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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Authority Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, SPCSA
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III, SPCSA
SUBJECT: Silver Sands Montessori – Charter Amendment Request to Reduce Enrollment Cap
DATE: March 3, 2023

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (SSMCS) has submitted an amendment application requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the school to reduce its enrollment cap for 2022-2023 school year and the remainder of the charter term.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends that the Authority grant the Good Cause Exemption and approve the amendment request. A proposed motion can be found on page of 3 this memo.

Background and Overview of the Amendment

SSMCS is a charter school in Clark County providing education in a Montessori environment. Its mission is to provide quality Montessori education in an environment that encourages a child's love of learning and respect for self, others, community, and the world. As of the 2022 Validation Day, SSMCS had 243 students enrolled.

SSMCS opened in the fall of 2009 and is currently in its fourteenth year of operation. According to the amendment application, SSMCS is requesting to reduce its approved enrollment cap for the 2022-2023, 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27 school years. The current cap for those school years are 320 students. If approved, the SSMCS enrollment cap would be:

School Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Grade Levels	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8
Total Enrollment	260	260	275	275	280

According to the amendment application, SSMCS is seeking to make the requested changes due to a drop in enrollment beginning in fiscal year 2020-2021. According to the amendment application, SSMCS enrollment numbers prior to the pandemic averaged approximately 298 students in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. However, since the pandemic SSMCS continued to see a decline in enrollment numbers: FY2020-2021 averaged 269 students, and FY2021-2022 averaged 253 students. SSMCS noted in its application that the initial drop in FY21 was attributed to online distance learning which does not align well with the Montessori methodology. SSMCS stated they expected to see enrollment return in FY22 when students returned to in-person learning, but that was not the case. SSMCS said that families chose to home school or go to schools that were closer to where they lived.

As such, SSMCS is taking steps to increase marketing by creating and promoting a Facebook page and creating ads within Facebook to target families living in the Las Vegas/Henderson area according to the application. SSMCS has also participated in the school choice fair and reached out to apartment communities to increase awareness of the school and the Montessori method they employ.

SSMCS explained in the application that it has been able to adjust its budget to account for less revenue. SSMCS reduced its lower elementary classroom by one class since the return from distance learning. SSMCS has also taken advantage of variable revenue from emergency relief funding from Local, State and Federal resources which have assisted with the loss of revenue according to the application. SSMCS also has set aside contingency funds in previous years which helped the overall financial position of the school. Finally, according to the application, staffing has remained unchanged since 2020 when staffing was reduced due to the pandemic. SSMCS does not foresee additional staffing impacts as a result of this amendment request.

Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests

Existing charter schools that are sponsored by the SPCSA may submit a charter school contract amendment application to the SPCSA – which is reviewed by SPCSA staff and presented for SPCSA Board action – in order to, among other things, increase enrollment, add grade levels above and beyond what the charter school is approved to serve, or add a new campus. When determining whether to approve an amendment request, the sponsor considers the 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. (See NAC 388A.400(8) and NRS 388A.276).

Analysis and Staff Recommendation

When reviewing an amendment application, SPCSA staff reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SPCSA staff has waived the requirement that schools maintain enrollment levels at or above 90% of their contractual cap due to the many extenuating circumstances impacting

students and families. Staff believes schools are now better positioned to adhere to this requirement for the 2022 – 23 school year, necessitating this amendment. SSMCS is currently rated as a 3-star elementary school program and a 5-star middle school program according to the 2018 – 19 NSPF ratings. The SSMCS elementary school received 49.8 points and the middle school received 61.6 points on the 2021-2022 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework.

Additionally, the school earned 96 points (out of 100) under the SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework for the 2021 – 22 school year as approved by the Authority on December 16, 2022. As such, SPCSA staff finds the school to be ‘Meeting Standards.’ SSMCS has also been found to ‘Meet the Standards’ on the most recent 2021 SPCSA Financial Performance Framework. Additionally, preliminary results under the 2022 SPCSA Financial Performance Framework appear to signal that the school is in a sound financial position.

SPCSA staff is supportive of the request by SSMCS. As previously stated in this memo, SSMCS has been operating at its current enrollment levels for the past two school years and has still met standard on the SPCSA’s financial framework, which shows the school has been able to adjust to its current enrollment. SSMCS has been in operation for 14 years, and built a strong relationship in the community in which it operates. SSMCS also noted it would increase marketing and outreach efforts to recruit families who may be newer to area, and SPCSA staff believes these efforts will result in SSMCS meeting its enrollment targets through the remainder of the charter term..

Proposed Motion: Grant the Good Cause Exemption request and approve Silver Sands Montessori’s request to reduce its 2022-2023 approved enrollment cap from 320 students to 260 students and to reduce the cap for the remainder of the charter contract term as detailed in this recommendation memo.

If approved, the enrollment cap for Silver Sands will be as follows for the remainder of the charter term:

School Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Grade Levels	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8
Enrollment	260	260	275	275	280

The current, approved, enrollment caps for Silver Sands is as follows:

School Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Grade Levels	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8
Enrollment	320	320	320	320	320

School Demographics change since 2017 – Silver Sands Montessori

Silver Sands

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
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%
21-22	259	6.5%	4.6%	32.0%	43.2%	0.7%	12.3%	0.3%	11.5%	5.7%	37.8%
22-23	243	6.5%	5.3%	24.6%	49.3%	0.8%	12.3%	0.8%	11.5%	<5%	35.3%

A – Asian

B – Black

C – Caucasian

H – Hispanic

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – 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

Silver Sands Montessori Financial Performance

Year	Rating
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard

Silver Sands Montessori Organizational Performance

Year	Rating
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard

Silver Sands Montessori Academic Performance

School Year	NSPF Rating
2021 – 2022 Index Scores	Elementary Index Score: 53.0 Middle Index School: 56.1

2020 – 2021 ¹	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 5 stars
2019 – 2020 ²	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 5 stars
2018 – 2019	Elementary: 3 stars Middle: 5 stars

Silver Sands Montessori 2021-22 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results³

Campus	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Silver Sands ES	49.8	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD
Silver Sands MS	61.6	MEETS STANDARD

¹ Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2020-21 school year waiver from the U.S. Department of Education for certain requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Nevada statewide assessments were administered in the 2020-21 school year, but the NDE did not calculate new Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2020-21 school year.

² Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2019 – 20 school year waiver from the US Department of Education for certain assessment, accountability, school identification, and reporting requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Accordingly, for the 2019 – 20 school year, Nevada statewide assessments were not administered and the NDE did not calculate Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings

³ The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) calculated NSPF index scores for the 2021-22 school year but did not calculate corresponding star ratings (shown as N/A). 2021-22 NSPF details and rules can be found at: <http://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/MoreDownload?filename=Nevada%20School%20Performance%20Framework%20Manual%202021-22%20School%20Year.pdf>