



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Silver Sands Montessori - Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE: December 11, 2020

1. Background and Summary

Silver Sands Montessori has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2021. Silver Sands is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 266 students in grades K – 8 and operates out of one campus in Henderson.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Silver Sands Montessori for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2021.

2. The Process Related to Renewal Applications and the Standards Under Which an Application for Renewal of a Charter Contract Will Be Granted

The first step in the renewal process is the submission of a renewal report by SPCSA staff to the charter school.¹ Specifically, on or before June 30 immediately preceding the final school year prior to expiration of a charter school's charter contract, the SPCSA submits to the governing body a report regarding renewal. The Silver Sands Montessori renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 25, 2020 and can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

The renewal report summarizes the performance of the charter school under the terms of the charter contract, identifies any deficiencies related to performance of the charter school that might lead to non-renewal of the

¹ Charter school regulations provide for an expedited and streamlined renewal process for high-performing charter schools. Generally, charter schools qualifying for expedited renewal review are those charter schools that are consistently rated as four-and five-star schools under the NSPF and have received no notices of concern or notices of breach for academic, organizational or financial performance. See [NAC 388A.415\(2\)](#).

charter contract, sets for the requirements forth the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the sponsor will apply in making a determination on the application for renewal. The charter school may submit a response to the renewal report. [See NRS 388A.285\(1\) and \(2\)](#).

Next, the governing body of the charter school must submit a written notice of intent to submit an application for renewal to the SPCSA 45 days prior to submitting a renewal application. See [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). Silver Sands Montessori submitted its notice of Intent to Renew its charter contract on August 27, 2020 and Silver Sands Montessori's notice of intent to renew can be found along with the supporting documents.

In regard to the renewal application, the window to submit the actual renewal application is October 1 through October 15. See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). The application for renewal must include, without limitation:

- (a) The requirements for the application identified by the sponsor in the performance report prepared by the sponsor;
- (b) -A description of the academic, financial and organizational vision and plans for the charter school for the next charter term;
- (c) Any information or data that the governing body of the charter school determines supports the renewal of the charter contract in addition to the information contained in the performance report prepared by the sponsor and any response submitted by the governing body; and
- (d) A description of any improvements to the charter school already undertaken or planned.

See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#). On October 15, 2020 Silver Sands Montessori submitted its renewal application, which can be found included with the supporting documents.

Silver Sands Montessori's renewal application includes a summary of the key design elements that have been integral to the charter over the course of two terms. These include:

- An emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning
- Individualized and Differentiated Student Supports
- Mixed-age groupings to foster collaborative learning arrangements
- Prepared environment designed to enable instruction to progress from exploration to abstract understanding
- Strong community and student experiences to enhance the school culture, including student and family events, academic events and competitions, field trips, sports and after school clubs.
- Leveraging the Read by Grade 3 allocation to support reading comprehension, critical thinking, speaking, listening and writing.

With regard to Restorative Justice practices, the renewal application submitted by the school notes that all components of the Montessori Philosophy work together to foster a deeply rooted sense of inner discipline in each child. The Silver Sands Peace curriculum includes a section of the classroom with a Peace Table where students can go for minutes of meditation, conflict resolution with a friend, yoga, or listening to quiet music, and is available in all classrooms. These practices will continue according to the application, and Silver Sands teachers will provide children with opportunities to take proactive measures to repair relationships and the environment that have resulted from their previously inappropriate choices.

Decisions to renew a charter school contract or deny a renewal application are made and based upon the Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations related to charter school renewal (see [NRS 388A.285](#)) and the collective record of a school's academic, financial, organizational, findings from the site evaluation process, and all data and information provided by the Department of Education.

Note that no factor may be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school, and the academic performance of the charter school is the touchstone of any renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

In making its recommendation to the Authority regarding a renewal application, SPCSA staff considers the past performance of the charter school, including information contained in the application for renewal, any

site evaluations, academic achievement of pupils, and any other information that is determined to be relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed, including organizational and financial performance. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#).

When determining whether to grant an application for renewal of a charter contract, the Authority Board considers the foregoing factors, any other information that the Authority Board determines is relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. The Authority Board will consider the “totality of the evidence” presented to it when making a renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#). Again, as stated above, no factor is to be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school.² See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

At its sole discretion, the Authority Board may renew a charter contract for a term of three (3) to ten (10) years, or, alternatively, deny the renewal application. See [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)](#). Note that a variable term length upon renewal was discretion afforded to the Authority under Senate Bill 451 during the 2019 Legislative Session and is now codified in [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#).

The Authority Board may accept or reject, in whole or part, the recommendation of the Executive Director. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(a\)](#). If a charter contract is renewed, that Authority Board may include a provision for a high stakes review during the term of the renewed charter contract which may result in the termination of the renewed charter contract prior to its expiration, or renew the charter contract and include any additional provisions, requirements or restrictions which the State Public Charter School Authority determines are appropriate. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(b\) and \(c\)](#).

Alternatively, the Authority Board may deny the renewal application for the purpose of reconstituting the governing body of the charter school pursuant to [NRS 388A.330](#) and assigning the charter contract to a charter management organization or a new governing body which may include, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school or a governing body assembled by the Executive Director; deny the renewal application for the purpose of restarting the charter school and issuing a new charter contract pursuant to [NRS 388A.300](#) to a charter management organization or a new governing body, including, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school, which will inherit any assets of the charter school which remain following dissolution; or deny the renewal of a charter contract for the purpose of closing the charter school. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(d\),\(e\) and \(f\)](#).

3. Analysis

Academics

Silver Sands Montessori is currently rated as a 3-star elementary school program and a 5-star middle school program according to the 2018 – 19 NSPF ratings. As the Authority is aware, NSPF school ratings and accountability for the 2019 – 2020 school year have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year.

The Silver Sands middle school program earned a 4-star rating for the 2017 – 2018 school year, and a 2-star rating for the 2016 – 2017 school year. respectively. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 4-star school is recognized as a commendable school that has performed well for all students and subgroups. A 4-star school demonstrates satisfactory to strong academic performance for all students. A 2-star rating identifies a school that has partially met the state’s standard for performance. Students and subgroups often meet expectations for academic performance or growth but may have multiple areas that require improvement. The 2-star rating during the 2016 – 2017 school year resulted in the Authority issuing the school a Notice of Concern.

It is noteworthy that the elementary school program has not earned less than a 3-star rating during the current charter term according to the NSPF.

² See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)](#). With regard to a second renewal, the Authority is required to place an even greater weight on academic performance than was assigned to it on the first renewal.

The NSPF results for this current charter term are summarized and provided in the table below:

School Year	NSPF Rating
2019 – 2020 ³	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 5 stars
2018 – 2019	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 5 stars
2017 – 2018	Elementary: 4 stars Middle: 4 stars
2016 – 2017	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 2 stars
2015 – 2016	No Star Ratings published by the Nevada Department of Education

Organizational

Until the Authority approved a more robust organizational framework in the summer of 2019, the previous version of the SPCSA Organizational Framework was a rolling evaluation of school organizational performance. Based on verified complaints and spot checks of school organizational performance, the Authority issues Notices of Concern or Notices of Breach for Organizational Performance. Schools which have not received such notices are presumed to be in Good Standing. Silver Sands Montessori has not received a Notice of Breach or Notice of Concern under this framework during the current charter term. The school earned 100 points under the 2020 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on November 6, 2020.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings

2020	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)
2019	Good Standing
2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing

Financial

In 2018, the Authority requested that the SPCSA Financial Framework be modified so as to be better assess the financial health of sponsored schools. The revised SPCSA Financial Framework was approved on January 18, 2019 and results for FY20 will be presented in January 2021. In the interim, SPCSA staff has continued to monitor a variety of indicators of financial health. Silver Sands Montessori has a history of clean audit findings, and staff finds the school to be in good standing against performance standards within the financial framework.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings

2020	<i>Will be reported in January of 2021</i>
2019	Good Standing
2018	Good Standing
2017	Good Standing
2016	Good Standing
2015	Good Standing

³ NSPF school ratings and accountability for the 2019 – 2020 school year have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year.

4. Recommendation: Renew Silver Sands Montessori for a 6-year term

Despite the issuance of a Notice of Concern due to academic underperformance at the middle school in the 2016 – 17 school year, Silver Sands Montessori has improved their academic performance at the middle school level, earning a 5-star rating according to the NSPF results in 2019. The elementary school has demonstrated consistent performance, earning at least 3-stars since the 2016 – 2017 school year.

As previously stated, NSPF school ratings and accountability indicators have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year for the 2019 – 2020 school year.

It is also noteworthy that the school has not been issued any financial or organizational notices.

SPCSA staff is confident the school will maintain strong performance at the elementary and middle school levels. Solid and largely consistent past performance supports staff’s recommendation that the Authority renew Silver Sands Montessori for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2021. The new term would be subject to the enrollment caps outlined below.

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-2027
Enrollment Cap	320	320	320	320	320	320
Grades Served	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8

5. Proposed Motion

Approve the Silver Sands Montessori Renewal Application for renewal with a six-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and enrollment caps as outlined above in the recommendation memo.

School Demographics since 2015

Year	Total Enrollment⁴	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	292	4.1%	3.1%	47.6%	25.3%	0.3%	17.8%	1.7%	4.1%	0.0%	13.7%
16-17	299	5.4%	5.0%	47.5%	26.1%	1.0%	14.4%	0.7%	3.7%	0.7%	15.7%
17-18	319	5.0%	5.3%	41.1%	30.7%	0.6%	16.3%	0.9%	5.3%	0.3%	19.1%
18-19	298	6.4%	4.7%	43.6%	30.2%	1.0%	13.1%	1.0%	7.7%	2.7%	15.4%
19-20	303	6.9%	5.6%	38.6%	34.0%	1.0%	13.2%	0.7%	9.9%	6.9%	25.7%
20-21	266	6.7%	5.6%	34.2%	38.7%	0.7%	13.5%	0.3%	10.1%	6.3%	33.8%

A – Asian

B – Black

C – Caucasian

H – Hispanic

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – Mixed/Two or more races

P – Pacific Islander

IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student

ELL – English Language Learner

FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

⁴ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).