

(3) The SPCSA has defined demographic and academic needs as follows:

**I. Demographics:** Applicants meeting this need will propose a school model that includes demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and thorough research and analysis in order to intentionally serve the following student populations, each of which has been identified as persistently underperforming based on data provided by the Nevada Department of Education: Students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, English Learners, and students with IEPs. Successful applicants will demonstrate the capacity to support these student populations in achieving academic performance at or above the state average.

**II. Academic Needs: Geographies with 1 and 2 Star Schools:** Applicants meeting this need will seek to provide access to 3, 4 and 5-Star schools in zip codes where students are attending a 1- or 2-Star school. A map and list of zip codes will be provided; SPCSA public charter schools will be removed from the data set used to identify zip codes.

**III. Academic Need: Students at Risk of Dropping out of School:** Applicants meeting this need will propose a public charter school model that includes demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and thorough research and analysis in order to prevent at-risk students from dropping out of school. Models may include but are not limited to programs designed for populations most at-risk of dropping out or programs aimed at enabling credit-deficient students to get back on track to graduate. Applicants should demonstrate a strong understanding of grade-level appropriate indicators for successful high school completion, such as early literacy, attendance, and credit sufficiency and plans to enable students to successfully meet these milestones.

*Given the above definitions, please describe how your proposed school would meet one or more of the needs defined in the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.*

Nevada Strong exists to be part of the solution in providing a high-quality option for students.

#### **I. DEMOGRAPHICS:**

Nevada Strong Academy has a school model that ensures high expectations, a solid core curriculum, data driven practices, supplemental remediation as necessary, credible plans and research based practices that have a history of demonstrated capacity serving demographics in need similar to those identified as persistently underperforming by the Nevada Department of Education. In addition, we intend to hire exceptional human capital through our vast connections and will make every attempt for those selections to be reflective of the community which we serve.

#### **A. MODEL**

Under Co-Founder Dr. Soner Tarim's lead, Nevada Strong Academy has adopted and improved upon a model used by Harmony Schools, which Dr. Tarim founded, and which has a proven track record in improving the academic performance of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, English Learners and students with IEPs.

Under his leadership Harmony earned a reputation as one of the best charter school organizations in the country as evidenced by being a Broad Prize Finalist in 2017. Many campuses have found a place in high school rankings such as News & World Report and Children-at-Risk. He also received the Texas Charter School Leader of the Year Award in October 2017.

## B. CREDIBLE RESEARCH BASED PLANS

Nevada Strong will use Texas researched Fundamental 5, Daily Fluency Practice and STREAMS360, which incorporates project based learning, personalized blended-learning and and takes traditional STEM education, which Dr. Tarim has been practicing over the last twenty years, and combines it with arts, reading and social emotional learning. In addition, Nevada Strong has daily literacy and math fluency practice implemented school wide.

### **Fundamental 5**

Nevada Strong knows great teachers are the heart of great schools and our model will produce educators who are properly prepared to teach students on day one when they enter the classroom. Research has shown that teachers aren't always effective and that they often do not get the supports they need to impact learning. About half of teachers leave the profession within the first four or five years<sup>1</sup>. Nevada Strong seeks to reverse that trend. The Fundamental 5<sup>2</sup> is a plan to begin with, that is targeted, intentional and purposeful. Every teacher can begin implementing it immediately, and when executed with fidelity, it will elevate the quality of instruction and overall success of our school and our students. The five critical practices Nevada Strong will use are:

1. Frame the Lesson
2. Work in the Power Zone
3. Frequent, Small-Group, Purposeful Talk about the Learning
4. Recognize and Reinforce
5. Write Critically

#### 1. Frame the Lesson

The effective lesson frame has two parts, the first is the learning objective or what the student can expect to learn today. The second is the closing question, product or task, that clearly states how the student will demonstrate his or her understanding of the learning objective for that day. It is the proof to both teacher and student that learning has taken place. Example of a Classroom Lesson Frame for math could be: Objective: We will add and subtract decimals Closing Task: I will compute the balance of my bank account.

#### 2. Work in the Power Zone

Working in power zones maximizes the effect of teacher location on instructional outcomes for students. The teacher places himself/herself in the middle of the action to have the most impact versus on the periphery. A teacher who occupies the power zone is simply teaching or monitoring in close proximity to one student, a small group of students, or the entire classroom of students. On-task behaviors increase, discipline issues decrease and student retention of the content increases.

#### 3. Frequent, Small-Group, Purposeful Talk about the Learning

After ten to fifteen minutes of teacher-driven discussion, or at the completion of a major instructional concept, the teacher stops talking and has two to four students briefly discuss a seed question related to the instruction. The structure is made up of frequency, group size, the seed

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<sup>1</sup> Eric A. Hanushek and Steven G. Rivkin, "How to Improve the Supply of High-Quality Teachers," Brookings Papers on Education Policy: 2004 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Cain, Sean and Lair, Mike (2011) The Fundamental Five, Middletown, DE.

question, and the power zone. This same technique is used by Doug Lemov and backed up by research surrounding habits of discussion.<sup>3</sup> School leader Dawson Owens has been trained in Teach Like A Champion techniques by Doug Lemov.

#### 4. Recognize and Reinforce

Students need to have their developmental advances recognized and praised. Positive feedback is important and words can be used to motivate students and build self-confidence. Recognition and reinforcement address two sides of learning, both academic issues and behavior issues. Nevada Strong employs a positive and proactive culture that will impact student outcomes and keep them in the classroom. School Leader Dawson Owens has observed schools such as Excel and U Prep<sup>4</sup> influenced by Excel, where 37 percent of students with special needs achieved Proficient/Advanced levels which was double the state average, and for six years in a row 8th graders were top-performers of all 450 Massachusetts public district and charter schools on the state's MCAS exams in 2017.

#### 5. Write Critically

Classroom observations as well as student artifacts show students are not writing nearly enough or critically enough. Students who think critically use writing for communicating ideas, for learning, to deepen their understanding of important concepts and to clarify interrelationships between concepts. They use writing as an important tool for learning ideas deeply and permanently. The act of writing critically encapsulates the learning and a key to increase reading skills is to also increase literacy activities. Writing should involve rigor, relevance and assessment. School Leader Dawson Owens has completed Lemov's Reading Reconsidered training on increasing rigor and increasing academic outcomes as seen at Uncommon schools<sup>5</sup>. Uncommon Schools ELA balanced literacy approach shows that by 6th grade, 75% of Uncommon regions outperform the state in reading, and continue to outperform the state in 7th and 8th grade. Uncommon has had remarkable success with low income, and urban students, and has decreased the achievement gap between students of diverse demographics. Uncommon is a school Nevada Strong has studied, trained under and will continue to engage with, to replicate successful results for our students most in need here.

Finally, teachers need time to practice as well as be coached in order to improve their teaching craft. Research shows that teachers can improve quickly when a formative loop system of coaching and walkthroughs with school leaders occurs, as seen in Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's, Get Better Faster<sup>6</sup> Nevada Strong will do walk throughs daily and this will immediately improve teaching through consistent practice and perfecting. While teachers may need additional, continued development in a myriad of topics, beginning with the Fundamental 5 and adopting it in schools can immediately begin improving instructional outcomes and success for both teachers and students.

#### **Daily Fluency Practice as well as Daily 20 minutes Independent Reading**

Nevada Strong Students will develop automaticity in both math<sup>7</sup> and literacy as well as independently read daily for twenty minutes while at school. This will position them to be successful in school as they are not easily frustrated expending all their energy and time on simple

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<sup>3</sup> Lemov, Doug (2016) Teach Like a Champion Hoboken, NJ; Jossey-Bass

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.the74million.org/article/nothing-short-of-phenomenal-u7niversity-prep-turnaround-sees-colorados-highest-test-bump/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://northstar.uncommonschoools.org/nsa/results>

<sup>6</sup> Bambrick-Santoyo (2016) Get Better Faster, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>7</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1194585.pdf>

computations that would hinder their ability to solve or understand higher level critical thinking tasks. Practice daily in reading<sup>8</sup> is critical to changing outcomes for students who are often coming to us below grade level as well as those who are seeking to accelerate learning. Nevada Strong knows literacy is key and is reflected in our model and school design.

### **STREAMS 360**

The Nevada Strong model intends to serve students in K-12th grade and to prepare them for college and career pathways through our STREAMS 360 program. STEM education, alone, is not enough to meet the social and emotional needs of students. We see SEL needs ever more prevalent and increasing at schools. Thus, we will adopt a model that serves the whole child and equips students with supports they need to navigate their world successfully. Nevada Strong believes that there are a very limited number of schools in the heart of the city offering a comprehensive college preparatory program, and none provide the planned STREAMS curriculum integrating project-based learning, personalized blended learning, and social emotional learning components. Nevada Strong will be a driving force for improving educational options among low-income, and underserved populations. Nevada Strong will offer parents a high-quality educational choice to prepare their children for college and beyond. We will place a strong emphasis on STREAMS 360 education and expose our students early in the education process to college and career pathways.

#### **1. Project Based Learning**

Researchers at Texas A&M indicate that PBL provides contextualized, authentic experiences necessary for students to scaffold learning and build meaningful and powerful STEM concepts supported by Language ARTS, Social Studies and Fine Arts. Integrating interdisciplinary STREAMS 360 and PBL will a) eliminate curriculum fragmentation, b) make learning more meaningful c) help students bridge concepts across disciplines, d) allow appropriate development with a modified curriculum e) allow for curriculum flexibility so that teachers can meet the needs of diverse learners.

Nevada Strong employs three levels of learning matched to students' skills and interests based off of what has proven successful in Harmony Schools. The school leader has been trained in Project Lead The Way, has developed relationships with this organization as well as other STEM programs/resources. Dr. Tarim is an expert in the field of stem and his schools have proven success with using the PLTW model with similar demographics of students.

**Level A PBL:** Students work collaboratively in a small group during class to apply learnings, apply inferences, and solve problems. As students complete their Level A PBLs each group presented their end product to the class.

**Level B PBL:** Students select a theme from one of their STEM courses and develop a project expanding on a specific scientific principle or research idea. Students should make meaningful cross curricular connections to arts, social sciences, history and humanities.

**Level C PBL:** Level C is not limited to project topics within the STEM course curriculum. Students generate problems or research questions for study. As with Level B PBLs, such students still have a project advisor who approves their project topic and will for more comprehensive research to gain necessary knowledge and skills to conduct or create their end product.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-daily/2013/07/16/practice-makes-perfect-especially-in-reading>

PBL will occur during the science and social studies instruction block, but is also integrated and woven across subject areas to maximize student learning and engagement.

## 2. Personalized Blended Learning

Nevada Strong expects to attract a diverse population. Our personalized instructional approach will optimize curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of each learner. Incoming students will have various levels of proficiency and this approach will address the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English Learners. This technique allows students to take ownership for their learning experiences and we will combine online educational materials and opportunities for interaction with traditional classroom approaches. We study, explore and will continue to select the best research proven online components and providers for our students.

Our two block structure allows for students to have time for intervention and enrichment. We will provide professional development in the following areas to support and develop teachers, maximizing this learning time and increasing student outcomes. Our double block gives us time to 1) work with small groups of students to address learning goals and individualization 2) enhance or extend the curriculum rigor 3) analyze and monitor student data 4) allow students and teachers to interact face to face, use independent and collaborative practice or work online, 5) personalize learning 6) use online curriculum to individualize instructional pathways aligned with academic goals 7) employ strategic integration of technology and face-to-face instruction to create a coherent, personalized learning experience for all students 8) facilitate strategic and effective use of technology tools to improve and/or extend learning within the boundaries of the typical school day 9) use real-time data and small group learning stations to provide multiple data points to measure student growth and to monitor progress to tailor activities to meet students' needs and 10) use common structures, including learning objectives, mastery assessments, and learning pathways which will allow for students to advance to new content based upon demonstrated mastery, rather than seat time.

The goal of blended learning is to personalize learning for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The Nevada Strong school model has double blocks of instruction in literacy and math, with the second block of instruction allowing for personalized blended learning. This has shown to improve educational outcomes for students in countless high performing schools observed across the country, including Uncommon, Freedom Prep, Excel, U-Prep, Forte, etc. More about our literary focus will be addressed in section III.

## 3. Social Emotional Learning

Nevada Strong will coordinate with the Chicago-based nonprofit, Collaborate for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL)<sup>9</sup> to integrate Social Emotional Learning with STREAMS 360. Social Emotional Learning is a systematic, evidence-based approach to teach students how to achieve goals, understand and manage emotions, build empathy, forge relationships, and make responsible decisions. According to the Brookings Institute, SEL competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy<sup>10</sup>. Students who participate in SEL programs have shown improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school. Our school leader has also participated in recent SEL training offered locally.

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.casel.org>

<sup>10</sup>foc\_spring\_vol27\_no1\_for\_web.

The Nevada Strong Team has researched and intends to continue to use and develop curriculum that incorporates in the SEL component across subject areas, and that weaves it throughout all grade levels.

#### C. CAPACITY:

Our team has demonstrated capacity as seen in Soner Tarim's Harmony results, Carrie Buck's Pinecrest results as well as Amy Trombetti's contributions across states, including, Nevada, in special education. Nevada Strong is well positioned to serve students with IEPs due to the experience and expertise in this subject that board member and founder of SPEDCO, Amy Trombetti, brings to Nevada Strong.

Amy Trombetti brings a wealth of experience progress monitoring IEP goals, communicating with parents, complying with all legal requirements, as well as her dedication to best serve all students through targeted, intentional approaches that will ensure an excellent education with supports in place necessary for every student who attends Nevada Strong to succeed.

Amy Trombetti will take an active role on the Academic Committee acting as a resource to the Nevada Strong team. Nevada Strong plans, at least once every nine weeks and as indicated on the IEP, to monitor and track the progress and success of students IEP goals. Nevada Strong's special education teacher(s) will conduct progress monitoring on goals for each individual student as often as indicated on the IEP (i.e. weekly, quarterly) with a certain number of trials for the duration of the IEP. The special education staff will track the progress using a system to measure growth or assess if the student is not showing growth. If the student is not showing growth the IEP team will reconvene. The special education teacher(s) will inform the parents and teachers on the progress as stated above, as often as specified on the IEP. Other data points will be collected throughout the school year in conjunction with the goals to monitor the whole child and to ensure access and growth is happening in all settings.

#### **II. Academic Needs: Geographies with 1 and 2 Star Schools:**

As referred to earlier in our application on Meeting the Need pages 3-10 to 3-14, Nevada Strong has identified two potential areas where students have limited access to high quality schools. One of our second identified areas includes zip code 89107 which was referenced as one of the most in need areas in all of Clark County from the recent needs assessment. We are intent on serving such populations and continue to demonstrate a desire to serve in an area of need.

Nevada Strong exists to be part of the solution to providing a high-quality option to our students who currently do not have options to a three star or above school. We know that in most of our areas it is the case that there is the need for more high-quality schools<sup>11</sup>, except for perhaps Summerlin or Seven Hills area. There are several areas such as Whitney where students have no access to a high-quality school. Nevada Strong is committed to locating in an area of need.

While we have done targeted zip code analysis, the below information also relays the need for Charter Schools to increase the quality of instruction being delivered to students.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://opportunity180.org>

## CCSD Schools Summary



According to data taken from the Opportunity 180 website, most students did not have access to a high-quality school, 5/7 compared to 2/7 who did, in 2017.

### III. Students at Risk of Dropping out Of School

Nevada Strong will protect students at risk of dropping out, students with disabilities, students who are struggling with behavior through building relationships, mentors and process under IDEA. Students who have a disability that impedes their access to their education and need additional supports to succeed will have those additional supports.

Nevada Strong will work with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, "BCBA", Psychologist and Registered Behavior Technicians "RTB" or highly trained behavior technicians to support any student that has moderate to severe behavior needs.

Nevada Strong believes in building relationships with students, which helps students who are struggling with academics and behavior. Students with disabilities who are displaying behavior that are often or repetitive need a stronger plan. Functional Behavior Assessments "FuBA" and Behavior Intervention Plan "BIP" are necessary for stronger support. The FuBA will be used to guide the BIP and BIP is developed and planned by the team. The BIP is adjusted as needed in order to achieve student success.

If a student under IDEA needs a more restrictive setting in order to succeed the team will determine that setting. Students will not be removed from the school due to behavior. Nevada Strong will follow all State and Federal rules regarding discipline and behavior. We will also have strong child

find training for all staff. Our child find system will be created to encompass data collection on all students who are in need of behavior support.

Curriculum at Nevada Strong is also designed to engage students who are at risk of dropping out of school through project based learning, a social emotional learning component, and double blocks of instruction where targeted intentional personalized learning will occur according to the need of each student.

### 1. Attendance

Nevada Strong understands chronic absenteeism can be a common problem for students and lead to their risk of dropping out of school. There are many reasons why children may be chronically absent from school. Typical factors may include physical or mental health concerns or illness, lack of reliable transportation, housing instability, family distress, safety issues and bullying, discipline infractions imposed by the school, inclement weather (i.e., many students walk to and from school), and even boredom in school. In addition, some students are absent because there is nothing or no one preventing them from missing school, or they simply do not see the value or benefit of attending school. Our school is designed to mitigate factors that lead to such, including combating boredom,<sup>12</sup> through increasing engagement as well as communicating with parents and students to understand the reasons and risks.

Nevada Strong will take a proactive approach of building relationships, offering worthwhile programs that students are engaged and interested in. We view the community as our partner and will communicate as well as listen to parents regarding the needs of our students. We will actively monitor student attendance, student performance, and student attitude as well as engagement with the school. We will intervene when students are not on target and come up with an action plan for their success. Nevada Strong will make use of mentors in our school as spelled out in our application and actively work to make connections with every student and family with targeted, intentional, purposeful home visits, instruction and culture of care for every individual who enrolls at Nevada Strong.

Nevada Strong desires to serve our most disadvantaged youth, including homeless students as well as students in the foster care system. According to the Casey Family Program<sup>13</sup>, 30-50 percent of youth exit the foster care system without a high school diploma or high school equivalent. Only 2 percent of youth formerly in foster care complete a bachelor's degree before the age of 25, compared to 24 percent of the general population. We continue to listen, learn, seek to understand and build relationships with organizations that care for such students. Nevada Strong would be open to working with the authorizer to offer an allowable enrollment preference for a portion of foster, as well as homeless students (students who do not even have a zip code), if it were deemed helpful and would lead to better outcomes in academically serving students.

### 2. Early Literacy

Our literacy program builds students' foundational skills through extended instructional time in phonics, standards-based reading comprehension, and guided reading. Research continues to reinforce the critical need for early literacy skills and Nevada Strong recognizes the deep connection between language, literacy, and opportunity. We desire for all students to read on grade level by third grade and continue along this path due to the known implications and the increased risk for dropping out when this goal is not met. Small groups will be leveled by student reading

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<sup>12</sup> Balfanz & Byrnes. 2012.

<sup>13</sup> <http://foster-care-newsletter.com/foster-youth-graduate-at-low-rates/#.XVRTFy3MxHQ>

ability and needs. Literacy instruction is woven across all content and is vital to students' success. In alignment with Nevada standards, students will use their literacy skills to build knowledge from nonfiction text in content areas such as science, social studies and math.

### 3. Credit Sufficiency

Our unique selection of PLTW and CTE elective courses place students on a path to introduce and integrate them to postsecondary options and life after high school. Students participate in a practicum or independent study as a 12th grade students and are in the community participating and volunteering, studying community issues. Our goal is to eliminate high school dropouts.

Through teacher observations, assessment data, and identification of students who fail to meet grade-level standards in tested subject areas, individuals will be placed in our academic intervention program RTI. We will provide students with substantial small group and/or one-on-one instruction A 30 minute academic support/enrichment block has been built into the school day for these interventions, and as necessary, students may be asked to attend instructional sessions before or after school. Evidence informed interventions will help ensure students are promoted to the next grade level each academic year.

Nevada Strong curriculum will satisfy all of the Nevada graduation requirements and meet the State of Nevada education and administrative codes. We implement Counselor Meetings, Guidance/Mentorship, Teacher Mentorship Programs and A Grade Placement Committee, details of which are provided in our Academic Plan on pages 4-40 to 4-43.