



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
Mike Dang, Management Analyst
SUBJECT: Amplus Academy –Amendment to Charter Contract
DATE: August 28, 2020

Background & Summary of Request:

At its June 11, 2020 board meeting, American Preparatory Academy Las Vegas’ (APA-LV) board unanimously voted not to renew its contract with its educational management organization (EMO), American Preparatory Schools (APS). This action was approved by the Authority on June 26, 2020. The school then appeared before the Authority last month with both a name change and grade configuration change at both campuses for the 2020 – 21 school year. During the July 24, 2020 Board meeting, the Authority approved these requests, formally changing the public charter school’s name to Amplus Academy and approved a 1-year change in the grade configurations of each campus.

To ensure that the responsibilities of the former EMO have been appropriately addressed for the 2020 – 21 school year, Amplus seeks approval of a second amendment that alters the operations and academic plan for the charter. According to the amendment submission, there are not any dramatic changes to the current charter. Nevertheless, there are some key components that will shift if approved by the Authority. These shifts are outlined within this this memorandum.

After reviewing the submitted amendment and following-up with Amplus Academy leadership to answer some clarifying questions, SPCSA staff is recommending that the Authority grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the amendment to the Amplus charter as submitted. If approved the amendment will go into effect for the 2020 – 21 school year, the first year of the school’s five-year contract. Amplus Academy was renewed by the Authority for a new term on January 31, 2020. A proposed motion can be found on page 3 of this memo.

Amendment & Proposed Changes

According to the amendment application, there are a few noteworthy changes within the academic plan from prior years. If approved, Amplus Academy will implement the following curricula, academic programs and resources beginning in the 2020 – 21 school year:

- Achieve 3000 (all grades, K-12)

- Teach Like a Champion (all grades, K-12)

- Writing by Design

- Love and Logic

- ARCHER Academy (all grades, K-12)

- Leveraged Leadership

It should be noted that Teach Like a Champion and Leveraged Leadership will be particularly important for teachers to ensure that students are on-track both academically and socially. As noted within the submission, all other curriculum and programs will remain in place at the school.

Another noteworthy change within the academic plan for Amplus Academy is the modified leadership structure. The current plan has shifted so as to devote more time to working specific student groups and allowing for dedicated time to assist in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process according to the amendment application. For the 2020 – 21 school year, the school plans to have two Principals, one dedicated to students in grades Kindergarten – 6th grade and a second dedicated to students in 7th – 12th grades. The school will also now have five assistant principals and a Director of Student Support. The Director of Student Support will be responsible for the RTI process in addition to facilitating engagement between the school, families and communities and supervising school counselors, mental health professionals and support staff working directly with families. According to the application, all school leaders and the Managing Director will be evaluated by staff feedback and professional assessments.

The amendment submission outlines a few noteworthy changes within the operational plan of the school. Without a contract with the former EMO, Amplus staff will be responsible for critical human resource functions such as benefit administration, employee relations, hiring, onboarding and any termination of employees. Additionally, the school will also absorb all accounting and finance functions for the school. Payroll will continue to be managed by an outside vendor. Amplus Academy staff will also assume all student recruitment and enrollment functions.

The operational plan within the submitted amendment also confirms that a number of responsibilities will remain unchanged as a result of the separation with the former EMO. Basic responsibilities for the facilities, such as HVAC, landscaping and janitorial services will continue to be provided by third-party vendors. Technology and IT support will continue to be provided by on-site staff instead of a third-party vendor.

Given the separation from the former EMO, the budget for the upcoming school year has changed substantially. Despite this significant change, school personnel have worked diligently to ensure that core services remain intact and that the majority of these dollars are reallocated to directly support students. As outlined within the amendment submission, the current budget repurposes over two million dollars previously allocated to the EMO for services. These funds are now

dedicated to the staffing changes highlighted above and improving instruction through evidence-based curricular enhancements, among other expenditures.

Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests

[NAC 388A.400](#) requires a governing body of a public charter school to submit a request to the SPCSA to amend the charter contract if it relates to:

1. A contractual relationship with an educational management organization which provides or plans to provide substantially all the educational services offered by the school;
2. A change in the educational programs, curriculum models, methods of instructional delivery or designs for the whole charter school; and
3. Any other change to the academic program of the charter school.

Note that the regulation also requires the governing body to obtain approval from the sponsor of the charter school before the governing body enters into or terminates the contract with an EMO. The Authority approved this request during its June 26, 2020 meeting.

Staff Recommendation: Approve

The Authority will recall that in January, Amplus Academy (f.k.a. APA-Las Vegas) was renewed for a new, five-year charter term that began on July 1. The school has demonstrated relatively strong academic performance since its inception. This is best exemplified by consistent 4- and 5-star ratings under the NSPF throughout the charter term at the middle school. Despite the issuance of a Notice of Concern due to academic underperformance at the elementary school in the 2018 – 2019 school year, SPCSA staff is confident the school will improve upon its most recent rating for the elementary school while maintaining strong performance at the middle and high school levels. Much of this work lies within the proposed changes provided within the amendment submission.

The school currently has strong enrollment and financial performance indicators show that the school is financially solvent and viable.

For all of these reasons, SPCSA staff is recommending that the Authority approve the request of Amplus Academy to continue to provide instruction to students and operate as presented within the amendment submission.

Proposed Motion:

- **Grant the Good Cause Exemption request of Amplus to hear this submitted amendment; and**
- **Approve the proposed changes to the academic, operations and financial plans for the school to take effect beginning in the 2020 – 21 school year.**

The chart below provides the Amplus enrollment caps for each year of the current charter term.

School Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Durango Campus					
Grade Levels	4-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12
Enrollment	1466	1616	1656	1656	1656
Rainbow Campus					
Grade Levels	K-3	K-6	K-6	K-6	K-6
Enrollment	770	640	640	640	640
Total Enrollment	2236	2256	2296	2296	2296

Amplus Academy (f.k.a American Preparatory Academy) Star Rating, Grade Structure, Historical Enrollment, and Demographics

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Rating(s)</u>
2014 – 15	Elementary: Not Rated Middle: Not Rated
2015 – 16	No Star Ratings Released
2016 – 17	Elementary: 4 stars Middle: 5 stars High: Not Rated
2017 – 18	Elementary: 4 stars Middle: 5 stars High: Not Rated
2018 – 19	Elementary 2 stars ¹ Middle: 5 stars High: 2 stars ²

¹ The Elementary school is currently operating under an Academic Notice of Concern that was issued on October 4, 2019.

² No action was taken by the Authority with regard to the two-star rating for the high school given purported issues related to the school's graduation rate in 2018. The high school is not operating under a notice, and the 2019 graduation rate improved significantly over the prior year.

Historical Enrollment and Demographic Information (as of Validation Day each year)

Year	Total Enrollment¹	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	548	14.4%	12.6%	42.7%	19.5%	0.4%	8.6%	1.9%	4.3%	6.7%	9.3%
16-17	402	16.2%	12.9%	43.4%	18.5%	0.4%	6.6%	1.9%	5.4%	3.1%	2.7%
17-18	384	17.0%	14.6%	41.4%	18.3%	0.3%	5.8%	2.6%	5.2%	3.2%	0.0%
18-19	1657	16.4%	16.1%	39.9%	18.5%	0.2%	6.2%	2.7%	5.1%	1.8%	14.4%
19-20	1637	17.3%	14.6%	39.8%	19.4%	0.1%	6.1%	2.6%	4.8%	1.5%	19.3%

A – Asian
 B – Black
 C - White
 H – Hispanic
 I – American Indian/Alaskan Native
 M – Two or more races
 P – Pacific Islander
 IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student
 ELL – English Language Learner
 FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch