

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

PATRICK GAVIN
Executive Director



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

**1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706-2543
(775) 687 - 9174 · Fax: (775) 687 - 9113**

**VIA UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

October 30, 2018

Steve Canavero, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Department of Education
700 East Fifth Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5096
scanavero@doe.nv.gov

Re: SPCSA Rising Stars Schools

Dr. Canavero,

This correspondence is in response to your memorandum dated October 1, 2018 regarding any accountability actions that the SPCSA has taken or will take in regard to SPCSA-sponsored public charter schools that have been designated as Rising Stars Schools by the Department of Education for the 2017-2018 school year. SPCSA-sponsored Rising Stars Schools for the 2017-2018 school year include the following:

- Beacon Academy of Nevada's high school;
- Nevada Connections Academy's elementary, middle, and high schools;
- Silver State High School (now known as Argent Preparatory Academy);
- Mater Academy of Nevada's Bonanza campus' elementary school;
- Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's elementary school; and
- Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school.

In addition to detailing any accountability actions that the SPCSA has or will take in regard to the foregoing public charter schools, as requested in your memorandum, this correspondence

also briefly summarizes the status of any prior accountability actions taken in regard to SPCSA-sponsored public charter school that were previously designated by the Department as Rising Stars Schools for the 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 school year.

Discovery Charter School's Elementary and Middle Schools

Discovery Charter School's two elementary school campuses are rated as three- and four-star schools, and Discovery's two middle school campuses are rated as four- and five-star schools for the 2017-2018 school year.¹ We previously detailed our actions related to Discovery in our [letter](#) dated January 15, 2016.

As noted in your memorandum, Discovery Charter School's elementary and middle schools were rated in the bottom 5 percent of all elementary and middle schools in the state for the 2015-2016 school year, qualifying them as Rising Stars Schools for the 2015-2016 school year. Discovery's elementary schools were rated as a two-star elementary school, and Discovery's middle school was rated as a four-star school for the 2016-2017 school year.

We attribute Discovery's turn-around in no small part to the appointment of a receiver in 2017. We are looking forward to Discovery's receiver reconstituting the governing body of Discovery once the receiver determines that Discovery has stabilized.

Quest Preparatory Academy's Elementary School

Although not on your list of Rising Stars Schools, we note that Quest Preparatory Academy's elementary school was rated as a one-star school and in the bottom 5% of all elementary schools for the 2016-2017 school year. Quest's elementary school had historically been rated as a three- or four-star school.

Quest's middle school was rated as a two-star school for the 2016-2017 school year and had historically been rated as a three-star school.

We are pleased to report that Quest's Bridger elementary school campus has improved to a two-star school, narrowly missing achieving three-star school status. The Northwest campus was 3-stars in 2017-2018. In this regard, Quest's elementary school showed one of the biggest index point jumps in the entire SPCSA-portfolio, improving from an index score of 18 for the 2016-2017 school year, to an index score of 48.5.² Quest's middle school achieved a three-star rating for the 2017-2018 school year. Notwithstanding that improvement, the receiver voluntarily closed Bridger at the end of the 2017-2018 school year and consolidated that campus's programs into the Northwest campus.

Just as with Discovery Charter School, we attribute the dramatic improvement at Quest to the appointment of a receiver in 2015. We anticipate Discovery continuing on its current trajectory and expect Quest's elementary school to be rated as at least a three-star school for the 2018-2019

¹ We note here that for the first time, each individual campus in the SPCSA's portfolio was rated under the NSPF for the 2017-2018 school year.

² Note that Quest operated two elementary school campuses during the 2017-2018 school year, and they achieved index scores of 47 and 48.5, respectively. Quest closed its two-star elementary school campus at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, and now operates a single campus.

school year, and just as with Discovery, we look forward to Quest's receiver reconstituting the governing body of Quest once the receiver feels that Quest has stabilized.

Beacon Academy of Nevada's High School

Again, as mentioned in your memorandum, Beacon Academy of Nevada (which only operates a high school) is currently operating under the Alternative Performance Framework. We previously detailed our actions related to Beacon in our [letter](#) dated January 15, 2016. While Beacon was one of the lowest rated schools in the SPCSA portfolio, earning a one-star rating and having a graduation rate of 59%, Beacon exclusively serves an at-risk student population. We continue to work with to improve its academic performance and look forward to it being rated under the Alternative Performance Framework for the 2018-2019 school year.

Nevada Connections Academy's Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Nevada Connections Academy's elementary, middle, and high schools were all rated as one-star schools for the 2017-2018 school year. Additionally, Nevada Connections Academy's high school only achieved a graduation rate of 45% for the 2016-2017 school year (the most recent graduation rate).

Given that Nevada Connections Academy's elementary school was previously rated as a one-star school for the 2016-2017 school year, in the Spring of 2018 the SPCSA Board approved an academic improvement plan as it relates to the elementary school. Likewise, given Nevada Connections Academy's historically dismal graduation rate, in the Fall of 2017 an academic improvement plan was approved by the SPCSA Board as it relates to Nevada Connections Academy's high school. The academic improvement plan and related agreement between Nevada Connections Academy and the SPCSA provided Nevada Connections Academy with an additional year (through the 2018-2019 school year) to demonstrate academic improvement. Currently, notwithstanding Nevada Connections Academy's middle school's one-star rating for the 2017-2018 school year, the SPCSA has not required Nevada Connections Academy to implement an academic improvement plan in regard to its middle school.

Nevada Connections Academy's charter school contract expires at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, Nevada Connections Academy will be eligible to apply for renewal of its charter school contract during the Fall of 2019.

The SPCSA has made clear to Nevada Connections Academy that absent significant and dramatic improvement – essentially three-star school ratings – across its elementary, middle, and high school, it is unlikely that Nevada Connections Academy's charter school contract will be renewed. The SPCSA is hopeful that Nevada Connections Academy can achieve such academic improvement. However, given Nevada Connections Academy's historical underperformance Nevada Connections Academy has a steep hill to climb in order to have its charter school contract renewed past the 2019-2020 school year.

Silver State High School (now known as Argent Preparatory Academy):

As you are aware, Argent Preparatory Academy's middle and high school have historically been academically underperforming schools. As a result, the SPCSA appointed a receiver in 2015 to attempt to improve Argent's academic performance. We previously detailed our actions related to Argent in our [letter](#) dated January 15, 2016.

Unfortunately, Argent's receiver determined during the 2017-2018 school year that a turn-around was not feasible, and Argent closed its doors at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. A copy of the receiver's closure request can be found at [The SPCSA](#) has been working with Argent's receiver regarding the wind-down of Argent; most importantly in regard to assisting the receiver with finding placement for Argent's former students.

Mater Academy of Nevada's Bonanza Campus's Elementary School:

Mater Academy of Nevada's Bozeman's campus' elementary school was rated as a one-star school for the 2017-2018 school year. Given that the 2017-2018 school year was the first year that Mater's Bonanza campus operated, the SPCSA has not requested that Mater institute an academic improvement plan. However, the SPCSA has issued a Notice of Concern to Mater, and has cautioned Mater that absent improvement next year, accountability measures will likely be implemented by the SPCSA.

Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's Elementary School:

Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's elementary school was rated as a one-star school and in the bottom 5% of all elementary schools for the 2017-2018 school year. Given that the 2017-2018 school year was the first year that Mater operated, the SPCSA has not requested that Mater institute an academic improvement plan. However, the SPCSA has issued a Notice of Concern to Mater, and has cautioned Mater that absent improvement next year, accountability measures will likely be implemented by the SPCSA.

Nevada Virtual Academy's Elementary School:

Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school was rated as a one-star school for the 2017-2018 school year. Nevada Virtual Academy's middle school was rated as a two-star school, and Nevada Virtual Academy's high school was rated as a three-star school for the 2017-2018 school year.

Given the historical academic underperformance of Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school, charter school contract termination proceedings were initiated in February of 2018. These proceedings resulted in an agreement being reached between Nevada Virtual Academy and the SPCSA whereby Nevada Virtual Academy agreed to close its elementary school at the end of the 2018-2019 school year if its elementary school did not achieve an index score of 34 or greater for the 2017-2018 school year. Since Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school earned a one-star rating with an index score of 21 for the 2017-2018 school year, Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school will close at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Finally, it should be noted that Nevada Virtual Academy's middle and high school are currently eligible for renewal. Nevada Virtual Academy submitted its application for renewal on October 15, 2018.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a capital letter 'R' followed by a horizontal line that tapers to a dot on the right.

Ryan Herrick
General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

cc: Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
(via electronic mail)

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**VIA UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
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October 19, 2018

Ricardo Jasso, Board President
Mater Academy of Nevada
4760 East Bonanza Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89110
ricardo.jasso@materacademynv.org

Re: Notice of Concern Due to Academic Underperformance

Dear Mr. Jasso:

As you are aware, Mater Academy of Nevada's Bonanza campus's elementary school program received a one-star rating under the Nevada Department of Education's Nevada School Performance Framework for the 2017-2018 school year. As you are also aware, the State Public Charter School Authority voted at its September 28, 2018 Board meeting to issue a Notice of Concern based on the foregoing academic underperformance.

This Notice of Concern serves as a reminder that the Charter School Performance Framework, which is incorporated into Mater Academy of Nevada's Charter School Contract, is meant to provide charter school leaders with clear expectations, fact-based oversight, and timely feedback while at the same time ensuring charter school autonomy. Under the Charter School Performance Framework, a Notice of Concern represents Level 1 in the Authority's Intervention Ladder. Please note that Level 2 in the Intervention Ladder is a Notice of Breach, and that a State Public Charter School Authority-sponsored public charter school entering Level 3 of the Authority's Intervention Ladder may result in Charter School Contract termination proceedings being initiated under NRS 388A.330.

Please note that at this time, no specific actions on the part of Mater Academy of Nevada, including the submission of an academic improvement plan, are being requested by the Authority. However, we note here that both the SPCSA and the Department of Education will

closely scrutinize the annual School Performance Plan that Mater Academy of Nevada is required to submit as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement / Rising Stars School.

Finally, please note that Mater Academy of Nevada's charter school contract will expire at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, Mater Academy of Nevada may be eligible to apply for renewal of its charter school contract in the Fall of 2019. Note that continued academic underperformance may result in a recommendation from the State Public Charter School Authority staff not to renew Mater Academy of Nevada's charter school contract, or a decision by the State Public Charter School Authority Board to not renew Mater Academy of Nevada's charter school contract.

The SPCSA believes strongly in a quality public school of choice for every Nevada child. We hope that Mater Academy of Nevada will join us by improving its academic performance, thereby increasing the number of high-quality SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

Sincerely,



Ryan Herrick
General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

cc: Renee Fairless, Lead Principal, Mater Academy of Nevada
Amy Gronna, Principal, Mater Academy of Nevada, Bonanza Campus
Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, State Public Charter School Authority
(via electronic mail)

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October 19, 2018

Luke Welmerink, Board Chair
Mater Academy of Northern Nevada
2680 East 9th Street
Reno, Nevada 89512
luke.welmerink@maternnv.org

Re: Notice of Concern Due to Academic Underperformance

Dear Mr. Welmerink:

As you are aware, Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's elementary school program received a one-star rating under the Nevada Department of Education's Nevada School Performance Framework for the 2017-2018 school year. Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's elementary school program was also ranked in the lowest 5% of all elementary school programs statewide. As you are also aware, the State Public Charter School Authority voted at its September 28, 2018 Board meeting to issue a Notice of Concern based on the foregoing academic underperformance.

Due to Mater Academy of Northern Nevada's elementary school being ranked in the lowest 5% of all elementary schools statewide, Mater Academy of Northern Nevada is eligible for charter school contract termination proceedings pursuant to NRS 388A.330(1)(f). However, charter school contract termination proceedings are not being initiated at this point due to the school being in its first year of operation and that Mater Academy schools tend to be high-performing. Please note that by not initiating charter school termination proceedings, the State Public Charter School Authority does not waive the right or ability to initiate charter school contract termination proceedings under NRS 388A.330(1)(f), or any other provision contained in NRS Chapter 388A or the school's charter school contract, in subsequent years.

This Notice of Concern serves as a reminder that the Charter School Performance Framework, which is incorporated into Mater Academy of Nevada's Charter School Contract, is meant to

provide charter school leaders with clear expectations, fact-based oversight, and timely feedback while at the same time ensuring charter school autonomy. Under the Charter School Performance Framework, a Notice of Concern represents Level 1 in the Authority's Intervention Ladder. Please note that Level 2 in the Intervention Ladder is a Notice of Breach, and that a State Public Charter School Authority-sponsored public charter school entering Level 3 of the Authority's Intervention Ladder may result in Charter School Contract termination proceedings being initiated under NRS 388A.330. As noted above, the Authority may choose to forgo the Notice of Concern and Notice of Breach steps and move immediately to Charter School contract termination.

Please note that at this time, no specific actions on the part of Mater Academy of Northern Nevada, including the submission of an academic improvement plan, are being requested by the Authority. However, we note here that both the SPCSA and the Department will closely scrutinize the annual School Performance Plan that Mater Academy of Nevada is required to submit as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement / Rising Stars School.

The SPCSA believes strongly in a quality public school of choice for every Nevada child. We hope that Mater Academy of Northern Nevada will join us by improving its academic performance, thereby increasing the number of high-quality SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

Sincerely,



Ryan Herrick
General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

cc: Prim Walters, Principal, Mater Academy of Northern Nevada
Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, State Public Charter School Authority
(via electronic mail)

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October 19, 2018

Scott Harrington, Board President
Nevada Connections Academy
555 Double Eagle Court Suite 2000
Reno, Nevada 89521
scottharrington@nca.connectionsacademy.org

Re: Notices Due to Academic Underperformance

Dear Dr. Harrington:

As you are aware, Nevada Connections Academy's elementary, middle, and high school programs each received one-star ratings under the Nevada Department of Education's Nevada School Performance Framework for the 2017-2018 school year. As you are also aware, the State Public Charter School Authority voted at its September 28, 2018 Board meeting to issue a number of notices to Nevada Connections Academy based on the foregoing academic underperformance.

First, in regard to Nevada Connections Academy's elementary school program, this correspondence serves as a notice of continuing breach due to Nevada Connections Academy's elementary school's one-star rating under the NSPF for the 2017-2018 school year. You will recall that the State Public Charter School Authority previously issued a Notice of Breach in regard to Nevada Connections Academy's elementary school program due to it being rated as a one-star school under the NSPF for the 2016-2017 school year. We note here that Nevada Academy's elementary school program rating under the NSPF has actually declined since the issuance of the Notice of Breach.

Second, in regard to Nevada Connections Academy's middle school program, this correspondence serves as a Notice of Concern due to Nevada Connections Academy's middle school program receiving a one-star rating under the NSPF for the 2017-2018 school year.

Third, in regard to Nevada Connections Academy's high school program, this correspondence serves as a notification that the school received a one-star rating under the NSPF for the 2017-2018 school year. In regard to Nevada Connections Academy's high school program, please note that the school's amended Charter School Contract and the previously-agreed-to settlement related to Nevada Connections Academy's high school program, NCA's high school program must achieve a graduation rate of 49% or greater for the 2017-2018 school year or else face additional enrollment caps. Nevada's Department of Education will release the 2017-2018 graduation rates in December of 2018, and we expect to bring this issue to the State Public Charter School Authority Board in early 2019.

Please note that at this time, no specific actions on the part of Nevada Connections Academy are being requested by the Authority. However, we note here that both the SPCSA and the Department will closely scrutinize the annual School Performance Plan that Nevada Connections Academy is required to submit.

Finally, please note that Nevada Connections Academy's Charter School Contract will expire at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, Nevada Connections Academy will be eligible to apply for renewal of its Charter School Contract in the Fall of 2019. Note that continued academic underperformance may result in a recommendation from the State Public Charter School Authority staff not to renew Nevada Connections Academy's Charter School Contract, or a decision by the State Public Charter School Authority Board not to renew Nevada Connections Academy's Charter School Contract.

The SPCSA believes strongly in a quality public school of choice for every Nevada child. We hope that Nevada Connections Academy will join us by improving its academic performance, thereby increasing the number of high-quality SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

Please confirm receipt of this Notice, and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ryan Herrick
General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

cc: Chris McBride, Superintendent, Nevada Connections Academy
Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, State Public Charter School Authority
(via electronic mail)

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October 19, 2018

Mrs. Samantha Morris, Board President
Nevada Virtual Academy
4801 South Sandhill Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89121
samanthaamorris@gmail.com

Re: Notice Regarding Elementary School

Dear Mrs. Morris:

As you are aware, the previously-agreed to Stipulated Agreement between Nevada Virtual Academy and the State Public Charter School Authority required Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school program to achieve an index score of 34 or greater for the 2017-2018 school year under Nevada's Department of Education's Nevada School Performance Framework ("the NSPF"). Nevada Virtual Academy also agreed in the Stipulated Agreement that failure to achieve an index score of 34 or greater meant that Nevada Virtual Academy would not apply for renewal of its charter school contract in regard to its elementary school program, and that its elementary school program would close at the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

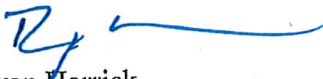
Nevada Virtual Academy's elementary school program earned a 21.33 index score under the NSPF for the 2017-2018 school year.

The State Public Charter School Authority is aware that Nevada Virtual Academy has notified all parents and guardians of currently enrolled students at Nevada Virtual Academy and posted on its website that its elementary school program will be closing at the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

As was stated at the State Public Charter School Authority's September 28, 2018 Board meeting, the State Public Charter School Authority is committed to assisting currently enrolled elementary school students and pupils with finding alternative, high-quality educational options for the 2019-2020 school year. Please contact the State Public Charter School's point-of-contact for assistance in this regard, Mark Modrein at (702) 486-8271, with any questions.

Please confirm receipt of this correspondence, and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ry", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ryan Herrick
General Counsel, State Public Charter School Authority

cc: Yolanda Hamilton, Head of School
Jason Guinasso, Chair, State Public Charter School Authority
Patrick Gavin, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Mark Modrein, Director of Authorizing, State Public Charter School Authority
(via electronic mail)