

Charter School Application Report

# Las Vegas Collegiate

*Recommendation from the Summer 2019 Charter Application Cycle*

## General Information

<b>Proposed Name</b>	Las Vegas Collegiate
<b>Proposed Mission</b>	Within an academically ambitious, individually supportive, values-based community, Las Vegas Collegiate Charter School prepares kindergarten through fifth grade scholars to thrive in middle school and high school, graduate from college, and lead within our communities.
<b>Proposed EMO or CMO</b>	N/A
<b>Proposed Grade Configuration</b>	Kindergarten – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>Proposed Opening</b>	August 2020
<b>Proposed Location</b>	Boys and Girls Club at Agassi Campus (Zip Code: 89106)

## Process/Key Dates for Las Vegas Collegiate

- New Charter Application Training
- March 15, 2019 – Notice of Intent is received
- July 15, 2019 – Application is received
- August 8, 2019 – AB 462 Addendum is received
- October 28, 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>	81	81	81	81	81	81
<u>1</u>	81	81	81	81	81	81
<u>2</u>	0	81	81	81	81	81
<u>3</u>	0	0	81	81	81	81
<u>4</u>	0	0	0	81	81	81
<u>5</u>	0	0	0	0	81	81
<u>6</u>						
<u>7</u>						
<u>8</u>						
<u>9</u>						
<u>10</u>						
<u>11</u>						
<u>12</u>						
<b>Total</b>	162	243	324	405	486	486

## Executive Summary and Recommendation

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the proposed academic and financial plans meet the standards as outlined in the charter application rubric, while the operations plan approaches standards. The Las Vegas Collegiate committee to form has outlined an intentional and well-researched plan that is informed by and responsive to the community they intend to serve. The academic plan is designed to include extended learning time, daily small group learning and individualized intervention. The model is literacy and math heavy to ensure foundational skills, without diminishing the importance of science and social studies. In addition, the applicant outlines a thoughtful approach to school culture that includes intentional teacher development. The financial plan is realistic and viable, and the board has sufficient accounting and financial expertise to provide rigorous oversight of the school’s fiscal health. While much of the operations plan is thorough and detailed, a few concerns remain. First, the proposed school leader would have a broad range of responsibilities, particularly in the early years of the charter. Second, some outstanding questions exist related to key items on the incubation year plan. Finally, the applicant provided limited information regarding how Building Excellent Schools will support the school leader and board over the next three years. Ultimately, while some specific questions remain, the review committee and SPCSA staff are confident that Las Vegas Collegiate has developed a strong plan that is likely to result in a high-quality school.

The review committee and SPCSA staff find that the Las Vegas Collegiate Public Charter School application meets both the Demographic Need and the Geographic component of the Academic Need within the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The applicant

has proposed a school model that includes demonstrated capacity, credible plans, and thorough research and analysis in order to intentionally meet the needs historically underserved student groups. In addition, the applicant has demonstrated a commitment, through community engagement and partnerships, to create a 4 or 5-star school in a community that has multiple 1 and 2-star schools and to provide access to students currently enrolled in those 1 and 2-star schools.

For these major reasons, in addition to those outlined throughout this document, staff's recommendation is to approve the Las Vegas Collegiate application with conditions as outlined below.

***Proposed motion:*** Approve the Las Vegas Collegiate application as submitted during the 2019 Summer Application Cycle, with the conditions outlined below, based on a finding that the applicant meets the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3).

1. Submit an updated incubation year plan that clarifies how the board will monitor progress towards key milestones and the available supports to the proposed school leader.
2. Provide either more detail as to how the existing staff will manage the range of administrative responsibilities in year 1 OR an alternative scenario that includes additional contracted support.
3. Work with the local jurisdiction to address traffic flow and pedestrian safety during student arrival and dismissal.

## 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/](http://charterschools.nv.gov/OpenASchool/Application_Packet/)

### Meeting the Need: Meets Standard

- Targeted Plan
  - Meets the Standard
- Parent and Community Involvement
  - Meets the Standard

### Academic Plan: Meets Standard

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

- **Meets the Standard**
- Distance Education Requirements
  - N/A
- Pre-K Requirements
  - N/A
- High School Graduation Requirements
  - N/A
- Driving for Results
  - **Meets the Standard**
- At Risk Students and Special Populations
  - **Approaches the Standard**
- School Structure (Culture)
  - **Approaches the Standard**
- School Structure (Student Discipline)
  - **Meets the Standard**
- School Structure (Calendar and Schedule)
  - **Meets the Standard**
- A Day in the Life & Scenarios
  - **Meets the Standard**

#### **Operations Plan: Approaches the Standard**

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

- N/A
- Student Recruitment and Enrollment
  - Meets the Standard
- Board Governance
  - Meets the Standard
- Incubation Year Development
  - Approaches the Standard
- EMO Relationships and School Management Contracts (If Applicable)
  - N/A
- Services
  - Approaches the Standard
- Facilities
  - Meets the Standard
- Ongoing Operations
  - Approaches the Standard

**Financial Plan: Meets the Standard**

## Meeting the Need Section

The applicant intends to locate in the 89106 zip code serving a community that has multiple 1 and 2-star schools. Existing schools in this community serve a high percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and approximately 25% of students are English Learners. Las Vegas Collegiate expects to serve a population that is representative of the existing schools in the community. With the current academic performance of schools in the local community in mind, the applicant has outlined an academic model that responds to the needs of students and is focused on closing achievement gaps, which are significant for the populations the school intends to serve. The applicant demonstrates a thorough understanding of the local community and provides evidence of community engagement and local partnerships.

### Areas of Strength

- The application provides compelling data regarding need for high quality schools based on current low performance of Historic West Side schools. Members of the Committee to Form spoke knowledgeably about the SPCSA Needs Assessment and provided compelling argument for how the school meets all three needs categories.
- The application reflects deliberate research of schools that have demonstrated success serving populations of students that are similar the expected population of Las Vegas Collegiate.
- The extended school day and school year demonstrate commitment to serving the targeted population by providing significantly more opportunities for students to develop content knowledge and build critical academic habits that foster success in secondary school.
- Several members of the proposed board have prior experience working in or have other connections to the 89106 zip code.
- During capacity interview, the Committee to Form pointed to the mission statement, core values, and inclusion of character education as examples of program design generated directly from community feedback.
- A key partner for the school, the Boys and Girls Club, was present during the capacity interview and voiced strong support for the school in terms of partnership and explained how having a school such as this on their campus aligns to their mission for their programs.
- During the capacity interview, the proposed principal indicated that there are already three parents that are seeking to be involved in the school beyond enrolling their children, and she intends to use them as a base for the It Takes A Village (ITAV) parent group.

### Areas of Concern

- While the applicant has established some key partnerships in the community, there is likely more work to do to build local relationships.



## Academic Section

The applicant has provided a detailed and thorough description of a cohesive academic plan. The plan is informed through research of high performing schools serving populations similar to the expected population of Las Vegas Collegiate. In addition, the applicant outlines a thoughtful approach to school culture that includes intentional teacher training. As a proposed slow growth school, the application outlines a lean staffing model, particularly in the first few years. This leaves the proposed school leader responsible for a multitude of activities, raising minor concerns about the overall capacity of the identified school leader and their number of responsibilities.

### Areas of Strength

- The mission is concise and the focus explicitly notes the individualized nature of the educational program.
- The vision statement illustrates the means through which the mission will be achieved. The elements described in the vision are individually sound and combine into cogent mission alignment.
- “Core Instructional Components” are mission aligned for both the school and the SPCSA. Further, the model is literacy and math heavy to build foundational skills, without diminishing the importance of science and social studies.
- The application includes a plan for annual curriculum review by key staff including: Executive Director, Grade Level Instructional Leads, and Dean of Curriculum and Instruction. The application further states that the school will seek input from SpEd and ELL teachers.
- The applicants expect the school’s English Learner and Special Education populations to mirror those of local CCSD schools, and the schools from which the open-source curricula will be drawn primarily serve students of color in low income communities. Therefore, if implemented with fidelity, LV Collegiate should expect similar results.
- During the capacity interview, the proposed leader spoke to alignment between the selected curriculum and the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) and stated that she had conducted a thorough review of the curricular materials for alignment to NVACS.
- The interview revealed that the school intends to prioritize supporting English Learners and Special Education students within the general education environment, and that Special Education teachers will have no teaching load other than the students in their caseload. The applicant provided more detail around how students will receive pull out supports and how co-teaching will be used to ensure appropriate services to these subgroups.
- The proposed principal already has special education certification and is considering TESOL certification as a means of providing informed supervision of teachers responsible for supporting English Learners; she will be positioned to provide direct student services only as last resort if faced with staffing shortage.
- The capacity interview also provided greater clarity on how the expanded literacy blocks and station rotation vs. two teacher intervention models will work and how these structures provide scaffolding for students of all abilities as well as English Learners and

- special education students.
- The Response to Intervention (RtI) model clearly describes how students will be identified and moved between tiers. The application proposes to implement an “Attendance RtI” model as well and sets low thresholds for entering students into higher tiers and working with families to improve attendance.
  - The application identifies specific professional development for general education teachers regarding teaching of students with disabilities both during the summer and the school year.
  - The planned program exceeds seat time requirements for core subjects.
  - The application outlines absolute goals for the school, in addition to comparative goals tied to sending zoned schools. Each outlined goal is broadly stated (e.g. “Scholars will be proficient in ELA,” and then is broken down into absolute, growth, and comparative measures for students in each grade band and number of years attendance at the school. All goals are presented in SMART terms and use multiple assessments such as STEP, MAP, SBAC.
  - The application is consistent throughout in describing the core values of character education that will guide school culture. These are consistently tied back into the academic program throughout the proposal.
  - The school will provide equity and inclusion training for staff and raise awareness of implicit bias.
  - The response notes that school leaders will use disaggregated data to ensure vulnerable students are not disproportionately impacted by discipline policies.

### Areas of Concern

- The success of the school model hinges on the capacity of instructional leadership and the recruitment and retention of highly skilled teachers from the start. The lean staffing structure in the first few years of the school along with the multitude of activities to be completed by the executive director pose potential risks to effective implementation of the promising program.

## Operations Section

The operations plan is generally well thought out, including clear delineation of board and staff responsibilities, detailed hiring process and a long-term facilities plan. As noted in the academic plan, the broad range of responsibilities managed by the proposed school leader in the early years create some implementation risk. In addition, some outstanding questions exist related to key items on the incubation year plan. Finally, the applicant provided limited information regarding how Building Excellent Schools will support the school leader and board over the next three years.

### Areas of Strength

- The background of proposed school leader closely aligns with mission of school.
- The proposed sustained and systemic coaching of teachers is likely to support teachers’

- skill development and foster instructional effectiveness.
- The application thoughtfully identifies the difference between board governance and school leadership and demonstrates board priorities aligned with oversight and school-wide goals at an appropriate level. The description of board duties includes an annual evaluation of the school leader.
  - The multi-step hiring process, including a demonstration of instructional skill, is clear and provides ample opportunity to assess mission alignment, fit with school culture, and core competencies while not being overly burdensome.
  - During the capacity interview, the responses to questions about the facility gave greater clarity to the long-term facility plan. Specifically, the Boys and Girls Club is actively looking to site a school on their campus and has the space to expand their facility to meet the needs of the schools as it grows. The intent is for the school to lease space from the B&GC for the foreseeable future.
  - The applicant appears to have put significant time and effort into building community relationships that will support recruitment once the school is approved, including with childcare centers, head start programs, churches, and community organizations with deep ties to the community.
  - The board bylaws appear thorough and in compliance with best practices in charter school governance. Included best practices include staggering of board terms, residency requirements, limitation of terms in succession.
  - Attachment 14 provides clear evidence that the school will secure an appropriate range of insurance coverage.
  - The plan for developing the emergency management plan cites specific supports including other schools and the template documents which will guide the final documents.
  - The proposed school leader will have three operational years of support and coaching from BES, which should support her in completing the many and various functions she is responsible for before the rest of the leadership team is hired, although it is not clear when she will have time for this training/support.

### Areas of Concern

- A key concern prior to the capacity interview was the amount of proposed leader's time to be devoted to teaching and learning; Committee to Form confirmed teaching and learning as proposed leader's main priority and expect 60-70% of leader's time to be devoted to instruction. However, the array of administrative responsibilities tasked to the proposed leader in the school's initial years of operation leaves substantial risk that this instructional time could be compromised. It is unclear why some responsibilities such as daily attendance tracking would not be assigned to the Director of Operations in order to prioritize the leaders time in support for student achievement.
- With regard to the incubation year, some challenges may arise including, staff capacity to support student and staff recruitment, short window of time for scope and sequence and assessment development, and the role of proposed board members in the formalizing of the governing body.
- The application provides limited details regarding the specifics of how BES support would be provided to the school leader and board.

## Financial Section

The applicant provided a realistic and viable budget. During the capacity interview the committee to form provided strong rationale for assumptions and thoughtful responses to questions about potential budget challenges.

### Areas of Strength

- Board members have sufficient accounting and financial expertise to provide rigorous oversight of the school's fiscal health.
- The founding team has identified the minimum enrollment necessary to implement the educational program as proposed.
- The systems for accounting, purchasing, payroll, and audits appear to all meet GAAP. Specifically, the application demonstrates understanding of the audit requirement, segregation of duties, document control, records retention, processing and reconciliation controls, securing financial data, and risk assessment.
- The drafted financial controls are based on practices in other Nevada charter schools and appear to undergird responsible stewardship of public funds.
- The budget narrative is informative and includes some detailed assumptions which provide context for the budget as presented.

### Areas of Concern

- The salaries proposed for teachers match the year one, step one salary for CCSD, and while the committee to form discussed the fact that conservative budgeting is expected to produce some additional funds to dedicate to salaries, they did not articulate any concrete plans to recruit veteran teachers or teachers with extra certifications for this low salary.

## 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 Las Vegas Collegiate was conducted on Monday, October 28. All members of the Committee to Form attended on behalf of the applicant. Additionally, one representative from the Boys and Girls Club as well as one representative from EdTech, a potential vendor to provide back office services, who assisted with the development of the budget attended the capacity interview. Questions during the capacity interview were developed by the team of reviewers to specifically address the details of the Las Vegas Collegiate 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 curriculum, instructional strategies, and student supports.
- The operations plan including staffing, organizational structure, vendors, governance and facilities.

- The financial plan, including the proposed budget, facilities, and alignment to the proposed academic model.

Information gleaned from the capacity interview were coupled with the initial review of the application to determine final ratings on the rubric. Relevant information from the capacity interview is incorporated in the findings outlined above.

## District Input

Per Assembly Bill 462 (2019), the SPCSA solicited input from the Clark County School District regarding this application.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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”