



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mike Dang, Manager, Financial and Organizational Performance
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: **Explore Academy Las Vegas**
Request to Reduce Approved Enrollment to 150 students from 330 planned
DATE: July 24, 2020

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Explore Academy Las Vegas (Explore) is requesting the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA)

1. Approve its request for a good cause exemption to hear this matter and,
2. Approve its request for a reduced enrollment cap to 150 students from its prior approved enrollment of 330 students for the 2020-2021 school year.

SPCSA staff have reviewed Explore's application and recommend approval of both requests.

Background

Explore is operating under a six-year contract, effective July 1, 2020. On March 6, 2020 the Authority approved Explore's amendment request to temporarily locate adjacent to and outside their originally approved zip codes for the 2020 – 21 school year. On June 26, 2020 the Authority approved Explore's amendment request to offer instruction in grades 6 – 9 during the 2020 – 21 school year, instead of grades 6, 7 and 9 as originally approved.

Explore Academy Las Vegas is a charter middle and high school that will serve grades 6-12 at full-scale. The school will open its doors in August, 2020 and serve the North Las Vegas community. The permanent site is currently planned to open in the zip code 89032.

Explore Academy's mission is to "provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future."

Explore Academy’s vision is to be a college preparatory school which will serve grades 6 to 12. Its core academic philosophy and overall vision are based on the idea of a differentiated curriculum in utilizing an expansive set of electives to provide students equal opportunity for choice in their learning, all the while empowering them with the freedom to create unique and individualized educational pathways.

The statewide shutdown for COVID19 has severely hindered their ability to meet with families for recruiting purposes. They have had some limited success using social media, but their enrollment is off track. So the school has adapted to be successful and the SPCSA board has helped them in this.

The SPCSA board approved their amendment to locate adjacent to their target zip codes. The SPCSA board also approved them enrolling 8th grade students a year early, to round out their approved grades 6, 7 and 9. The SPCSA board approval in this area has enabled the school to increase their enrollment in all of these grades.

The school is now requesting for the Authority to approve a reduced enrollment cap of 150 students instead of 330 students. The school is not requesting changes to the enrollment cap for future years.

Applicant Eligibility

When reviewing any RFA, SPCSA staff and board review the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Explore opens this fall for its first school year so documentation of this nature will be created beginning this fall. Thus far, the school has timely completed its pre-opening requirements. At this time, then, staff finds Explore in compliance with SPCSA requirements.

Summary, Recommendation and Condition

Overall, SPCSA staff finds the Explore application to reduce its approved enrollment to 150 students for the School Year Ending June 2021 complete and satisfactory. SPCSA staff is comfortable supporting this reduction, and the Explore model allows for students from multiple grade levels to participate in the same classes. As such, this somewhat limits the impact on total FTEs or their preparation schedules.

This request would be with the condition that Explore continue to submit weekly enrollment updates to SPCSA staff showing its progress in enrolling students for grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 for this fall. Staff will work directly with the school on the format of these reports.

<u>Current</u> Enrollment Cap for 2020 – 21	<u>Proposed</u> Enrollment Cap for 2020 – 21
330 students	150 students

If approved, the enrollment cap would be as follows for the entire charter term:

<u>2020 – 21</u>	<u>2021 – 22</u>	<u>2022 – 23</u>	<u>2023 – 24</u>	<u>2024 – 25</u>	<u>2025 - 26</u>
150	525	615	700	700	700

Proposed Motion:

Approve Explore Academy of Las Vegas’s requests, first for a good cause exemption to hear this matter and second for it to reduce its approved enrollment cap to 150 students for the 2020 – 21 school year subject to the condition described herein.