

Charter School Application Report

Alaka'i Heritage Academy

Recommendation from the Summer 2019 Charter Application Cycle

General Information

Proposed Name	Alaka'i Heritage Academy
Proposed Mission	Through arts integration, leadership cultivation, and multicultural education, Alaka'i Heritage Academy ensures all students are on a path for success at the college and career level.
Proposed EMO or CMO	Academica Nevada
Proposed Grade Configuration	Kindergarten – 8 th grade
Proposed Opening	August 2020
Proposed Location	Zip codes: 89120, 89014, 89074, 89122 or 89121

Process/Key Dates for Alaka'i Heritage Academy

- New Charter Application Training
- March 15, 2019 – Notice of Intent is received
- July 15, 2019 – Application is received
- August 15, 2019 – AB 462 Addendum is received
- October 7, 2019 - Capacity Interview is conducted
- December 17, 2019 – Recommendation is presented

Planned enrollment chart

	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2025-26</u>
<u>K</u>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<u>1</u>	50	100	100	100	100	100
<u>2</u>	50	100	100	100	100	100
<u>3</u>	50	50	100	100	100	100
<u>4</u>	25	50	100	100	100	100
<u>5</u>	25	25	50	100	100	100
<u>6</u>	30	60	60	120	120	120
<u>7</u>	0	30	60	60	120	120
<u>8</u>	0	0	30	60	60	120
<u>9</u>						
<u>10</u>						
<u>11</u>						
<u>12</u>						
Total	330	515	700	840	900	960

Executive Summary and Recommendation

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the Alaka’i Heritage Academy application has shortcomings within all four components of the submitted application. The SPCSA staff find that the proposed academic, organizational, and financial plans for the proposed Alaka’i Heritage Academy do not meet the standards as outlined in the charter application rubric. The academic plan does not clearly articulate how the identified instructional strategies would coherently fit together to enable faithful implementation of an arts integration model. While the committee to form spoke generally to the applicability of the arts integration model for all students, they could not specifically speak to how this model would meet needs of students from the local community. In addition, the board and school leadership have limited experience with the arts integration model. Despite anticipating approximately one in four students to be English Learners, the applicant did not sufficiently explain how the school would provide high-quality education to English Learners and has allocated very limited resources and staff to providing services to English Learner students. In addition, the incubation year plan is significantly underdeveloped, and it is unclear which parties will be responsible for key milestones.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the Alaka’i Heritage Academy application partially meets the geographic component of the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. Since the submission of the written application, in which the applicant identified five potential zip codes, the applicant has identified a potential facility in a zip code with 1 and 2-star schools and adjacent to other zip codes with 1 and 2-star schools. However, the applicant did not demonstrate a clear commitment to serving the local community as little to no evidence of engagement with or support from the local community was provided. Additionally, the applicant has not clearly articulated how the proposed school would meet the needs of the target community.

For these major reasons, in addition to those outlined throughout this document, staff's recommendation is to deny the Alaka'i Heritage Academy application.

Proposed motion: Deny the Alaka'i Heritage Academy application as submitted during the 2019 Summer Application Cycle based on a finding that the applicant has failed to satisfy the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

Summary of Application Section Ratings

The State Public Charter School Authority is required to assemble a team of reviewers and conduct a thorough evaluation of the application, which includes an in-person interview with the applicant designed to elicit any necessary clarification or additional information about the proposed charter school. The SPCSA is required to adhere to its policies and practices, namely the application guidance, training and rubric, regarding evaluating charter applications. Ultimately, the SPCSA must base its determination on the documented evidence collected through the application process.

Rating options for each section are Meets the Standard; Approaches the Standard; Does not Meet the Standard. These are defined as follows:

- **Meets the Standard:** The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively in a way which will result in a 4- or 5-star school.
- **Approaches the Standard:** The response meets the criteria in many respects but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
- **Does Not Meet the Standard:** The response is undeveloped or incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

The rubric is broken into four major sections as outlined below and detailed descriptions of each rubric item can be found in the full rubric located on the SPCSA Application website:

http://charterschools.nv.gov/OpenASchool/Application_Packet/

Meeting the Need: Approaches the Standard

- Targeted Plan
 - Does Not Meet the Standard
- Parent and Community Involvement
 - Approaches the Standard

Academic Plan: Approaches the Standard

- Mission and Vision
 - Approaches the Standard
- Transformational Change
 - Approaches the Standard
- Curriculum & Instructional Design

- **Approaches the Standard**
- Distance Education Requirements
 - N/A
- Pre-K Requirements
 - N/A
- High School Graduation Requirements
 - N/A
- Driving for Results
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- At Risk Students and Special Populations
 - **Does Not Meet the Standard**
- School Structure (Culture)
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- School Structure (Student Discipline)
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- School Structure (Calendar and Schedule)
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- A Day in the Life & Scenarios
 - **Approaches the Standard**

Operations Plan: Approaches the Standard

- Leadership Team
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Leadership for Expansion (Experienced Operators Only)
 - N/A
- Staffing
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Human Resources
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Scale Strategy (Experienced Operators Only)
 - N/A

- Student Recruitment and Enrollment
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Board Governance
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Incubation Year Development
 - **Does Not Meet the Standard**
- EMO Relationships and School Management Contracts (If Applicable)
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Services
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Facilities
 - **Approaches the Standard**
- Ongoing Operations
 - **Approaches the Standard**

Financial Plan: Approaches the Standard

Meeting the Need Section

Ultimately, while there is some evidence that the applicant understands the needs assessment, they have yet to clearly commit to a specific target population aligned to it. This includes not being able to concretely address how the model would meet the target population's needs. While the plan for how the proposed school would engage with parents and families met some of the rubric criteria, the applicant largely did not engage with the proposed community during the development of the application or even once the decision had been made to shift the target population. In addition, a limited number of community partnerships showed potential to directly support the needs of the target population.

Areas of Strength

- Overall the school has been active in advertising their program and provided over 600 letters of intent to enroll from parents and families.
- There are 27 letters of support submitted by a range of local organization and businesses.
- The applicant provided substantial data regarding the five zip codes initially identified for potential location including data regarding the demographics and academic performance of schools in the surrounding area.
- Applicant includes plan to incorporate parents into the life of the school, once open (e.g. parent volunteering, parent workshops, Parent Teacher Student Organization, etc.).

Areas of Concern

- The written application describes recruitment efforts largely focused on parents/families that are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and states that 98% of the 600+ letters of intent are from Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islander families. However, when asked during the capacity interview about meeting the needs identified in the SPCSA Needs Assessment, the applicant articulated an intent to locate in and serve a community with 1- and 2-star schools and potentially utilize preferential enrollment to prioritize serving the immediate community. The applicant has yet to conduct outreach in the proposed community or communicate with the 600+ families that have submitted letters of intent to enroll regarding the changing priorities and enrollment approach.
- While the applicant outlines some concrete methods for conducting community outreach, there has been limited engagement with the target community in the development of the plan. Moreover, it was noted during the capacity interview that while the families and students who have completed Intent to Enroll forms are committed to the school, they are not aware of the shift in sentiment to meet the needs as outlined within the Needs Assessment.
- The applicant was unable to clearly articulated how the proposed model would address the needs of the local community, particularly in the area of serving students who are English Learners, expected to make up approximately 25% of the student body based on the surrounding school data provided by the applicant.

- During the capacity interview, the applicant acknowledged that there may need to be some changes to the staffing and model to meet the needs of the newly identified target community. While some ideas were provided, no clear plan was outlined.
- The application states that parents will be able to choose to attend the Board meetings of the school and provide comment. This represents a narrow approach to parent feedback that is likely to limit engagement and input from parents.

Academic Section

The applicant outlined an arts integration model, including research to demonstrate the positive impacts that this approach can have on student achievement. However, both in the written application and during the capacity interview, the applicant was unable to clearly describe how the long list of strategies would coherently fit together to enable faithful implementation of an arts integration model in a manner likely to result in replication of previous success in other schools. In addition, the committee to form spoke generally to the applicability of the arts integration model to all students but could not specifically speak to how this model would meet the identified local community needs. In particular, the applicant is now anticipating a sizable population of English Learners. However, the applicant did not sufficiently explain how the school would provide high-quality education to EL students. It was not clear in the application or interview who in the school will be responsible for providing educational services to EL students. The application also included weaknesses in establishing and monitoring goals, meeting the needs of at-risk students, school schedule and school culture.

Areas of Strength

- The mission statement defines the purpose and specialized focus of the school (arts and cultural integration) to its stakeholders and the public.
- Applicant provides research as to how arts integration programs can help increase student academic achievement.
- The applicant lists the curricula they intend to use; they are widely used nationwide and respond to the state and federal standards.
- There is a clear understanding of the obligation to participate in the statewide and Authority systems of assessment and accountability and an explicit commitment to full participation in all federal, state, and Authority mandated assessments and measurements which are currently in effect or may be adopted in the future, including any updates to the Nevada School Performance Framework or the SPCSA Performance Framework.
- Two members of the school's founding team have demonstrated track records of success serving students with disabilities.
- Applicant demonstrates understanding of Nevada and federal laws and regulations governing services for students with disabilities.
- Applicant states that the attendance goal is a daily average of 95% or higher and outlines plan to monitor and address student progress toward this goal.

Areas of Concern

- Applicant does not clearly describe how the school will accelerate the academic growth of all subgroups and for students who are struggling academically. In several places, vague generalized approaches are listed within the application.
- The applicant's plan for serving English Learners is not fully developed, particularly when considering that in surrounding schools, approximately one in four students is an English learner. This would translate to about 90 students at Alaka'i Heritage Academy in the first year of the school. In particular, the plan relies on using a classroom teacher who would be provided with a stipend to coordinate EL services on top of regular classroom duties. While the committee to form spoke about aiming to hire teachers with a TESOL endorsement, they did not provide convincing evidence that the staffing model would be sufficient given the expected size of the population. In addition, the applicant states that staff will be trained in working with students with EL students but does not provide a detailed plan for professional development to teachers and staff to ensure they can support and accelerate the learning of English Learners.
- The school model is oriented around arts integration and aims to incorporate Hawaiian culture and the cultures of the student body. The applicant lists various instructional strategies that will allow the school to implement their educational plan, but it is not clear in the written application (nor is a successful implementation model cited on the footnotes) as to how these strategies will be simultaneously used together. During the capacity interview members of the committee to form provided examples of classroom activities, however it is still unclear how the curriculum, arts integration model and multicultural approach will consistently and systematically be integrated to create a cohesive learning experience.
- While the applicant states that the school will "integrate relevant cultural components, reflective of the school's student body" and provides an example, the applicant does not articulate how this would be accomplished at a school-wide level. This is a fairly significant component of the proposed model.
- One of the applicant's two overarching goals is "Demonstration of at least one (1) year of growth in Reading and Math annually with the ultimate goal of meeting and exceeding proficiency in the core curriculum." This goal raises significant questions about how the school will support students across the performance spectrum. In particular, a single year's growth is insufficient for students that are below grade level. When asked about this during the capacity interview, the applicant stated they wanted to maximize growth for students and support students through tier 2 and tier 3 instruction. However, the applicant did not define what success should look like for those students entering behind academically.
- The MAP goals as stated indicate that the applicant does not fully grasp the proposed interim assessments. MAP does not report whether a student is "proficient" or "advanced" as stated within the proposal.
- The applicant's plan is not concrete as to how there will be a norming of social/cultural expectations for students and does not discuss how students that join mid-year will learn about and become accustomed to the school culture.
- During the capacity interview, when asked about supporting at-risk students, the committee to form described the use of "double dose" for math and reading to support

student growth and remediation. However, this is inconsistent with the schedule provided in the application and a plan for adapting the schedule was not provided.

Operations Section

Though the applicant has described an Arts Integration model, the board and school leadership have limited experience with this educational approach. While the board and principal were realistic about this gap and spoke to steps for developing the principal in the area of arts integration, this represents a weakness in the proposal and exposes a risk regarding successful implementation the proposed model. In addition, the applicant now anticipates a sizeable population of English Learners but the staffing model and budget show limited resources and support for English Learners. While the training plan for the incubation year is detailed, the remainder of the incubation year plan is very general. The committee to form indicated substantial reliance on Academica Nevada during the incubation year, however, they could not provide details as to Academica Nevada's responsibilities and how they would hold them accountable for completing critical incubation year milestones.

Areas of Strength

- The dismissal procedures are fair and respect the integrity of an employee.
- There is a clear delineation of authority and working relationships between the governing body and school staff. In addition, during the capacity interview, the committee to form made it clear that the EMO is a vendor who works for and would be accountable to the school's board.
- The applicant demonstrates that the membership of the governing body will contribute education, management, and business expertise and well as extensive community experience and connections; the proposed board also has the cultural background and skillset to reflect school-specific programs.
- The written application demonstrates knowledge of facility costs including, as applicable, cost of purchasing, leasing, building, or renovating an educational facility.
- While the written application did not identify a school leader, the applicant selected a leader in advance of the capacity interview. During the interview, the committee to form outlined a detailed and standards-based process for identifying a school leader.

Areas of Concern

- The applicant's plan for serving English Learners is not fully developed, particularly when considering that in surrounding schools, approximately one in four students is an English learner. This would translate to about 90 students at Alaka'i Heritage Academy in the first year of the school. In particular, the plan relies on using a classroom teacher who would be provided with a stipend to coordinate EL services on top of regular classroom duties. While the committee to form spoke about aiming to hire teachers with a TESOL endorsement, they did not provide convincing evidence that the staffing model would be sufficient given the expected size of the population. In addition, the applicant states that staff will be trained in working with EL students but does not provide a detailed plan for professional development to ensure they can support and accelerate the learning of English Learners.

- The plan for the incubation year, including funding to support activities is not clear or sufficiently detailed. For the limited number of planning year milestones that are listed, only some are specific and measurable.
- The applicant intends to apply for the (Charter School Program) CSP grant, however, contingency plans are not fully developed. It is not clear how the applicant would cover pre-opening expenses if the applicant is not awarded a CSP grant.
- Details regarding the relationship and expectations that the committee to form has with Academica NV are not present. In particular, there is currently no formal agreement in place to outline the responsibilities for Academica NV in the incubation year. Coupled with the fact that the incubation year plan is not sufficiently detailed, this leaves substantial questions as to how the proposed school would come to fruition.
- Among the applicant team, including the proposed principal, there is limited experience with the Arts Integration educational methodology. The proposed principal plans to participate in training on the arts integration approach, however this creates risk with regard to successful implementation of the model.
- The proposed board does not have significant expertise in a few key areas including financial, accounting, and legal.
- Proposed leadership team structure does not demonstrate effective assignment of management roles and distribution of responsibilities – it's not clear who will be in charge of instructional leadership, curriculum, personnel, budgeting, financial management, management of state categorical revenue streams, special education and ELL programming, legal compliance, state reporting, external relations, etc. During the capacity interview the committee to form repeatedly made clear that the principal is ultimately responsible for all facets of the school's operations, but it is still unclear who will manage key day-to-day responsibilities.

Financial Section

While many aspects of the budget and financial plan were well thought out, several gaps exist in the budget. In particular, the application included no incubation year expenses or revenue. While the applicant spoke of applying for the CSP grant, there was very limited discussion of contingency plans. In addition, the budget did not reflect any costs associated with supporting the needs of English Learners.

Areas of Strength

- There is appropriate segregation of financial duties outlined in the application which align to the organizational chart and job descriptions.
- Overall, the budget priorities are aligned with school plan, including staffing, facilities, technology and other key areas of the plan.
- The applicant shows a firm understanding of monthly cash flow for the school.
- The EMO has the appropriate expertise to provide accurate and timely financial information to decision-makers.

Areas of Concern

- The applicant does not list any expenses or revenues for the pre-opening year in the proposed budget. While the committee to form stated their intent to apply for a competitive charter school program grant or work with Academica Nevada to secure a loan, the funding for pre-opening activities is not clear. While representatives from Academica Nevada spoke generally about providing support during pre-opening period, these supports were not spelled out within the application and there is no evidence that the proposed board and Academica Nevada have agreed to the concrete responsibilities and outcomes that Academica Nevada will deliver during the pre-opening year.
- The proposed budget does not reflect any costs associated with providing services to EL students. Given that the school is expecting approximately one in four students to be English Learners this does not appear to be reasonable.

Capacity Interview Summary

Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a 90-minute in-person interview of the applicant to elicit any necessary clarifications or additional information about the proposed charter school and determine the ability of the applicants to establish a high-quality charter school.. The capacity interview for Alaka'i Heritage Academy was conducted on Monday, October 7. All but one of the proposed members of the Committee to Form attended on behalf of the applicant. In addition, the proposed principal who was identified subsequent to the submission of the application and two representatives from Academica Nevada, the proposed Education Management Organization, attended the capacity interview. Questions during the capacity interview were developed by the team of reviewers to specifically address the details of the Alaka'i Heritage Academy application and focused primarily on four key areas:

- The ability of the applicant to meet one or more of the academic or demographic needs as outlined in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment.
- The academic plan, including instructional strategies, programs, assessments, and student supports.
- Organizational and Leadership capacity including vendors, the proposed principal, board qualifications, and governance.
- The financial plan, including the proposed budget, prospective facilities, and the incubation year plan.

District Input

Per Assembly Bill 462 (2019), the SPCSA solicited input from the Clark County School District regarding this application.¹ The timeline regarding this request for input is below and the response provided by the Clark County School District is attached.

- September 16, 2019 – Memo sent to CCSD soliciting input
- November 6, 2019 – Presentation by CCSD staff to CCSD Board of Trustees regarding input
- November 13, 2019 – Written input provided from CCSD to SPCSA

¹ Assembly Bill 462 (2019) section 6.3, subsection 1, paragraph (d): “The proposed sponsor of a charter school shall, in reviewing an application to form a charter school...If the proposed sponsor is not the board of trustees of a school district, solicit input from the board of trustees of the school district in which the proposed charter school will be located”