



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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RECOMMENDATION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA BOARD

FROM: Mike Dang, Manager of Financial and Organizational Performance
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing

SUBJECT: EXPLORE ACADEMY REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT

DATE: March 6, 2020

Summary of Request

Explore Academy was approved by the Nevada Achievement School District on October 1, 2018 and was initially expected to open in the fall of 2019. Explore Academy ultimately decided to delay opening until the fall of 2020 and was approved for a contract with the Authority on July 26, 2019. Approval was contingent on three conditions:

1. Explore Academy High School in New Mexico maintains a “C” or better rating on the 2019 New Mexico School Ratings.
2. Explore Academy shall locate in one of the following zip codes: 89030, 89031 or 89032. If Explore Academy intends to locate outside of the three approved zip codes, the school’s governing board must request and be granted a contract amendment by the Authority.
3. Explore Academy must complete all pre-opening requirements for new schools.

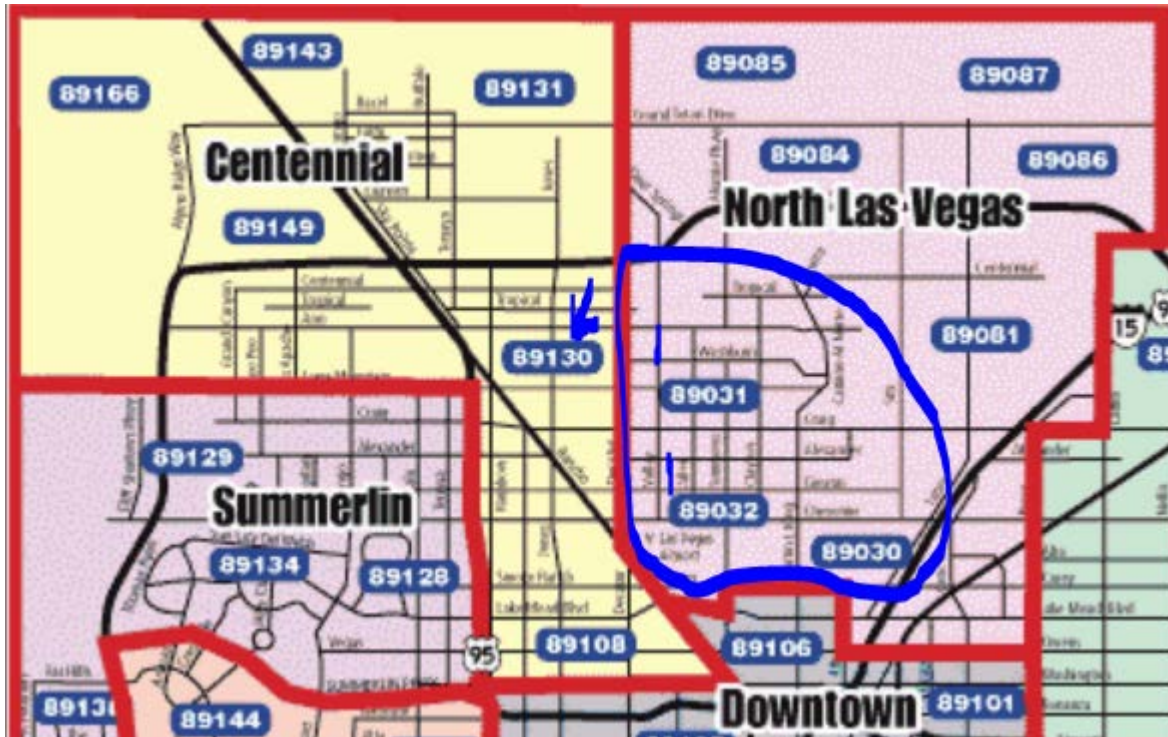
Explore Academy is requesting the SPCSA Board approve the Explore Academy Board’s request to occupy a temporary facility outside of one of the three zip codes listed above for the school year ending (SYE) 2021. The school plans to locate within one of the approved zip codes for the 2021 – 2022 school year and beyond.

Staff recommends approval, subject to existing and additional conditions.

Background

Explore Academy will be operating under a six-year charter contract beginning on July 1, 2020. This charter was approved by the Authority on July 26, 2019.

The temporary space Explore Academy intends to locate in temporarily for the SYE 2021 is at 4460 North Ranch, Las Vegas, West of Jones Boulevard at Craig Road, in the 89130 zip code. The school will be sharing space with an operating K-12 private school called Far West Academy which currently enrolls about 100 students. The projected enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year is 330, serving 120 students in 6th grade, 110 in 7th and 100 in 9th grade. This proposed location is 1.8 miles west of the border of one of the three zip codes the school is conditioned and agreed to open in. The map below shows the intended one-year lease property (light yellow area) and shows the area the school is conditioned to locate in (circled pink area).



Explore states in their amendment application that the “same community will be served in the temporary site, and the permanent site (starting fall 2021) will be located within the required zip codes listed in the charter contract. According to the amendment application, the at-risk students in the zip code for the permanent site (89032) will still be able to access the temporary site in zip code 89130, and the Explore team is dedicated to providing choice to students who are living in areas with limited access to high quality school models.”

Explore states that it will be paying relatively the same facility costs as it would or will in its new facilities. It further states there are no substantive changes to its other commitments and descriptions in its approved application

The Authority approved the following conditions be fulfilled prior to the school opening. Below is an update on each of those conditions.

1. Explore Academy High School in New Mexico maintains a “C” or better rating on the 2019 New Mexico School Ratings.

Status: The Public Education Department of New Mexico website did not show 2019 ratings as of 2/28/2020. For the years, 2015-2018, Explore received the grades of D, A, A, A, respectively. The school is ranked in the top 10% of public schools in New Mexico, according to one website. In 2018 the Public Education Department of New Mexico recommended “a renewal term of five (5) years for Explore Academy.

2. Explore Academy shall locate in one of the following zip codes: 89030, 89031 or 89032. If Explore Academy intends to locate outside of the three approved zip codes, the school’s governing board must request and be granted a contract amendment by the Authority.

Status: School is requesting approval within this amendment to locate outside of these zip codes temporarily for one year, for the SYE 2021 only.

3. Explore Academy must complete all pre-opening requirements for new schools.

Status: School is in process of fulfilling these requirements. An initial conversation with SPCSA staff on February 6, 2020, and the school is working to complete these items.

These conditions remain in effect.

Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests:

The RFA application includes Eligibility Requirements, per NRS 388A.279, that a school must be in good standing in all three domains of the Authority’s academic, financial and organizational performance frameworks and it must not be considered a low-performing school or otherwise ineligible

As the school has not opened yet, staff is not aware of any non-compliance. Staff remains encouraged by the performance of network schools in New Mexico, which continues to earn an overall rating of A by the New Mexico Public Education Department as of SY 2018.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Based on the findings above staff recommends the Board approve this request, subject to the below additional conditions and submissions to be formalized in a contract amendment to be executed by both parties.

- The school board agrees to confirm in writing within 30 days approval by this board, in a form acceptable to the SPCSA Board by its Executive Director, of its contractual commitment to locate in one of the contractually agreed upon zip codes as soon as possible and that the planned lease is only temporary for the upcoming school year and of its commitment to perform according to all other conditions and terms of its contract.
- Submittal of copy of actual enrollment breakdown including zip codes of students enrolled at a mutually agreed-upon deadline with SPCSA staff.
- A copy of the mutually executed lease for the temporary facility, to be submitted to the SPCSA no later than June 1, 2020.

- Submittal of a final budget incorporating the temporary lease terms.
- Submittal of a copy of a Certificate of Occupancy for the permanent facility on or before July 1, 2021.
- Submittal of a final budget for the acquisition and, if needed, development or tenant improvements and other costs preparatory to the school occupying its permanent facility in the agreed upon zip code area.

Proposed Motion: Accept staff's recommendation to

Approve for one year, with conditions, Explore Academy of Las Vegas' request to temporarily lease a facility in the 89130 for the 2020 – 2021 school year only. The school must locate in the 89030, 89031 or 89032 zip codes beginning in the 2021 – 2022 school year.

Explore Key Statistics:

I. School Performance (NSPF Star) Ratings:

N/A

II. Total Projected Enrollment:

The projected enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year is 330 students, serving 120 students in 6th grade, 110 in 7th, and 100 in 9th grade. The enrollment cap for the school is 750 for grades 6 – 12 at full-scale.

III. School Demographics:

N/A