



# **Nevada State Public Charter School Authority**

Site Evaluation Report

**Amplus Academy-Durango and Rainbow Campuses**  
(Formerly American Prep Academy)

Evaluation Date: February 22 & 25, 2021

Report Date: 04/05/2021

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## A: Nevada State Performance Framework

<http://www.doe.nv.gov/Accountability/NSPF/>

## B: SPCSA Academic Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/19062-2-8-Academic-Performance-Framework-Guidance-Document.pdf>

## C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/19062-8-OPF-Att-1-Ratings-Scorecard.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 at Amplus Academy Durango campus and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at Amplus Academy Rainbow campus. The State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all charters within the portfolio during the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization.

An analysis of the school's academic and operational success is undertaken by reviewing the most current versions of the Nevada State Performance Framework (Appendix A) and the State Public Charter School Authority Academic Framework (Appendix B) as well as the Organizational Framework (Appendix C).

In addition, the Site Evaluation Team conducts classroom observations within the areas of classroom environment and instruction. The purpose of these observations is to collect evidence using a rubric which has been normed by our team. All classroom rating outcomes will be displayed within this report so that school leaders have an overall idea of what is happening in general, at any time, in any classroom. The overall numbers will provide information about the school outcomes on this one day.

SPCSA staff will track "best practices", using a checklist and a summary of best practices observed, and will be contained within the report. Using information from focus groups of students, parents, staff, school leaders and the school's board, the SPCSA team will conduct focus groups and summarize results for schools within the report. The operational portion of the evaluation will be observed and take-aways recorded using a checklist and observing all aspects of the school's operational components as outlined in the SPCSA operational framework.

This evaluation has been designed to focus on teaching and learning (e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students) as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The SPCSA uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The mission of Amplus Academy is: "Amplus Academy operates as a free public charter school that welcomes and honors all. Our intent is that our students acquire knowledge and skills to become esteemed, distinguished and productive citizens who preserve the pillars of a free and just society."

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Amplus Academy has two locations within the city of Las Vegas. The campuses are located within close proximity to one another. One facility is located at 8377 W. Patrick Lane and serves grades 4-12. The other is located at 7077 Patrick Lane and serves students in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The campuses have a total of 2,249 students combined according to the most recent, 2020-2021 validation day data from October 2020. This number is an increase of 612 students during the current school year as opposed to 1,637 enrolled during the 2019-2020 school year. The achievement data at the school has varied over the last few years. According to some of the board members, the two-star rating at the Elementary school was one of the major reasons the board made the choice not to continue with the Education Management Company as of July 2020. At this time Amplus, formally known as American Prep, broke away from the Utah based management company and became self-managed. This transition has led to several operational and academic changes.

- A new Principal, and four Assistant Principal were hired.
- The school now an independent public charter school, unaffiliated with a management company
- A second campus has been opened for the 2020-2021 school year.
- An HR manager established new policies and procedures to include a more transparent and robust hiring and on-boarding as well as exit interview process.
- New math curriculum better aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards has been implemented.
- A focus on teaching to each student's mastery of learning and mastery of the standard is emphasized within lesson plans and classroom teaching. This is in sharp contrast to the previous expectations for teachers to have fidelity to the pre-written lesson scrip as written by the curriculum publisher and or the management company.
- An EL Coordinator position has been created and filled. The EL population has increased due to a more robust identification process. The EL population is estimated to be approximately 185 students at the time of this report which is an increase from 24 during the 2019-2020 school year
- The Special Education program has been evaluated internally and the number of Special Education staff has increased from five to 13 employees. Co-teaching, providing students a more inclusive education within the general ed classroom, co-teaching, providing students a more inclusive education within the general ed classroom is in place.

To better cope with the changes listed above members of the school board hired an outside consultant to guide the governing board through this transitional period. According to school leadership, the consultant reviewed and recommended to the organizational structure of employees, the budget oversight process, and reviewed school policy/procedures for accuracy. The consultant also participated in the interviews for the new leadership and suggested Achieve 3000-an ELA diagnostic learning system to be implemented at the school beginning in the 2020-21 school year.

In an effort to improve classroom instruction and student achievement the school changed from using Saxon math to Engage New York. School leaders have put into place a new system to track the teaching and learning of each content standard. Teachers now use a plan book to view all grade-level standards and a calendar which tracks the teaching and standards in place.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary grade configuration in place for the 2020 – 21 school year, the impending transition to a permanent configuration over the summer of 2021, and completing year one as an independent charter school, SPCSA staff elected to combine the evaluations of both campuses into one report in effort to streamline recommendations to better inform planning for

the upcoming school year.

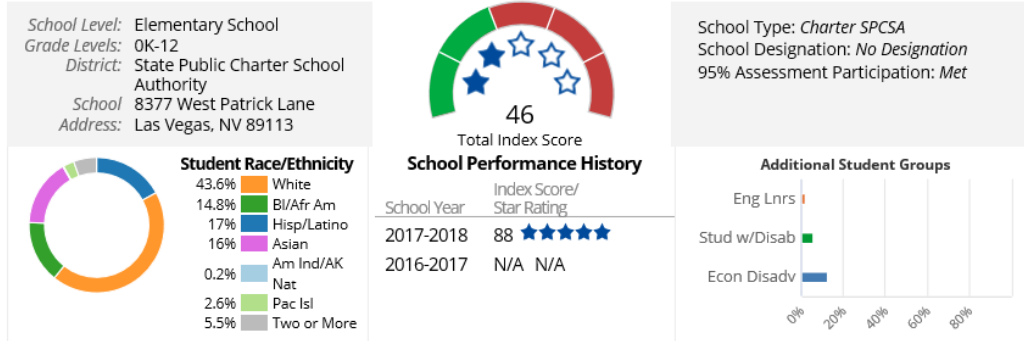
# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## Amplus Academy/Math and ELA Results Nevada School Performance Framework-2019

### Elementary School

#### American Preparatory Academy LV

#### School Year 2018-2019 Nevada School Rating



### Middle School

#### American Preparatory Academy LV

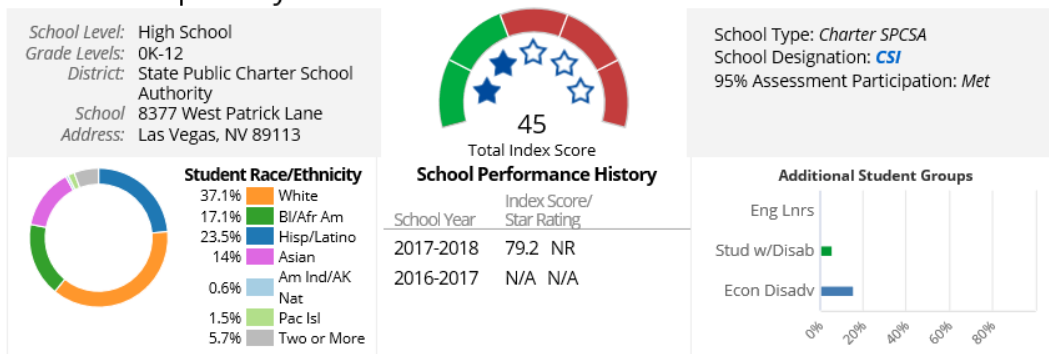
#### School Year 2018-2019 Nevada School Rating



### High School

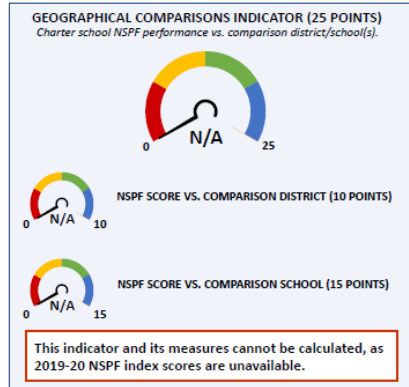
#### American Preparatory Academy LV

#### School Year 2018-2019 Nevada School Rating

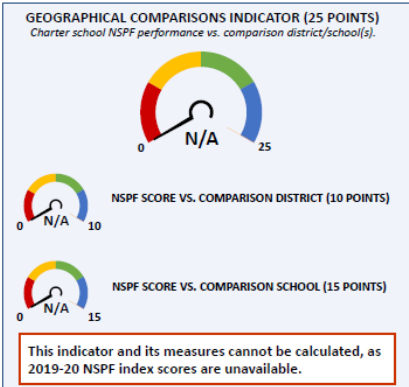


# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Geographic Comparison Report

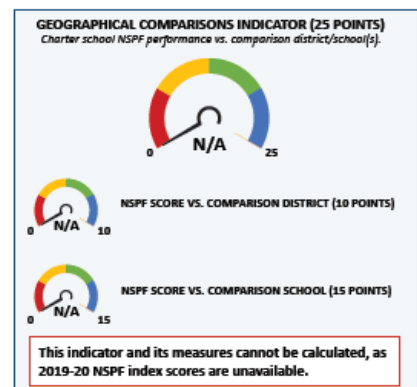
## Elementary School



## Middle School

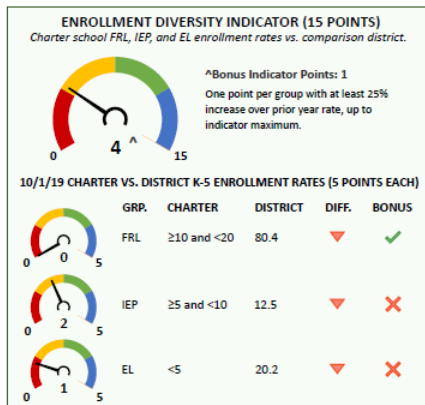


## High School

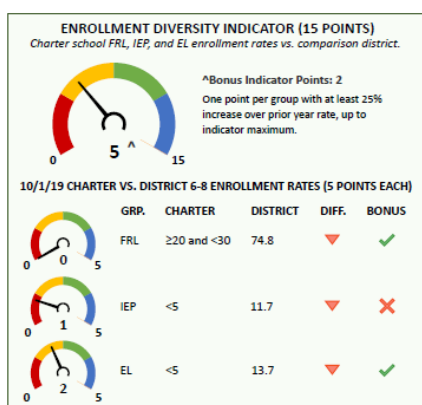


# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Diversity Comparison Results

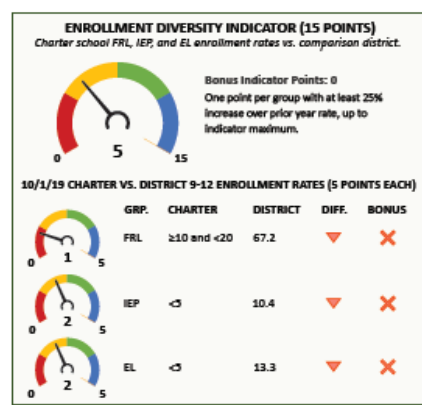
## Elementary School



## Middle School



## High School



# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board <sup>1</sup>	2	30 minutes
Parents/Families	4	30 minutes
Students	8	30 minutes
School Leadership	7	50 minutes
Staff	7	30 minutes

### Governing Board<sup>1</sup>:

- When the governing board was asked to describe the changes at the school, they explained that they chose to not renew the contract with EMO and this led to several changes. The board described changes in their academic plan which has included a new curriculum to better teach the Nevada Academic content standards. In addition, they have made changes to the way teaching takes place, more based on mastering the standards then sticking to the script of the curriculum. The board explained that they made the decision to purchase a program called 3000 and a new math curriculum. The focus group members said that these changes have already made a dramatic improvement in helping students be better prepared to take the SBAC and ACT tests.
- Board members shared that they hired an expert consultant, who spent ten weeks in the summer of 2020 reviewing school policy and procedures, salaries and making improvements to the Special Education Program. This was helpful given that of the five member board, three members are relatively new. Board members met with the consultant each week to better understand how to meet the needs of all students. According to board members, the results have been an improved accounting system, more checks and balances fiscally, and a personnel system that provides improved oversight. There is also a new facility, Chromebooks, new hires, increased salaries, and, financially, board members report that the school is doing very well.
- To manage the transition to an independent charter school as a board, members participated in committees, creating a COVID committee, transition committee, financial committee, and a committee to review the curriculum. Board member shared that they made a point of having two to three board members spend time at the campus every month. The change to an independent charter school also required several emergency board meetings. Board members said that they also restructured the staff and they added key personnel positions. The board has pushed for better supervision and improvement in teaching. There is a new and bigger emphasis on transparency and accountability than before.
- Board members explained that one of the biggest drivers for zeroing in on eliminating the EMO contract was that they felt the school was not going in the right direction. The two-star rating at the Elementary level was a sign that teachers needed to be empowered and accountable for upholding the teaching of the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS). Board members said that the curriculum is mapped to the NVACS and implementation began with fall of 2020.



## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Parents/Families:

- Family members shared that they made the choice to enroll their children at the school for several reasons. One parent has been at the school for seven years and their children continue to enroll year after year because they feel the school offers a much better education than other schools in the area. Another parent enrolled her children and transferred from the private school setting after researching the school. Her children attend Amplus because the school is located about one mile from their home and the family wants to have the ability to have a grouping concept for their children. The parent commented that, “she understands the difficulty of this for the 2020-21 school year.” Another new parent said that, “she chooses this school because they offer a half-day kindergarten and base learning groups that offer a differentiated approach to learning. She likes the feeling of a smaller school, the community based concept, and the ability for parents to be more involved.” Another thing appreciated by some of the parents is the way the school has scheduled the breaks during the school year.
- Parents said that communication between home and school has been very good. One family member said that school staff responds right away when she has questions or concerns. Another parent said that she has tried to teach her children to communicate directly with their teachers and noticed that the teachers have been very responsive. One parent commented, “with many Amplus changes this year, I think I would like to see more about what the course curriculum would look like next year so that I know what is going on in the future. I am wondering about the plan for textbooks as well.” A different parent commented that the previous year’s communication was a struggle. However, the parent feels that there is improvement this year. She would like to see some of the communication done ahead of time because it can be hard to pivot the family schedule to make it to events at the last minute. Family members are appreciative for several improvements, including the school’s decision to provide Chrome books to every child. Although parent teacher conferences this year were conducted virtually, family members expressed their appreciation of receiving a lot of feedback about how their children are doing in school. One family member explained that during the conference this year, the MAP data was presented to the parents and now they are able to get the MAP data in the mail as well. For several of the parents that were in the focus group, this was the first time this data was explained.
- Family members unanimously felt that the teachers at the school know their children. In several instances, family members were pleased to receive positive news from the school. In one case, a teacher went out of their way to let the parent know how well her daughter is writing. In another example, when the topic of accelerated math was up for discussion, the school staff already knew who the family member’s child was and were already thinking about how to accelerate for the student. One parent remarked, “the personal communication is new and something I had not experienced at any other school. The small environment is helpful and there is a lot more communication.” Parents feel that the teachers know their children, even with the pandemic.
- Families were asked if they believe their children are challenged. One parent said she is new to the school and with the distance learning it is, at times, hard to determine the levels of challenge. She added that many parents have their children attending this school for the ability-based reading and math. This parent commented that, “although ability based grouping has not been easy to do this year due to the pandemic, in general, parents want the ability grouping to take place next year. This parent commented that although ability-based grouping has not been easy to do this year due to the pandemic, in general, parents want the ability grouping to take place next year.

## Students:

- Students shared that the clubs are one of their favorite things about the school. One student said he loves the Latin classes and enjoys learning. Students said that the virtual learning has been pretty smooth. They explained that the recorded lessons are nice because they can either attend or watch later. Some of the students remarked that it is a bit more difficult to learn in the distance education setting. Students were asked if they felt respected when attending school. One student said, "I feel respected in my classes by both teachers and students." Another student commented, "there is one kid who disrespects teachers and students." A third student explained that there are many other students who help him learn and he really appreciates his peers and feels respected by them.
- Students said they feel challenged by their classes. They said that having leveled classes helps at the secondary level. For example, one student is challenged with writing essays, another believes that the AP classes are highly challenging. Students said that they monitor their progress through Google Classroom. One student added that students can also check Infinite Campus and talk to their peers if work is missing.
- The members of the student focus group said that teachers share behavior expectations at the beginning of the year and then change them as needed as the year progresses. One student said that teachers give students instructions on how to do an assignment as expected. The students appreciate that they have been taught how to use different on-line programs to learn and to turn in their assignments.
- Students commented that that if they have trouble understanding a concept or receive a lower grade than expected, they have the option of looking over the assignment to see what was marked as incorrect and then can go back and improve the assignment after watching the videos of classroom instruction again. Students said they can reach out to the teachers to get assistance or ask their peers for support. Students said that every Wednesday is set aside for students to contact teachers during office hours, since school is not held on Wednesdays.

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Leadership:

- School Leaders explained that with governing board's decision to discontinue the contract with the Arizona based EMO and become self-managed, there have been several positive changes to the school. For example, leadership shared that the school has stopped using Saxon Math and instead elected to use Engage New York this year until a compete K-12 math curriculum can be vetted and selected. Focus group members explained that the new, Engage New York math is much better aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards. The school has developed an internal system to better track the teaching and mastery of each standard as well. The school encourages the teaching staff to teach to each individual student rather than sticking to a curriculum script as a guideline which offers much more flexibility, creativity, and at the same time requires high quality instruction.
- In terms of the changes to the Special Education, or Exceptional Student Department, the school has overhauled the procedures, policies, and staff to create a newer more quality program. The Department has created a mission, vision, and collective agreements as well as hiring a director and several new staff. The emphasis is on meeting the identified needs of the students as well as supporting faculty and staff as they implement procedural requirements of IDEA and Section 504. Leaders expressed that they have high standards for students with educational disabilities and promote the inclusion of students with educational disabilities into the general education classroom.
- With the English Language Learner program, school leaders were happy to report that the school has done a better job of conducting WIDA testing of students. The WIDA EL Coordinator has assisted in identifying a larger number of students qualifying for services than in the past. The school had previously tested 24 students during the 2019-20 School Year as opposed to 186 students during the 2020-21 School Year. In addition, school leaders have worked together and developed individual ELL plans for each student in the program as well as a parent engagement plan for student families with second language learners.
- School leaders said they have a variety of assessments taking place. For example, diagnostic includes Brigance, NWEA MAP, and new Achieve 3000 Level Set as well as the PSAT. Formative assessments include in-class assessments, white boards, Go Formative, Google Forms, exit tickets, quizzes and exit polls, and MAP Accelerator Data. Interim Assessments include MAP, Unit Exams, projects and essays and summative tests include End of Unit Tests SBAC, end of semester exams. Leaders expressed that they have many culturally responsive practices taking place including differentiated instruction, small groups, cooperative groups, a focus on real-life applications for all students, and restorative practices. In addition, staff has been trained with refugee program at Catholic Charities, Multicultural/Multi-disciplinary committee, and implicit Bias trainings.
- The leadership teams at both the Rainbow and Durango Campus campuses reported strengths. Including communication with families, effective instruction in a hybrid setting, curriculum conversations, teacher rapport with students and multicultural education. They see communication with families and effective instruction in a hybrid setting as well as curriculum conversations, and teacher rapport with students as well as multicultural education.
- Conversely, the leadership teams at both the Rainbow and Durango campuses reported challenges, including further alignment of instruction to standards, 6th grade being treated as an elementary grade/program, developing grade level team capacity to evaluate and execute curriculum RTI, and the implementation of an inclusion model.

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Staff:

- According to the staff instructional techniques have changed. One person shared that teachers record their lessons so that students can go back and listen a second time. Staff said that they have adapted lesson format and use Near Pod to check for student understanding of content. With regard to using data to drive instruction, staff shared that, for elementary, it has been hard during the pandemic. It is difficult to know where students are because they may be getting help with taking the test at home. Staff said that the MAP data is helpful and proctored. The staff said that there have been many trainings on how to retrieve student data and on learning to identify achievement gaps that exist for some students. Staff explained that they are learning to use Achieve 3000 as it is new and is being implemented this year for the first time.
- The staff explained their understanding of high quality instruction. They said it is important to be very intentional with plans because there is a limited amount of time for teaching this year, especially with the modified schedule and distance learning. They said they had to simplify what was being taught and create lesson plans that allow them to teach all the standards. The staff said there are several ways they check to see if students have understood the content including discussion or questions in break out rooms, exit tickets.
- The staff said there has been a great deal of Professional Development this year. They said that every week, and sometimes twice per week, the staff meets for the purpose of new learning for themselves. They said the administrative team has been supportive of those teachers working to become Nationally Board Certified.
- When staff was asked about how they support students with special needs and English Language learners they said that the school has both inclusion and pull out options for students with special needs. As an inclusion teacher we have both pull out and push in and I have someone in the classroom to support students as needed. Teachers said that they all have the option of staying after their class time has ended in order to support all students, especially those with special needs and second language learners. Staff commented that the school has added several new staff to support in the area of special education.
- Staff commented that, although this year has been challenging, they have been well-supported by the administrative staff. One teacher remarked that the emotional support the teachers have provided is outstanding. Staff said that they highly encourage students to keep their cameras on because it helps teachers know if students are learning. One teacher remarked that her grade level has students complete an exit ticket on each day of instruction to check for learning. Several members of the teaching staff agreed that they used to be tied to the curriculum and it was very scripted. They explained that this year, there is more autonomy and freedom to teach to best meet the needs of the students in the class.

# CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

A total of 17 classrooms were observed for approximately 20 minutes on the day of the evaluation.

I. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT					
<b>Areas 1 &amp; 2</b>  <b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>  <b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
	Classroom interactions are highly respectful and the teacher demonstrates a passionate commitment to the subject.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring and a genuine culture for learning.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict with a minimal culture for learning.	Classroom interactions between the teacher and students are negative and do not represent a culture for learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total:</b>
	Students ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among classmates and assume much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning.	Interactions reflect cultural and developmental differences of students. Teacher and students are committed to the subject.	Interactions may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity and inconsistent expectations for student achievement.	Interactions are characterized by sarcasm, put-downs, and/or conflict. There is a low teacher commitment to the subject and few instances of students taking pride in their work.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>Areas 3 &amp; 4</b>  <b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>  <b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
	Classroom routines and procedures appear seamless and student behavior is entirely appropriate.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and the teacher ensures smooth functioning with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>
	There appears to be no misbehavior during the observation. The teacher monitoring of student behavior is subtle and/or preventative.	Teacher responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Teacher tries to establish standards of conduct for students and monitor behavior. These efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is unsuccessful in monitoring student behavior.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 8</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>

## II. CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Area 5					Not
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Observed
Purpose and Explanation of Content, Lesson, Unit or Classroom Activity	The purpose of the lesson or unit is clear and connects with student's real- life experiences. The explanation of content is imaginative, and students contribute to the lesson by participating and/or explaining concepts to their peers.	The purpose for the lesson or learning activity is clear. The teacher's explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students.	The teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose with limited success. The explanation of the content is uneven. Some explanations are done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	The purpose for the lesson learning activity is unclear. Teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>
Area 6	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
A Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	Students formulate and ask high-level questions.	Teacher formulates and asks several high-level questions.	Teacher questioning and discussion techniques are uneven with some high-level questions.	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low level questions, limited student participation and little true discussion.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>
B	Students assume responsibility for the participation of most students in the discussion.	Teachers assumes responsibility for the discussion which includes most students.	There is some attempt by the teacher to initiate student discussion and student participation.	There is little to no student discussion even though the opportunity is there.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 6</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>

II. CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION (continued)					
Area 7 A Engaging Students in Learning	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson allows high levels of student engagement.	Students appear to be intellectually engaged throughout most of the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is suitable for this group of students.	Students are partially engaged throughout the lesson.	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>
	Students make contributions to the representation of content.	There are appropriate activities and materials and instructive representations of content.	The representation of content or structure/pacing is uneven.	There are inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content or lack of lesson structure/pacing.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>	
Area 8 A Using Formative Assessment in Instruction	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
	Students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Most of the students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Some of the students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Students are not aware of the learning goals/learning target during this instructional time frame.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total: 13</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>
	The teacher purposefully and consistently provides clear, descriptive feedback in regard to student's demonstration/understanding of the learning goal/target. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	Much of the time, the teacher, provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding/ demonstration of learning goal/target. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	At times, the teacher provides clear, descriptive feedback but not in a consistent manner regarding learning goal/target. Observing where the work was meeting and where it was not. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher does not provide clear, descriptive feedback regarding learning goal/target and does not observing where the work is and where it is not meeting. The feedback is not timely and is not in a reasonable amount.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 12</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	

The purpose of this portion of the report is to provide a numerical value to the total number of best practices seen during the classroom observational portion as a whole. This number is indicated at the end of each best practice descriptor/line.

**Evidence of adapted materials/assessments: Area #5**

- Lessons are designed to encourage student curiosity and learning beyond classroom time:
- The explanation of the content is imaginative:

**Evidence of questioning and discussion techniques: Area #6**

- Questions are planned ahead of time and tied to learning target(s): 5
- Teacher questions are open ended: 11
- Teacher allows time for students to answer – 3 seconds or more:
- Teacher extends the thinking and discussion by encouraging students to say more, restate or summarize:
- Teacher purposefully signals to entire group of students to wait/think before volunteering a response:
- Teacher provides the opportunity for all students to answer the question (think, pair, share, written response): 7

**Evidence of engaging students in learning area: Area #7**

- Active learning is taking place (rather than just listening or viewing): 7
- Students are using reasoning and critical thinking:
- The lesson is rigorous and includes cognitively complex tasks: 5
- Students engage in several types of activities during the lesson including:
  - Speaking  Writing  Reading  Listening  Discussing  Creating  Problem Solving
- Cooperative groups:
- Student-led classroom:
- Technology is integrated into learning/outcomes: 17
- Project-based learning:

**Evidence of Formative Assessment During Instruction: Area #8**

- Teachers provide the students feedback about their learning referring to examples taking anecdotal notes: 4
- Students incorporate the feedback by revising their work: 1
- Students receive frequent and meaningful feedback regarding their work:
- A wide range of instructional practices that are likely to motivate and engage most students are used during the lesson:



Other:

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# ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The SPCSA uses the Organizational Performance Framework to collect evidence of performance and evaluate schools, at least annually, to monitor schools throughout their charter terms, to report to schools and the public annually, to intervene in schools that do not meet expectations and to make high-stakes decisions, including: renewal, non-renewal, possible revocation, expansion, or replication. Most of this work is done through routine submissions by the school to the SPCSA.

A limited number of measures within the organizational performance framework may be at least partially evaluated during the site evaluation process. Measures are partially evaluated based upon evidence from school focus groups, school observations, documents reviewed and information from the school presentation portion of the evaluation. SPCSA staff will note the evidence provided by the school and also outline any questions or potential concerns.

Measure	Description	Evidence Collected Through	Takeaways
1a	The school implements material terms of the education program.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The school is a classical education school. They are language focused and all knowledge is interrelated. The written and spoken word is critical and there are trivium phases of learning, grammar/ logic/rhetoric.
1b	The school complies with applicable education requirements.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The curriculum is dedicated to meeting the Nevada Academic Content Standards. The school uses diagnostic, formative, interim and summative tests to monitor student achievement.
1c	The school protects the rights of students with disabilities.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The school's Exceptional Student Department is dedicated to promoting student achievement based on specifically identified needs and to prepare students for success in all academic and developmental pursuits. The staff promotes the inclusion of students with educational disabilities into the general education classroom.

1d	The school protects the rights of ELL students.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The school has hired an ELL Coordinator. They have provided specialized attention during the distance/hybrid learning time with Cohort D a 4 day a week attendance. The school uses WIDA for screening and testing on a regular basis and sent from 24 students tested in 2019-20 SY to 186 in the 2020-21 SY.
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Measure	Description	Evidence Collected Through	Takeaways
3a	The school complies with governance requirements.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The Board governs the academic, financial, and operational quality of this charter school. They meet on a regular basis and have formed several committees to best support the transition from an outside EMO to managing themselves.
3b	The school holds management accountable.	School Presentation	Teachers and Administrators are evaluated by supervisors using the NEPF in professional and instructional standards. Support staff are evaluated annually.
4a	The school protects the rights of all students.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	Evidence of differentiated instruction included culturally relevant curriculum, staff training, restorative justice practices, MTSS, and the addition of an ELL coordinator.
5b	The school complies with health and safety requirements.	School Presentation Classroom Observations	The school has CPR/First Aide training, a School Nurse, Counselor Referral Process, School Psychologist, and therapist on call. Automatic lockdown swipers, restricted school entry, mandated reporter training, Safe Voice, and school surveillance.

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

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## STRENGTHS

A Summary of Strengths as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback and portions of the Organizational Performance Evidence are found within the body of the report and summarized here.

- Amplus Middle School has been rated a 5-star school (2019), according to the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). The 5-star status means that the school is performing very highly as measured by performance indicators within the framework. A 5-star status is considered “Superior”.
- Teachers were observed to be kind, flexible and have strong commitments to both the students and families at the school. A positive classroom environment, especially in times of virtual schooling is a critical component of student achievement. In fact, a positive school climate has the potential to accelerate student learning, with an effect size of 0.43 (Hattie, 2020)
- School leaders, teachers, and staff have a sense of teamwork, a calm, steady perseverance, and open lines of communication. As the school transitions through several changes during the 20-21 school year, it is important for staff to be informed on when changes will take place, how they will be implemented, and how the change will affect them and understand that their role is the key to sustaining the change. In addition, staff have a need for assurance in their working environment (Gilgeous and Chambers, 1991). Early communication can decrease pessimism and uncertainty and minimize rumors before they spread. Communication is generally at the core of any successful reform initiative.
- There is a recognition that the school must work to improve alignment between the ELA, Math, and Science curriculum based standards and student learning in the classrooms. This work is underway and a system to move forward with this change using a system of content based alignment and teacher communication has been implemented during this school year. The staff and school leaders work collaboratively to better meet the educational needs of each student as measured by their mastery of the Nevada Academic Content Standards.
- Student safety is prioritized at the school. A newly developed Counselor Referral Process as well as school counselors and social workers have been employed. A School Psychologist and Therapist are on call. The school building has emergency procedures in all rooms (Automatic Lockdown swipers) and there is restricted school entry. The school has implemented restorative justice practices to create a more proactive and sustained response to discipline.
- School personnel take a proactive approach to student relationships. Parents expressed their appreciation for the personalized relationships teachers have nurtured with students, despite the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The school’s staff shared the belief that through collective action, they can positively influence student outcomes. This collective teacher efficacy has a powerful effect size of 1.39 (Hattie, 2020).

## CHALLENGES

A summary of challenges as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework Evidence are described within the body of the report and summarized here.

An unprecedented and unforeseen number of events have led to several changes at the school. These are interrelated and pose challenges. A description of each is listed here.

1. The Amplus Board voted to no longer contract with their management company. Therefore, the school has been operating as an independent public charter school since July 2020. This action resulted in the school reviewing all items which were previously performed and managed by the EMO. The Amplus board, in cooperation with the school leaders, concluded that a complete overhaul of many foundational pieces of the school were required and, in fact, necessary for the school to move forward in a positive and mission-aligned manner. In response, the board delegated the creation of several small committees to the interim managing director to oversee and implement several academic and operational shifts. An outside consultant was hired and has provided guidance with regard to several of the changes. A list of the large-scale changes is listed below.
  - The School curriculum was reviewed and modified to align with the Nevada Academic Content Standards. Saxon math, which was not aligned, was eliminated from the curriculum, and replaced by Engage New York in K-6.
  - Several new hires in the leadership team were hired including the school principal, 4 Assistant Principals, an ELL Coordinator, and a Finance Director.
  - The teaching methods used at the school have changed and are no longer curriculum-script based. The school has changed to standards based instruction in alignment with NVACS.
  - A shift in lesson and learning preparation by school instructional staff has changed and is standards based, beginning with the mastery of a standard as a target.
  - The Special Populations including Sped and ELL, were believed to have large gaps under the previous management company and the board, leaders, and staff have worked to create an inclusive transparent and more equitable and robust education for students.
2. In March of 2020, the COVID pandemic required the school to offer an education to all K-12 students in a distance education format. The school personnel made several changes to the educational program offered to students as each month progressed, from March 2020 through current February 2021. The school has yet to return to a complete, in-person learning format. Changes are listed below:
  - Expecting to be Hybrid for the 2020-21 school year but having to go full distance learning due to state mandates and continued high levels of the virus. The school began instruction later in the school year (September) thinking they would return using a Hybrid model.
  - School had to create and implement several different plans to allow for full distance learning and increasing levels of hybrid models at each grade level.
  - In the midst of hiring several new teachers and leaders, the staff were required to create a distance learning platform, using some new curriculum, to best educate students in the distance learning model.
  - Because on-line engagement is much shorter than that of in person, instructional time had to be modified and educators had to determine ways to teach the standards with less time allotted.

3. The school opened a new campus during the 20-21 school year and leaders were challenged with extra duties, responsibilities, and oversight of this undertaking. These include interviewing and hiring faculty, classroom assignments for staff, formation of schedules, overseeing furniture and equipment inventory, and the development and implementation of security measures. This addition of (612) students has a major impact in staffing and the daily operations at the school.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended items are provided so charters may increase their school-wide ratings as well as their overall success. SPCSA School Support Team members will follow up on each listed recommendation.

Recommendations 1-4 are considered to be both crucial and intended to improve the effectiveness of the school quality and consistency of teaching. The recommendations are to be followed up with a complete plan to address each recommendation including timeframes and steps toward completion.

### Next Steps:

- Once this report has been submitted by e-mail to your governing board and the SPCSA board, develop a written plan and submit this plan to the SPCSA team by May 1, 2021 In the plan include:
  - a. The recommended item
  - b. Steps and timelines to complete the recommendation
  - c. A plan for monitoring the implementation and follow-through of each step for each recommendation.
- As of June 1, 2021, the SPCSA site evaluation team will work directly with school's leadership to determine an appropriate timeframe to follow-up on each of these recommendations over the next month.
- The plan as developed by Amplus School Leaders and approved by the SPCSA will ensure that each recommended item has been addressed prior to the start of the 2021 – 22 school year.

### Recommended items:

1. Implement a research based Formative Assessment Process to significantly improve student achievement and raise teacher quality. Provide training and coaching to answer these questions:
  - What is formative assessment?
  - How does formative assessment affect student learning and achievement?
  - What is the student motivation connection between formative assessment and student's having a clear learning target?
  - What strategies can be shared with teachers?
  - How will everyone recognize formative assessment when they see it?
  - How can the formative assessment process best be modeled?

One option to accomplish this is to use the following resource: "Advancing Formative Assessment In Every Classroom A Guide For Instructional Leaders 2nd Edition by Connie M. Moss and Susan M. Brookhart (2019).

2. Develop a plan to improve current levels of student engagement, relevancy, and student voices in instructional settings. Assist educators to create more interesting, relevant, and diverse learning activities that link to students' interests. It is important that students contribute to the lessons by explaining concepts to their peers as opposed to teachers doing the majority of the talking in the classrooms. Possibilities include using group projects, individual projects, Socratic seminar, and student reflection learning logs.



3. Develop a plan to continue the shift from teaching according to a scripted teacher publisher curriculum manual to a more standards-based instructional program. Include the following in your plan. How will you:
  - a. .Access with accuracy including knowing where the students are currently functioning.
  - b. Identify appropriate learning targets.
  - c. Link standards to the current curriculum and lesson plans.
  - d. Sequence learning standards across grades and in alignment with academic progress.
  - e. Incorporate the 8 Mathematical practices into the plan and align them vertically.
  - f. Strengthen and build the inclusion model and the alignment of grade-level standards to a more robust model for all students testing below grade level.
  - g. Continue to build and expand the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and infuse interventions for all levels of students, including below, at, and above grade level students.
  
4. Share a plan on how you will continue to improve and implement the CTE and Dual Credit Programs. Include information regarding the following in the plan:
  - a. Communication with families
  - b. Final list of CTE, Dual Credit options
  - c. Information about how the school board and leaders will submit a formal amendment request to the Authority in the coming weeks.

#### DEFICIENCIES

There were no deficiencies for Amplus Academy Durango and Rainbow campuses during this evaluation.