

# NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

**October 4, 2019**

Nevada Department of Education  
700 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Board Room  
Carson City, Nevada

Nevada Department of Education  
2080 East Flamingo  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Board Room  
Las Vegas, Nevada

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

#### **In Las Vegas:**

Tonia Holmes-Sutton  
Don Soifer  
Mallory Cyr  
Sheila Moulton  
Sami Randolph  
Melissa Mackedon  
Randy Kirner

#### **In Carson City:**

None

### **AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT:**

#### **In Las Vegas:**

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director  
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing  
Michael Dang, Management Analyst IV  
Lisa Dzierbicki, Education Programs Professional

#### **In Carson City:**

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel  
Selcuk Ozdemir, Education Programs Supervisor  
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I  
Susan Hanshew, Legal Assistant

## **AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:**

### **In Las Vegas:**

(See attached sign-in sheet.)

### **In Carson City:**

(See attached sign-in sheet.)

## **Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order, Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance**

Vice Chair Melissa Mackendon called the meeting to order at **9:09 a.m.** with attendance as reflected above.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1**

Jose Solorio – Vice Chair for the Board of Nevada Prep. Mr. Solorio spoke in support of Nevada Prep and stated that the Board is going to look at the reasons the elementary school has a 2-Star rating and will address those issues.

Joan Brown is a math educator at Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Brown read a statement from a parent, Teri McNabb, in support of the Nevada Connections Academy (NCA). The statement is attached to the minutes.

Kim Arkerson is an educator and a parent. Ms. Arkerson read a statement on behalf of NCA. Her statement is attached to the minutes.

Rebecca Fay spoke on behalf of NCA. She is a parent of three students at the academy. She summarized the six indicators of student success of the NCA. The full text is attached to the minutes.

Levi Fay spoke on behalf of NCA. He is a former educator of the Clark County School District. He appreciates the flexibility of the hours of NCA and the opportunity for his children to have access to their high level of technology.

Ronan Fay spoke on behalf of NCA. He is a student at the academy. He is thankful that he is able to learn at his pace. He also appreciates being able to spend more time with his family.

Amy McMahon spoke on behalf of NCA. She enrolled her daughter last year as a kindergartner. She has an anxiety disorder so she is not able to attend a regular school. Her daughter feels safe in this type of learning environment.

Michele Spiger spoke on behalf of NCA. Her daughter is a freshman at the academy and has been a student for five years. Her daughter has visual and auditory dysfunctions which make it harder and takes it longer for her to process information. She has excelled at NCA due to its flexibility.

Tessa Spiger spoke on behalf of NCA. She has been a student at the academy for five years. She appreciates the flexibility of the learning environment which has led to her success in her test scores.

Jennifer Fletcher spoke on behalf of NCA. She is the parent of six children who are currently enrolled at the academy. Ms. Fletcher read from her statement which is attached to the minutes.

Danny Peltier of the SPCSA staff read an email from Julius Tan on behalf of NCA. Mr. Tan has an eighth and third grader at the academy. The email is attached to the minutes.

Victoria Neer, High School Support Specialist, Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Neer spoke on behalf of NCA. She read from her written statement which is attached to the minutes.

Alison Thomas, Elementary Support Specialist, Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Thomas spoke on behalf of NCA. She read from her written statement which is attached to the minutes.

Kimberlee Linton spoke on behalf of NCA. She is a parent of two daughters who are students at the academy. Ms. Linton read from her statement which is attached to the minutes.

Kaycee Green, Chair, Math Department, Manager for the High School, Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Green has been with NCA for the last six years. She read from her statement which is attached to the minutes.

Sheila Redmon spoke on behalf of NCA. She is a parent of two elementary NCA students. Ms. Redmon read from her statement which is attached to the minutes.

Paula Rubke spoke on behalf of NCA. She is a parent and learning coach for two students at the academy. Ms. Rubke said that NCA saved her child's life. She said that a brick and mortar school does not work for her son. Ms. Rubke does not feel the test scores reflect what NCA has to offer. Her children are thriving in this learning environment.

Tarah Evans, Teacher, Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Evans spoke on behalf of NCA. She read from her written statement which is attached to the minutes.

Tom Clark introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Clark and his business partner Keith Lee have been retained by K-12 to provide government affairs and public relation services for K-12 going forward. He is looking forward to working with the Authority and staff regarding on-going issues.

LuLu is a kindergartner at NCA and said that she loves kindergarten.

Evan Nunley's mother read a written statement from her son since he was too sick to attend the meeting. Evan is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Nevada Connections Academy and has a rare disease called cyclical vomiting syndrome. Nevada Connections Academy is bringing him back to where he was prior to getting sick. NCA has been the only program that hasn't failed him. He is so grateful to the caring quality teachers and overall program he has with NCA.

Ms. Nunley added that she comes here first as a parent and then as a CCSD teacher. She retired to take care of her son. When dealing with the system she states that she dealt with red tape and broken promises. NCA has given her son the opportunity to focus on curriculum again. She asks that the Authority put serious thought into the future of NCA.

Katelynn Schneringer, Elementary Teacher, Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Schneringer spoke on behalf of NCA. The last few months have been very trying for the families. Not everyone is able to home school. This school gives families the opportunity to spend time together and be a positive influence for their children. Teachers are able to spend one on one time with the students. She requests the Authority consider the students at NCA.

Vice Chair Mackedon asked Ryan Herrick for clarification as to what is on the agenda for this meeting since it seems there may be some confusion.

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority. Mr. Herrick explained that with the release of the 2018-2019 school year performance framework star ratings, the Board has the option of issuing notices of concern and notices of breach for underperforming schools at this meeting. Mr. Herrick went on to explain that renewals or any type of charter school contract termination in regard to any SPCSA school is not on the agenda for this meeting and will not be considered today.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Approval of the September 13, 2019 SPCSA Board Meeting Action Minutes**

Member Moulton moved to approve the minutes from September 13, 2019.

Member Holmes-Sutton stated that on page 17 of the minutes as to Agenda Item 6.b., it states that she made the motion and Member Randolph made the motion.

Vice Chair Mackedon asked Danny Peltier to see if this error was made.

Mr. Peltier said that he would check and the minutes would be corrected.

Vice Chair Mackedon asked Mr. Herrick if the minutes could be approved with that change.

Mr. Herrick replied that the video would be checked and the change would be made. He recommended to the Board that the motion could be to approve the minutes with direction to staff to check the video as to that item.

*Member Moulton moved to approve the September 13, 2019 minutes with direction to SPCSA staff to check the video and make the change as needed. **Member Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Member Kirner abstained since he was not in attendance at the September 13, 2019 meeting.***

#### **Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Board Elections**

Vice Chair Mackedon asked Mr. Herrick for guidance prior to discussion on this agenda item.

Mr. Herrick replied that there could be a discussion and then one of two motions could be proposed. The first one would be for the nomination of the Chair and the second could be for the Chair and Vice Chair as a single motion.

Member Kirner stated that he thought they should be done one at a time. He feels the Chair has a very serious role and has numerous responsibilities. The Chair needs to have a thorough knowledge of charters and how they operate.

*Member Kirner made a motion that Melissa Mackedon become the Chair of the State Public Charter School Authority. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Chair Mackedon said that she has served under three fantastic Board Chairs and she looks forward to using what she learned from them to do a great job and serve this community. She thanked the Board for this privilege.

Chair Mackedon moved on to a discussion regarding the Vice Chair position. Chair Mackedon thinks it is important that the Vice Chair be an individual that was engaged in the last Legislative Session and is up to date on what has been occurring during the Board meetings.

Chair Mackedon made a motion to appoint Don Soifer as Vice Chair. She also said that there are other Board members that meet the criteria. Chair Mackedon asked if there was anyone that wanted to second the motion. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion.

Member Soifer stated that based on his knowledge of the Board he wanted to propose that Randy Kirner serve as Vice Chair.

*Chair Mackedon withdrew her motion and made a motion that Randy Kirner serve as Vice Chair. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Chair Mackedon expressed that she was looking forward to working with Randy Kirner in the role as Vice Chair. It is an important position going forward since she is located in the north and so many schools are located in the south and it is important to have someone like Mr. Kirner representing the Authority in the south.

#### **Agenda Item 5 – SPCSA Board Calendar**

Chair Mackedon stated that the Board will review and consider approval of updates to the 2019-2020 Board Calendar.

Executive Director Feiden discussed a couple of scheduling items. The first item was pursuant to the discussion at the last board meeting about splitting the new applications over the two board meetings in November and December. The alternative would be holding a second meeting in December. There are nine pending applications which is more than the usual amount. Dedicating a single meeting would be appropriate. A poll was conducted and it appears December 17<sup>th</sup> does work. The standing meeting will be held on December 13<sup>th</sup> as well as a second meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup>. One of the meetings would be dedicated to the approval or consideration of approval for new applicants.

Chair Mackedon concurred as to the two meetings to be held in December 2019.

Executive Director Feiden said the next item for discussion is what day of the week and at what time should the meetings be held for calendar year 2020. With regard to the day of the week it appears that Friday is the most convenient day for all members of the Board.

Vice Chair Kirner asked if Executive Director Feiden is still looking at the fourth Friday of the month due to the cycle of star ratings, performance ratings, new applications, etc.

Executive Director Feiden replied that the dates have not been chosen yet. That will be done next week while looking at boardroom availability in the north and south. The Authority will aim to align the meetings with the traditional schedule which is the end of the month or the beginning of the month with four weeks in between.

Member Moulton said that she felt that 3-day weekends should be avoided.

Executive Director Feiden agreed that meetings should not be scheduled around 3-day weekends since it makes attendance difficult. She went on to speak about public comment at the previous meeting as to the 9:00 a.m. starting time. It is unfortunate that it is difficult for some individuals to participate due to work hours or scheduling conflicts. Due to meetings in the south being held at a location where there are so many varying schedules, it makes it difficult to accommodate everyone. It is the Authority's intent to put a link on the agendas/website where individuals can provide written comment if they cannot appear in person.

As far as the time of day, Executive Director Feiden reached out to the Department of Education as to the availability of the boardrooms for these meetings. The Las Vegas boardroom has more flexibility than Carson City. If meetings went after hours in Carson City, arrangements would need to be made for staff to manage the building. She said that the Board may want to consider alternative start times other than 9:00 a.m., either on a permanent or rotating basis. Other starting times are an option but would need logistical work on the Authority's end to make it work. The preferred start time as polled by the Board was 9:00 a.m.

There was more discussion as to the start time of the meetings.

Executive Director Feiden asked Mr. Herrick if the Board can move forward or if further clarification is needed.

Mr. Herrick suggested that the logistical issues should be addressed and reported back to the Board as to availability at the next board meeting. A formal board motion did not need to be made at this meeting.

**Agenda Item 6 – Overview of 2018-19 Nevada School Performance Framework (“NSPF”) Ratings for SPCSA-Sponsored Public Charter Schools**

Selcuk Ozdemir, Manager of Academic Performance and Education Programs Supervisor for the SPCSA. Dr. Ozdemir did a presentation of the 2018-2019 Nevada School Performance Framework Star Rating Results which contained a lot of good news. The PowerPoint presentation is included in supporting materials for this agenda item.

Slide 2 defines the star ratings from 1-Star to 5-Star. All public schools in Nevada receive star ratings every year. The Nevada School Performance Framework defines ratings on a scale of 1 star, not meeting standards to 5 stars being superior.

Dr. Ozdemir’s PowerPoint presentation is organized into four main themes: Star rating distribution by elementary, middle and high school; student proficiency data in math and English Language Acquisition (ELA); Title I schools and highlights for SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

Dr. Ozdemir was pleased to report that the majority of SPCSA-sponsored schools have 4- and 5-Star ratings. Slides 5 and 6 show the NSPF star rating results for SPCSA and the former Achievement School District (ASD) schools. Slide 7 lists the 65 SPCSA schools that received 4- or 5-Star ratings.

Slides 8 through 11 show the elementary, middle and high school results. Dr. Ozdemir mentioned that Beacon Academy is approved for the State’s Alternative Performance Framework (APF) and they will be evaluated under the APF.

Slides 12 through 14 are tables that show the following: Star rating comparisons from last year to this year; star rating comparisons for the last three years; and the comparison between SPCSA-sponsored schools with the state public schools (the majority of SPCSA schools are outperforming the public schools).

Dr. Ozdemir said that slide 15 was one of his favorites because in the 2018-2019 school year there were 120 schools that received 5-Star ratings and 45 of them are SPCSA-sponsored schools.

Dr. Ozdemir talked about student proficiency which can be seen on slides 16 through 18. Slides 19 through 21 are comparisons between SPCSA-sponsored school performance with the state’s results.

Slides 22 through 26 of the presentation show the Title I school results. Title I schools serve a high percentage of students in poverty. They improved significantly from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.



Dr. Ozdemir recognized the Shining-Star schools as shown on slide 27. They are state designated high-poverty, high-performing schools. There is a total of 41 Shining-Star schools in the state and 9 of those (including 2 former ASD schools) are from the SPCSA portfolio.

Slide 28 sets forth the former Achievement Schools District star rating distributions. Three of these schools did not receive star ratings. They will receive ratings in the next school year.

Dr. Ozdemir continued his presentation with SPCSA-sponsored schools that made incredible gains and some that saw significant declines (slides 29 through 31). He congratulated the schools with the huge gains in their index scores. Dr. Ozdemir drew attention to the schools that went in a downward direction. These schools are being continuously monitored even if they remain above the 3-Star threshold.

Slides 32 through 34 are additional highlights. They are comparisons between the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school year statistics as to the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC), students identifying as Hispanic, students qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch (FRL) and students designated as English Learners (EL).

Slides 36 through 39 show how to access a school's star rating report. The report can be accessed by typing [nevadareportcard.com](http://nevadareportcard.com) in your browser. State data can be accessed as well as district and individual school data in the drop down menu. The slides show the step-by-step instructions.

Executive Director Feiden wanted to note that the ASD schools are sometimes incorporated and sometimes not. The Department of Education kept those schools rated separately since they were outside of SPCSA's authority. She believes those schools are in the Authority's portfolio so some data was included for them in Dr. Ozdemir's presentation. In January, it is anticipated that the Authority will be doing a state of charter schools report to the Board and all schools will be under one portfolio including the ASD schools.

Member Soifer recommended the Opportunity 180 [greatschoolsallkids.org](http://greatschoolsallkids.org) website as a helpful tool. It used to be only for Clark County but is now a statewide tool. He made a request of Dr. Ozdemir regarding the slides that break down the number of schools by star ratings. He would like that information broken down by student subgroups that attend the 1- through 5-Star rated schools.

Executive Director Feiden replied that the Authority will be receiving demographic data by the end of this month and clarified that Member Soifer was asking for a breakdown of how many students are in each of the star rating levels and then how many are in each of the subgroups in each of the star rating levels.

Member Soifer confirmed that was what he was requesting.

Dr. Ozdemir said he would follow up with Member Soifer and provide him with a graph that contained that information.



Member Moulton said she was happy to see the decline in the chronically absent and the percent of proficiency. She asked if there will be an increase in the numbers needed to receive the 4- or 5-Star index ratings.

Dr. Ozdemir said he does not expect the Department of Education to change the cuts in the ratings.

Member Moulton commended the middle schools for their accomplishments.

Chair Mackedon also commended the Title I schools due to their many challenges.

Chair Mackedon requested a 10-minute convenience break at 10:44 a.m. The convenience break ended at 10:57 a.m. and the meeting was reconvened.

### **Agenda Item 7 – NSPF 2018-2019 Ratings and SPCSA Staff Recommendations**

#### **a. Return to Academic Good Standing Notices**

Chair Mackedon said that since this is a long agenda item, each school will be taken individually except for Agenda Item 7.a. The Authority is excited about the ten schools that are listed for being “Return to Good Standing”. Their accomplishment is huge and she asked the record to reflect that. She requested a single motion to return all of these schools to academic good standing.

Member Moulton asked if next year these schools decline, do they go back to notice of intent.

Mark Modrcin replied that would likely be the recommendation to the Authority.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the SPCSA staff recommendation to return the following schools to good standing due to their improved academic performance:*

- *Freedom Classical – Middle School (4-Star)*
- *Founders Academy – Elementary School (3-Star)*
- *Leadership Academy – Middle School (3-Star)*
- *Learning Bridge - Elementary School (4-Star)*
- *Legacy Traditional, North Valley – Middle School (3-Star)*
- *Mater Academy of Nevada, Bonanza – Elementary School (3-Star)*
- *Mater Academy of Northern Nevada – Elementary School (3-Star)*
- *Nevada Virtual Academy – Middle School (3-Star)*
- *Nevada Virtual Academy – High School (3-Star)*
- *SLAM – Middle School (3-Star)*

*Vice Chair Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**b. Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing for the SPCSA. Director Modrcin reminded everyone that ratings are a multi-phase process, students complete the school year, they are tested, there is a date of validation window, preliminary ratings lead to final ratings which were released on September 16<sup>th</sup>. When staff received the preliminary data in August, they initiated conversations with schools whose ratings appeared to be under 3-Star to let them know they would probably appear on this meeting's agenda pending any changes which did not occur from the preliminary to the final data.

Director Modrcin referred to a slide that is included for Agenda Item 7.b. titled "SPCSA Performance Framework - Interventions". The first slide sets out the SPCSA Framework Guidance as approved on September 13, 2019. Slide 2 shows what happens after a notice is issued.

Director Modrcin provided some background on the Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Elementary School. They are a K-8 school in Elko, Nevada that serves approximately 200 students. Historically, this school had an above average performance. The middle school earned a 5-Star rating in the last 2 years. The elementary school had a drop in performance according to the 2019 ratings. Ms. Perkins and Mr. Zimmerman will speak to the school's performance and the plan moving forward.

Director Modrcin said that all of the schools were given an opportunity to provide supplemental materials to their remarks. Elko Institute provided supplemental information they will be referencing which is included for this agenda item.

Ashley Perkins, Administrator, Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Elementary School. Ms. Perkins stated that the school has until the end of this school year to prove themselves. They have made huge changes in the last two years. They have seen results as to consistency in teachers, admin and students. This is their first year of full enrollment and waiting lists for all of their grades. They lost one teacher. There has been turnover of administrators. The school opened in 2009 and this is the ninth administration. Ms. Perkins feels that they are learning to work smart along with working hard.

Ms. Perkins provided background for the Elko Institute contained on page 1 of the supplemental information. She said that teachers acknowledge the need for change but are hesitant in moving in that direction since it is a big shift. It is a shift in curriculum as well as mindset as to how students learn. Since the middle school was successful, they took some of their curriculum and brought it to the elementary school.

Ms. Perkins posed a question about the requirements this year from last year to become a 3-Star school.

Executive Director Feiden said there were a couple of technical changes but the cutoff has been 50 for 3-Stars for the last couple of years.

Ms. Perkins feels that the hard work that has gone into the last two years and the consistency that now exists has set the school up to be successful. She went over page 2 of the supplemental information. Three

teachers are attending SBAC Professional Development to better understand components of the assessment. She understands that they have a lot of work to do in all areas.

Dennis Zimmerman, Board Chair, Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Elementary School. Mr. Zimmerman wanted to let the Authority know that they have a high level of commitment not just for the elementary school but for all levels to make any and all improvements necessary to raise the star levels.

Chair Mackendon commended Elko Institute in recognizing last year that work needed to be done.

Member Moulton expressed her appreciation for the hard work that went into Elko Institute's presentation and recommended that the school reach out to other schools for assistance in professional development.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to Elko Institute for Academic Achievement elementary school and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Cyr seconded the motion.*

Vice Chair Kirner asked if the site visit that was held last year was helpful.

Ms. Perkins said that it was helpful and it reaffirmed that what they identified needed to be worked on was accurate and they were headed in the right direction. She mentioned that there are logistical problems with the school since the site doesn't have doors and testing can be difficult due to noise. They have worked on alternatives to this problem. She appreciated the feedback during the site evaluation.

Member Kirner asked Director Modrcin how often the site visits are done.

Director Modrcin said that he believes the reference was to site evaluations. Site visits occur about once a year and site evaluations are normally done every other year but they can be taken out of sequence or add additional ones as needed.

Member Kirner thinks there should be a differentiation between the 4- and 5-Star schools and the other schools that are struggling as to the need for site visits and evaluations since they appear to be helpful.

Member Cyr asked if the school is reaching out to the parents as to their concerns and if they are provided with tools to assist them. She also asked if attendance is an issue and what is the level of engagement with parents.

Ms. Perkins replied that they have been working on engaging the parents more and that it has helped improve attendance. They have many conferences with parents and the school has huge parent support.

*The motion carried unanimously.*

**c. Nevada Prep Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin provided background as to the Nevada Prep Elementary School. This year the school is a 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade school located in Las Vegas that served about 125 students last year. The middle school earned a 5-Star rating this past year in its inaugural year. The elementary school earned a 2-Star rating. Mr. Blodgett is in attendance to speak to the school's performance and to discuss their plan moving forward as regards to the elementary school.

David Blodgett, Executive Director, Nevada Prep Elementary School. Mr. Blodgett expressed his gratitude that he received communication from the Authority as to the school's 2-Star rating. He said school staff are their harshest critics and the 2-Star rating was a punch to the gut to the teachers who did great work all year. They are fired up to do better this year.

They are attempting to understand how their SBAC results can be more aligned to what they are hearing during the year. They predicted their middle school performance would be higher than the 5<sup>th</sup> grade; however, they were surprised to see some of their results being so low.

He said they had a very small sampling of 38 students that counted last year in the elementary school. He briefly shared the school's scores and didn't provide any materials; however, he referred to the website Opportunity 180 [greatschoolsallkids.org](http://greatschoolsallkids.org) that contains all of the numbers which he is not disputing. He said the areas of concern are in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade English and Language Arts (ELA) and Science. There is room for growth and they expect to see improvement. They are working on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades which work together as one cohesive team.

He discussed the number of students to scale comparing number of students to campuses. They are working on a performance plan which they will be submitting in the near future. Mr. Blodgett explained the training that is provided to the teachers. They have a second math and ELA class for every student. They would like to provide more attention to the students that need it the most. They were a new school last year. This is their second year and they are working on hiring more staff.

Mr. Blodgett discussed the chronically absent students and some of the reasons for this absenteeism. The school now offers a full transportation program before and after school that launched on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Most of the chronically absent students was because of lack of transportation until November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Blodgett said they are working with parents to have students read more outside of school and rewarding that behavior. Staff intends to prepare the students in a more efficient manner for them to improve when taking standardized tests. He also sees the need to be stronger in the area of science instruction. They will be doing more interim assessments in science to have a better prediction as to how the students are prepared.

Chair Mackendon said that there are so many pros in the school's slow growth model but one of the challenges is that next year they are going to have third graders coming from low-performing schools, etc. Really small schools have the disadvantage of a very small shift in the numbers.

Member Cyr asked about the 38 students that were part of the assessment. How many of them are in the 5-Star middle school?

Mr. Blodgett wasn't sure of the exact number of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who moved on to 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the middle school. He said that approximately 90% of the students returned for year two and two that left came back this week.

Member Soifer asked if the scores are based on the scores of the 38 students. He also expressed his concern that a statistical anomaly can occur in a school that has so few students.

Mr. Blodgett explained how the evaluation works with the smaller scale of students and that it can work both ways. He went into a little more detail about how the proficiency scores are calculated. Mr. Blodgett is also concerned but he is aware of the system especially as it relates to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Member Soifer asked about next year's population.

Mr. Blodgett said there will be a few more students. It will be a larger group but not double from last year.

Member Soifer asked if the configuration of breaking out the elementary and middle school campus makes sense due to the small population size.

Mr. Blodgett said you have to look at the big picture which is to help students prepare for college.

Executive Director Feiden explained that the Department of Education establishes that 5<sup>th</sup> grade has to be counted as an elementary school.

*Member Holmes-Sutton Member made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to Nevada Prep Elementary School and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **d. Democracy Prep Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin provided background for the Democracy Prep Elementary School. This is a K-12 school located in Las Vegas and served approximately 1,000 students last year. The middle school earned a 5-Star rating this year improving from a 4-Star rating in the prior year. The high school was not rated. The elementary school earned a 2-Star rating for the second year. Executive Director Johnson will speak about the school's performance and their plan moving forward. This school came over from the Achievement School District.

Adam Johnson, Executive Director, Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. Mr. Johnson went over why they do the work they do and what they achieved in the 2018-2019 school year and improvement plans for 2019-2020. He said that lower income communities work with the mission to ensure every child has

the education to go to the college of their choice. There is a direct correlation between education level and income.

Democracy Prep measures their results in 2 ways which are data and anecdotal. He went over data first using his presentation which is available for this agenda item. Slides 11 through 15 show percentages of elementary school scholars at performance levels and the distribution of performance levels among tested students across academic years. The proficiency levels against neighborhood schools appear on slide 16. The school outperformed those schools in English Language Acquisition (ELA) and math proficiency.

Democracy Prep has six steps in their action plan shown on pages 17 and 18. The steps include literacy focus, closing gaps, culture, coaching, special education (SPED) support, joy and learning. Mr. Johnson explained each step in detail. One step that is not listed in his presentation is a leadership development training program. The new elementary school principal attended this program. The initial review of the elementary school shows a significant improvement based on the time the principals put into the program. That was the first change between last year and this school year.

Mr. Johnson skipped to slide 38 which shows the goals for the upcoming year which include American College Testing (ACT) improvement, an increase in college acceptance, improved SBAC performance and a reduction in percentage of non-proficient scholars. Slides 39 through 41 are additional goals that the school has for the upcoming year so they can move forward.

Chair Mackendon asked about attendance and mechanics of the Saturday school.

Mr. Johnson replied that it is more challenging to get the older scholars to attend. Elementary school scholars are higher in attendance for the four hours on Saturday. The teachers are asked to provide an additional 40 hours a year for scholar support.

Member Soifer stated that the other 3 of the former ASD schools have an average of 90% of their students eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meals under the national school lunch program and about 8 out of 10 are eligible for free meals. He asked for the percentage of students at Democracy Prep that use this program.

Mr. Johnson believes 75% are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program at the elementary school and most are eligible for free meals which is a similar demographic to the other ASD schools.

Member Soifer stated that Democracy Prep elementary school had a score of 45 in math for the median growth percentile. He asked what the action plan and strategies are for math in the elementary school.

Mr. Johnson said that they want to leverage the strategy of having strong instructors. They are adding a double block of math that will address some of those challenges. He wants to ensure that all teachers are able to break down the math concepts for the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> graders so they will have strong math instruction throughout the campus.



Member Cyr asked if the notice of concern is because they are transitioning from ASD to SPCSA and this is the first year they would get a notice.

Executive Director Feiden responded that the first year of the ASD had a similar provision for notices to the SPCSA and it was agreed that they would wait on notices until their second year. Since the ASD did not issue notices in the first year the ASD was in existence that is why this is a departure that a school with 2-Stars would receive a notice in their second year.

Member Cyr attended the State of the School and saw this presentation and appreciated that the school is engaging parents in the process and it is part of the school's culture and they are part of the key to success.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to Democracy Prep at Agassi Elementary School and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**i. Discovery Charter School**

**i. Discovery, Mesa Vista Campus Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

**ii. Discovery, Mesa Vista Middle School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin began by saying that this campus was previously under receivership. Historically, this campus has performed above the 3-Star threshold and the memorandum states that last year at the Discovery Charter School-Mesa Vista Campus, the elementary school earned a 3-Star rating while the middle school earned a 4-Star rating. Unfortunately, the ratings for both schools dropped in the 2018-2019 school year to the 2-Star level. He felt it was important to note that the Hillpointe Campus, which is under this charter, earned a 4-Star rating at both the elementary and middle schools. Also, the school was recently reconstituted from a receivership over the summer after the 2018-2019 school year. The school leadership and the board are hard at work to identify the performance problems.

Denise Koch, Site Leader, Discovery, Hillpointe Campus. Ms. Koch provided a short summary about the Hillpointe and Sandhill campuses of Discovery Charter School.

Carrie Buck, Chair, Discovery Charter School Board. Ms. Buck serves as a volunteer board member. Discovery Charter School transitioned from a receivership. They have held two board meetings since August when she was appointed Chair. They are in the process of working on their bylaws. The Mesa Vista campus ratings are based on 47 students from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade; 16 in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> and 31 in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. She hopes to bring value to the leadership team by asking questions and providing guidance. The team is predominantly new to Discovery.

Curriculum is key with I-Ready and putting strong curriculum in place as they look at weaknesses. Ms. Buck set forth the numbers of students at each campus and different grade levels.



Ms. Buck went on to say that they are data driven and they are looking at standards, based grading and making sure they are transparent. She likes the charter school community where the focus is on community engagement which includes meetings with parents and making them aware of how their children are doing on the assessment.

Chair Mackedon wished Discovery luck during this transition and acknowledged that they have a strong board and leadership team.

*Member Soifer made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to both the Discovery Charter School-Mesa Vista Elementary and Middle School Campus and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**e. Coral Academy, Nellis Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin provided a brief background of the school. This is a pre-K through 7th grade school in Las Vegas that served approximately 800 students last year. Coral Academy has been one of the highest performing schools in the community and in our portfolio. While the academic performance of the middle school program is at the superior level (5-Star), the elementary school declined in performance in the 2018-2019 school year below the 3-Star threshold.

Chair Mackedon said she cannot imagine serving on a military base with students transferring out every three years.

Ann Diggins, President of the Board, Coral Academy of Science. Ms. Diggins said that when Coral Academy had the opportunity to open a school at Nellis they knew they would have different challenges. Nellis has a very transient population. Absences had already been identified as a problem. Ms. Diggins and the Board Secretary went to the Nellis Campus and dug deep into the data. They toured the campus and had discussions with staff members. She said the Board will continue to have that level of attention. The school will use the successes and model that the other schools have used. They have unique challenges of serving military dependents which are 98% who move frequently. The leadership team is meeting with the Commander of the 99<sup>th</sup> Squadron. They are reaching out to partner and sister schools and other charters on military bases as to absences and what they have done regarding absenteeism. She thinks providing some flexibility to the families would be helpful.

Academic challenges will take a bit longer to address. They are optimistic with the high achievement at the middle school level that have similar student populations and want to build on some of those successes. A big investment has been made in the physical plant by the issuance of bonds and it will be the only school that Coral has built in the Las Vegas area. The goal is to move the elementary school to a 3- or 4-Star level.

Ercan Aydogdu, Executive Director, Coral Academy of Science, Las Vegas. The Nellis Campus has 880 students. Nellis is the only campus with pre-K through 8th grade. Eighth grade was added this year.

The school started 3 years ago with pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The school added 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades over the last 3 years. The middle school had a 5-Star rating which was one of the highest in the area in the portfolio.

The Nellis Campus administration is trying to fix the problems to improve the star rating. The 2-Star rating appears to be due to achievement in the SBAC test results and chronic absenteeism. Coral-Nellis is still operating an alternate campus. This February, the construction on the new campus will be completed.

English for elementary students is average for the state but the math and science scores are very low. For each of the problem areas, there are corrective action plans that administration has compiled. They are also working on a plan for the attendance issue. Mr. Aydogdu explained some of the actions that are included in the corrective plans.

Transiency is a major problem with an average of 98% military. One solution is a focus intervention targeting struggling students through the Professional Learning Community (PLC). All campuses use PLC and most of the teachers will go to the PLC conferences. They are providing additional after school and Saturday sessions. The school pays teachers additional compensation to assist these struggling students. There has been good participation and they will continue these additional sessions. The main focus will be on students who had lower scores.

As to chronic absenteeism, there will be training for teachers and office staff on daily, weekly and monthly attendance practices and follow up with the parents. There will be mandatory parent meetings with administrative staff to discuss attendance issues. The school thinks that awards and incentives for positive attendance would be helpful. He believes that clear communication with parents as to chronic absenteeism is essential.

Ms. Diggins commented that the unique nature of the military dependence provides the opportunity to work with commanders of squadrons and parents to have a clear understanding of the effect of the chronic absenteeism.

Chair Mackedon mentioned that due to deployment and parents leaving or returning home causes absentee problems because the families want to spend time together and this is one of the challenges.

Ms. Diggins responded they are trying to come up with innovative ideas such as floating days and/or floating weeks to try to address the issues so the families can spend time together.

Jonathan Yutuc, Principal, Coral Academy of Science, Nellis Campus. The chronic absenteeism at the elementary level has a significant impact on their education and success. The middle school level that achieved a 5-Star status, chronic absenteeism was not an issue and the academic achievement and growth was also not an issue. The younger students (1/3 of the population) are more likely to have the permanent change of service order that happens throughout the year. With the chronic absenteeism, the 91-day enrollment mark affects the school because various families move within that time period and they want to visit the change of station. The school wants to partner with the base leadership and commanders to incentivize the requirements for the well-being of those families.

Member Moulton stated the school was so close to the next star rating and she felt great comfort they are working so hard.

Mr. Aydogdu concluded with setting forth the plan for chronic absenteeism, collaborative interaction with different cultures and increasing student achievement and growth.

Member Kirner said that there aren't many charter schools on a military campus that can be used to compare and contrast.

Mr. Aydogdu responded that they are unique since they are the only charter school to build a brand new facility from scratch on a base.

Member Kirner said that Coral has an excellent record with their schools and he is confident they are going to take this and deal with it and move forward. He asked about the meeting with the base commander. Is there any way the base commander can influence some of the absenteeism and some of the other issues?

Mr. Aydogdu replied that the meeting with the commander is set for Monday.

Member Kirner said it is very clear that working in a military environment is very different than working somewhere else in Las Vegas. He feels confident that it can be done; however, there is a lot of customization to make it happen.

Ms. Diggins said that she was brought up in the Air Force and her dad was at Nellis. Incentives as well as some communication with the squadron commanders is a unique opportunity that can be leveraged by being located at Nellis.

Chair Mackendon saw great legislation that came out of the last session as to military spouses and veterans and this can be addressed legislatively. It seems that there could be some exceptions for this attendance issue in statute. It just makes good sense for these students to spend time with their families.

Member Cyr asked about the remaining 2% of the students.

Mr. Aydogdu responded that some are staff children and some are from the neighborhood. There was legislation in 2015 they have to give priority to the military students.

Member Cyr asked if there is any targeted recruitment outside of the base.

Mr. Aydogdu said if room is available other students would be enrolled from the neighborhood. There can be issues with the parents getting a pass to Nellis but other parents and the school try to help them by carpooling or other transportation solutions.

Member Holmes-Sutton expressed her appreciation for the school's commitment and for their efforts. She was a military child and they finally did settle down when she was in high school. She recommended that they be mindful of the engagement with the commander and try to hold military soldiers accountable for the choices of their families and how it can cause great turmoil and adversely affect their spouses and children.

Mr. Aydogdu mentioned that the school had to send a postcard within 2 miles and they extended it to 5 miles and all parents were invited. However, there is still the first priority to the military. If there is room, the other children will be accepted.

Member Moulton asked why the Clark County School District closed and then re-opened the campus but could not remember all of the details. She said she would look into it and it may help in this situation.

Mr. Aydogdu explained that there was a 50 year agreement that was expiring at the end of 2015 and the Nellis authority said if they wanted to renew the agreement, they had to build a new campus.

Member Moulton wondered why the Clark County School District didn't sponsor this but maybe there was legislation they had to be under the Authority.

*Member Kirner made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to Coral Academy of Science Las Vegas Elementary-Nellis Campus and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**g. Freedom Classical Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Breach**

Director Modrcin provided background about the school. Freedom Classical Elementary is a K-8 school located in the Las Vegas area and served approximately 800 students last year. Staff is pleased with the progress of the middle school improving from a 2-Star to a 4-Star rating and they were returned to good standing earlier in this meeting.

The elementary school did show improvement going from an adjusted index score of 28 to 41; however, staff is recommending to the Authority that a notice of breach be issued given this is the second year they are below a 3-Star performance. As part of the breach recommendation, they are recommending the school appear at a future meeting to address their ongoing efforts as to that concern as well as speak to any mid-year data they may have available.

Jeremy Christensen, Executive Director, Freedom Classical Elementary School. Mr. Christensen also introduced Shannon Hiller, Board Member, Freedom Classical Elementary School. He said that he was pleased to see growth in both the elementary and middle school levels. Looking at the ratings and the scores, the biggest problem is chronic absenteeism. The school is working with the truancy diversion program where a judge and a truancy officer come to the school every week and meet with parents and students to encourage and help them so they can get to school. They are looking at hiring a school

counselor this year to do home visits and reach out to parents. The school is also looking at changes to the attendance policy that would require a Saturday or summer school for students who are chronically absent.

Academically, they are confident with their core curriculum (Tier 1) and they are seeing gains but there is still a lot of work to do. The middle school saw significant gains in the ELL population but are not seeing those gains in the elementary school. They are looking at targeted tutoring for those students and the use of fast forward which is a remediation tool which will be utilized after school. They are hiring two ELL paraprofessionals this year to help students during the school day to access the curriculum and to provide tutoring and support. Mr. Christensen continued to discuss the school's performance in math, reading and the ELL students.

As far as parent engagement, they are meeting regularly with the parent advisory committee. Historically, that was a closed group and it has been opened up to all parents and meetings are being advertised to get increased participation. The school is also asking parents what changes they would like to see. They did a summer orientation for students and families to help them succeed and added grant funds to add family events. They are particularly targeting the ELL parents by trying to engage more in their culture so they will participate more with the school. There is an online curriculum engine that can be published as a website to the parents so they are aware of every lesson with standards for their students. This online engine also has videos with the instructions that parents and students can view as many times as needed to help the learning environment.

Chair Mackendon asked how many students attend Freedom Classical Academy.

Mr. Christensen answered said they have 1,105 students with approximately 800 in the elementary school.

Member Soifer said that the school has about one in five students that are in the chronically absent category and you are considering hiring a counselor that would be responsible for home visits and engaging a parent advisory committee. How much direct interaction does the school have with parents?

Mr. Christensen responded that they require teachers to reach out to parents on a daily basis using an app called "Remind" so that every day parents receive texts as to work that day and how they are doing. They are also expanding their community events. Every time a student is absent a call is made. If they reach a certain amount of absences, they are called in to meet personally to discuss the absenteeism as part of the truancy diversion program.

Member Soifer asked how those meetings are going.

Mr. Christensen replied that it depends on the family. The goal is to encourage the parents and provide support. The parents that are not committed stop going to the meetings. Mr. Christensen reached out to other executive directors at schools with excellent attendance asking for ideas and recommendations.

Member Moulton asked the radius of the students that attend the school.



Mr. Christensen said that most of the students are within two miles of the school and some of them travel a distance.

Member Moulton said that transportation can be a real problem with attendance issues. She liked the idea of reaching out to other schools.

Member Cyr said that it appears these parents and families are choosing charter schools. They should feel that attendance matters too as well as academics. Member Cyr inquired of a school that has shown extensive growth in attendance (Equipo). Equipo's parent involvement coordinator mentioned reaching out to the Clark County School District's Faces Program and their attendance session was brought to their campus and they were able to facilitate it to the parents. She feels the "why" parents are making this active choice to send their students to these schools, then the attendance component can be improved.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Breach to Freedom Classical Elementary School and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Soifer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Chair Mackedon called for a lunch recess from 12:50 p.m. for 45 minutes. The meeting re-convened at 1:36 p.m. and continued where it left off.

**f. Quest Preparatory Academy Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin provided background about Quest Preparatory Academy. By way of background this is a K-8 school located in Las Vegas that served approximately 500 students last year and this year. The middle school earned a 3-Star rating for its second consecutive year. The elementary school earned a 2-Star rating for the second year in a row. The academic performance is shown on page 2 of the briefing/recommendation memo which is included for this agenda item.

The school has been under a receivership for the last few years due to a number of financial, organizational and academic issues. Almost all of the concerns have been addressed as to the receivership. The school is working diligently to make progress from an academic perspective.

The Authority did not issue any notices or take any action as a result of the 2017–2018 ratings due to the school increasing its adjusted index score by nearly 30 points under the NSPF compared to the prior year. Since this is the second consecutive year the school received a 2-Star rating and there was a slight dip in their performance, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority issue a Notice of Concern to Quest Academy regarding the elementary school. In addition, the school is up for renewal and it is expected they will submit a renewal application prior to October 15, 2019.

Jacqueline Working, Student Support Services, Quest Preparatory Academy. Ms. Working attended the meeting on behalf of the school's principal Janelle Veith. Dr. Lynn Hanrahan, a leadership coach who assists in the training of the school's teachers was also present. Since the principal was unable to attend the meeting, she prepared a statement that Ms. Working read on her behalf (4:44:30-4:52:05). Ms. Veith's statement referred to the supplemental information that is included for this agenda item.

A few highlights from the statement include that Quest met the SPCSA performance targets set forth in its agreement with the SPCSA in the 2018-2019 school year. Quest's performance targets from the improvement plan approved by the SPCSA are shown in Table 1 on page 1. The median growth percentage in ELA and Math are contained in Table 2 on page 1. Table 3 contains the percentage of the student body eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL). At the bottom of page 2, the plan for the elementary school improvement in the 2019-2020 school year are set forth in bullet point format.

Dr. Hanrahan talked about the school improvement process and the research behind that process. Quest is taking all the action steps and components of that process. They all focus on the components that include creating a culture and climate conducive to learning, making sure that all students have access to the essential guaranteed curriculum, that high yield strategies are used in instructional delivery, there is a school-wide assessment framework where they use their data to determine their instruction and focus on promoting their professional development.

Member Holmes-Sutton referred to the supplemental information and asked about the student demographic set forth in Table 2 on page 2 and asked if it is exclusively for students of color. Are there children not of color at the school?

Ms. Working responded that the table is more to address that they are serving a majority of non-Caucasian students but they do have Caucasian students.

Member Holmes-Sutton asked does instructional staff reflect the demographics of the student population.

Mr. Working said that the SPCSA did a site visit in the spring of 2019 and one of the comments was that the students are diverse as well as the staff members. The feedback also indicated that Quest was one of the most diverse in the portfolio as to students and staff members.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA staff to issue a Notice of Concern to the Quest Preparatory Academy Elementary Program and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the School Performance Plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**h. Legacy Traditional Schools**

- i. Legacy, North Valley Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Breach**
- ii. Legacy, Cadence Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**

Director Modrcin began with the Cadence Campus in Henderson, Nevada which is a K-8 elementary school that served approximately 1,200 last year which was their first year of operation at that campus. Staff is pleased with the performance of the middle school earning a high rating right out of the gate and the school is also proud of that rating. The elementary school earned an adjusted index score of 48 points as shown in the briefing/recommendation memorandum that is included for this agenda item. SPCSA staff is recommending a Notice of Concern for the Cadence Elementary School Campus based on that rating.

Director Modrcin went on to discuss the North Valley Campus. This is another K-8 school that served approximately 1,300 students last year. Staff is pleased with the performance of the middle school as



shown on page 2 of the memorandum. The body acted today to return the middle school program to good standing as they were operating under a notice last year. The elementary school still remains below a 3-Star threshold for a second consecutive year although they did show improvement in their adjusted index score.

Stephen Steel, Member of the Board, Legacy Traditional Schools. Mr. Steel introduced Nicole Kirkley, the Vice President of Academics and Eve Brier, Nevada Superintendent. Mr. Steel said that the reason three people were present at the meeting was in recognition that all stakeholders need to be engaged in the process of academic success. The presentation today is how Legacy wants to invoke a change through the stakeholders and have targeted programs and activities that will engage the administration, teachers, parents and ultimately the students.

Nicole Kirkley, Vice President of Academics, Legacy Traditional Schools. Ms. Kirkley began her presentation (included as part of this agenda item) with Legacy's priority goals for the elementary campuses which include student proficiency, student growth and teacher attendance. Ms. Kirkley explained the first goal of student proficiency as set out on the table on slide 3 of the presentation. Slide 4 is in bullet point format and shows the way Legacy is working on improving student proficiency.

Student growth is shown in a table on slide 5 and slide 6 is in bullet point form. Ms. Kirkley explained the approaches that are being used to achieve this goal. Teacher attendance is set forth on slides 7 and 8 of the presentation. Ms. Kirkley provided a summary of how Legacy plans on reducing the number of teacher absences to less than 7.5 days per teacher.

Eve Brier, Deputy Superintendent, Legacy Traditional Schools. Ms. Brier said she recognizes that specifically at the North Valley Campus work needs to be done. She stated that there was significant growth from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year particularly in the elementary school in ELA and math. She intends to put processes and procedures and high level instructional practices in place.

Member Holmes-Sutton asked about the tiered professional development and if they are taking the opportunity to utilize those teacher leaders on campus that appear to be effective instructional leaders.

Ms. Kirkley replied that the lead teachers are providing the professional development working along with the subject matter experts and instructional coaches.

Ms. Brier said that bi-monthly meetings and support are provided to any new teachers and staff at the campuses.

Member Holmes-Sutton acknowledged Legacy's attention to teacher attendance and support is a critical factor for commitment of the teachers despite the challenges they may face.

Member Soifer asked about the North Valley Elementary Campus when looking at proficiency criterion-referenced test (CRT) data. Member Soifer noticed there are real differences in results between

some of the different groups. He asked what the strategies are that are being used as to the achievement disparities between the segregated groups at the campus?

Ms. Brier said they are strategic in providing support to the English Language (EL) learners. They have paraprofessionals in place to support those subgroups specifically. They have strength in their special education department. The school is also providing professional development to the staff members in those areas. Ms. Brier noted that the North Valley Campus saw significant growth in the academic framework as to ELA proficiency between the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.

Ms. Kirkley added that Legacy employed an Extended School Services (ESS) specialist that is a teacher. She rotates over all the campuses and provides professional development and teacher observations and assists in bringing students to the next level.

Mr. Steel added that one of the challenges for ELL students is when they go home for breaks, they are outside of the English learning structure and the English emersion that happens in the classroom. One of the strategies that is in place at Legacy is the inter-session learning opportunities in addition to having a Saturday school program to help with those demographics.

Director Modrcin said there is a third campus that opened this school year but there isn't any data on that school at this time. A site evaluation is being conducted next week. That information will become available in the coming months.

Ms. Kirkley said that Legacy is implementing all of these strategies, goals and action plans at the southwest campus this year.

Member Holmes-Sutton commented that a notice of breach was being issued for one campus and not for the other. She asked if the school is distinguishing the supports that they are putting in place for both campuses.

Ms. Kirkley said they had conversations about this as a team and the star report card showed the concerns are from the same areas at both campuses. They need to implement the action steps and probably more severe at some campuses than others.

*Member Soifer first moved to approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue a Notice of Concern to the Cadence elementary program and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the school performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Second, moved to approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue a Notice of Breach to the North Valley elementary program, and require the school to present to the Authority an update regarding the school's progress against the performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance in early 2020. Member Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**j. Nevada Connections Academy**

**i. Nevada Connections Academy Elementary School (1-Star), Other Action**

**ii. Nevada Connections Academy Middle School (2-Star), Notice of Breach**  
**iii. Nevada Connections Academy High School (2-Star), Notice of Breach**

Director Modrcin provided background about Nevada Connections Academy (NCA). NCA is a K-12 statewide virtual school that served approximately 3,200 students over the State of Nevada last year. The historical performance of this school will not be discussed since it has been discussed on numerous occasions but historically this school has struggled academically. In the briefing/recommendation memorandum (included as part of this agenda item), page 2 sets forth the academic performance of NCA for the last two school years. Note that the academic performance in the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle and high school programs remained below the 3-Star threshold.

Due to both the middle and high school programs earning a rating of less than 3-Stars for the second consecutive year in the 2018-2019 school year, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority issue Notices of Breach to NCA regarding both the middle and high schools.

Given that the elementary school program earned a rating of 1-Star for the third consecutive year, SPCSA staff is recommending that the Authority issue a formal letter to notify NCA that its underperformance at the elementary school triggered the automatic termination provisions of NRS 388A.300(1). Based on recent conversations, the elementary school does not intend to apply for renewal and the school will close at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Finally, it should be noted that an application for renewal of Nevada Connections Academy middle and high school is expected by October 15, 2019 and we expect recommendations from the staff likely prior to the end of the calendar year. The renewal item is not on today's agenda but it will come up in the future.

With regards to the elementary school, staff knows it is a difficult decision. Staff appreciates that the school's board acknowledging the challenges it has had in implementing an elementary school program. Assuming that is the path forward staff is fully prepared and will be supportive during the closure process so staff, students and families can make informed decisions regarding their options in the 2020-2021 school year.

Dr. Chris McBride, Superintendent, Nevada Connections Academy. Dr. McBride introduced himself to the new board members and explained how NCA serves Nevada families and students and how mobility impacts school rankings but also addresses how NCA is making changes with this student reality in mind. Dr. McBride did not cover each slide in detail as the presentation is contained in the board package. In addition, he submitted his written oral statement which contains additional details and also written statements from families that did not testify at the meeting about what NCA means to them. All documents are included for this agenda item.

Matthew Wicks, Director of School Accountability, Pearson Online & Blended Learning. Mr. Wicks works with schools across Pearson's portfolio in 27 states helping them understand the way they are measured and held accountable and work with them in ways to make improvements. His presentation covered the research Pearson conducted on mobility and how it impacts student performance. NCA is a virtual school that provides a full-time online education to students in grades K-12. His presentation can be found with the supporting materials for this agenda item.

Slide 10 is a table showing the clusters identified in the student profile study. The percentage of mobile students is very high and ranges from 35% to 60%. The table shows the common factor is the high mobility.

Chair Mackedon asked Mr. Wicks asked how many years the slide represents.

Mr. Wicks replied that the slide represents one specific year of students and covers numerous schools but does not include Nevada.

Slide 18 addresses what NCA is planning to do to improve the performance under the existing rating. It is a significant investment in the total redesign of the curriculum. Slide 19 goes into more detail in bullet point format as to how NCA plans to accomplish the redesign. The curriculum supports the concepts of ready to learn, learning to learn and skills to learn.

Chair Mackedon said that when opening an online charter school, it is understood that mobility is an issue. The testimony is saying that NCA has a product that can meet those needs. NCA is using a tired argument and cautioned them. NCA is saying that their curriculum can get the job done for mobile students. She cautioned Mr. Wicks on using this argument.

Mr. Wicks replied that is the reason they are improving the curriculum. He feels the way the schools are measured does not accurately reflect how they are performing. Growth rates are one of the most biased against highly mobile populations.

Executive Director Feiden appreciates the school is looking at ways to improve. She pointed out there are two virtual 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade schools that are meeting or exceeding the standards so it can be done.

Member Kirner asked if NCA is using the mobility argument to excuse the 1-Star and 2-Star ratings.

Mr. Wicks said the ratings are a lower reflection of the actual performance of the school. He believes they are continuing to improve. The middle school went from a 1-Star to a 2-Star.

Member Moulton said the parents and students are impressive and the testimony was heart-touching. She asked staff if virtual school students have to attend the same number of days as any other school. How many days do the students need to be at the school to be tested?

Executive Director Feiden said she believes it is 180 days of enrollment for the Smarter Balanced test which she thinks is in April. The student would not have to be at the school the entire year but at least a chunk of the year.

Member Moulton stated that Mr. Wicks presentation included data that was with all of the schools and not Nevada. She went on to say that Nevada is different and she would like data just from Nevada and not the entire Pearson portfolio.

Mr. Wicks said the research study included such a large number in order for it to be valid research and Nevada doesn't have enough comparison points.

Member Moulton said she wants to see just the Nevada data. She heard that they had 3,671 students and 1,000 in the enrollment process. Is that only in Nevada? She wanted clarification since it is such a large number.

Mr. Herrick said that since Mr. Wicks does not work directly for NCA, her questions would be more appropriately directed to Dr. McBride.

Dr. McBride answered that it is just in Nevada and the school has about 160 to 180 students that have completed every step of the application process and there are about 1,000 other students who have started some phase of the enrollment process with the intention of trying to enroll at NCA.

Member Moulton asked if there is a cap as to how many students can be serviced in Nevada. Is it a total cap or based on grade level?

Dr. McBride said there are several different caps. The high school is 1,500 and within the last 2 years there has been a freeze for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. McBride did not recall the caps for the other grade levels. He did say that the school has an overall cap and the school is full.

Member Moulton said she did not see significant changes in NCA's scores where other schools have shown significant increases.

Mr. Wicks said the high school has shown the greatest improvement in the graduation rate which is lagging a year in the framework.

Chair Mackedon replied that you have to get a 67% graduation rate to earn 1 point on the star framework so if NCA is at 64% or 65% there would not be a significant change in the overall score.

Member Soifer had a question concerning the data in math, 26.4% of Caucasian students were at or above grade level efficiency and African American students the number is 5.7%. He asked how NCA plans to fix this.

Dr. McBride said the number is shameful and they are discouraged by that number. In the elementary and the middle school, they are identifying and offering various assessments and interventions that are needed for students in both ELA and math. One issue which is a great reason why the Legislature passed Senate Bill 441 last session is because the regulations that are in place for brick and mortar schools do not apply and serve charter schools well. NCA plans to work with NDE through the regulatory process to correct this and to provide interventions to all students no matter what subgroup they fall into to make them successful.

Chair Mackedon was disappointed during public comment about the mom with seven children that she signed up last year at NCA and she just found out the situation with the elementary school. She has serious concerns with the 1,000 students in the queue about those parents being informed that the school is being closed in a year. How are the parents being advised as to the closure?

Dr. McBride said they have to send mandatory notices and they have sent multiple mass emails to families letting them know about the elementary school closure and he has hosted two town hall meetings to explain why the board decided not to ask for renewal of the elementary school. There is a need for this school and despite the ratings there is a demand for this school.

Mr. Wicks said that NCA is the only elementary school in Nevada that is an online school.

Chair Mackedon said it isn't NCA's fault that the parents were not informed.

Erica Nannini, Holland & Hart on behalf of Nevada Connections Academy. Ms. Nannini wanted to add some closing remarks which began with the Authority is considering serving NCA's high school with a Notice of Breach at the meeting. She wanted to provide some background for the new board members on the history. The Authority and NCA entered into an agreement in 2017 that imposed some very strict requirements on the high school which have all been satisfied. In the past two years, due to some very hard work by Dr. McBride and his staff, NCA has raised its graduation rate by 20% and the number is expected to continue to increase. As part of the 2017 agreement, the Authority made NCA a promise that "if you meet strict graduation rate improvement requirements that we have placed on your high school we will offer protection in that we will agree that we cannot terminate the high school if it meets graduation rate goals. We will agree that the termination provisions of NRS 388A do not apply if you meet these goals." Relevant to the October 15<sup>th</sup> deadline that Mr. Modrcin brought up earlier, "we promise that if you meet these graduation rate goals, NCA's achievement of these academic year benchmarks for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 will be a material factor for consideration relevant to any renewal proceedings."

Ms. Nannini said that NCA believes they have met its end of the bargain and with the potential issue of a notice of breach, it seems the Authority is reconsidering its end of the deal so "we would like to go on the record to object to this change of heart by the Authority and ask that it reconsider its position in light of the legal documents that govern the parties. In addition, we understand NDE is planning to adopt regulations that acknowledge that virtual schools require different rules from those of brick and mortar schools, of course, and we are hopeful that these regulations will help with accurately reflecting this school's good work. That said, we look forward to working with the Authority further to ensure that we continue to serve our Nevada families and its students in ways that they have expressed over and over again are important to them and recognizing the importance of having access to their school of choice."

*Member Moulton moved to approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue a Notice of Breach to both the middle and high school programs at Nevada Connections Academy and require the school to present to the Authority an update regarding the school's progress against the performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance in early 2020. Additionally, approve the recommendation of the SPCSA staff to notify the school that the elementary program's performance triggered the automatic termination provisions under statute and that the school must close at the end of the 2019–2020 school year. Member Soifer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

- k. Somerset Academy**
  - i. Somerset Academy, North Las Vegas Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Breach**
  - ii. Somerset Academy, Aliante Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**
  - iii. Somerset Academy, Losee Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**
  - iv. Somerset Academy, Losee Middle School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**
  - v. Somerset Academy, Losee High School (2-Star), No Action**
  - vi. Somerset Academy, Skye Point High School (2-Star), No Action**

Director Modrcin said that since there are a few moving pieces for this agenda item, he would break this down in an efficient and thorough manner by campus. Page 2 of the briefing/recommendation memorandum (contained in the supporting materials for this agenda item) contains data that may help track Staff's recommendations.

Given some purported issues related to the reported graduation rates, SPCSA staff is recommending no action at this time for both the Somerset Academy Losee and Skye Pointe high school programs, despite the fact that each school earned a 2-Star rating. Graduation data for 2019 is to be released in December. SPCSA staff will review that data when it is finalized and may bring recommendations to the Authority at that time regarding these schools.

Will Hardy, Board Member, Somerset Academy of Las Vegas. Briefly highlighted and summarized a few items. The board is aware of the situation and is reviewing data. A number of the campuses are high scoring in some areas. He understands they need to address the scores that are under 3-Star. The principals have a detailed plan to address the issues. A cover letter was submitted which is part of the supporting documents for this agenda item.

Elaine Kelley, Principal, Somerset Academy, Aliante Elementary School. Ms. Kelley said they opened their doors last year and this is their second year. She is proud the middle school had a 5-Star rating and the elementary school was only one point away from receiving a 3-Star rating. Ms. Kelley explained the action plan for Aliante Elementary School. Her written testimony is included in the supplemental information for this agenda item.

Jessica Scobell, Principal, Somerset Academy, Losee Elementary, Middle and High Schools. Ms. Scobell began by providing some history of the school. Somerset Academy, Losee was combined as one unified campus K-12 at the start of the 2018-2019 school year. The previous secondary principal retired. The new principal that was brought in for 2018-2019 also left the position. Those factors created upheaval on the campus and Ms. Scobell was appointed on July 1<sup>st</sup> as principal for the entire K-12 campus. Ms. Scobell stated that she has a lot of experience from at risk Title I populations and Somerset Losee was named a Title I school and received additional funding as a result. That funding is being utilized to support interventions that are being put into place on the campus. Ms. Scobell explained the action plan and interventions for the elementary and middle school that have been put in place. Her written testimony and improvement plan are included in the supplemental information for this agenda item.

Christina Threeton, Principal, Somerset Academy, North Las Vegas Elementary School. Ms. Threeton began by providing some history. She came from Somerset Academy, Lone Mountain where she opened the school with Sherry Pendleton and was the Assistant Principal. In November 2018, Ms. Threeton was asked to go to Somerset Academy, North Las Vegas to help address some areas that were concerning. In February 2019, she was appointed Principal.

This is the second year as a 2-Star school. They did have some positives overall for the elementary school which gained 5 points in academic achievement and 8 points in student growth. There are areas of concern with the decrease of 5 points with the ELL students and a loss of 3.5 points for chronic absenteeism. These are the main focuses for this school year. Her written testimony that includes the interventions and action plan are included in the supplemental information for this agenda item.

Chair Mackendon asked if they still have an Executive Director.

Ms. Kelley responded that they have changed their administrative structure. They no longer have an executive director. It is a principal-based structure with the support of Academica, the management company.

Member Moulton asked if the teachers still have preps.

Ms. Threeton answered that they still have preps.



Member Moulton expressed her concern about almost a 20 point drop. She noted that the ELL students need the extra help when they can't read or speak English.

Ms. Kelley said that all the teachers have a prep and at the elementary level they have a common prep so they can collaborate five days a week. At the middle school level, they try in the content areas to have a common prep but they have additional time in the morning and afternoon and they also have time at lunch to meet. They have a Spanish teacher who is on a 6-day rotation and pulls all ELL students to meet with them twice a week during the school day.

Member Soifer asked about giving awards for student attendance and 20% of the students that qualify. What other strategies are you using for chronic absenteeism and how is the parent engagement going?

Ms. Threton responded that a weekly newsletter goes out every week to parents and their goal is 98%, which is a lofty goal. The newsletter is a proactive approach. It is 94% or 95% and they want to get better. They had a town hall meeting and 30 parents attended and they went Facebook live and they had over 200 parents view the videos. She talked to the Spanish teacher to see if she could attend the town hall meetings to translate in the future.

Member Holmes-Sutton asked if the town hall meetings are held during the day. The one they had was held at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at night. They are flexible to changing the times.

Member Holmes-Sutton said that she appreciates they used the Facebook live and that it is very helpful.

*Member Moulton made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue Notices of Concern to the Aliante and Losee elementary programs and Losee middle school program at Somerset Academy of Las Vegas and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the school performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Additionally, approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue a Notice of Breach to the North Las Vegas elementary program, and require the school to present to the Authority an update regarding the school's progress against the performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance in early 2020. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **I. American Prep Academy**

- i. American Prep Academy Elementary School (2-Star), Notice of Concern**
- ii. American Prep Academy High School (2-Star), No Action**

Director Modrcin said this is a K-12 school in Las Vegas that served approximately 1,650 students last year. Historically, American Prep Academy (APA) has been one of the higher performing schools in the SPCSA portfolio. The academic performance of APA Las Vegas for the last two school years is provided on page 2 of the briefing/recommendation memorandum included for this agenda item. While the academic performance of the middle school program remains at the superior level (5-Star), the elementary school declined in performance in the 2018-2019 school year below the 3-Star threshold.

Given some purported issues related to the reported graduation rates, SPCSA staff is recommending no action at this time for the American Preparatory Academy high school, despite the fact that the school earned a 2-Star rating. Graduation data for 2019 is to be released in December. SPCSA staff will review that data when it is finalized and may bring a recommendation to the Authority at that time regarding the high school.

Lee Iglody, Board Chair, Jon Gardner, Board Treasurer and Rachelle Hulet, Administrative Director, American Prep Academy. Mr. Iglody started out by saying they were surprised at the drop in their star ranking. They immediately had a board meeting and had a preliminary introduction as to a remedial plan.

John Gardner, Board Treasurer, and parent of three students at American Prep Academy. When the ratings were received, they were surprised and everyone on the Board was motivated to understand the star rating system. Mr. Gardner now realizes that the rating system is much more involved as to the components and how they are weighed. This has been a good opportunity to learn and understand the system and develop and implement a plan as to improvements next year.

Rachelle Hulet, Administrative Director, American Prep Academy. Ms. Hulet began with the ratings for the school over the past two school years. Due to the drastic change, they dug into the data and learned some important things about the scores on the proficiency tests and the factors that contributed to the drop in those scores. Some of the reasons are changes in enrollment, staffing, teacher turnover and curriculum. Ms. Hulet went on to say they are committed to student growth as well as proficiency. In order to increase proficiency levels students must progress at least a year's growth in a year's time and their programs are designed to make that possible. She continued with the plan going forward to improve the testing results. They are planning on targeting the teachers with lower growth and provide training to assist them. They will also focus on the disadvantaged population that includes the ELL students that attend the school.

Ms. Hulet said they are in the middle of their charter renewal application. The application will contain some components of the plan. She mentioned the home residency language questionnaire and whether the parents answer it honestly. She does not believe they have accurate numbers as to how many ELL students the school really has enrolled. They plan on working on obtaining a correct number of ELL students moving forward which will be higher than previous years.

As far as the high school that received a 2-Star rating which was due to the published graduation rate of 64% which is not an accurate number. Ms. Hulet stated she believes that number should have been 100% giving the high school a 4-Star rating.

Member Holmes-Sutton said that looking at the report card last year, the student populations as to economically disadvantaged did not present as they did this year. Perhaps there could be challenges around engaging or providing instruction that would be culturally relevant or responsive to the changes that are taking place in this student demographic.

Ms. Hulet responded that she doesn't think there has been a huge change in the student demographic. She thinks it is a matter of engaging the teachers and making sure they have the right professional development and they know the students that need to be targeted, helped, need more one on one time and to offer more services and support. Ms. Hulet also said that programs, curriculum, staffing, etc. had not changed between the school years so it was surprising the ratings dropped.

Member Holmes-Sutton said she noticed the difference between last year showing zero and this year it was 20% which seemed significant in the elementary school.

Ms. Hulet stated that she feels it was because they were not getting an accurate reporting due to parents not filling out the questionnaires. When the school offered incentives if the questionnaires were returned

to the school, they were able to get 85% of the green forms returned which was a considerable amount since the forms are not electronic and they are getting more accurate data.

She also mentioned that the school is five years in, and they are now going to look up the Free and Reduced Lunch Plan program. She feels when they offer that program, they will also get a more accurate number of the population of the school.

Chair Mackedon said that the green form has a box that says you do not need to fill out the form. Some parents do not fill out the form because it is a point of pride and they would qualify but they don't want to provide that information.

*Vice Chair Kirner made a motion to approve the recommendation of SPCSA Staff to Issue a Notice of Concern to American Preparatory Academy Las Vegas-Elementary and require the school to submit a report by February 1, 2020 which includes progress to date in implementing the school performance plan and a summary of mid-year assessment performance. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **m. Beacon Academy High School (1-Star), No Action**

Director Modrcin provided background that this high school is in Las Vegas that served approximately 400 students last year. The agenda item shows that it is a "no action" item but Director Modrcin thought it was important to provide some detail to explain staff's recommendations which is included for this agenda item.

The school has been rated as a 1-Star school for the past 2 years. It is important to note that Beacon Academy of Nevada falls under both the state's Alternative Performance Framework (APF) as well as its own, unique framework given the distinctive student population the school serves. Specifically, Beacon's charter contract stipulates that students are only eligible for enrollment if they are at least sixteen (16) years of age and meet one of the following criteria: 1) are significantly credit-deficient; 2) are or have been suspended or expelled; 3) are a habitual discipline problem; 4) are under court jurisdiction or adjudicated to be in need of supervision, or 5) have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Staff firmly believes that both the APF and the results under the school-specific framework (which will be available in early 2020) will provide a more accurate representation of the school's progress.

Given these factors, SPCSA staff is recommending that the Authority take no action regarding Beacon Academy of Nevada at this time. The school is up for renewal and the SPCSA is expecting the renewal application prior to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Tambre Tondryk, Executive Director of Operations, Beacon Academy. Andrea Damore, Executive Director of Academics, Beacon Academy. Ms. Tondryk explained that the APF is new to Nevada so there aren't a lot of schools within this framework. The school still meets with the Department of Education to discuss the APF and how these schools will be measured. This was the school's baseline year. Their primary mission is to help the under-credited students. There is set criteria for the school's students. They are expected to maintain their status and their scores or to improve. The rating is now "to be determined" and next year they will have a rating under the framework.

Member Kirner said that Beacon Academy is a charter school and recognizes the population they serve. He asked if there are any other schools in the state that serve a similar population of students. He thought there was a similar school in Washoe County but could not recall the name of the school.

Ms. Damore said there are several schools currently on the APF and there is one in Washoe, but she couldn't recall the name of it either, that serve a similar population and they are all considered credit-recovery.

Member Kirner asked if there is a measurement for alternative schools.

Ms. Damore answered that the APF the Department of Education has built does have measurements for all schools but a school with a high percentage of special education students has other categories and they are excluded from some of the categories. When more data is available there will be a comparison.

Member Kirner mentioned the maximum age being around 22 and asked what type of funding the school receives for these types of students.

Ms. Tondryk said the school is funded the same way the district education schools are funded which is based on enrollment and participation. The state will fund students up to the age of 21 unless they are special education and then it is 22 years of age.

Chair Mackedon thanked them for the work they do. This was not an action item, so no motion needed to be made.

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Somerset Academy (Dual Enrollment Policy Update)**

Mike Dang, Manager, Financial and Organizational Performance, State Public Charter School Authority. Mr. Dang's team responsibilities include the charter contract amendment process including requests for amendments (RFA). Mr. Dang's purpose is to present a request for amendment for possible action.

Somerset Academy of Las Vegas (Somerset) is seeking from the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority approval to implement a dual credit program. Statute requires high schools to enter into an agreement with a higher education institution to provide dual credit courses for students. Somerset's vision is to be a college prep school. The recommendation memorandum is included for this agenda item.

Mr. Dang presented background for Somerset. They opened their first Nevada campus in the fall of 2011 in North Las Vegas. The school is modeled after Somerset Academy of Florida, originally founded in 1997. The school operates under its current contract starting July 1, 2016 with a six-year term that expires on June 30, 2022.

Under Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 389.310, each school district and charter school shall enter into cooperative agreements with one or more community colleges, state colleges and universities to offer dual credit courses to pupils. Somerset Academy has established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) to offer these dual enrollment courses for its student body and believes that this program will further support the school's vision of being a quality "college prep school".

Mr. Dang acknowledged that this request is after-the-fact, meaning the SPCSA received this request after the current school year which began in August. While there is concern, it is staff's understanding perhaps the fact that statute now requires schools to institute a dual credit program may have caused some confusion. Regardless of the requirement to institute dual credit programs this does cause a material change to the contract regarding eligibility.

Regarding its eligibility, the SPCSA and the Executive Director also consider "a charter school's compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations and evidence relating to the academics, finance and organization of the charter school when determining whether to approve a request for an amendment to its charter contract," pursuant to NAC 388A.400. Staff have reviewed the factors and Somerset meets the standards.

Staff recommends the Authority approve Somerset's request to implement a dual credit program subject to the conditions set forth in the recommendation memorandum. Staff believes it will be helpful for Somerset to have this additional program option.

Chair Mackedon said she wanted to go on the record as saying "I really don't think that if something is required in statute that schools should have to do an amendment request. If suddenly, NDE starts to require all schools to provide pre-schools and they are giving us funding to provide pre-schools, I don't think every single one of our elementary schools should have to do an amendment request to do that. It is required by law that they do it. Quite frankly, some of this I think feels punitive where it is like acknowledging in writing that this could affect their organizational framework because it is after-the-fact. I kind of feel like well at least they are doing it. We haven't received any notice from a lot of schools so either they are out of compliance completely with the law and they are not offering dual credit or they just did it and didn't realize they needed to do an amendment request because it was required by law. There is probably a little mix of both. I would hate to be punitive when they are just trying to get in compliance with the law."

Executive Director Feiden responded that the SPCSA currently and has continued to have dual enrollment as an amendment item. The Authority could consider changing that and she encouraged the Board to consider two things which she explained in some detail.

Chair Mackedon responded that she would like to see this as an agenda item so it can be considered. She said she does not want this to impact Somerset negatively on the organizational performance ratings. She doesn't think the Authority should be about it when it is required by the law.

Member Moulton said that as policymakers we try to follow the lead of the Legislature. This shows the importance of keeping up on our policies and regulations.

Member Kirner stated that he sees the need to keep the contracts up to date but he thinks that some of these things can be consent agreements. He thinks the Board needs to acknowledge this; not necessarily approve it but if there are different types of dual enrollment then it needs to be approved but if it is legislative then it would seem to fall into a consent decree.

Chair Mackedon asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

Member Kirner asked if the Chair was looking for a motion on something that has already happened.

Chair Mackedon read from the recommendation memo as to what staff recommended.

Executive Director Feiden responded that staff wants to acknowledge that they believe Academica, which is the service provider, and they were aware this was on the list of requirements. It is also expected that someone on Somerset's staff would have also been aware of the requirement. It is understood there could have been some confusion. The SPCSA was not aware of this until August 30<sup>th</sup> and there are some concerns as to this being late. Timeliness of submissions is important.

Chair Mackedon asked about the other high schools that may also be doing this and never turned in anything. Are they in compliance with the law?

Director Modrcin said that two other schools have brought forth amendments and they were approved by this body and the state board in plenty of time prior to the contract going into effect. Staff has agreed that this should be handled differently moving forward. This body, staff and the state board should sign off on this. The procedures by this school have historically fallen short of practice and concerns as to how this amendment was submitted. It is for those reasons staff is recommending all conditions be attached because this was heard late, and staff does not know if the state board has approved this.

Member Kirner asked if this is a requirement for all state high schools and, if so, is there a time frame for schools to establish this program. He also asked where the applications are for the other high schools.

Executive Director Feiden said they can investigate and make sure that all high schools have acted and if there are implementing it without approval, we will make sure they do so. These are supposed to go to the state board as well so there is the concern that if they are not coming to the SPCSA they may not be getting the proper approval from the state board. Without that approval the students cannot receive credit.

Mr. Dang said that the language says that each school district and charter school; it doesn't have an exception for elementary. It seems there are some language issues that need to be cleaned up in the next session. The language is confusing.

Member Kirner stated that they are late and they are asking us to approve something that Somerset is already doing so he doesn't understand why it needs to be approved.

*Member Moulton made a motion to: 1) Approve the Good-Cause exemption; 2) Approve amending the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas (Somerset) contract to enable the school to enter into a contract with CSN; 3) Approve the Somerset RFA to implement a dual credit program for all eligible high school students enrolled in the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas network, subject to the following conditions: a. Somerset ensures that all details related to the dual-credit program are in place immediately in this SYE 2020. b. That the following are submitted by the school to SPCSA - Supporting documentation that the governing body of Somerset has applied and been approved by the State Board, thereby permitting students to earn credits during the upcoming school year. Member Randolph seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

## **Agenda Item 9 – Strategic Planning**

Executive Director Feiden said this is an update to the strategic planning process. The Strategic Plan and the Growth Management Plan are intertwined and so she said they would be addressed together. Today she was discussing a couple of the components of the Strategic Plan which are the vision, mission and values that are some of the higher components. Staff developed some proposals/options to consider. She is asking the Board for its direction at this meeting.

Executive Director Feiden began with the vision statement portion. A vision statement is an aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish. The PowerPoint presentation is included for this agenda item. There are three proposed vision statements that were agreed upon by staff at their retreat.

Executive Director Feiden read all three possible vision statements contained in the presentation.

The Board discussed all three proposed vision statements. They felt that “Nevada” needed to be inserted somewhere in the vision statement. The Board recommended combining options A and B with some changes.

Chair Mackedon said that the direction of the vision statement seemed to have a consensus as to what changes needed to be made.

Executive Director Feiden said that we will come back in November with changes and in December approve a full plan. This is a working session and she appreciated the Board’s flexibility.

Executive Director Feiden moved on to the possible mission statements, which is a declaration of an organization’s core purpose and focus. She read the three options contained on page 7.

The Board went on to discuss their opinions regarding options A through C. They all agreed they would like the words “autonomy” and “innovative” added somewhere in the mission statement.

Executive Director Feiden moved on to the last piece which are the proposed values along with description statements. She recommended that they should focus on picking the words at this meeting and view the descriptions as ideas. She defined values as being principles that guide organizational thinking and actions.

Lisa Dzierbicki, Education Programs Professional, State Public Charter School Authority. Ms. Dzierbicki provided some background information about the staff retreat that was held on September 12<sup>th</sup>. A committee was formed from staff members of the SPCSA that volunteered. The committee met a few times after the retreat and had thoughtful discussions about the values.

Ms. Dzierbicki went over the six possible values setting forth the value names and descriptions which are shown on pages 9 through 15 of the presentation. Page 16 sets forth value names.

The Board discussed the options on page 16. There were recommendations to number 1 that included adding “student and family focused” and “choice-based” was suggested to be added to the values. Conversation continued as to the six draft values. “Student improvement and success” was also recommended. Some said the word “autonomy” can be misunderstood. They expressed the need to be



thoughtful about the choice of words because this will become a public document. This is what the Authority is going to be judged on, so the wording is crucial. The Board moved on to the other draft values numbers 2 through 6. The discussion went on about whether the values are for the schools or the Authority. There was a lengthy discussion regarding all the values.

Executive Director Feiden gave her presentation on the Growth Management Plan which began on page 19 of the PowerPoint presentation. She began by saying that Assembly Bill 462 has four parts. The Growth Management Plan is one of those parts and is due by January 1, 2020. Ms. Feiden provided some updates that staff has made and the progress that has taken place. The timeline is shown on page 20. The process for developing the Plan is shown on page 21. She went into further detail as to the stakeholder engagement portion of the plan. Page 23 is a summary of survey responses. Approximately 2,500 individual responses were received.

Brian Scoggins, Deputy Director, State Public Charter School Authority. Mr. Scoggins said that the surveys were sent out to a variety of sources in diverse areas, rural and economic development agencies, various chambers of commerce, etc. to reach as broad a population as possible. Mr. Scoggins said that more surveys may be sent out to get additional input from stakeholders.

Executive Director Feiden continued with page 24 which is a summary of the targeted outreach. The third level is the working group which included a broad representation of individuals throughout the state and included approximately 15 individuals. There will be three meetings of the working group in October.

Executive Director Feiden stated that an overview will be provided at the November 1 Board Meeting. The overview will be a draft of the most critical components of the Growth Management Plan. It will include the key goals, targets and information. The December 13 or December 17 will be for the review and approval of that document and the final document will be submitted by January 1, 2020 to the Legislative Committee on Education.

Executive Director Feiden made a note that over the course of October there will be opportunities for the schools and other stakeholders to provide feedback.

Member Kirner asked if there is a date for the January Interim Committee on Education meeting.

Executive Director Feiden said that the dates have been set and she will provide the dates to the Authority once she looks them up on their website.

Member Kirner wanted to know if Executive Director Feiden would like members of the Board to attend the Interim meetings with her. He said that he assumes there will be a presentation.

Executive Director Feiden said that if there is a presentation it would be helpful to have Board members present to help address questions or anything that might come up during the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 10 - SPCSA Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Feiden began her report with the listening tour. Superintendent Ebert and her team visited with the SPCSA. The Authority was the fourth visit of the eighteen stops visit. They visited two of the SPCSA schools and focused on the Shining Star schools which are the high-performing,

high-poverty schools which are Equipo and Mater Academy. Six of the Board members joined one of those two meetings.

They had three round tables with a total of 30 school leaders, teachers and parents were able to speak with the Superintendent and ask questions and share thoughts. It was a good learning opportunity and Members Kirner and Randolph were able to sit in on one of the school leader meetings.

Nine applications are expected to be received in November and December and capacity interviews have been scheduled.

Amendments are due by October 15<sup>th</sup> and 10 schools have submitted letters of intent for potential amendments so there will be several of them. They will be heard in either the December and January or a combination of the two meetings.

There are seven renewals applications. They will be split between November and December. Some should be in December so graduation rates are available. This year we also must consider term lengths and that may be impacted by graduation rates. There will be four in November and three in December. The high schools would be in November and Quest Academy would be in December due to the ongoing litigation and needed as up to date information as possible.

#### **Agenda Item 11 – Long-Range Board Calendar**

Chair Mackedon said that they settled on Fridays with a couple of meetings in the early afternoon or evening.

Executive Director Feiden asked if any of the Board members plan to be absent to let staff know. They also have the option of calling in if they cannot be physically present at the meeting.

Member Kirner asked if there was an update on the Argent property?

Mr. Herrick responded that it is his understanding that the escrow has fallen through for the Argent property. He plans on speaking with Mr. Kern in the next week. He believes that the property has been relisted. It will be included in the November or December agenda for an update.

#### **Agenda Item 12 – Public Comment #2**

Patricia Haddad, Leads Community Pack Initiative for Opportunity 180. Ms. Haddad said a core part of their work is celebrating the success of schools that are beating the odds. This year they released the inaugural version of their annual top school's report to highlight schools that are doing great things that need it the most. Ms. Haddick set forth the requirements to be a top school. She wanted to congratulate two SPCSA schools that met the top school criteria which are Nevada Prep Middle School and Mater Academy Mountain Vista Middle School. She noted that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Middle School received honorable mention for their math and GP.

#### **Agenda Item 13 – Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Statement to be read at the October 4<sup>th</sup> at the State Public Charter School Authority meeting.

My name is Teri McNabb. I am here to support Nevada Connections Academy. I am a parent, and I want you to know how Nevada Connections Academy has made a difference for our family. We decided to enroll our Son Payton in Nevada Connections Academy for his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, because he was not able to have success and confidence in a brick & mortar school. We knew he was a good student & he did like to learn but there were many distractions that made it hard for him to learn. He was constantly frustrated & not understanding what was going on in the classroom. After trying to communicate with teachers, all the testing they did, the curriculum changes & the class interruptions, I had enough. I was tired of fighting a system that I knew would never listen to me & would never change. Most of these brick & mortar schools cater to the student that can get good test grades.

I knew Nevada Connections Academy was another option & I have to say it was the best decision we had ever made for Payton. Since we have put Payton in Nevada Connection this year, we have noticed a big difference in him. He is being able learn at his own pace & concentrate in a comfortable environment. His success shows in his schoolwork, his grades & the comments from his teachers. If it was not for Nevada Connections Academy I do not know where we would be.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Teri McNabb

For the record, my name is Kim Arkerson.

Authority board, I speak in front of you as an educator, a parent and someone truly concerned with the state of School Choice in Nevada.

Four of my children have been enrolled at NCA over the last four years... currently only one is in attendance this year due to family changes, but in a perfect world - all of my children would attend NCA - until they graduate. They were successful, they were independent and had amazing teachers that motivated them and challenged them to strive for more.

My five year old daughter Emery has developmental delays, is mostly non verbal, has sensory issues and would simply be swallowed and eaten up at a brick and mortar school. Here as a kindergarten student at NCA, she is thriving... participating, attending field trips, crushing her Speech services and frankly blowing my mind with her success. It is no doubt because of all of the supports and programs she has been offered just in these first few months of this school year.

NCA works. NCA works for many families... for a variety of reasons. It may not work for everyone and that is okay... the world is not a perfect place. All schools are not created equal... and neither are reviews of them or their star ratings. A review or a rating should serve as an FYI for those looking for additional information before making a choice that works best for their family. Reviews and ratings are not the be all and end all - human connections, teachers and their students are and those are personal and subjective.

It's very sad to think that so many families, including my own, are losing this school choice option. I believe in NCA as a teacher and a parent. I can say that our doors are open to any Nevada Department of Education or State Public Charter School Authority member who wants to come look at our data and learn more about our school. As the saying goes, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Don't judge us by our rating. Rather, come see what we do.



Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Nevada Connections Academy. My name is Jennifer Fletcher 6 of my 7 children are currently enrolled in NCA. As a Christian military family we decided from the beginning that sending our children away as full time students was not the best plan for us. So we traditionally homeschooled. I will humbly admit here that I am far from perfect and my particular imperfections shine their brightest in areas like organization and diligence! You can imagine the negative affect this had on our studies.

So a year ago when our oldest was becoming a teenager we knew we had to find a better way to train our children from home. I had heard how Connections Academy is the perfect hybrid for families who want utilize all of the benefits of a well-rounded public charter school education from the comforts of home so we joined the NCA tribe. I opted for a soft start, enrolling "only" 3 younger kids. I was very nervous to accept the challenge of adapting to the needed structure I knew a certified charter school would provide. NCA's staff and my children hit the ground running and far exceeded my goals! Our 2<sup>nd</sup> grader jumped 34 points in MAP scores from fall to spring, the average goal for good growth on that test is 12 points. Our very bright first grader was encouraged and challenged and thrived under a teacher who was also new to NCA. And our 5<sup>th</sup> child got to become our first official graduate as he walked that stage at UNLV surrounded by his exceptional kindergarten team! We are heartbroken and angry to be informed that we were given no option to commission for their school to carry on as we had planned.

But this fall our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders began their NCA journey. We met their teachers at a local hotel/casino. I joked that it was an odd place for a school meet-n-greet. Mr. Holliday an innovative science teacher said, "Hey this is the best space for us to get to connect with our new students and we will always do whatever is best for them!" his firm reply embodies the heart of Nevada Connections Academy. They work tirelessly to provide the best option for our family. NCA is the only full time online public school option in our state. Our older children are only beginning to enjoy the experiences and knowledge they will gain as students at NCA. We need live lessons with passionate certified teachers and field trips to vibrant places in the city I've never heard of and the accountability of deadlines and check-ins and the excitement of clubs and activities! We need Nevada Connections Academy! Keeping THE BEST EDUCATION PLAN FOR MY CHILDREN OPEN IS IN YOUR HANDS THIS MORNING. We are hoping and praying that you make the right decision because NCA is absolutely the right decision for us! So please save the mustangs!!!

our School!!

## The Six Indicators of Student Success at Nevada Connections Academy

With regards to the 2016-2017 District Accountability Report, our family has been able to achieve the following goals set by the school district for the school district. As representatives of that populace, we feel our experience deserves consideration concerning the rating of online schools, specifically Nevada Connections Academy.

### **Goal 1: Increase Grade 3 Proficiency Rates in Reading**

Our children's proficiency rates in reading have increased due to the staggered timing of reading assignments granted by the ability to walk away from a subject, therefore reducing anxiety and stress upon our children. Our children are excited to exhibit their ability to identify new words and openly practice the use of new words in an environment that encourages trial without fear from peers. We read large texts as a family, such as *The Lord of the Rings* novels and the *Harry Potter* collection. Proficiency clearly includes comprehension of the material provided, which our children easily demonstrate. The learning platform provided by Nevada Connections Academy encourages students to rely on their own ability to seek solutions rather than idly waiting for teachers to supply them with answers, which is a vital trait, even as an adult.

### **Goal 2: Reduce the overall achievement gap percentage points in elementary and middle school between the highest-performing subgroup and ethnic/racial subgroups.**

The achievement gap has been reduced due to our ability to learn in our own environment, however this goal may not be available in the future if the online option is removed. Our second child is diagnosed on the autism spectrum and is receiving a 504 plan with the Nevada Connections Academy. He flourishes as the individual he is, with the freedom from classroom etiquette. The option to travel from his computer as he needs allows him the opportunity to recalibrate, thus demonstrating self-care and awareness. The online option at Nevada Connections Academy seamlessly integrates the 504 model by catering directly to the student's need for more time on assignments. In absence of classroom distraction and social adherence, our son is proving that he is an exemplar student.

### **Goal 3: Increase the percentage of students graduating each year.**

Graduating as a Nevada Connections Academy student is our goal, but as the threat of closure looms, this goal will be a harder one to achieve. Our family has taken the option of applying into the Charter program in the past. We have attended CSN Cheyenne for preschool, Northwest Academy for Kindergarten, Quest Academy for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Coral Academy for 3<sup>rd</sup>, finally finding our school of choice at Connections Academy. We wish to stay with this school as we are the model family for success at the online level. We believe that allowing our family to prove that the school model at Nevada Connections Academy works, the school district, too, shall be impressed. It is our belief that Nevada Connections Academy is pioneering the path for future online options in Nevada with their comprehensive program and open acceptance model, quintessentially designed for the future.

### **Goal 4: Increase the percentage of parents reporting that they have been informed regarding their child's progress and feel welcome at school.**

My family feels wholeheartedly welcome, supported, and well informed by Connections Academy. The school's webmail system is always available for teacher-student-administration communication. We have not ever felt confused about our children's progress as we know precisely what they are learning and we can witness first-hand how exactly the curriculum is implemented. We receive daily updates of happenings at our school, our children's progress, and on certain days, our children interact directly with

their teachers via a web conference known within the school as a "Live Lesson." Here, our children demonstrate directly to the teacher what they have learned and receive feedback and guidance. The live lessons provide our children with teacher assisted instruction for harder projects and anticipated assignments. If the live lesson is missed, a recording is always provided to the student.

**Goal 5: Increase the percentage of students who feel safe and happy at school.**

The wellbeing of our children has increased substantially with the ability to stick together and work through the learning process as a family unit. Our children see and interact with their father, who works nights. They receive immediate help, not always available in a classroom setting. They receive the greatest level of student understanding from their parents, who know intimately their personal quirks. The environment is devoid of bullying and social pressure. The nutrition of our children stays within our family ideals and does not generate waste for the school district. They are not bound to time restraints or weather incompatibilities when physical education is considered. We are given the freedom to exercise as a family, to enjoy the outdoors later in the evening when the weather is optimal, and to engage in stimulating activities that don't require the cooperation of 20 other students. When a field trip is scheduled, our children are excited to meet their peers. Nevada Connections Academy staff have always been supportive of each family's level of involvement, and for the families of this school, it is a mighty fine system! The necessity to allow our children to be precisely who they are, rambunctious and sometimes spacey, without the fear of reprimand is crucial to their success. We would say that our children are very happy.

**Goal 6: Increase the number of students completing Advanced Placement (AP) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses each year.**

We would love to apply in Advanced Placement (AP) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses when the time presents itself, yet again with the ~~THREAT~~ of closure looming, the ability to prove our excellence is removed.

Concerning attendance and truancy, these are non-issues. Exposure to pathogens in the school setting is nonexistent, therefore we do not have sick days. Compulsory engagement of each subject by our children does sometimes exceed the 8 hour school day, yet our children do not feel overburdened or that their personal time has been taxed. There isn't a reason not to attend class at home since the effort of travel is negated. We are always present and our assignments are always on schedule.

We believe that Nevada Connections Academy exhibits the foundations of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Nevada Connections Academy is an innovated approach to the learning environment. The school upholds standards and protections for disadvantaged and high-needs students. There is an absolute expectation of accountability that needs to be considered over a longer measure of time as the school does remain transient for students. With this regard, as the population shifts and changes, the school district must understand the need for flexibility. There are students who excel and families who challenge the brick-and-mortar model. We call for the Nevada Board of Education to stand together with families of Nevada Connections Academy to keep the K-5, and continuing, K-12 online option open for all Nevada families as Nevada will be the model for the future of our national education system.



**From:** Julius Tan <juliusfst10@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 3, 2019 2:21 PM  
**To:** Danny Peltier <dpeltier@spcsa.nv.gov>  
**Subject:** Connections Academy

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing because I am unable to go to the meeting tomorrow because I work, and my children's mother cannot attend either since she is unable to drive due to a disability. However, I wanted to make sure that our voices are still heard.

We have an 8th grader and a first grader. My fiancé has homeschooled both of our children since our eldest son was in Kindergarten. We love the flexibility homeschool offers in regards to what they learn, how they learn, being able to work with the children at their levels, and being able to work around our schedules. We just moved to Nevada a little over a year ago, and we home schooled both our boys for their 7th and Kindergarten years. This year when we were looking up curriculum for them to use, we kept running into issues with our curriculum choices. There were certain aspects we were unable to purchase as homeschoolers. Certain features of the curriculum that I feel are an integral part of the curriculum are not available to us.

We spoke to a family member who has lived in Nevada since her son was 1 year old. She homeschooled her son as well until the 9th grade when she put him into Connections Academy. She told us that NCA is a wonderful program that really prepared her son for college. She solely credits NCA for his academic success where he is getting a 3.9 G.P.A in college. After hearing the success they had with the program, we decided to give NCA a shot. We were pleasantly surprised with the program. Not only is NCA using the curriculum I had been researching for months, my youngest son gets all of the features we were denied as homeschoolers. Not to mention, we have teacher support if either of my kids need assistance.

We are saddened to learn the fate of NCA. We are so sad that we will have to find an alternative for our youngest son and possibly our eldest son for next year. The only alternative for us is traditional homeschool. NCA is an amazing compromise for parents who don't have the ability to homeschool their children but do not want to send them to the local brick and mortar school. There are many reasons parents are unable to send their kids to the local school. For parents in our situation, where the primary caretaker does not drive due to a disability or who want to meet their children where they are and give them a more personalized education, NCA provides them with a middle of the road option. We went into NCA thinking we were just going to try it this year but had decided that we will probably stick with it until our children graduate. Unfortunately, I fear that won't become a reality. NCA is being forced to close their elementary portion of the school and have yet to be approved for their Junior High & High School grades.

If NCA is used correctly, it is an amazing program. It uses the same curriculum that the schools use. It isn't meant for parents to send their kids to the computer and that is it. They say specifically, the parents are the learning coach. They are also responsible in making sure their children are learning the material and must do what it takes to ensure that.

We are beyond frustrated that the SBAC scores are being used against the schools and ultimately the children. Those scores are not supposed to affect the kids. The problem with that is, you are not taking into account the different reasons students might not do well on the test. Some kids have test anxiety and some kids don't care what their answers are because they just want to get done as quick as possible. Another issue we have with this is that if our local brick and mortar school got the same SBAC scores, they would not be penalized and closed down. I live in a small town where we only have 1 school per Elementary, Junior High, and High school. There is no way those schools would be shut down. If the graduation percentages are also being held against them, that is not fair. There are many

reasons a student might not graduate. They might move or have to go to traditional schooling for various reasons.

We are asking you to please renew NCA for the Junior High & High school grades. It would be such a disservice to those who rely on NCA as an education choice for their children. We are also asking you to renew the elementary portion. We heard that Nevada did pass a law that will change the way these Charter schools are rated so we implore you to renew their elementary license until that new law takes affect. By removing NCA as an option for kids, you are really doing a disservice to their educational needs. All kinds of children thrive in all different types of educational choices. It depends on the child and how much work the parent is willing to do to ensure that the method they chose works best for their child. Please don't take NCA away from the parents who are doing their best to use the program as it was intended. Their children are thriving in this program, and it is a wonderful compromise to traditional school and homeschooling. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Julius Tan

Good morning, Chair Mackedon, my name is Victoria Neer and I serve as the High School Support Specialist for Nevada Connections Academy.

Nevada Connections Academy serves a variety of students, many of whom have very unique needs that prompted them to seek a different type of learning environment.

Specifically at the high school level, one of the largest unique populations that we serve are students who have been bullied to the point of causing severe anxiety, depression, and even issues of suicide that prevent them from being able to be in any type of bricks and mortar learning environment.

While bullying in the bricks and mortar environment is the number one reason stated by families when asked why they chose NCA, our families choose to continue to stay with NCA for a variety of reasons that are not easily shown on the state report card.

What the state report card can't show is the lifelong relationships that are created because of the unique way in which instruction is offered in the online learning environment. The majority of typical classroom instruction offered here at NCA is one-on-one with the students' teachers. One-on-one instruction not only offers the teacher the ability to tailor their instruction to individual student needs, but it offers an opportunity for students to build relationships and connections with teachers free from the distractions in a traditional classroom environment.

Because the online learning environment eliminates the distractions and restraints of a traditional classroom, students who suffer from mental or physical health illnesses are better served with an online learning environment. Students who want to advance or are participating in athletics or the entertainment industry are better served with the flexible schedule the online learning environment offers. Students who are currently homeless and desperately need some stability are better served by being enrolled in an online learning environment where the technology is provided for them and can travel with them regardless of where "home" may be for the day, week, or month. Ultimately, students who require an environment that breaks the mold of the traditional classroom learning style are better served by being allowed the choice to attend Nevada Connections Academy.

Many of the high school families who have chosen to enroll at Nevada Connections Academy have enrolled with us because they have struggled for years in other learning environments. The online learning environment works for them because it is different in its approach to student learning and the ability teachers have to form lifelong connections based upon the individualized mentoring approach toward student learning and building relationships.

Plastered across our social media platforms for our families are multitudes of messages that our school has been the answer to their prayers and has saved their child's life. That phrase, "You

saved my life" is often used in hyperbole; however, due to the unique nature of the students that attend our school, Nevada Connections Academy has truly saved so many of our students' lives and given our families hope for a brighter future.

Having worked at Nevada Connections Academy for 7 years, I have seen the battles our school and families have gone through. We have met the expectations set by this board at the end of 2017 for our high school. In fact, we have exceeded the expectations having increased our high school graduation rate by almost 20% with fidelity and integrity in one year. My request to you is to seek understanding of the unique program and public school offered to Nevada families by our virtual education and to allow us to continue our work with students to help them graduate instead of dropout.

Thank you

For the record... my name is Alison Thomas, Elementary Support Specialist for Nevada Connections Academy. Chairwoman Mackadon and the authority board... I have had the privilege of teaching at NCA for more than 10 years. Our student population at NCA is as varied as the population in our state. We support students from every race, background, socioeconomic status, religion, and region. Our student's abilities and interests span the spectrum, and regardless of the time they spend with us, we always do our best to support them.

Throughout my 10-years here I have seen our staff push themselves to new places to engage with students and families. We have lifted the bar on ourselves, but despite what we see as successes, the state's rating system says it is not enough. This rating may seem terrible to most, but what most students, families and staff at NCA will tell you is it doesn't matter. The single star does not represent or define what we do or what we mean to so many. The categories measured make sense in a brick and mortar setting, but a brick and mortar setting does not make sense for many of our families.

For some students, NCA is the first school where they felt safe. For others, it is the first place that parents actually felt like their child was learning and/or being challenged. Many students come to us as a last chance to earn their high school diploma. We serve big cities, rural communities, average students with families who are frustrated with the zoned school options, competitive athletes, and child actors. We support special education students who can work in an environment that's familiar to them and with the people who know them best, families living in hotels or shelters, and every other type of student in between.

With our elementary school closing, I continue to wonder where will the student's go? Most have tried other schooling options and chose us because we have the ability to meet their needs in a way other schools could not. Others were pointed in our direction and are now finding the success and support they needed. Washoe and Clark County schools are bursting at the seams; the classrooms are at max capacity and there are not enough teachers or buses.

The threat of closure has loomed over NCA for many years, but that has not slowed us down. We will finish the year strong, with our heads held high. We believe in what we do. Virtual schools are not a fad. They fill a need and a want, and we hope that you will continue to educate yourself on this type of school choice option to better serve the students in our state. Thank you.

Members of the board, my name is Kimberlee Linton and I am here to support Nevada Connections Academy. I am a parent and I want you to know how Nevada Connections Academy has made a difference for my family. My family has been a part of Nevada Connections Academy for 4 years and in that time, it has provided nothing but a positive and safe learning environment that meets both of my 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade daughters' individual needs.

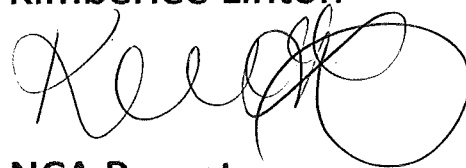
Nevada Connections Academy has allowed them to succeed by having teachers, staff, and administrators who care and support them through every aspect of their educational journey. My husband and I are more involved in their education now than ever before since we get a firsthand look at the curriculum and lessons, they are completing at a pace that is best for them while engaging in meaningful discussions about what they are learning. They are able to learn without unnecessary distractions and pressures that brick and mortar schools have. Being included and a part of an online school, Nevada Connections Academy has provided them with the opportunity to make positive friendships by interacting with other students during Live Lessons and participating in field trips. They are not made to feel less important because of what they wear, what they like, or friends that they have. They don't have to eat lunch secluded because a certain group didn't like who they talked to earlier in the day or be brushed aside from their teacher because of discipline and/or behavior issues in class that takes time away from their education. They don't have to rush and move on when it comes to learning the curriculum without being proficient in it because the school is on a schedule or agenda of what needs to be taught by a certain time.

Being a part of Nevada Connections Academy has not only provided a great educational environment with the curriculum taught, but it also provides and encourages students to become proficient with technology at an early age. It has given my daughters' the confidence to know and work with different computer programs that will benefit them now and in the future. Nevada Connections Academy has also guided them to become self-starters with their education and disciplined with being involved and in charge of their schedules and completing daily lessons.

Lastly, with everything I have discussed about why Nevada Connections Academy has made a difference for my family, the main factor as to why it works for us is the flexibility and time together as a family that would otherwise be lost. My husband currently serves in the military and being able to modify my daughters' school schedule that is tailored to benefit spending time with him is something we would not be able to do if they attended a brick and mortar school.

In conclusion, while online schools may not be suited for everyone, it remains the best possible option for my family along with many other families throughout Nevada. Thank you.

Kimberlee Linton

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberlee Linton', with a large, stylized circular flourish at the end.

NCA Parent

10/4/2019



Chair Mackadon + board

Good morning ~~everyone~~. My name is Kaycee Green, and I am the chair for the math department as well as a manager for the high school at NCA. I have been with this school for the last 6 years, and in the profession for 15 years. I have worked in a variety of charter schools, public schools, private schools, and online schools, so I understand the need for oversight and regulation. But I also understand that behind every statistic is a child and that child has a story. We are here in front of you not because of our many students who are excelling in their courses. We are here in front of you because of a population of students who are impacting the data of every school around the state no matter where they attend.

This current strategy penalizes schools who are servicing these students that require our greatest attention, while also accepting the impact of their enrollment on our data. We are a public school; we don't turn away families; we don't say no. As a result, we have many families where online school is certainly not the best fit. But while they are enrolled, I can assure you that our staff is doing everything we can to ensure that they have the best learning experience possible. My high school math department completed over 6,500 successful calls during the last school year and had an 86% pass rate in high ~~school~~ combined course school math courses— including our credit recovery courses. We are working hard; we are addressing student learning gaps and off cohort credit deficiencies all while also meeting the needs of our highest achieving students.

I understand that many of you could see us as part of a problem in the state's failing education system. To you, we might just be another underperforming school that just can't get its students to achieve. But what you are missing are the individual stories of why these families end up selecting to come to online school. Our families each have backstories and so many reasons why online school is their best option. So many families, in fact, that we are currently at capacity and taking students on through the waitlist process, as you know. The desire for online education is apparent, and I am grateful for the state recognizing that continuing to use the same framework to compare online schools to other schools is not reasonable. I am looking forward to the new framework for online school to be available and applied

because it will properly reflect the success of NCA. I know that there are many issues yet to be resolved and that there are always areas to improve, but I cannot see how we are not a part of the solution to the problems facing education in Nevada. We are sometimes the last hope for many desperate families, and no matter what this board decides about offering online education to the students of Nevada, the students and families want online education to be available to them. I am proud of my school, my staff, and my students. I understand that we may not meet the standards required by the current framework, but online schools were not even a consideration when the framework was developed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kayce A  
10/21/19

My children & I  
My name is Sheila Redmon. I am here to support Nevada Connections Academy. I am the parent of two elementary Connections Academy students, and I want you to know how Nevada Connections Academy has made a difference for us.

Connections Academy has allowed me to be the parent of my children, to be a part of their education. **Connections Academy allows ME to parent.**

When we learned about ~~their dad~~ <sup>my husband having</sup> ~~had~~ **cancer** last year, we had NCA, and our children were able to maintain their honor roll status without disruption. We live nearly one hour and a half from Carson City where my husband needed daily treatments of radiation. The car ride became school time.

When **bullying** was an issue for my daughter in Girl Scouts in our small town, it was a NCA teacher that my daughter reached to for help. My daughter grew to realize her own strengths to stay positive, kind and continue to be the bright and cheerful young lady that she is.

Regardless of the outcome today, I must find schooling for my children that are still elementary grade levels. It is our sincere hope to be able to return one day, to the interaction with staff and the wonderful quality of curriculum and programs offered at the bully-free zone of NCA. Please allow us to continue the privilege choice that we were given when we first started out with Connections Academy over 5 years ago.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding NCA to remain open and show the state of Nevada that even bill paying is a virtual world!

Sincerely, Sheila Redmon

Chairwoman Mackadon and authority board... My name is Tarah Evans. I am a teacher for Nevada Connections Academy. State testing performance has been and continues to be a huge factor that impacts our school rating. As a public school, we are required to administer all tests mandated by the State of Nevada including SBAC, EOC, ACT, MAPs, Brigance and any others that the state requires of public schools. Our teachers fan out across the state to facilitate these tests from down south in Mesquite all the way North to Owyhee (15 minutes from the Idaho border) and all the towns and cities in between... these take teachers away from their students and their own families for days to weeks. For example that would mean I would have to take the entire 1-2 month SBAC window and travel from here to Jean, Nevada (30 miles southwest of Las Vegas), all the way up to Elko and Ruby Valley with many stops in between. And that is only 1 of the tests that my class alone is required to take. Some of our students even have to travel great distances just to get to the nearest town so we can test them. Logistically, it's intense and hectic, but we make it happen. We do everything we can to get students to state testing, but a huge reason families choose our school is because the classroom environment is too much for their child. Whether it was experience with bullying, test anxiety or something else. For many students physically arriving to a foreign location to take a test with people who are essentially strangers can be, to say the least, overwhelming. Unfortunately, given our large enrollment, our teachers cannot test just the students in their class. This has meant that we have had students go to the location that we are going to be using so that they can become familiar with the setting to try to limit the impact that anxiety will have on their testing. Many of students have come to our school to escape the pressure and anxiety that they feel in a traditional bricks-and-mortar class but have to face these feelings head on when they have to test in a face to face setting with our school. As you can imagine this can seem impossible for many of our students. Testing is just one of the BIG obstacles that our online school has had to face as it is measured like the traditional bricks- and- mortar schools.

My name is Dr. Chris McBride & I am superintendent of Nevada Connections Academy.

With new Board members, we wanted to take the time to introduce ourselves; explain how we serve Nevada families & students & how mobility impacts rankings but also address how Connections is making changes with this student reality in mind; and finally, during public comment, you heard from families how NCA is meeting their child's academic needs. I won't cover each slide in detail as you have the presentation in your Board package and we want to respect the 10 minute presentation general guideline we've been asked to follow.

Nevada Connections Academy was founded in 2007 and currently serving 3,671 students in grades K-12 throughout Nevada with more than 1000 additional students at some point in the enrollment process

Our graduation rate is always a point of discussion. In the last year, graduation rate increased almost 20% in one year with the 17-18 grad rate at 64% and when we get the 2018-19 validated graduation rate in December from the Nevada Department of Education, we expect that rate to be even higher. Our graduation rates have far exceeded the graduation rate percentages agreed upon with the SPCSA in Grad Cure document signed at the end of 2017. Again, we have exceeded the primary expectations set in this Cure document.

In addition, Connections students' scores are higher than the state averages on student Social Emotional Learning measures. There is an extensive body of research that has demonstrated the impact of Social and Emotional Learning on academic growth (e.g., [Casel.org](#); [Zins et al., 2007](#), [Durlak et al., 2011](#)). Social Emotional Learning helps students develop important competencies that last a lifetime ([Taylor et al., 2017](#)), and these effects are often especially pronounced among students with complex needs such as those that drive students and families to enroll in Connections Academy schools --- e.g. health concerns, bullying and safety, looking to be challenged, trying to catch up, and needing flexibility ([Pearson Efficacy Report](#); [TransformingEducation.org](#); [PromotePrevent.org](#)).

Now that we reviewed some positive highlights, I wanted to discuss how Nevada Connections works for our students: I won't touch on each slide & will move through these quickly, but please interrupt me if you have questions.

Our NCA teachers are the lifeblood of the school & connect with students daily via phone; webcam, email or live classroom interaction. One of my biggest surprises when I came into this position was teachers consistently telling me that they build much closer relationships with students and families than they ever did as a brick and mortar teacher.

The teacher & student are supported by a learning coach -- most often a parent -- who supports the student at home.

While our curriculum is great; NCA is always learning and improving. You will hear from Matt Wicks how the mobility of our students is changing our curriculum to better meet the needs of our students.

You will see quotes from our parents on these slides, and I would like to highlight what one parent told me who is associate professor of mathematics education at the University of Nevada - Reno. The complete quote is in my written statement but I wanted to highlight two areas that were important for this family.

Dear Chris,

It was nice to meet you. I just wanted to express my gratitude for Connections academy. My son started 10th grade this year.

I am grateful for the following:

- \*well sequenced high quality curriculum- everything builds on each other as opposed to random unsequenced lesson.
- \*If he did not understand something, he has the resources to go back and reread and restudy
- \*teachers provide opportunities for learning and demonstrating understanding.
- \*Great pacing of lessons, focus on learning as opposed to "busy work"
- \*Everynight I check to make sure my son comprehended the material. He is able to explain the key concepts and ideas of what he learned
- \*He is able to work in a style that is meaningful to him
- \*He is able to focus on learning without distractions
- \*Has time to develop a social life in the evenings with robotics club, boy scouts and church youth group.
- \*very responsive teachers, almost within the hour
- \*quick grading
- \*great live lessons- high quality. Great teachers!
- \*Teachers are also very quick and responsive with any questions that i might have.

Please let the staff know that we are grateful for the quality experience my son is getting. The one star rating does not define the learning experience he is getting. This morning he told me that he would like to remain in Connections until graduation. This is huge!



Teruni Lamberg (Zachary Lamberg's mother -grade 10)

This parent's son started last year in tenth grade and NCA offered him a learning style that is meaningful, without distractions and is moving him academically forward. This parent stated the "one star rating does not define the learning experience he is getting."

I will now turn it over to Matt Wicks for his portion of the presentation.



### **What does NCA mean to your family?**

Ability to teach my daughter & give her a quality education at home.

- Chrissy Bruening

NCA has been an amazing experience for our family. We live in a very rural community with 1 very small public school. The local school is failing miserably and does not provide an adequate education. We are an hour away from any other charter alternatives. NCA has allowed my three young children an opportunity to grow and thrive.

- Ruthann Devereaux-Gonzalez

NCA has been an amazing thing in our lives. My son has flourished and grown so much intellectually while enrolled at NCA. He has severe pediatric psoriasis, and as such, must take medications that render him immune deficient. NCA has been able to provide him with the socialization he misses by not attending school in person, while also keeping him safe from the countless germs of a physical school. We are terribly disheartened to hear he will not be able to return to NCA next year.

- Austen Morse

### **Safety**

- Veronica Gonzalez

Our children are zoned to a public school that is so overcrowded with children who don't even speak English that it would be impossible for my kids to learn in that environment. Our daughter's academic progression is above that of even the top school kids for her age using Nevada Connections Academy's educational curriculum.

The rate of change in technology and the economy has made it so that centralizing education in poorly funded facilities is no longer necessary. Attacking home-school services and charter schools does a disservice to many kids in poor neighborhoods that never get the attention they deserve from State and local officials.

We have no desire to place either of our children into the public school system where they will not get the attention they need to succeed. They do get that attention here at home and to great effect. The status quo in the state of Nevada's education system is not working. NCA works where county districts have failed. Do not take away our kids' educational future over politics.

- Bryan and Ashley Guzman

This is the best thing that has happened to my son. I am so grateful to all of his teachers. Christian was having a very difficult time in the Brick and Mortar school environment. I made the decision to have him go to Connections Academy and it was the best decision I have made.

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My son now gets an intimate education with these wonderful teachers. Some kids need that one on one time or in smaller groups so they can be heard. My son is that kind of child. He has excelled so much in all aspects and I am thrilled!

- Helen Chandli

I moved to Nevada a little over a year ago. I homeschooled my eldest son from Kindergarten through 7th grade, and I homeschooled my youngest son in Kindergarten. When I moved to Nevada, I was inundated with recommendations for Connections Academy. I was still debating whether I wanted to try Connections Academy. Then, I heard from my aunt who lives in Nevada and her son went to Connections Academy. She had nothing but wonderful things to say about the school. The deciding factor for me was the fact that my cousin is now in college with a near 4.0 G.P.A. and my Aunt solely credits Connections Academy for his academic success. She has told me numerous times that NCA is an amazing college preparatory school, and I get to see it first hand with the success of my cousin.

Connections Academy was a life saver for me and my kids. I have a disability that makes it difficult for me to drive my kids to and from school daily. I have been able to homeschool my children on their current levels but I love how I have teacher assistance when needed. Homeschooling has been amazing for us but NCA has been the great compromise between homeschooling and the local Brick and Mortar school. It is a great option for families that do not want to put their children in the local Brick and Mortar school but don't have the capability to homeschool their children whether that is financially or just the inability to do it all themselves.

NCA gives the children many opportunities to socialize with their classmates through field trips and other excursions. They make sure the kids keep on track with their school work, and they assign important assignments, such as projects they call portfolios, that will prepare them for the vigorous work of college. The teachers are amazing and really care about our children. They are available to assist them whenever they need it, and you can tell they teach because they love children and want to help them succeed in their futures. My youngest son is in first grade, and I love the elementary program as well. They use the curriculum the schools use. I was actually looking into buying that curriculum for my son when I thought I would homeschool him for first grade. The issue is that the curriculum I am allowed to purchase as a homeschooling Mom is not as complete as the one provided by the school. He gets all the features included in the program because it is through a school. All the interesting things he would be denied as a traditional homeschooler are included through NCA. They make learning fun and exciting for my son. NCA is innovative, and they really put an effort into helping the children succeed. They also have this really fun program called Lexia that helps the kids where they are at in their reading level. It helps them get to where they should be in reading for their grade. It is amazing. I am sad that he will no longer have access to that.

I am so disappointed that the choices I have for my son next year are really limited. It's either Brick and Mortar or homeschooling. I can also choose private school but that would be thousands of dollars a year. Our children deserve better. They deserve options for education.

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There is not a one size fits all when it comes to education, and we are really doing a disservice to our kids when we limit their options in regard to their education. Thank you.

- Lisa Leask

Having the ability to keep our daughter home with us, and still give her the best education that we can, has been invaluable! We have loved our experience over the last 2+ years with NCA and would be saddened to have it come to an end.

- Raini Lockett

Everything, my child loves this school.

- Cassandre Chavez

We choose to use this format of learning as all 3 children have been bullied not only by students but by teachers alike. My rural town has one option for schooling. Our youngest was spit on, yelling directly in her ear, pencils thrown at her and other classmates, and the teacher's response was he's special needs but not special enough to move to a special needs class. The school couldn't move her class because there aren't enough teachers. The other two have similar problems and all 3 would cry all morning before school, during school and a bit after school. Online school has been a blessing as now our kids are happy and look forward to classes and learning. The teachers have been very accommodating and it is truly a safe and tailored environment. Please do not take happiness and safety away from our and countless other children.

- Bernardo and Kristin Hernandez

This program means EVERYTHING, and I mean EVERYTHING to our family! Our son has a rare disease and cannot attend a regular high school. I had to quit my job as a teacher in Clark county school district to care for him after teaching 24 years. We've tried for the last few years (5th grade through 9th grade) to make it work for Evan in a physical school and in other similar at home programs (homebound, on-line). What makes this school special is the FLEXIBLE TIME FRAME that allows us to fit Evan's needs to the curriculum. In other words, if Evan is sick all morning, he is not punished for it and can sleep then catch up that night. As a teacher, I've seen other programs and been extremely disappointed with their lack of organization, quality of teachers, the pace, curriculum (yes, I know they all are supposed to meet the same curriculum- but they don't), feedback, the program on-line (tech problems), materials, etc. - YOU GUYS ARE STELLAR!!

Other schools, including the other online school we tried, have been nothing less than a nightmare for our entire family and promoted his illness. On multiple occasions they have continued to fail him regardless of all our efforts with meetings, parent involvement, his 504 and

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even bringing in an advocate from NVPEP. He is a smart boy and was in the GATE program before becoming so ill. He just needs a different schedule that fits our family with accommodating teachers that push for his highest levels academically- while understanding him if there is a relapse or hospital stay. This WONDERFUL, GOD SENT program allows Evan to push himself intellectually during those times when he is at his best at home and can then accommodate his physical needs while being sick.

This school is VITAL to not only our son's success but also to his MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL BEING. It's slowly bringing back his self-esteem from the last few years of negative experiences and for the first time I've seen him smile in sometime. We've all been through a lot. We're still not sure about Evan's lifespan but we are sure about one thing- WE COULDN'T BE WITHOUT THIS PROGRAM! So please, I know there must be others like us out there. KEEP THIS OUTSTANDING PROGRAM WITH THESE QUALITY TEACHERS!!

- Nicolle Hallums

My daughter has anxiety and depression and PTSD from sexual abuse. She came forward in 6th grade and for 3 years we battled in court. She missed 7th and 8th grade. They could not keep her in school as the anxiety and feeling of wanting to die overtook her. By her freshman year her father had been sentenced and she was doing well. She joined cheer, band, ROTC, etc. Being her mom, I allowed her to go out of town to games on the bus without me. The cheer coach would become mad and call the girls "little whores". My daughter by December had a complete breakdown. My daughter would miss school A LOT due to anxiety and I attempted to have a meeting with the school and teachers. They belittled my daughter. My mom and I with my daughter tried explaining how my daughter had PTSD, etc. They had Dr and psychiatrist notes. My daughter was told "if your teacher with cancer can be at school a kid YOU with so called PTSD can too". At that point, I called the meeting and stormed out. They did not understand. We started connections the following year. My daughter homeschooled at the end of her freshman year. No one understood her. She took 13 classes per semester to get ahead last year. She is back on track, completely caught up and will be able to graduate when she is to graduate. My daughters only option is connections. She has been able to heal because of the school. No one is mean to her and her teachers understand her.

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My son went 1 week to the middle school he is zoned for and was completely bullied and offered drugs. My son tried going back this year to public school and he was bullied badly again. Sadly, we are on a waitlist to get back in connections. Until then we do Leadership Academy of Nevada but my son hates it.

Connections academy saved my children's education. And they both have learned so much. No matter the issues it usually can get solved. Please know connections means so much to many of us. My kids will never go back to Washoe county schools. I'm prepared to homeschool if need be...

- Crystal Roberts

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**The Six Indicators of Student Success at Nevada Connections Academy (by Rebecca Fay)**

With regards to the 2016-2017 District Accountability Report, our family has been able to achieve the following goals set by the school district for the school district. As representatives of that populace, we feel our experience deserves consideration concerning the rating of online schools, specifically Nevada Connections Academy.

Goal 1: Increase Grade 3 Proficiency Rates in Reading.

Our children's proficiency rates in reading have increased due to the staggered timing of reading assignments granted by the ability to walk away from a subject, therefore reducing anxiety and stress upon our children. Our children are excited to exhibit their ability to identify new words and openly practice the use of new words in an environment that encourages trial without fear from peers. We read large texts as a family, such as The Lord of the Rings novels and the Harry Potter collection. Proficiency clearly includes comprehension of the material provided, which our children easily demonstrate.

Goal 2: Reduce the overall achievement gap percentage points in elementary and middle school between the highest-performing subgroup and ethnic/racial subgroups.

The achievement gap has been reduced due to our ability to learn in our own environment, however this goal may not be available in the future if the online option is removed. Our second child is diagnosed on the autism spectrum and is receiving a 504 plan with the Nevada Connections Academy. He flourishes as the individual he is, with the freedom from classroom etiquette. The option to travel from his computer as he needs allows him the opportunity to recalibrate, thus demonstrating self-care and awareness. The online option at Nevada Connections Academy seamlessly integrates the 504 model by catering directly to the student's need for more time on assignments. In absence of classroom distraction and social adherence, our son is proving that he is an exemplary student.

Goal 3: Increase the percentage of students graduating each year.

Graduating as a Nevada Connections Academy student is our goal, but as the threat of closure looms, this goal will be a harder one to achieve. Our family has taken the option of applying into the Charter program in the past. We have attended CSN Cheyenne for preschool, Northwest Academy for Kindergarten, Quest Academy for 1st and 2nd, Coral Academy for 3rd, finally finding our school of choice at Connections Academy. We wish to stay with this school as we are the model family for success at the online level. We believe that allowing our family to prove that the school model at Nevada Connections Academy works, the school district, too, shall be impressed. It is our belief that Nevada Connections Academy is pioneering the path for future online options in Nevada with their comprehensive program and open acceptance model, quintessentially designed for the future.

Goal 4: Increase the percentage of parents reporting that they have been informed regarding their child's progress and feel welcome at school.

My family feels wholeheartedly welcome, supported, and well informed by Connections Academy. The school's webmail system is always available for teacher-student-administration

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communication. We have not ever felt confused about our children's progress as we know precisely what they are learning, and we can witness first-hand how exactly the curriculum is implemented. We receive daily updates of happenings at our school, our children's progress, and on certain days, our children interact directly with their teachers via a web conference known within the school as a "Live Lesson." Here, our children demonstrate directly to the teacher what they have learned and receive feedback and guidance. The live lessons provide our children with teacher assisted instruction for harder projects and anticipated assignments. If the live lesson is missed, a recording is always provided to the student.

Goal 5: Increase the percentage of students who feel safe and happy at school.

The wellbeing of our children has increased substantially with the ability to stick together and work through the learning process as a family unit. Our children see and interact with their father, who works nights. They receive immediate help, not always available in a classroom setting. They receive the greatest level of student understanding from their parents, who know intimately their personal quarks. The environment is devoid of bullying and social pressure. The nutrition of our children stays within our family ideals and does not generate waste for the school district. They are not bound to time restraints or weather incompatibilities when physical education is considered. We are given the freedom to exercise as a family, to enjoy the outdoors later in the evening when the weather is optimal, and to engage in stimulating activities that don't require the cooperation of 20 other students. When a field trip is scheduled, our children are excited to meet their peers. Nevada Connections Academy staff have always been supportive of each family's level of involvement, and for the families of this school, it is a mighty fine system! The necessity to allow our children to be precisely who they are, rambunctious and sometimes spacey, without the fear of reprimand is crucial to their success. We would say that our children are very happy.

Goal 6: Increase the number of students completing Advanced Placement (AP) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses each year.

We would love to apply in Advanced Placement (AP) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses when the time presents itself, yet again with the threat of closure looming, the ability to prove our excellence is removed.

Concerning attendance and truancy, these are non-issues. Exposure to pathogens in the school setting is nonexistent, therefore we do not have sick days. Compulsory engagement of each subject by our children does sometimes exceed the 8 hour school day, yet our children do not feel overburdened or that their personal time has been taxed. There isn't a reason not to attend class at home since the effort of travel is negated. We are always present and our assignments are always on schedule.

We believe that Nevada Connections Academy exhibits the foundations of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Nevada Connections Academy is an innovative approach to the learning environment. The school upholds standards and protections for disadvantaged and high-needs students. There is an absolute expectation of accountability that needs to be considered over a longer measure of time as the school does remain transient for students. With this regard, as the population shifts and changes, the school district must understand the need for flexibility.

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There are students who excel and families who challenge the brick-and-mortar model. We call for the Nevada Board of Education to stand together with families of Nevada Connections Academy to keep the K-5, and continuing, K-12 online option open for all Nevada families as Nevada will be the model for the future of our national education system.

- Rebecca Fay

This is the third attempt at school for Zachary. He had an eye problem in kindergarten that was not caught by his teacher until the end of that year. He struggled all year and got by, by listening to the other students and copying what they said. He never learned to read or write, even with tutoring twice a week. His teacher let him scribble and said it would come eventually. For the fall I enrolled him in Nevada Virtual Academy. He had learned bad habits and refused to work. The challenge of having to do independent work angered him, he would run away from the screen crying, he fell behind and was removed from the program by November. For the remainder of that year, we worked on improving his eyesight, but very little, if any school work was done, he refused. I signed up for Connections Academy with little faith that this would be successful, knowing his history. I didn't have any other options as now he is seven and required to go to school. Currently we are four weeks into Connections and Zachary loves learning. He is engaged, he does not run away when it gets hard. He is starting to read and write. He is improving and understands the curriculum. I am amazed at his progress. He has done more in four weeks than in the last two years.

- Erin Holmes

NCA gives me peace of mind that both my children are safe while still studying and they learn at their own pace. I'm able to travel to California when my family needs my help and have both my children go and still participate in their studies.

- Kerri Chang-Torres

My son has special needs. As his brother before him public school does not work. They couldn't handle him walking out and being ADHD so they sent him to the principal and called me. This was 4 out of 5 days. I have been dealing with public schools since 1980. This is the best school for my children. Did you know that NCA kindergarten had him reading before his friends in public schools? Did you also know that the Authority doesn't care about our children? There are several public schools that should be closed to not teaching our children or keeping them safe. A lot of parents a few years ago took their children out of these public schools. My children will never go back to brick and mortar. Closing Elementary is the worst thing to do. My kids love school and one graduated NCA 2018 and one graduating 2020. Thanks to the teachers she did it in 3 years. My son is already devastated about this situation as the rest of the family is. We fought for NCA about fighting for us.

- Donna Jordan



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NCA has been such a positive experience and truly a blessing to our family. My daughter has been with NCA since Kindergarten. She has always been a very shy girl who hates the spotlight and it takes time to bring her out of her shell. Being able to do school in the comfort of our home each day as well as being able to provide a one on one learning experience. NCA has completely eliminated all the stress of having to put her into an overflowing classroom environment that she would most likely just get lost in the shuffle. With the help of her teachers who have been nothing short of amazing (Mrs. Musselman - Kindergarten - 1st and Mrs. Savage 2nd - 3rd) I can confidently say that my daughter continues to thrive in this type of learning environment. She has had Principal's Honor Roll or Honor Roll every single semester. Seeing her growth and how much she has learned each year with NCA it was an obvious choice to have our son start kindergarten at NCA next year.

Finding out about the school's decision to close grades K-5 has left us at a complete loss. We are devastated. Clark County doesn't have another virtual school option for us, and we are feeling very overwhelmed and not sure what will be next for our children for the next school year. Along with everything I've just written NCA literally means everything to me as a parent with young school aged children. I'm grateful for the years we have had and hope that we can return to NCA again in the near future. Please consider reopening our school again!!

- Elizabeth Haro

This was our source of education, obviously. We have no options at this point. It has been beneficial for us who want to participate in our children's education. This was a very unfortunate decision.

- Heather Fuller

To our family, NCA means flexibility, self-paced learning and allowing our daughters to be in a positive and focused learning environment that meets their individual needs. It allows them to succeed without additional and unnecessary pressures of a brick and mortar school. We love NCA!

- Kimberlee Linton

It means I can feel safe about my child's environment and help him go at his own pace without worry he will miss something because he's in a classroom with a lot of children and not getting the attention he needs to succeed.

- Massiel Andreu

# State Public Charter School Authority

## Carson City

10-4-2019

Name	Representing	Email Address for SPCSA List serve
Alison Thomas	NCA	althomas@NCA-connections@nca-connections.com
Victoria Neer	NCA	vneer@nca-connections.com
Kim Tiptonsky - Klatt	NCA	ktiptonskyklatt@nca-connections.com
Dan Hickory	A.C.S.O. Advocates for Charter Schools	patthackay@data
Chris McBride	NCA	clowne@mail.com
Stewart J Stewart	NCA	sjstewart@nca-connections.com
Jimmy Laan	Imagine Schools	jimmy@terracopa.com
Tom Clark	K12	tom@tomclarkschools.com
Kimberlee Little	NCA	kimberlee8@gmail.com
Scott Harrington	NCA Board	sharrington@nca.com

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# Representing

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# State Public Charter School Authority

## Board Meeting

Las Vegas

10-4-2019

Name	Representing	Email Address for SPCSA List serve
Jeremy Christensen	Freedom Classical Academy	jchristensen@freedomclassical.org
Ashley Perkins	Elko Institute for Academic Achievement	aperkins@elkoiaa.net
Dennis Zimmerman	GIKO TAA	mardenz2@hotmail.com
Christine Dzarowski	Nevada Connections Academy	cdzarowski@ncaconnectionsacademy.com
Sharon Maynard	Quest Prep	maynardtv@yahoo.com
Wendy Tacyne	Quest Prep Academy	j.wendy@questlv.com
Debra Forrest	NVIA	debraforrest@nvia.org
LOAUDA HAMILTON	ic	
Albert Scariot	NCA	alscariot@ncaconnect.com

LV

①

Jesse Solorio	NV Prep	jesse.s.solorio@gmail.com
Nicole Kirkley	Legacy	
Rebekah Baker	Legacy	
Andrea Derrin	Baldwin Academy	
Kathryn Vaughan	<del>Wofford</del>	
Jessica Sobell	Somersett Loser	
Erin Aydeh	CASLU	
Sarah Palmer	nv connections	
Willow Palmer	↓	
Gabrielle Palmer		
Kelly Heide	FAW	
Jamara Yutuc	CASLU - News AFB	
Rosanna	FAW	
Amy McMahon	NCA	Nine4vs@gmail.com
David Blodgett	NV Prep	dandenvprep.org
Wesley Gill	NCA	USIA@ccca.org
Eric Krier	Legacy	

Amelia Galindo	Academica NV	amvia.galindo@academicanv.edu
Eyan Reeves	Academics Nevada	
Patricia Haddad	Opportunity ISO	Patricia@opportunityiso.org
Gayle Jefferson	Academica NV	
Jessica LeNeave	Pinecrest Academy of Nevada - cadence	jessica.leneave@pinecrestnv.org
Michael Nunley	NVA	

Nicolle Hallums	NVC	lorcantique@lance@gmail.com
Evan Nunley	NVC	
Amy Gronna	Master Academy	amy.gronna@materacademywv.org
Lee Esplin	Somerset Academy	lee.esplin@somersetwv.org
Ann Diggins	Carroll Academy	ann.diggins@carrollwv.edu

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# State Public Charter School Authority

## Board Meeting

Las Vegas

10-4-2019

Name	Representing	Email Address for SPCSA List serve
<i>Tamara Tordella</i>	<i>Beacon Academy</i>	<i>tordella@beacon.org</i>
Kim Arkenson	Nevada Connections Academy	karkenson@nca.connectionsacademy.com
Shannon Hiller	Freedom Classical Academy	hiller@shannonhiller.com
Lynn Hanrahan	Quest Prep.	lynn@thetenssquaregroup.com
REBECCA FAY	NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (NCA)	FAY.RML@GMAIL.COM
LUTHIEN FAY	NCA	
RONAN FAY	NCA	
Milo Fay	NCA	
LEVI FAY	NCA	levifay@gmail.com



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## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10-4-19

Name Paula Rubke

Title Nevada Connections Academy

Address 5335 Golden Eagle Lane

Carson City, NV. 89701

Phone No. (775) 508-6521

Representing Nevada Connections Academy

Subject I support NCA and

Public online school!

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19

Name Victoria Neer

Title High School Support Specialist

Address 555 Double Eagle Ct. Suite 2000

Reno, NV 89521

Phone No. 775-525-0832

Representing Nevada Connections Academy

Subject NCA

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19  
Name Olson Thomas  
Title K-5 support specialist  
Address 555 Double Eagle Ct #2000  
 Reno, NV 89521  
Phone No. 775-232-7723  
Representing Nevada Connections Academy  
Subject NCA

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

### Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

#### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19

Name DM CIRAK

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address 445 CALIFORNIA AVE STEL.

RENO, NV 89509

Phone No. 813-0523

Representing KIZ

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19

Name Tarah Evans

Title Mrs.

Address ~~6001~~ 555 Double Eagle Ct.

Reno, NV 89521

Phone No. (175) 830-9112

Representing Nevada Connections Academy

Subject Nevada Connections Academy

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

### Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

#### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19  
Name Kimberlee Linton  
Title NCA parent  
Address Fabric Dr.  
Sparks, NV 89436  
Phone No. 775-287-2821  
Representing NCA  
Subject NCA

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor

## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so that we may maintain accurate records.

Date 10/4/19

Name Kaycee Green

Title Teacher

Address 555 Durbin Eayle Ct #200  
Reno, NV 89521

Phone No. 775-376-2068

Representing NCA

Subject NCA

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor



## VISITOR'S CARD

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

### Meeting

Welcome... PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY all information in full so

that we may maintain accurate records.

Date October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019  
Name Sheila Redmon  
Title Parent - Learning Coach  
Address 10 Green Acres Lane  
Verington NV  
Phone No. 775-291-0299  
Representing NCA  
Subject School closure - remain open.

☒ I Request To Speak

☐ I am a scheduled speaker

☐ I am a visitor