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## 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:** Somerset Academy Charter Contract Amendment Request: Addition of Supplementary Distance Education Courses

**DATE:** June 28, 2018

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Somerset Academy, operating under a charter contract entered into in 2016, is located in Las Vegas, Nevada and is currently rated a 4-star elementary and 3-star middle school serving 6689 in Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. In the 2018-2019 school year, Somerset Academy seeks to offer distance education classes. As discussed below, Staff recommends approval of the amendment request, with conditions.

#### **Summary of Request:**

The vision statement of Somerset Academy is to cultivate effective leaders, good character and a desire to render service among scholars in a college prep school. Somerset Academy continuously seeks unique and innovative strategies aimed at increasing student achievement and has developed a multi-tiered system (management, assessment and instruction, and professional development) which integrates technology within the core curriculum and achieves increased performance across all student populations and subgroups. To help achieve this vision, the school is seeking to expand its high-performing school network by increasing the school's capacity to serve students in its middle school and high school program. Through offering distance education, the school will supplement and enhance its traditional courses with access to virtual learning opportunities for students that are credit deficient, in need of credit recovery or academic remediation, or seeking electives that are currently not offered at any Somerset campus. **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 offer middle school and high school students the opportunity to take credit bearing courses if they are credit deficient, more robust and academic challenging courses if they are exceptional learners, or electives that the school may not be able to otherwise offer. This distance education offering would be particularly beneficial to those students in need of additional credit opportunities to avoid falling further behind in their pursuit of graduation. The online supplement will also expand the electives available to students that are not currently available at any of the Somerset campuses. Somerset will utilize its affiliation with Somerset Academy of Florida and Somerset Virtual Academy for guidance, best practices, and support in order to contribute to the overall success of their distance educational program.

Students will be selected to participate in Distance Education based on their individual needs, and only those students that are full-time students of Somerset Academy 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) Ninety percent (90%) of students enrolled in blended distance education classes will successfully pass the course;
- 2) One hundred percent (100%) of students enrolled in distance education courses will participate in two-way academic communication with their virtual instructor with support of their face-to-face instructor on a weekly basis.

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

- Progress reports sent via email to students and parents by the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month, or the previous Friday if the 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend.

**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 Somerset pursuant to [NAC 386.3269](#).

**Recommendation: Approve with Conditions**

Somerset Academy has been classified as at least a 3-star school since the inception of the Star rating system, and was rated as both a 4-star elementary and a 3-star middle school during the most recent set of ratings for the 2016 – 2017 school year. The school also exhibits both a healthy enrollment and waitlist.

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. Lastly, the school will benefit from guidance, best practices, and support from both Somerset Academy of Florida and Somerset Virtual Academy.

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						
	2011-2012	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Pre-K	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
K	209	268	378	466	556	569	572
1	159	270	404	473	573	573	579
2	160	248	394	473	572	571	581
3	146	238	363	477	575	575	573
4	103	198	356	473	573	599	606
5	100	198	323	495	597	600	604
6	118	186	322	590	692	747	735
7	60	118	231	456	661	710	712
8	N/A	59	177	354	464	679	661
9	N/A	N/A	68	201	254	317	397
10	N/A	N/A	N/A	65	197	257	300
11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	64	180	216
12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	55	153
<b>Total</b>	<b>1055</b>	<b>1783</b>	<b>3016</b>	<b>4523</b>	<b>5778</b>	<b>6432</b>	<b>6689</b>

**Background:**

**Somerset Academy Academic Performance**

Year	NSPF Rating
2012	Elementary: 5 Star
	Middle School: 5 Star
	High School: N/A
2013	Elementary: 4 Star
	Middle School: 4 Star
	High School: N/A
2014	Elementary: 5 Star
	Middle School: 5 Star
	High School: N/A
2015	Elementary: 5 Star (frozen from 2014)
	Middle School: 5 (frozen from 2014)
	High School: N/A (frozen from 2014)
2016	No star rating published by State
2017	Elementary: 4 Star
	Middle School: 3 Star

High School: N/A
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**School Demographic Change since 2015**

Somerset	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	5778	3.2%	9.7%	51.7%	26.0%	0.2%	7.5%	1.4%	8.9%	4.6%	0.6%
Somerset	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
16-17	6432	3.1%	10.6%	48.5%	27.8%	0.4%	7.8%	1.5%	10.9%	6.6%	16.9%
Somerset	TOTAL ENROLLED	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
17-18	6689	3.4%	11.1%	45.2%	30.2%	0.2%	8.0%	1.5%	12.1%	6.0%	14.7%

- 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