



MATER ACADEMY
of Nevada

Mater Academy of Nevada

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Renee Fairless, Principal

February 13, 2018

State Public Charter School Authority Board of Directors
1749 North Stewart St. Suite 40
Carson City, NV 89706-2543

Re: Mater Academy of Nevada Notice of Concern

Dear SPCSA Board Members and Director Gavin:

Mater Academy of Nevada (“Mater”) is in receipt of your agenda for the February 16, 2018 board meeting and correspondence from Mark Modrcin dated February 9, 2018. Please accept this correspondence as our response to item number 8 on your February 16, 2018 agenda.

The stated mission of Mater is “to provide an innovative, challenging, multi-cultural education preparing students to be global citizens and have a competitive edge in the 21st century workforce.” Presently, Mater’s elementary school is rated as a 2-star and the middle school a 3-star. While these ratings are on par or better than many of the schools in the surrounding area, Mater acknowledges that to achieve its mission, it must improve its academic performance.

Mater has already undertaken the following efforts to improve its student academic performance:

- Reviewed test specs, and broke down the test strands to identify our greatest need in both Math and English Language Arts.
- Invited Administration teams from Mater Academy Inc. to do a site based assessment.
- Solutions identified within the site based assessment which have been implemented include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Revised student schedules to provide for a “double-dose” of math and ELA
 - Adjusted middle school student schedules to a block schedule to emphasize core subjects
 - Intensified coaching program for teachers in need of additional support
 - Transitioned to I-Ready assessment tool
 - Weekly data chats with teachers
 - Elementary Power Hour (additional differentiated instruction block)
 - Implemented USA Test Prep and SBAC standards mastery test prep
- Increased professional development to ensure course pacing guides are being implemented with fidelity, and,

- Continued collaboration with Mater Academy Inc. team with ongoing school visits.

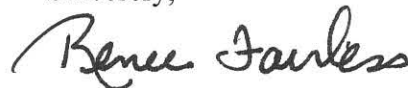
While we recognize the need to improve, and have demonstrated the willingness to take all reasonable efforts to do so, we must also acknowledge that the data relied upon for our current evaluations is not compliant with the Every Student Succeeds Act (“ESSA”). ESSA requires that ELL students be assessed in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what the students know and can do in academic content areas.¹ As of the 2016-2017 school year, 15.93% of all students in Nevada are ELL,² the SBAC is available with Spanish translations, and Nevada’s ESSA plan identifies Spanish as a language other than English that is present to a significant extent in the student population.³ As of the 2016-2017 school year, **63.75% of the student population at Mater is ELL.**⁴ However, Nevada has failed to make Spanish translation of the SBAC available to our students. We recognize that the Nevada Department of Education (“NDE”) is responsible for the administration of the SBAC, not the SPCSA. However, if the SPCSA is going to rely on NDE ratings for student performance then we must identify and acknowledge this failure. There is no legal justification for not offering the SBAC in Spanish to ELL students.

Despite these circumstances, Mater recognizes the need to improve student performance and welcomes feedback from the SPCSA. Furthermore, the positive accomplishments which Mater Academy has already achieved should also be noted. These include the following:

- A 98% re-enrollment rate in grades 1-8 for the coming school year, giving students the continuity necessary for a stable learning environment.
- Expansion of Pre-K to 105 students. This has increased the opportunity for our ELL and immigrant student populations to develop strong English language skills at a young formative age.
- Mater’s 3-star middle school outperformed all other middle schools within a 4-mile radius.

Mater will continue to strengthen and further develop all of the steps outlined above to improve instruction and learning on our campuses. Mater will also work closely with the SPCSA staff to continue to improve its academic performance, including utilizing resources from the SPCSA. Mater remains committed to providing a quality education to all of its students.

Sincerely,



Renee Fairless
Lead Principal

¹ See, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(vii)(III). See also, NRS 390.810(2) (containing the same requirement)

² See, Nevada Report Card State ELL Data, <http://nevadareportcard.com/> (last visited Feb. 12, 2018). Nevada’s ESSA plan identifies that 91.5% of those students who are ELL, native language is Spanish. See, Nevada’s ESSA Plan Pg. 24.

³ See, Nevada’s ESSA Plan Pg. 24.

⁴ This number was calculated based on the number of WIDA tests administered.