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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Authority Board
FROM: Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III, SPCSA
SUBJECT: **Strong Start Academy Elementary – Charter Amendment Request to Reduce Enrollment Cap**
DATE: March 1, 2024

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Strong Start Academy Elementary School (SSA) has submitted an amendment application requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request to reduce its 2023-24 enrollment cap and reduce the enrollment cap for 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 3 of this memo.

Background and Overview of the Amendment

SSA is located at the Tony Hsieh Education Center at 310 S. 9th Street in Downtown Las Vegas. SSA was approved by the Authority in January 2022 and opened in August 2022 with three classes of students in kindergarten and two classes in 1st and 2nd grades. The school will add one grade level each year ending at 5th grade. As of Validation Day 2023, SSA had 142 students enrolled.

The mission of SSA is, “To provide equitable, high- quality academics as we prepare our bilingual, civic-minded thinkers to maximize their potential in their community and the world.”

The vision is a culturally diverse learning community that prepares children to excel academically in two languages and have a positive impact on an increasingly evolving and global society.

According to the application, while the school was able to increase enrollment by 45%, it did not meet the projected enrollment cap of 180 for the 2023-2024 school year. Therefore, the school is seeking a contract amendment to adjust maximum enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year of 143 students. Additionally, SSA is seeking to reduce the cap for the remainder of the charter term in order to align the with the projected growth beyond the 2023-24 school year.

SSA also noted in their application that it currently serves grades K – 3, and the slow growth model has been somewhat challenging with regard to overall enrollment. To address the enrollment challenges, SSA explained that they have increased the marketing budget with Graphicka to boost the marketing campaign. SSA has started to work with Latino Outreach to assist with recruiting and canvassing in the surrounding community. The Executive Director will also attend tabling events throughout the community to make the information about the school more accessible to the neighboring communities. The Executive Director will also present at Strong Start Academy Pre-Schools to strengthen the transition from preschool to kindergarten. According to the application, with the strategies outlined above, SSA believes the school will be able to maintain the 143-student enrollment cap for the remainder of the current school year and meet the projected student enrollment of 206 students for the 2024-2025 school year.

If approved, SSA’s enrollment cap for the remainder of its charter term would be:

School Year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade Levels	K – 3	K – 4	K – 5	K – 5	K – 5
Total Enrollment	145	206	266	306	345

SSA also provided an updated budget and noted that they received a Federal CSP grant totaling \$750,000 for certain eligible start-up expenses. In addition, SSA receives support from the City of Las Vegas in varying amounts which has been committed for the next 4 years. SSA also received ARP ESSER, AB495 and CLV ARPA funds that are one-time in nature and included in the FY23-24 Budget along with offsetting expenses.

Legal Authority

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 for RFA eligibility, SPCSA staff reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. SSA is in its second year of operation and has not been rated academically, financially, or organizationally, however, staff finds no current issues that would impact the eligibility of this amendment request.

SPCSA staff recommends the SPCSA board approve the request of SSA to change its enrollment cap from 180 students to 145 students for the 2023-2024 school year and to reduce the enrollment cap for the remainder of the charter term.

Proposed Motion: Grant the Good Cause Exemption request and approve Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s request to reduce its approved enrollment cap for the 2023-24 school year and the reminder of the charter term.

If approved, Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s enrollment cap for its charter term will be:

School Year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade Levels	K – 3	K – 4	K – 5	K – 5	K – 5
Total Enrollment	145	206	266	306	345

The current approved Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s enrollment cap for its charter is:

School Year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade Levels	K – 3	K – 4	K – 5	K – 5	K – 5
Total Enrollment	180	240	300	320	360

School Demographics since 2022 – Strong Start Academy Elementary School

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
22-23	80	2.5%	13.7%	6.2%	62.5%	0.0%	13.7%	1.2%	*	21.2%	82.5%
23-24	142	2.1%	19.7%	4.2%	66.9%	0.0%	7.0%	0.0%	14.2%	27.4%	100%

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

* - Suppressed data due to n-count

Financial Performance – Not Rated

Organizational Performance – Not Rated Academic

Performance – Not Rated