



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Site Evaluation Report: Explore Academy
Evaluation Date: 10/4/2022
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Appendices

A: Nevada School Performance Framework

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

B: SPCSA Academic Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-Academic-Performance-Framework-Guidance-Document.pdf>

C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-OPF-Att-1-Ratings-Scorecard.pdf>

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This Site Evaluation report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on 10/4/2022 at Explore Academy. The State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all charters within the portfolio during the first, third, and fifth year of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. Schools identified as having a rating of a two-star or below, and those schools with a Notice of Concern, Notice of Breach, or Notice of Termination, will have a differentiated procedure for their site evaluation. Explore Academy is in year three of its charter contract and has strong recommendations which meets the criteria for a comprehensive site evaluation.

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.

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 Organizational 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.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Explore Academy is located in North Las Vegas, Nevada in a facility at 3551 N Ferrell St. North Las Vegas, NV 89032. The school serves 192 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in 6th through 11th grade. The mission of name of school is: "Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future."¹

¹ Because the Explore site evaluation occurred before the enrollment count for 2022 – 2023 was finalized, this information may be dated at the time this report is released.

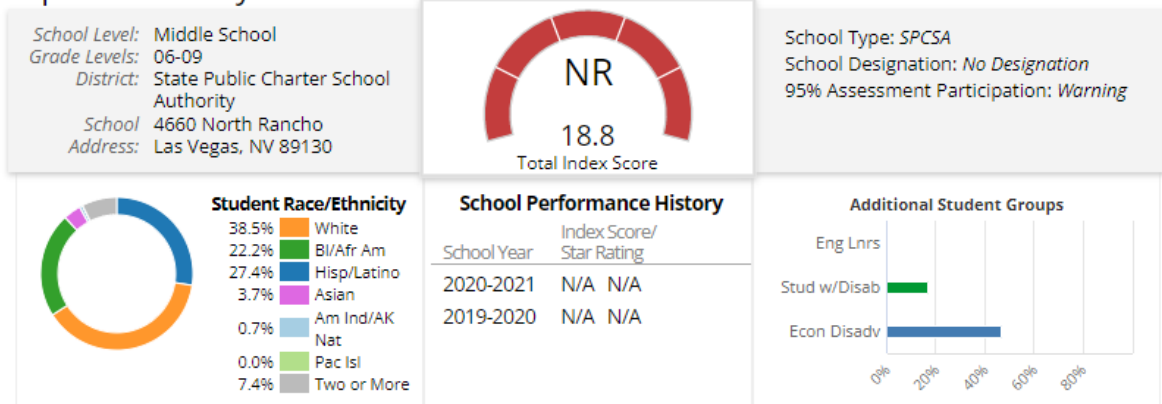
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Nevada School Performance Framework 2022

This information is provided to assist in understanding the data sets impacted by the pandemic.

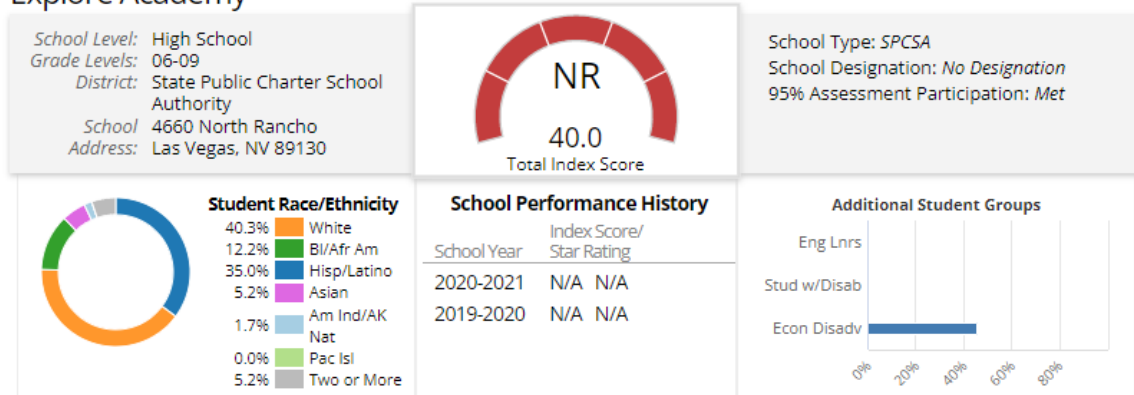
Middle School Explore Academy

School Year 2021-2022 Nevada School Rating



High School Explore Academy

School Year 2021-2022 Nevada School Rating



Math and ELA Results

Nevada School Performance Framework

2022

Proficiency Rates

Middle School

Math Proficient

Groups	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP	2021 %	2021 % District	2021 % MIP
All Students	17.5	36.5	39.7			
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	36.3	31.9			
Asian	-	62.7	60.6			
Black/African American	<5	18.2	27.3			
Hispanic/Latino	14.7	26.4	32.8			
Pacific Islander	-	28.3	40.1			
Two or More Races	-	41.8	43.6			
White/Caucasian	26.3	48.1	49.8			
Special Education	<5	9.7	22.7			
English Learners Current + Former	5.8	20.1	24.2			
English Learners Current	-	7.6				
Economically Disadvantaged	10.3	23.9	32.7			

ELA Proficient

Groups	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP	2021 %	2021 % District	2021 % MIP
All Students	35.0	57.3	56.4			
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	53.7	46.3			
Asian	-	79.0	77.1			
Black/African American	9.5	41.1	40.9			
Hispanic/Latino	35.2	48.2	47.9			
Pacific Islander	-	53.3	55.5			
Two or More Races	-	64.6	63.2			
White/Caucasian	40.6	67.2	68			
Special Education	<5	18.0	25.8			
English Learners Current + Former	17.6	38.8	28.1			
English Learners Current	-	16.7				
Economically Disadvantaged	24.7	45.9	47.1			

High School

Math Proficient

Groups	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP	Math Proficient Points Earned: NA/10		
				2021 %	2021 % District	2021 % MIP
All Students	N/A	25.2	36.19			
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	-	26.96			
Asian	N/A	55.1	52.76			
Black/African American	N/A	10.2	22.5			
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	14.2	26.78			
Pacific Islander	N/A	23.0	32.8			
Two or More Races	N/A	31.9	40.11			
White/Caucasian	N/A	33.8	47.04			
Special Education	N/A	6.6	16.76			
English Learners Current + Former	N/A	<5	18.8			
English Learners Current	N/A	<5	16.04			
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	14.6	27.8			

ELA Proficient

Groups	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP	ELA Proficient Points Earned: NA/10		
				2021 %	2021 % District	2021 % MIP
All Students	N/A	54.3	51.11			
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	-	39.92			
Asian	N/A	78.7	66.85			
Black/African American	N/A	40.6	34.82			
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	42.3	39.67			
Pacific Islander	N/A	35.8	51.31			
Two or More Races	N/A	60.5	60.16			
White/Caucasian	N/A	65.7	64.14			
Special Education	N/A	16.5	19.92			
English Learners Current + Former	N/A	12.5	21.64			
English Learners Current	N/A	9.2	15.98			
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	43.4	40.77			

SPCSA Academic Performance Framework

The school opened during the 20-21 School Year and NSPF data is not available. Explore Academy serves 192 students in grades six through ten. Because the Explore site evaluation occurred before the enrollment count for 2022 - 2023 was finalized, this information may be dated at the time this report is released.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board	2	30 minutes
Parents/Families	4	30 minutes
Students	7	30 minutes
School Leadership	2	30 minutes
Staff	7	30 minutes

Governing Board²:

- Two members of the Explore Academy governing board attended the focus group. One board member said that she was unable to attend the board training offered by the SPCSA. Another member attended the training and said the content was related to learning about the role of a charter school board member. Board members reported they have a way to record future board trainings using an excel spreadsheet to track the date, topic, and attendees. The board was successful in evaluating the school leader in May of 2022. Members said they have not evaluated the CMO but are currently working to have this completed during this school year.
- When asked about the board's understanding of academic achievement, one board member commented, "There was a quarterly report and the school leader has informed us we are on a trajectory of progress. We are not yet aware of the newest information." Another board member communicated, "The understanding surrounding the academic achievement of the school is that it is outperforming surrounding schools. Due to covid there are no star ratings, but the network provides regular updates as available regarding performance." Board members shared, "The CMO³ is working in tandem with the board to provide social- emotional supports as well as teacher training and development"
- When asked about the types of backgrounds and expertise of board members, the focus group said they just voted for a new member who is an attorney. The board members explained that other members have expertise with the Education Alliance, small business ownership, and a third is the chairman for a non-profit. One board member said there are five board members and some open seats, and that the board is seeking new additions. Currently, there are no subcommittees however the board is working toward this. The board said they are implementing social emotional learning supports as well as teacher training and development to help improve student learning. Regarding the previous strong recommendation to implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement which contain both reliability and validity, the board communicated, "We understand this is an important tool but also recognize the financial constraints the school is under and are working to implement interim testing".

² Two members of the seven member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

³ CMO is the Charter Management Organization

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

Parents/Families:

- Families were asked about their awareness of their child's academic progress at Explore Academy. One family member said they know their student took an important test last spring, but they didn't know the name of the test, the results, or how to find information about the examination. One family member stated, "A whole week was blocked out for testing last year, but we didn't get any results from the school. My other kids attend a different charter school, and we got information from that school about the testing results." In terms of school year student achievement progress, parents reported that the "Parent Portal" has improved from last year but is still a work in progress. One family member explained, "At times, there is a lapse between information posted across multiple platforms and this can be confusing if a person doesn't understand this." Several family members agreed that it is difficult for first-year parents to understand the grading system and how grades are tied to an individual learning standard. A more experienced parent commented, "It is much easier to see the breakdown of learning and the alignment to standards if a person looks at each "flavor"⁴. Each flavor is focused on one standard and then each new flavor builds upon the standards."
- Overall family members believe that their students are challenged at Explore Academy. One parent said the flavors model requires students to be responsible. Another added, "The challenge is for the students to be proactive by preparing for class, asking for help, and planning study time for completion." Family members described the classes as interactive and creative. One family member provided an example of students learning about a historical figure and being in the "hot seat" in order to answer questions about that historical person. The hot seat in this case is referring to a student having the challenge of knowing a topic so well that they are able to answer random questions from classmates. Parents shared that they like the choices available to their students in terms of choosing which seminar/flavors topic they will proceed to learn about several times per year. In terms of non-academic activities, one parent explained, "There are clubs on Fridays and students participate in those. In addition, students participate in after-school activities such as the Fall Dance and Trunk or Treat."
- Parents appreciated that teachers know each student by name and personally support students both academically and emotionally. One parent said, "Teachers will reach out and say, "I see you're not yourself today and then take time to talk with the student"". Family members commented about positive improvements this school year. One person said, "We are moving in the right direction and communication has improved. [The school leader] is 100 % accessible. The Family Compass⁵ has improved from last year. It is more informative about future events." Family members shared suggestions for further improvement. Some family members were concerned about the struggle that new families and students face in knowing about academic and social school events. Parents shared that the Parent Teacher Organization is trying to find ways to better communicate with the school community about future events. One parent said, "The events are the same as last year, but new parents may not know." A few family members suggested that Explore Academy create and offer a new parent orientation.

⁴ Students are offered themed versions of each class from which to choose as they complete their required credits. These themes are referred to as "flavors".

⁵ The published family newsletter for Explore Academy located on the school website.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

Students:

- Students said they enjoy having several opportunities to work with other students. One student said, “In English class we read the material and then work together with other students to find the voice⁶ in the text. We gather in student pairs and small groups to learn in almost all of our classes in High School.” When students were asked about their understanding of progress in mastering each of the Nevada Academic Content Standards, students said that the standards are listed in Google Classroom⁷ and Infinite Campus⁸. Students spoke about some of the recent learning. One student shared, “I am excited to be learning about linear equations, and equations for speed and time in science. Another student added, “I like learning how much force it would take to stop the earth from moving.” Students said they learn grammar & parts of speech, and one class is currently reading “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allen Poe. One student said, “I have special needs and I am able to show my understanding by drawing it. I couldn’t do that at my previous school.”
- Students said that they appreciate their teachers and the school leader. One student commented, “Teachers are here for us, they are kind and make it very comfortable to speak with them about personal concerns.” Students said that they felt they could approach teachers if they are confused or behind in their academic work. One student said, “I ask teachers for help during the flex periods or during lunchtime. We ask for permission to go meet with teachers beforehand.”
- Students were asked about how they feel socially and physically at Explore Academy. One student said, “I feel safe but sometimes it is difficult. This year there are several new students and they must learn about the culture here at Explore.” Another student said, “The school handles problems quickly, but students are still learning.” Students said that many of the newer people are learning how to act in school and how to be serious about their education. One student commented, “Sometimes new students act silly and don’t seem to be here to get an education.” Students reported that they are not to use their cell phones in the classroom and can keep them in their backpacks. Students reported that there has been some graffiti and vandalism to the new building. Overall, students feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe.

School Leadership:

- The school leader was asked about the status of obtaining standards- based interim assessments as written in the most recent site evaluation report as a Strong Recommendation. The school leader commented, “We are investigating options for interim assessments, but the cost is prohibitive.” The school leader explained that the school has addressed feedback from the previous site evaluation by training teachers to create high-quality assessments, providing more engaging instruction with timely feedback and sharing learning targets in the classroom. The school leader commented, “Teachers have standards posted in each classroom and our school goal is for students to talk 50% of the time while in classrooms.” The school leader explained that there are two types of tests/measures at Explore. The first type is a test of Proprietary Standards which are standards based on common core assessments coming from Nevada, Michigan, and New Mexico.

⁶ Voice refers to the stylistic mix of vocabulary, tone, point of view and syntax that makes words flow in a particular way.

⁷ Google Classroom is a free web based tool used to streamline assignments, boost collaboration, and foster communication.

⁸ Infinite Campus is a web-based K-12 student information system with real-time access to administration, instruction, communication, curriculum, reporting and more.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

These tests require higher levels of thinking according to Blooms Taxonomy⁹ are based on each individual state's set of state standards. The other type of test at Explore is teacher's own set of created formative and summative assessments as part of their curriculum development of the flavor of the class. The school leader said, "Our teachers work in PLC¹⁰ by content with three teachers per group. Educators use the proprietary standards matrix to align learning targets for each flavor/seminar." The school uses diagnostic assessments such as IXL¹¹ in math and for Special Education support.

- The school leader explained that families are kept up to date regarding the academic progress of their students as grades are updated weekly in Infinite Campus. The school leader said, "The grade is the level of mastery for the content during a given week so parents can see how well students understood. Over the year, Infinite Campus grades display the standard and the grades aligned to that standard. A credit analysis shows the classes and the mastery of that content." Explore Academy has academic referrals for students who arrive to class academically unprepared. An email is sent to parents letting parents know their child has not done their academic frontloading. PLC's meet bi-weekly with a focus this year on improved learning outcomes. Teams use a PLC learning agenda created by an outside academic support vendor, Achievement Network or ANet¹²
- Continued challenges and changes contributing to school improvement were shared by the school leader. According to the school leader, Explore Academy is making strides in becoming current with their PERS obligations. There is a plan in place and a considerable payment was made this past summer. Another challenge reported is the status of teachers still talking more than students, or overly relying on direct instruction. There have been high numbers of student misbehaviors as the school year began and new students were enrolled. Several steps toward progress were communicated. For example, the school leader meets with an individual from Explore Learning Network who has extensive background in school leadership. In addition, the school leader meets with a group of principals from across states to collaborate and brainstorm ideas with one another. While August 10th was both the first day of school and the first day in a brand- new building, staff focused on social emotional and problem-solving skills with students and continued their work to implement the Ron Clark house system.¹³ Expectations for the beginning of the school year have been set by the school leader. She wants to see students leading the discussion within all classrooms at least fifty percent of the time.
- She expects to be able to see the learning standard posted within each classroom and to be able to observe the connection between the classroom activity/learning and the posted standard.

⁹ Blooms Taxonomy is a framework consisting of six major categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

¹⁰ PLC is known as Professional Learning Community, which focuses on what students learn, how educators collaborate and what results are produced.

¹¹ IXL is an online learning program which provides personalized learning for students K-12 in a variety of topics including math and English language arts.

¹² ANet is a non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity with the purpose of helping boost student learning.

¹³ The Ron Clark features eight houses within a school. This house system is known around the world and offers an exciting way to create positive powerful school climate with an emphasis on promoting a sense of belonging for all.

Staff:

- Staff members said that several trainings took place over the summer. Some of the topics included backwards planning, the new grading model, Infinite Campus, improved implementation of themes/flavors, conducting grade level meetings, student engagement and ways to increase student ownership in learning. Teaching staff shared that they have implemented an improved backwards planning of the Explore “flavors”¹⁴ as a result of this training. Teachers shared ways they check for learning progress as it relates to eventual mastery of a standard. One person said, “I ask students to provide feedback for each other and this creates student ownership. When students can reflect and explain how the learning is meaningful to their life then they can vocalize mastery of the learning.”
- Teachers were asked how they create and conduct classroom assessments which are aligned to each standard. One teacher said, “The standards are considered a “core assessment” which is skill based. The flavor assessment is life skills based.” An example was provided. The math teacher designed a math flavor around cooking and how math is used in cooking. The assessment was students had to create their own cooking show including the logo, a signature drink, and a recipe. Students were assessed on these items. The “core assessment” or standards- based assessment was related to using money and purchasing items. Students use their planner and review the standards during the front loading. Students are asked to put the standards in their own words.
- Staff said that families know the status of their children’s understanding of the standards. This is done in several ways. One teacher explained that she sends out home communication letters to families that include the standard and ideas they can use at home. The teacher calls these “grow-life” questions. Other teachers reported using Google Classroom and Class Dojo to communicate. Families receive messages, directions, and explanations about projects, standards, criteria, and rubrics. Students can and families can look and see what they are missing as well as what assignments are coming up. Family members can view the number of participation and enthusiasm points within the system.
- The staff noted some changes from this school year to the last. Several staff said that there has been a significant change in the culture of the school. The staff reported a feeling of pride and ownership of the new building. One staff member commented, “Students are taking care of the facilities and seem to be calmer in the hallways.” Staff said they have implemented new behavioral expectations this school year. One teacher remarked, “We seem to have fewer behavioral issues and it is interesting to watch the new students come into the school. It is encouraging to see students select the flavors and realize that teachers care about them.”

¹⁴ Flavors are different themes offered by Explore and chosen by the student. Based on the choice model theory of education, Explore Academy is focused on turning each student into an active learner who will become increasingly responsible for his/her education. Specific themes for the seminar flavors and their strategies are developed by the creativity of the school’s teachers.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

A total of 20 classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the evaluation.

Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning	Students create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Students take ownership in explaining, modeling, and reinforcing classroom routines. Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher creates and maintains a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher attempts to create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers attempt to explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences make an effort to guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is sometimes maximized.	The teacher does not create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers do not explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences do not guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is seldom maximized.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 2	Total: 15	Total: 2	Total: 0	Total: 1
Establishing a Culture for Learning	Students and teachers respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher responds appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher attempts to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher does not attempt to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and does not demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 1	Total: 15	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 2

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not 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 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 is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	The purpose of the lesson and learning activity is unclear. The teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing, or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 3	Total: 12	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 3
Students' Cognitive Awareness of Learning Goals/Targets	Students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Most of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Some of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Students cannot explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional time frame.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 2	Total: 14	Total: 4	Total: 0	Total: 0
Quality and purpose of questions	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.
	Total: 3	Total: 13	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 2
Opportunities for student discourse and student use of academic language	Students use academic language while participating in discourse. Students demonstrate mastery through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	Teachers encourage the use of academic language and provide students opportunities for discourse. Students are encouraged to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage the use of academic language. Students are provided limited opportunities for discourse. There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher order thinking.	There is little to no opportunity for student discourse. There is little to no opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 3	Total: 13	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 2

Classroom Instruction (continued)

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Intellectual Engagement in Learning	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is differentiated and 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 differentiated and adequate.	Students are partially intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is somewhat differentiated and inconsistent.	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning. The pacing and structure of the lesson is not differentiated and inadequate.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 2	Total: 15	Total: 2	Total: 0	Total: 1
Using Formative Assessment in Instruction	The teacher purposefully and consistently provides clear, descriptive feedback in regard to student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	Most of the time, the teacher, provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher provides clear, descriptive feedback inconsistently regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is seldom timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher does not provide clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is not timely and is not in a reasonable amount.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 3	Total: 12	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 4

Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable

In one English language arts classroom, students listened to the teacher read a passage. Students used white boards and their small groups to indicate the voice of the passage based on the pronouns used (first person, third person, third person omniscient).

In this middle school Spanish class, students used a computer in front of them as well as a display in the front of the classroom to complete a worksheet on Spanish Nouns and Articles. The teacher had two screens, and she couldn't see what answers the students are completing. She called on different students to say the answer out loud. She followed this up with what does, Las, Unas, unos or las mean? Students volunteered their answers.

In this middle school classroom, a group of five students were presenting information about global warming. There are two teachers in the room. One of the teachers (who is the instructional coach) asks questions of the group. Then students ask questions. There are high levels of instructional engagement and intellectual engagement.

In one flex classroom, students worked independently on assignments. The instructor assisted when asked. Several students were off task, chatting with their neighbor(s), playing games on their laptops, or doodling. One group of students were standing and pushing each other, pulling backpacks, being rough and inappropriate ten minutes before class ended. Loss of learning time was evident during flex time.

In this Special Education classroom, which is a pull-out resource room, students had just finished playing a game but had transitioned to IXL program and individually.

Teacher began the lesson by having the slide: Frontloading 9 "Literal Equations," and asked for a volunteer to share their understanding of a literal equation. The teacher asked, "Did anyone notice that we are still using the same equation, but there are no numbers?" He also related the concept of equations to what some students are learning in science.

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, visual inspection 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.

Indicator	Measure Description	Evidence Collected
<p>Indicator 1: Education Program</p>	<p>Measures 1a and 1b: The school implements the material terms of the education program. Ex: SPCSA site evaluations will confirm that the school is staying true to its approved application and programming, as well as review curricular materials and their alignment to Nevada Academic Content Standards.</p> <p>Measures 1c and 1d: The school protects the rights of students with disabilities and EL students. Ex: For example, classroom observations include examples of students with an IEP or those learning English as a language. Student support is provided within small groups or teachers using interventions and supports to provide students with special needs and EL learners with meaningful access to grade-level content and standards.</p>	<p>The school is implementing the educational program as evidenced by student choice of seminar/ flavor. The Nevada Academic Content standards are taught alongside the flavors. Students were learning in small groups.</p>
<p>Indicator 3: Governance and Reporting</p>	<p>Measure 3a: The school complies with governance requirements. Ex: Board policies and oversight of Education Service Provider</p>	<p>According to those within the Board Focus group, Board there is at least one board member who has missed out on a board training. Board members shared that they have evaluating the school leader. The board is currently working to evaluate their CMO.</p>
<p>Indicator 4: Students and Employees</p>	<p>Measure 4a: Student records under lock and key/stored appropriately.</p> <p>Measure 4d: Personnel files are under lock and key/stored appropriately.</p>	<p>Student and personnel files were seen locked and stored in a secure location.</p>

<p>Indicator 5: School Environment</p>	<p>Measure 5b:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuation plans for classrooms are posted • The school has fire extinguishers on all floors which are tagged • Active permit for food service (if applicable) • Nurse requirements are met through visual check of health office, disposal of sharps, cot, refrigeration 	<p>The site evaluation team saw evacuation plans in classrooms, tagged fire extinguishers throughout the building and common areas, as well as an active food service permit. The site evaluation team visually checked and located one cot, a refrigerator, and a receptacle for disposing of sharp objects in the nurse's area.</p>
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Measures of Progress from Previous Site Evaluations

The extent to which the school has been successful in maintaining areas of strength, removing challenges, and acting upon the recommended items made by the SPCSA during the school's previous evaluation.

<p>Summary of recommendations from most recent site evaluation</p>	<p>As stated within the most recent site evaluation report for Explore which took place on February 10, 2022.</p> <p>The board is encouraged to create a list of trainings which includes the type of training, who should attend and a timeline for a given calendar year. Although the Explore Academy Board has been trained in several areas regarding school governance, SPCSA staff recommends that a written training plan be used to remain up to date with trainings.</p> <p>Because additional time may be needed to experience the variety of circumstances to which the Special Education and ELL policy and procedures may need to be referenced, it is recommended that these newly established handbooks and procedures be closely monitored.</p> <p>SPCSA staff recommend Explore Academy board and leaders develop a robust plan to increase student applications, acceptance, and enrollment.</p> <p>Strong Recommendations:</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that Explore Academy implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement which contain both reliability and validity.</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that Explore Academy reexamine Classroom Tier 1 Instruction to drive continuous improvement. This might include:</p> <p>Shared learning targets, learning targets, feedback to students, and strategic teacher questioning.</p>
<p>School Assessment of progress made against recommendations and evidence provided, or reasons school believes additional time may be necessary to fully address past recommendations</p>	<p>According to the Explore school leader, "The SPCSA recommendations from the SPCSA regarding classroom instruction and assessment have been woven into professional development since the spring of last year. Our school has seen growth in these areas. They will remain a focus for the school until mastery."</p>
<p>SPCSA staff assessment based upon findings during site evaluation</p>	<p>The SPCSA staff recognize that Explore Academy is working to address the recommendations from the previous site evaluation. There is progress in several areas. See the recommendation and strong recommendation areas on pages 22-24 for a detailed breakdown of findings.</p>

SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

STRENGTHS

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

- A continued strength at Explore Academy is the unique educational program. The Explore Learning model is based on choice that is intended to promote student growth and responsibility while providing an individualized educational path for each student. The school's academic year is split into smaller learning modules, called seminars, which vary in length depending on the grade level. Each seminar focuses on a specific set of standards, allowing students to focus their studies across a shorter period of time. Families commented on the model, "The seminar/flavors model requires students to be responsible and they are challenged to be pro-active by preparing for class, asking for help, and planning time to study." Family members described the classes as interactive and creative. Students like the unique model as well. One student commented, "I like learning how much force it would take to stop the earth from moving." The school schedule is designed to provide additional opportunities for students to obtain academic support. Flex periods are scheduled into each student's school day to allow time for students to prepare for their classes. Students are expected to arrive for each class prepared for the lesson at hand. Students and staff are available to assist other students with their work and provide academic guidance as needed during the flex period.
- A more positive and improved culture has been developed at Explore Academy. One major influence on the culture appears to be the new, well-designed school building. The staff and students reported that they look forward to coming to the new school and said the surroundings are pleasant. The physical features of the campus such as large windows, lighting, space, furnishings, and equipment, were reported to make the staff and students feel valued. During the staff focus group, several staff said that there is a significant change in the culture of the school. The staff reported a feeling of pride and ownership of the new building. One staff member commented, "Students are taking care of the facilities and seem to be calmer in the hallways." In addition to the new building, staff said they have implemented new behavioral expectations this school year. As reported by the school leader, "While August 10th was both the first day of school and the first day in a brand-new building, staff focused on social emotional and problem-solving skills with students and continued their work to implement the Ron Clark house system."
- Explore Academy is clearly working toward ensuring that students from historically underserved groups are represented. Over 40% of the student population in the middle and high schools are considered economically disadvantaged. Almost 20% of students in the middle school are students with disabilities. In addition, the student race and ethnicity percentages as displayed on page four of this report indicate large percentages of Hispanic, Black, and White students. In addition, it is noted that the teaching staff is racially diverse as well.

- The levels of distinguished and proficient ratings in classroom environment and instructional methods under the SPCSA site evaluation rubric have improved. As compared with the classroom observational data from the site evaluation conducted during the previous 2021-2022 school year, the number of indicators on the site evaluation rubric (pg. 12) in the Basic and Unsatisfactory columns have shifted to the Proficient category. While these observations took place over one day and within twenty classrooms, this is still a measure of improvement. It is important to note that there were still some cases of unsatisfactory and basic, but the overall number was fewer when compared to prior site evaluations. Despite this progress, it is important to note that the school's index score for the previous school year recorded per the Nevada School Performance Framework as 18.8/100 possible for the middle school and 40/100 possible for the high school. Thus, while clear improvement in the areas of shared learning targets, feedback, and teacher questioning has taken place under the SPCSA evaluation rubric has occurred, there is significantly more work to do so that NSPF scores improve.
- The Explore Academy school leader is receiving support from the CMO which includes one-on-one principal consulting. The school leader continues to participate in collaborative meetings with other Explore school leaders from various states. The evaluation team believes this is a strength as school leaders usually benefit from leader coaching and collaboration with others in unique roles.

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.

- Explore's NSPF index scores of 18.8 Middle School and 40.0 High School are challenges which are being addressed by the school. It is important to consider that the school is new and opened during the COVID pandemic.
- The school has reported that finding new teachers during this time is difficult. About 50% of the current teaching staff are teaching with a substitute teaching license.
- Parent engagement is a challenge. In one recent instance just 29 people clicked on the parent communication flyer which is available on the website.
- School enrollment numbers are lower than what is desired. This in turn affects per-pupil funding and is considered an important challenge to the school. When revenues are lower than anticipated, it can be exceedingly difficult to implement the proposed program and any necessary adjustments (such as interim assessments).
- The Governing Board has communicated that they have not evaluated their CMO. This is a challenge as the CMO is employed by the governing board. It is important that an evaluation of effectiveness is completed on a yearly basis.
- Both the School leader and members of the governing board require training in the area of the Nevada School Performance Framework so that they are better able to understand school-wide data as it relates and compares to other schools in the state, charter, and zip code.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Within the Classroom Instructional area on the rubric on pages 13-15 of this report, there has been a significant improvement in the number of basic and unsatisfactory ratings from the previous site evaluation. Although improvement is noted, additional time is needed to both arrive at sustainability and to arrive with academic changes reflected in state testing measures. It is recommended that the school continue to work on the Tier One instructional. Consider a continued emphasis in the following areas as you work toward sustainability of improved strategies.
 - Shared learning targets (Area 5A and 8A) Comments from pg. 12 #3,5,8,9
Consider having teachers share their learning goals for students' learning, both by telling or writing the goals and by giving assignments and activities that embody them. Consider checking for students' understanding of learning targets by using strategies that help assess students' comprehension of the degree to which they have mastered a learning goal. Teachers may use this information to affirm understanding of a target, and to clarify misconceptions during lessons.
 - Shared criteria for student success (Area 5A and 8A) Comments from pg. 12 #3,5,8,9
Consider ways to help students to envision the learning target more clearly. This might include showing students some good examples and having them discuss why they were good examples. Using rubrics with specific descriptions could help with this and would be a good default strategy if no examples are available.
 - Increased feedback from the teacher to the students (Area 8B) Comments from pg. 12 #7, #4
Consider ways to provide students with more descriptive and corrective feedback to meet their needs during individual and group learning. This may consist of more evaluative or improvement-oriented feedback. It may also consist of a planned time for peer feedback to obtain ideas and suggestions.
 - Increased levels of strategic teacher questioning (Area 6A and 6B)
Consider methods to increase the number of teachers with expertise in using high level classroom discussion and questioning techniques building in time for students to discuss concepts with the teacher whole group, small group, and paired up in most of the lessons, the engagement and learning levels will most likely rise. Here are 10 learning structures for questioning and discussion that you may want to consider.
 - Fishbowl or Socratic Circles
 - Save the Last Word for Me
 - Philosophical Chairs
 - Pinwheel Discussion
 - Concentric Circles
 - Snowball Discussion
 - Talk Moves
 - Kagan Structure: Rally Robin
 - Kagan Structure: Timed Pair Share

- The SPCSA recommends that the school leader commit to attending SPCSA trainings on the topic of NSPF measures and the Nevada Report Card. The SPCSA has this training available to view on a recorded session. The SPCSA would be happy to assist with this recommendation. A link to the Nevada School Performance Framework Manual is provided below. A link to a September 2022 training on this topic is included below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_Cyz9IMo4c&feature=youtu.be

<http://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/MoreDownload?filename=Nevada%20School%20Performance%20Framework%20Manual%202021-22%20School%20Year.pdf>

- Continue to work on family relationships and seek out methods to improve overall levels of parent engagement. The State of Nevada Parent Involvement & Community Engagement actively promotes and supports the participation and engagement of families and communities in a child's education. The office, created by Assembly Bill 224 of the 2011 Legislative Session assists schools with incorporating effective family engagement practices and strategies. To receive updates on recently released family engagement tools, resources, articles, and upcoming events and webinars you can subscribe to Nevada's monthly Family Engagement Newsletter.

https://doe.nv.gov/Family_Engagement/

https://doe.nv.gov/Family_Engagement/School_Resources/

- It is recommended that the Explore Academy governing board commit to evaluating their CMO and to learning more about their role in monitoring charter school academic performance. The National Charter School Resource Center may be a good resource to use. The web site offers areas of focus, resources, and FAQs as they relate to governing boards across the country. The link is provided below.

<https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/>

STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS

Strong recommendations identified during this site evaluation are listed here.

- It is strongly recommended that Explore Academy implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement which contain both reliability and validity. The school has reported that each seminar assessment at the school is designed by either the current teacher or taken from a group of ready-made content from a similar school. The school leader and staff have explained that teachers use the standards to create assessments. Although teachers work to ensure assessments are aligned, teacher created tests do not consistently offer a measure of the academic standard and may not be an accurate measure. It is increasingly important the school create a more data-driven environment, especially given the current NSPF index scores for the 2021 - 2022 school year. Without significant improvement, the school may be subject to SPCSA interventions.
- SPCSA staff note that Explore Academy is delinquent in PERS payments despite multiple conversations with SPCSA staff over the past several years. As a public school, Explore Academy is required to make timely payments to PERS to remain in compliance with SPCSA and state requirements. SPCSA staff has requested a timeline for becoming current with PERS obligations for the current year, and school leadership indicated that Explore will be current by February 1,

2023. SPCSA strongly recommends Explore meet this deadline to avoid SPCSA intervention under the Organizational Performance Framework.

DEFICIENCIES

There are no deficiencies identified for Explore Academy during this site evaluation.

Explore Academy Las Vegas School Response to SPCSA Site Eval Report Draft 1/11/2023

- On January 5 and 6, 2023 we implemented the SBAC interim assessment blocks with grades 6-8. Staff are still working to complete makeup testing due to illness and other absences. The school team, with support from CMO staff, baseline data will be analyzed and trends and patterns discussed. This data will be shared and further analyzed in relationship to the CIP at the winter status check in late January 2023. We will also be reflecting on the efficacy of the test administration in preparation for the 2023 summative assessment, ACT, and the spring SBAC interim (tentative scheduled for the first week of May, 2023).
- Teachers have received over 12 hours of professional development focused on shared learning targets and shared criteria for student success. Professional development has focused on standards-based grading using Bloom's Taxonomy and the creation of standards-based common formative assessments (core assessments). Core assessments are reviewed for rigor by the Director of Secondary Instruction and benchmarked against standards-based items. Teachers provide lower- and higher-level assignments and grade those each week to provide timely feedback to students on their progress toward mastery. Teachers also have been trained in four, year-long strategy teams to increase their proficiency in creative and interactive teaching methods, including increased levels of strategic questioning and highly engaging project-based flavor assessments.