



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** SPCSA Board  
**FROM:** Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing  
Mike Dang, Management Analyst IV  
**SUBJECT:** **Mater Academy of Nevada Amendment Request to:**  
- **Add a Dual-Credit Program**  
- **Add Pre-Kindergarten sections to the Mater East location**  
**DATE:** February 15, 2022

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**Summary of Request and Recommendation**

Mater Academy of Nevada (Mater) is requesting that the Authority grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the school's requests to:

- Offer a Dual-Credit program to comply with [NRS 389.310](#); and
- Offer Pre-Kindergarten at the Mater East campus beginning in the 2022 – 23 school year.

After review and analysis of Mater's request and supporting documentation, staff recommend that the Authority grant the school a Good Cause Exemption and approve both requests, subject to the conditions outlined on page 4 of this memo.

**Background**

Mater opened their first campus, Mountain Vista, in August of 2014 serving grades K-5. Today this campus serves 1,057 students in grades K-8 and is currently led by Principal Olivia Carbajal. For the 2021-2022 school year, nearly 77% of students identify as Hispanic/Latino, nearly 36% are English Language Learners, and nearly all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, per the Validation Day data.

Mater opened their second campus, Bonanza, in August of 2017 serving students in grades K-8. This campus, led by Principal Amy Gronna, serves 1,074 students, of which nearly 87% identify as Hispanic/Latino, nearly 40% are English Language Learners, and nearly all students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, per the Validation Day data.

Mater opened their third campus, Las Vegas East, in August 2020. This campus is led by Principal Renee Fairless and currently serves grades K-10 with approval to grow to grades K-12. This campus serves 1,573 students, of which nearly

80% identify as Hispanic/Latino, over 40% are English Language Learners, and nearly all students are Free and Reduced Lunch eligible. These three schools are governed by a 7-member Board of Directors from diverse backgrounds.

The amendment submission makes two substantive requests.

First, Mater seeks to add a Dual Credit program for its East campus, which opened for the 2020 – 21 school year. According to the amendment application, this addition will allow the school to comply with [NRS 389.310](#) as the school will be expanding to serve 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2022 – 23 school year, and eventually 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2023 – 24 school year. The target community for this request, as stated in the application, is current middle and high school students.

Mater's request notes that qualified junior and senior students from Mater may participate in Western Nevada College's (WNC) JumpStart program and earn the amount of credit typically awarded to college students who successfully complete WNC courses. Additionally, WNC will provide student success support and shall assign identification numbers to each pupil who is enrolled in the dual-credit course. The amendment submission notes that those students enrolling through College of Southern Nevada's (CSN) JumpStart program will be provided instruction from Mater staff as the school will offer certain approved 299 or lower-level college courses that qualify for CSN academic credit and fulfill Mater's high school graduation requirements. According to the amendment, CSN will grant college credit toward earning a credential, certificate, or degree, as applicable, for dual credit course when a Mater student satisfactorily completes the course. The amendment goes on to note that Mater will develop a four-year plan for each student which may include concurrent enrollment courses. CSN, through its Academic Affairs department, will oversee the administration, instruction and educational requirements for the Certificate of Achievement and Associate Degree programs offered to Mater students pursuant to the MOU.

Regarding tuition and fees, the amendment notes that Mater Academy will pay 100% of the tuition and fees incurred while students will pay for required textbooks. The amendment notes that under the JumpStart program at CSN, Mater students will be charged a course fee of \$50 per course and the technology fee per credit hour. Additionally, CSN will charge all courses via invoice and Mater will remit payment for fees for each student enrolled in courses within 30 days of the start of the course. In the full-length program, Mater is responsible to pay for all fees applicable to Mater students.

The second request is seeking approval for Mater to open two sections of Pre-Kindergarten at the Mater East campus as the charter currently offers sections of Pre-Kindergarten at the other two campuses, Bonanza and Mountain Vista. The amendment notes that the target community for these additional sections are families residing within a two-mile radius of the East campus, and that interest is driven by parents from the community seeking this type of program for their students. These sections are proposed to open for the 2022 – 23 school year and are contingent on receiving funds from the Nevada Ready! State Pre-Kindergarten grant per the amendment application. In the event that state funds are unavailable, the campus would then seek grant funds such as Charter School Program (CSP), ESSER, Cares ESSER II, ARAP, and ESSER III as additional funding streams. The application goes on to note that if both the statewide process and grant funds are unavailable then the school would not offer these sections for the 2022 – 23 school year and would remain as a K-11 for the upcoming school year as previously approved.

If approved, the application notes that Mater will continue to engage parents and other community members through meetings and school events such as award ceremonies and Parent-Teacher Meetings among others. The amendment submission notes that Mater will continue to employ a multitude of parental-engagement practices and strategies, including but not limited to: multi-tiered communication, workshops, open houses, career fairs and family picnics. The amendment also notes that Mater has many established community partners that can be leveraged to assist in these efforts as well.

In terms of programming, the amendment states that the Mater Pre-Kindergarten program will follow all required elements to meet the federal expansion grant criteria, including teacher qualifications, eligibility, and class size/ratio among others. The amendment budget notes that the school plans to serve approximately 34 students beginning in the 2022 – 23 school year, and the Mater East facility has adequate space to accommodate this small increase of students as proposed.

## **Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests**

Existing charter schools that are sponsored by the SPCSA may submit a charter school contract amendment application to the SPCSA – which is reviewed by SPCSA staff and presented for SPCSA Board action – in order to, among other things, increase enrollment, add grade levels above and beyond what the charter school is approved to serve, add a new campus, or change mission and vision statements.

Only those existing charter schools that are meeting expectations in regard to academics (under both the Department of Education’s Nevada School Performance Framework – the “Star Ratings” – and the SPCSA’s Academic Performance Framework), are compliant in regard to the SPCSA’s Organizational Framework, and are fiscally sound may be approved for expansion. Furthermore, the academic, organizational, and financial performance of other charter schools that contract with the same Charter Management Organization or Educational Management Organization are taken into account when reviewing an expansion application.<sup>1</sup>

At this time, SPCSA staff finds that Mater is meeting expectations in regard to academic expectations, are compliant in regard to the SPCSA’s Organization Framework, and are fiscally sound. The charter currently is meeting expectations under the NSPF, and is not operating with any active academic notices across the three campuses. The school also serves a very representative student population, and each campus earned at least 13 out of 15 points under the diversity indicator of the 2020 – 21 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework.

At its January 28, 2022 board meeting, the Authority approved the 2020 – 21 Organizational Performance Framework results for Mater Academy, and the school earned a perfect score of 100 points for the second consecutive year. This signals that all available information indicates that the school is compliant and organizationally sound.

Additionally, the 2019 – 20 Financial Performance Framework results for Mater Academy showed that the school ‘Met the Standard’ for each indicator, and staff does not have any concerns regarding the 2020 – 21 school year results after reviewing available information as well as additional data and context provided by the school.

## **Eligibility, Analysis, Summary and Recommendation**

SPCSA staff find that Mater Academy is exhibiting strong performance academically, organizationally and financially as noted above, and that the rationales for both the addition of a dual-credit program as well as Pre-Kindergarten sections at the East campus to be compelling. Information presented in the amendment application supports both enhancements of the charter, and it is noteworthy that the Mater Academy of Nevada system has experience implementing a Pre-Kindergarten program at its other two campuses. Upon request, Mater leadership shared that the school currently has a waitlist of 188 students seeking to enroll in available Pre-Kindergarten programs at both the Bonanza and Mountain Vista campuses, with the former being located less than 1.5 miles from the East campus. Finally, SPCSA staff note that available data indicates that Mater is representative of the community it serves with regard to students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, English Language learners and students with disabilities. As such, SPCSA staff recommends the Authority board approve Mater’s requests, with conditions as outlined below.

## **Proposed Motion:**

**Grant Mater Academy of Nevada a Good Cause Exemption and approve their requests to add a Dual Credit program and approve the Mater East campus to offer up to two sections of Pre-Kindergarten starting in the 2022 – 23 school year, subject to the following conditions:**

- **That Mater provide evidence that the governing body of Mater Academy of Nevada has applied and been approved by the State Board of Education, thereby permitting students to earn credits;**
- **That Mater provide SPCSA staff copies of fully-executed agreements between the school and the College of Southern Nevada and the school and Western Nevada College so that students may earn dual credit pursuant to NRS 389.310; and**
- **That by May 1, 2022 or sooner, Mater determine if Pre-Kindergarten will be offered at the East campus, and subsequently communicate this information on its website and to SPCSA staff.**

*Note that conditions 1 and 2 are specific to the dual credit request and condition 3 is specific to the Pre-Kindergarten request. As such, failure to complete the first two conditions does not impact the school's ability to implement the Pre-Kindergarten program and vice-versa.*

**If approved, Mater Academy of Nevada will have the following enrollment caps for the remainder of their current charter term:**

	<b>2022 – 2023</b>	<b>2023 – 2024</b>	<b>2024 – 2025</b>
<b>Mater – Bonanza</b>	984	984	984
<b>Mater – East</b>	1,824	2,094	2,209
<b>Mater – Mountain Vista</b>	1,035	1,035	1,035
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,843</b>	<b>4,113</b>	<b>4,228</b>

*Appendix: School Performance and Demographics: Mater Academy of Nevada*

<b>Year</b>	<b>NSPF Rating</b>
2021 <sup>1</sup>	Mountain Vista Campus elementary: 4 stars Mountain Vista Campus middle: 5 stars Bonanza Campus elementary: 3 stars Bonanza Campus middle: 4 stars East Campus elementary: Not Rated East Campus middle: Not Rated East Campus high school: Not Rated
2020 <sup>2</sup>	Mountain Vista Campus elementary: 4 stars Mountain Vista Campus middle: 5 stars Bonanza Campus elementary: 3 stars Bonanza Campus middle: 4 stars
2019	Mountain Vista Campus elementary: 4 stars Mountain Vista Campus middle: 5 stars Bonanza Campus elementary: 3 stars Bonanza Campus middle: 4 stars
2018	Mountain Vista Campus elementary: 3 stars Mountain Vista Campus middle: 4 stars Bonanza Campus elementary: 1 star Bonanza Campus middle: 3 stars
2017	Elementary: 2 stars Middle: 3 stars
2016	No Star Ratings published by the Nevada Department of Education
2015	Elementary: Not Rated (new school) Middle: Not Rated (new school)

<sup>1</sup> Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2020 – 21 school year waiver from the US Department of Education for certain requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Nevada statewide assessments were administered in the 2020 – 21 school year, but the NDE did not calculate Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2020 – 21 school year.

<sup>2</sup> Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2019 – 20 school year waiver from the US Department of Education for certain assessment, accountability, school identification, and reporting requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Accordingly, for the 2019 – 20 school year, Nevada statewide assessments were not administered and the NDE did not calculate Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings.

### Mater Mountain Vista

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
21-22	1,057	2.7%	9.0%	6.0%	76.9%	0.1%	3.9%	1.0%	9.9%	35.2%	>95%
20-21	1,049	1.8%	9.4%	7.3%	76.7%	0.1%	4.0%	0.3%	8.6%	38.6%	>95%
19-20	1,060	1.6%	9.0%	7.1%	77.4%	0.2%	4.1%	0.8%	8.1%	35.9%	>95%
18-19	1,056	1.2%	7.8%	8.1%	78.6%	0.2%	3.6%	0.5%	8.4%	46%	>95%
17-18	996	0.8%	9.0%	10.2%	75.5%	.01%	4.3%	0.0%	8.3%	47.4%	62.9%

### Mater Bonanza

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
21-22	1,074	0.6%	6.2%	3.5%	86.5%	0.2%	1.9%	0.7%	8.4%	38.9%	>95%
20-21	1,071	0.5%	7.6%	4.1%	84.6%	0.3%	1.8%	0.7%	9.7%	33.9%	>95%
19-20	1,041	0.6%	8.9%	6.4%	81.1%	0.2%	1.7%	1.1%	8.5%	36.1%	>95%
18-19	906	0.9%	9.3%	7.8%	78.6%	0.3%	2.4%	0.7%	8.9%	43.3%	86.0%
17-18	760	1.1%	9.5%	9.2%	77.5%	0.4%	2.1%	0.3%	6.8%	52.2%	80.3%

### Mater East

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
21-22	1,573	0.8%	11.7%	4.5%	79.3%	0.1%	2.7%	0.6%	10.9%	40.7%	>95%
20-21	1,143	0.6%	12.7%	5.2%	76.9%	0.0%	3.4%	0.7%	9%	42.6%	>95%