the situation, the GALS Denver Schools' Executive Director took swift action to improve future outcomes. She aligned more resources to 7th grade math, used assessment results earlier in the year to create learning groups based on proficiency level and then targeted lessons based on where the student is at, and increased the number of instruction minutes for math. GALS Denver believes these changes will drive positive results in 2020.

GALS Denver also receives a rating from the state of Colorado Department of Education. In this context, GALS Denver received a Green or 5-star equivalent rating since 2011 and GALS students outperform, in all measures, when compared to their peers across Colorado.

GALS LV will also look to learn from the experience of GALS Los Angeles (GALS LA) as the demographics of the LA school closely mirror the population GALS LV expects to serve. GALS LA, in its second year of operation, is a Yellow or 3-star equivalent school. The school is on track to achieve its goal of being a high performing, 4- or 5-star equivalent school, by year six of operation.

GALS LV will benefit from the experience of GALS Denver and GALS LA in our implementation. Examples of successful practices, modeled after our network schools, to close academic gaps with special populations include:

- GALS LV will review a student's ELL classification history to determine the length of time the student has been an ELL and then assign interventions accordingly. For those students that have a history of two years or less, which is likely indicative of recently moving here, these students will receive Rosetta Stone as part of their interventions to

help them progress in the English language development. GALS LV has dedicated one hour in the daily schedule for interventions. Students with a history greater than two years, will receive a specific ELD course called ELL Essentials, modeled after the course provided at GALS LA. ELL Essentials is a “bootcamp” type class with targeted instruction that helps long-time ELL students better understand the testing methodology and provides students with opportunities to practice skills like listening and speaking.. The GALS LA Head of School reports she expect to be able to re-classify at least 50% of the long-term ELL as a result of implementing ELL Essentials.

- GALS LV plans to implement Achieve3000⁵ for literacy and McGraw’s ALEKS⁶ for Math to provide differentiated, standards-based instruction with real-time data feedback so teachers can monitor a student’s progress and students can advance at their own pace. Based on the experience at GALS LA, Achieve3000 enabled students to achieve up two years of reading proficiency growth in one year. Ms. Sarah Sherman, our proposed Head of School, has achieved similar results with her students using ALEKS. These tools work well with all students including FRL, ELL, and SPED students. Given the majority of students at surrounding schools (approximately 70%) are performing below grade level for reading and math, having a plan “to catch these students” up at this pace is critical.
- GALS LV plans to follow GALS Denver protocols for family engagement and participation which is critical to success with SPED and ELL students. GALS Denver’s Student Success Team includes both the student and parent/guardian. Parents/guardians and students themselves have some of the greatest insight into what interventions will best help the student grow. GALS LV intends to implement this same team structure and share data with the student and parent/guardian for them to fully understand what is occurring and involve them in a discussion about what interventions and supports GALS LV can provide for the student.
- Recent school performance results have also informed the GALS network. By strengthening their data collection and assessment process, GALS strives to provide a Scorecard style report to the GALS board. This provides timely feedback on model efficacy and ensures that intended processes remain intact over time.

GALS LV will provide a supplemental plan to serve at-risk students and a comprehensive analysis of GALS Network performance to Director Modrcin as supporting documentation.

⁵ Achieve 3000 provides differentiated, standards-based instruction and measures that Nevada students using Achieve 3000 realize nearly 4x their expected Lexile Growth. Lexile Growth is a framework developed by MetaMetrics based on 20 years of research funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Achieve 3000 forecasts student’s performance on the SBAC and provides teachers with real-time data to assess a student’s progress.

⁶ ALEKS is based on research funded by the National Science Foundation and it uses artificial intelligence (AI) to map the details of each student's knowledge to know, whether a student has mastered a topic or if the student is ready to learn the next topic.

2. *The GAL LV proposed Leadership team is well supported and has a track record of working with at-risk students.*

The GALS LV Board and proposed leadership team bring personal life experience and essential skills to successfully meet and respond to GALS students' needs. The GALS LV Board understands the challenges GALS LV students will face in life and are committed to helping them achieve successful futures. The Board takes seriously its responsibility and affirms that the proposed school leaders are well prepared to work with all the students GALS LV will serve.

The GALS proposed Head of School, Ms. Sarah Sherman, is an accomplished educator with over twenty years of teaching experience and nine years as a Principal of an all-girls school, the LV Jewish High School (LVJH). While at LVJH, Ms. Sherman partnered with Beacon Academy, an alternative charter school to reduce dropout rates for at-risk students. LVJH students completed Beacon's on-line instruction, and special education students received supports from Beacon and ultimately their high school diploma. Ms. Sherman graduated 100% of her students with at least 90% going on to complete college. While collaborating with Beacon Academy to for LVJH's student's education, Ms. Sherman was invited to join the Beacon Board of Directors and served as parent representative and then Treasurer. Tambre Tondryck, the Executive Director of Beacon Academy, provided a letter of recommendation in support of Ms. Sherman as the GALS Head of School that reads, "based on more than five years of closely working with Ms. Sherman, she has the knowledge, skills, experience and commitment to serve the demographic GALS LV intends to serve" (Attachment 2). Ms. Sherman has also worked in high poverty schools in Los Angeles and Budapest, Hungary, and has spent considerable time volunteering and helping communities in Israel and South Africa, where she was raised.

The GALS LV proposed Executive Director, Ms. Jennifer McCloskey, mentors high school juniors and seniors, many of whom are at-risk, through the College of Southern Nevada's Promise Mentor Scholarship Program, helping them recognize the pathway to college. Ms. McCloskey has lived in Mexico and worked extensively in Central and South America, as such she is a fluent Spanish speaker and understands the Hispanic culture that GALS LV will serve. Ms. McCloskey will also be a certified Trauma Yoga teacher prior to school opening. As a lifetime practitioner of yoga, she hopes to share with students and staff the benefits of mindfulness in dealing with trauma.

Ms. McCloskey and Ms. Sherman received coaching from Krista Yarberry, retired Principal of Petersen Elementary School, a school located in the same neighborhood as GALS LV plans to open doors. Ms. Yarberry helped the future school leaders understand the challenges and resources in the area for support and assistance. Ms. Yarberry was a highly recognized school leader for building a business/public school partnership with Wynn Resorts. Given Ms. McCloskey's experience as an executive level leader, she is well equipped to develop similar partnerships for GALS LV.

3. *Reservations about the agreement between GALS LV Board of Directors and GALS, Inc. are addressed.*

GALS staff met with SPCSA staff to better understand reservations about the agreement between GALS LV and GALS, Inc. and believe we have found alternative language that is agreeable to all parties. The proposed language is that GALS LV Board of Directors and GALS, Inc. shall collaborate with the intent to reach consensus on the selection of school's Executive Director. If consensus is not reached, the ultimate decision-making authority resides with the GALS LV Board of Directors. GALS LV will send a revised agreement to Mr. Modrcin reflecting this change.

4. *GALS LV academic goals align with the SCPSA Academic Framework for future success.*

In response to staff's concerns that GALS LV's goals were not well aligned to the SCPSA Academic Framework, GALS LV has modified its goals to align with the Academic Achievement, Growth Indicator, English Language Proficiency, Closing Opportunity GAPS, and Student Engagement goals in the SPCSA Framework. GALS LV would like to provide the revised goals in draft form to Mr. Modrcin and for further review with him to ensure we have achieved optimal alignment.

5. *GALS LV revised teacher salaries are comparable with other public charter schools.*

In response to staff's concerns that GALS teacher salaries were comparatively lower than that of Clark County School District (CCSD) making it difficult to attract talent, GALS LV revised its budget and increased teacher salaries from \$40,000 to \$42,000 for entry-level teachers and \$42,000 to \$45,000 for senior-level teachers. The starting pay scale for CCSD starting in 2020 is \$41,864. These levels are in line with other public charter schools. GALS was able to allocate additional budget to salary by changing retirement benefits to reflect the PERS Employee/Employer Contribution Plan, which is a more likely scenario as many of our employees will likely be new to the PERS system⁷. GALS LV would also like to highlight our benefits package includes a 70% employer contribution to an employee's health insurance, this is 20% higher than CCSD's contribution. GALS LV, through its outreach activities, has successfully attracted teachers in every subject needed. GALS LV will provide a revised budget to Mr. Modrcin.

6. *GALS LV will adopt a nationally recognized partnership model with UNLV to supplement mental health services for all students including, special populations.*

In response to SPCSA's concerns that GALS LV maybe depending on a student workforce from UNLV to meet the needs of our special populations, GALS LV offers further explanation of our plans. GALS Denver, through a partnership with the University of Colorado (CU), provides

⁷ There are two contribution rates that an employee can select in the PERS plan. The Employee/Employer participation rate is 15.25% (is available to the employee regardless of years of service) and the Employer only rate is 29.5% (requires 5 years of service for any benefits).

internship opportunities for psychology graduate students to complete required counselling hours under the supervision of a licensed psychologist or psychotherapist. The long-standing partnership of eight years is mutually beneficial, providing graduate students with required counseling hours for graduation and GALS students with supplemental services. The GALS Denver – CU partnership is recognized as a national model for student support by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, New Profit, and the Pivot Foundation, foundations working to eliminate poverty and improve education for every child.

GALS LV will replicate this model partnership with UNLV. Psychology graduate students at UNLV are required to complete 1200 hours in an internship to graduate. GALS LV is working to enter into a memorandum of agreement with UNLV for students to complete their required hours at GALS LV under the supervision of a licensed psychologist. Such a partnership is expected to yield the same benefits GALS Denver students receive which is essentially having access to counselor support when they need it, not just when they are scheduled to do so.

7. The GALS LV staffing plan and budget represent a robust plan to serve underperforming demographic subgroups such as SPED, ELL and FRL students.

In response to SPCSA staff's concern that the GALS LV staffing plan and budget were not robust enough to serve underperforming demographic subgroups, GALS LV sought the expert advice of Amy Trombetti of Special Education Consulting Services (SPEDCO) and Vanessa Garza, GALS LA Head of School and ELL educator with over 10 years of experience, to create a more effective plan. Specifically, GALS LV plans to hire a special education licensed teacher with a teacher of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) certificate with the support of two paraprofessionals for each grade level starting in years one through three. In year one, GALS expects to hire this individual in advance of school opening to ensure that all services are available when school starts. In year three, when the school reaches full capacity, GALS LV plans to hire a Dean of Special Education Services to oversee all special services. This individual will also have a special education license also with a TESOL certificate. This staffing plan aligns with GALS LV's inclusion education model in which ELL and SPED students will be included, as much as possible, in regular classrooms with any necessary supports. For ELL students, GALS LV plans to use a Sheltered English Instruction approach to create multifaceted content in the classroom and provide professional development for all GALS teachers in WIDA English Language Development Standards and ELL recommended teaching methods. GALS teacher's performance expectations will reflect that ELL methods must be implemented in everyday instruction.

In addition to this staffing plan, the revised budget includes \$50,000 per year for contract services and an additional \$650 per SPED student, which equates to \$10,500 in year one, \$21,000 in year two, and \$31,000 in year three. In year three, GALS plans to start a reserve fund to grow to \$75,000 in three years or less. GALS LV maintained a conservative budgeting approach and made these changes by adding \$62,500 (125 students X \$500 per student) to the budget for a revolving loan and using the PERS Employee/Employer Contribution Plan for retirement benefits. The GALS LV Board passed a resolution on November 18, 2019 to apply for the SPCSA loan for the purposes of preparing a charter school to commence its first year of operation in accordance with NRS 388A.435.

GALS LV also recognizes that special populations may have special needs not currently foreseen. GALS LV has applied for Charter School Program (CSP) funding, is working with Opportunity 180 to become a part of their school support grants, and once chartered, will apply for grants from private foundations like the Albertsons Foundation to create additional budget strength and flexibility. Opportunity 180 provided a letter regarding their support that is included as Attachment 3.

GALS LV will provide a revised budget, revised staffing plan, and a supplemental plan to serve at-risk populations to Mr. Modrcin.

GALS LV appreciates the Board's review and consideration of the contents of this letter and respectfully requests your consideration of a conditional approval for GALS LV at the December 17, 2019 board meeting. Approval would be conditional on staff's review and concurrence with the supporting documentation GALS LV will provide to Mr. Modrcin before December 17, 2019. A decision made in this manner allows GALS LV to maintain the momentum built to date and open the school in 2020/2021, while also remaining eligible to receive critical CSP start-up grant funds which expire September 30, 2020.

The GALS LV team is very appreciative of the SPCSA charter application process, the robust nature of the process has helped us market test our school and challenged us to think creatively and critically as to how best to serve students in Las Vegas. We greatly appreciate the expertise and commitment of Executive Director Feiden and Director Modrcin. Thank you for your consideration of this additional information and our request for conditional approval. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 605-376-2406.

Best Regards,


Julie Schoolmeester (Dec 10, 2019)

Julie Schoolmeester, GALS Board Chair
On behalf of the GALS Board of Directors



DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Emily Griffith Campus ● 1860 Lincoln Street ● Denver, Colorado 80203

December 5, 2019

State Public Charter School Authority
1749 N. Stewart Street, Suite 40
Carson City, NV 89706

Dear Nevada Authority Board Members:


I understand that the Girls Athletic Leadership Schools (GALS) has an application for a charter pending with the State Public Charter School Authority.

GALS has been part of the family of schools here in Denver since 2013, and, in that time, I have consistently observed their steadfast commitment to the girls and families they serve, as well as the passion so many in our community hold for GALS. As authorizer, I'm also aware of the significant efforts the GALS organization is making to improve academic outcomes for the students in its Denver schools, while also maintaining other important focus areas of its mission and model.

Model diversity is an important element for any system of schools, and the GALS model is an innovative and unique offering within the Denver Public Schools. In fact, my office highlights GALS in the materials it uses to debunk anti-charter stereotypes that sometimes arise with stakeholders in our community. (See attached.)

Please feel free to contact me at 832-472-2851 with any questions you may have about GALS Denver and our working relationship with GALS.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Holladay
Associate Chief, Portfolio Management
Denver Public Schools

MYTH: “Charter schools are all the same.”

Facts:

Charter models vary widely in Denver, from college prep to STEM, from single-gender to dual language, from Montessori to expeditionary learning.

Learn more [here](#).



Students at the Girls Athletic Leadership School of Denver, which “fosters academic excellence and personal development necessary for every young woman to become a powerful advocate for herself and a leader in her community.”



December 4, 2019

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority Board
1749 N. Stewart Street, Suite 40
Carson City, NV 89706

Dear Board Members,

It is my pleasure to recommend Sarah Sherman for the position of Head of School of the proposed Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS) Las Vegas.

I was first introduced to Ms. Sherman in August 2014, when I was assigned as the Principal of Beacon Academy and she served as the Principal of Las Vegas Jewish High School (LVJH). Through continuous collaboration, students from LVJH obtained a high school diploma from Beacon Academy while simultaneously focusing on Judaic Studies. I found Ms. Sherman to be a highly qualified school leader and as Principal of LVJH, Ms. Sherman advocated for her students by making sure their academic schedules were challenging and aligned to their post high-school graduation plans and goals. She provided additional supports to her students using tutors who provided interventions, accommodations, and support for Beacon Academy's online courses, from the LVJH campus. Ms. Sherman worked closely with Beacon Academy's teachers, counselors, and administrators by ensuring her students stayed well informed of Beacon's school calendar, testing schedules, provided assistance by arranging transportation and notified parents of required meetings or obligations.

The student's from LVJH required an array of supports, ranging from special education services to being enrolled in dual credit courses. Ms. Sherman had a deep understanding of these academic programs, the student's abilities, and she inspired the students to set challenging and realistic goals. She would offer to attend IEP meetings in the absence of a parent, referred students for counseling services, and arranged tutoring because she understood how vital these services were for the success of the student.

This collaboration led to Ms. Sherman serving as a well-respected member of the Beacon Academy Governing Body, first serving as the parent advocate and then later as the school's Treasurer.

Ms. Sherman is an asset to the Governing Body due to her vast knowledge and experience as a Principal, school founder and with Beacon's academic, social, and emotional programs and services. Due to her time in the classroom at Beacon Academy, she has firsthand knowledge of the school's day to day operations and unique teaching model for at-risk students.

I highly recommend the SPCSA support Ms. Sherman as the GALS Head of School. Based on more than five years of closely working with her, she has the knowledge, skills, experience and commitment to serve the demographic GALS Las Vegas intends to serve.

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www.banv.org



I along with the Director of Academics at Beacon Academy provide mentoring, advice and consulting to Ms. Sherman in her work to establish GALS Las Vegas. We will continue to provide any support needed to help GALS Las Vegas achieve its goals to be a high-quality school that provides a unique and tailored education experience for adolescent girls.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tambre Tondryk', is written in a cursive style.

Tambre Tondryk
Executive Director of Operations



December 9, 2020

State Public Charter School Authority
1749 N. Stewart Street, Suite 40
Carson City, NV 89706

Dear Nevada Authority Board Members:

I am writing to express our organization's support for a conditional approval of the Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS) application for authorization under the State Public School Charter Authority.

Over the past year, we have seen the progress the GALS team has made to prepare to launch a high-quality charter school that uniquely serves the needs of middle school girls.

We understand the outstanding concerns that the SPCSA staff has expressed, and met with the school's proposed founder, Ms. McCloskey, to learn about her plans to resolve them. The GALS team and their approach to planning for the expansion of this school continue to show great promise. Upon conditional approval and completion of our own due diligence process, Opportunity 180 is committed to provide resources and technical assistance to GALS as they move forward in implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jana Wilcox Lavin".

Jana Wilcox Lavin
Executive Director, Opportunity 180








GALS Response and Attachments

Final Audit Report

2019-12-11

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