



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** SPCSA Board

**FROM:** Patrick Gavin, Executive Director  
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing

**SUBJECT:** Mater Academy of Nevada Charter Contract Amendment Request: Addition of Supplementary Distance Education Courses

**DATE:** June 28, 2018

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Mater Academy, operating under a charter contract entered in 2014, is located in Las Vegas, Nevada, and is currently rated as a 2-star elementary school and 3-star middle school serving 1,925 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Mater is requesting an amendment to its charter contract to allow it to begin offering distance education courses starting in the 2018-19 school year. As discussed below, Staff recommends approval of the amendment request, with conditions.

**Summary of Request:**

The vision statement of Mater Academy of Nevada is to develop successful scholars with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Students will be college and career-ready with cross-cultural competence. To help achieve this vision, the school is seeking to expand its network by increasing the school's capacity to serve students in its middle school program (grades 6 – 8) and for those students that are newly enrolled. Mater Academy of Nevada will capitalize on pooling teaching resources across its two campuses in addition to gaining access to teachers and courses from its affiliate schools in Nevada and Florida. This proposed amendment will allow the school to offer a wider range of courses for its students for credit recovery and remediation, academic challenge, and a variety of electives by offering distance education as a supplement to its traditional courses. **Stated another way, the proposed addition of distance education courses will not replace the current delivery of instruction in a brick-and-mortar atmosphere; the school will offer distance education as a supplement for students with specific needs.** The school seeks to implement an exemplary virtual learning program to effectively prepare students for success in college and career.

According to the submission, the rationale behind this proposal is to enhance its current innovative coursework with a blended model, combining face-to-face and online distance education to allow

the school to pool and leverage its teaching resources to prepare middle school students for success in college and their careers. The school also proposes to expand its course offerings for students who wish to seek advanced high school classes so that they are better prepared to graduate high school as Mater does not have a high school program at this time. The online supplement will also expand the electives available to students that are not currently available at either of the Mater Academy of Nevada campuses. Finally, the school also proposes to increase their ability to be flexible and offer stronger individualized instruction, especially for the school's growing English Language Learner (ELL) population who may be struggling academically or working above grade level to progress at their own pace.

Students will be selected to participate in Distance Education based on their individual needs, and only those students that are full-time students of Mater Academy of Nevada will be eligible to participate. This student-driven approach will begin in the Fall of 2018, but all students enrolling in supplementary distance education courses will still be required to attend classes full-time at their home school. For students enrolled in the distance education courses, the school has set forth the following performance expectations and goals:

- 1) Increase Distance Education students' math grade level equivalence by more than 1.0 (one year of growth) as determined by the iReady assessment;
- 2) Increase Distance Education students' reading grade level equivalence by more than 1.0 (one year of growth) as determined by the iReady assessment; and
- 3) If an achievement gap exists between students in Distance Education that are targeted at-risk student subgroups (economically disadvantage, English Language Learners, students with disabilities and other at-risk groups) and the general student population, the school will work to decrease the achievement gap between each subgroup and the general student population by at least 30 percent (without reducing the rigor and performance of the general student population) through individualized programs of distance education in Mater Academy of Nevada's blended learning model.

To track and monitor progress towards these goals, the school will require students enrolled in distance learning courses to interact with their virtual teacher one time per week. All weekly communications between teachers and students are logged into the student information system (Bocavox/MAESTRO) and stored for seven years. Moreover, evidence that communication between the student and virtual teacher is required, and data will be available 24 hours a day and 365 days each year. The attendance reports reflect real-time data will be generated by designated school staff every Monday, or more frequently, to comply with the weekly communication requirement for attendance. Furthermore, student attendance and participation in courses is also tracked in the learning management system (Agilix/Buzz) each time a student logs into their course. Time is tracked by minutes and seconds.

According to the proposal, the school will employ various progress-monitoring tools to ensure that courses are assisting students in achieving their academic goals. These include:

- Daily progress reports for both students and teachers that use real-time data;
- Assessment reports (generated weekly, monthly, interim or quarterly) for teachers that include disaggregated data;

- Weekly teacher reports generated to identify those students having difficulties with the distance education course. Students not progressing or falling behind pace will be identified and contacted by the academic coach to determine next steps; and

**Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests:**

Pursuant to [NRS 388A.276](#) and [NRS 388A.279](#), the Authority may, at a duly noticed public meeting, approve, approve with conditions, or deny a request to amend a charter contract. Authority staff believes that the addition of supplementary distance education courses constitutes a material amendment to the current contract for Mater Academy pursuant to [NAC 386.3269](#).

**Recommendation: Approve with Conditions**

Mater Academy of Nevada has been was classified as a 2-star elementary school and a 3-star middle school for the 2017 – 2018 school year according to the Nevada State Performance Framework Star rating system. Staff believes that this amendment will help the school in its efforts to attain a 3-star rating.

The school is proposing to begin offering distance education courses during the fall of the 2018 – 2019 school year. As mentioned above, the school includes a number of performance monitoring strategies as part of the proposal, in addition to performance benchmarks that the school aims to achieve upon implementation. The school has also submitted verification that each of the proposed courses in this distance education package have been approved by the Nevada Department of Education.

Authority staff recommends approval, but with conditions, to ensure that the first year of implementation runs smoothly, and the school is working to ensure that it maintains strong oversight of these programmatic additions. The school should submit the following to Authority staff:

- A year-end report of the student performance against the performance expectations outlined both in the memo and on page two of this memo; and
- A student enrollment summary or course log that notes the number of students enrolling in supplemental distance education courses during the 2018 – 2019 school year.

**Total Current Enrollment Across All Campuses:**

Grade Level	Total Amount Across All Existing Campuses - Number of Students			
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Pre-K	N/A	36	N/A	106
K	51	99	104	243
1	47	103	104	233

2	39	98	104	231
3	54	99	103	229
4	35	100	107	234
5	38	98	104	223
6	22	90	124	213
7	N/A	56	92	123
8	N/A	N/A	62	90
9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>1925</b>

**Background:**

**Mater Academy Academic Performance**

Year	NSPF Rating
2015	Elementary: N/A
	Middle School: N/A- New School
	High School: N/A- New School
2016	No star rating published by State
2017	Elementary: 2 Star
	Middle School: 3 Star
	High School: N/A

**School Demographic Change since 2015**

Mater	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	779	1.9%	10.7%	14.2%	67.6%	0.1%	5.0%	0.2%	7.9%	65.7%	79.5%
Mater	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
16-17	911	0.9%	9.9%	10.5%	73.3%	0.1%	4.9%	0.1%	9.4%	46.8%	100.0%
Mater	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
17-18	1756	0.9%	9.2%	9.7%	76.3%	0.2%	3.3%	0.1%	7.6%	49.4%	70.3%

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

A – Asian

H – Hispanic

B – Black

C - White

P – Pacific Islander

M – Two or more races

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