



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mike Dang, Manager, Financial and Organizational Performance
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: **Explore Academy Las Vegas**
Request to Add 8th Grade beginning in 2020 – 2021
DATE: June 26, 2020

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Explore Academy Las Vegas (Explore) is requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) approve a Good Cause Exemption request to take action on a formal request to allow the school to enroll students in 8th grade level beginning in the school year 2020-2021, in addition to the SPCSA's earlier approval for it to enroll students in the 6th, 7th and 9th grade levels for SYE 2021.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends that the Authority grant the school's request for a Good Cause Exemption and approve the school's amendment proposal to offer 8th grade beginning in the 2020 – 2021 school year.

Background

Explore Academy was conditionally approved by the SPCSA to open its doors to students beginning this fall to serve 330 students in grades 6, 7 and 9. This approval occurred on July 26, 2019. On March 6, 2020, the Authority approved the school's request to temporarily locate adjacent to and outside their originally approved zip codes.

Explore Academy Las Vegas is a charter middle and high school that will eventually serve grades 6-12 at full-scale. The school will open its doors in August 2020 and serve the North Las Vegas community. The permanent site is currently planned to open in the zip code 89032. The projected enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year is 330 students, serving 120 students in 6th grade, 110 in 7th, and 100 in 9th.

Explore Academy's mission is to "provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future."

Explore Academy’s vision is to be a college preparatory school which will serve grades 6 to 12. Its core academic philosophy and overall vision are based on the idea of a differentiated curriculum in utilizing an expansive set of electives to provide students equal opportunity for choice in their learning, all the while empowering them with the freedom to create unique and individualized educational pathways.

According to the amendment application, the statewide shutdown for COVID19 has severely hindered Explore Academy’s ability to meet with families for recruiting purposes. The school have had some limited success using social media, but their enrollment is off track. Many families have inquired about 8th grade, indicating that they would enroll if it were an option at the school for the coming year. Additionally, the school has several families who intended to enroll in 7th grade last year and now have students entering 8th grade. According to the amendment proposal, many of those families would still like to enroll their students at Explore Academy.

Therefore, Explore Academy is proposing to offer grades 6-9 during the 2020 – 2021 school year in order to cast a wider recruitment net. This proposal will not affect the current budget for the school, staffing, or total enrollment numbers. The Explore model allows for students from multiple grade levels to participate in the same classes, so the proposed change would not impact the number of FTEs or the preparation schedules for teachers. The school plans to shift available seats from other grade levels to accommodate 8th grade, if approved.

The enrollment changes are proposed as follows:

SYE 2021		
	Current	Proposed
6th	120	100
7th	110	90
8th		70
9th	100	70
10th		
11th		
12th		
Actual	330	330

Applicant Eligibility

When reviewing any RFA, SPCSA staff and board typically review the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Explore will be opening this fall for its first school year so documentation of this nature will be created beginning this fall. Thus far, the school has timely completed its pre-opening requirements. At this time, then, staff finds Explore in compliance with SPCSA requirements.

Summary and Recommendation

Overall, SPCSA staff finds the Explore application to add an 8th grade this fall to be compelling, and as such, staff recommends that the SPCSA board approve Explore’s request to begin its 8th grade this fall.

This request would be with the condition that Explore submit a weekly enrollment report to staff showing its progress in enrolling students for grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 for this fall. Staff will work directly with the school on the format of these reports.

Proposed Motion:

Approve the request of the Explore Academy of Las Vegas to:

- Grant the School a Good Cause Exemption to Request; and

- Approve the school to add a 8th grade along with their 6th, 7th, and 9th grades beginning this fall 2020-2021 school year, subject to the condition that the school submit weekly enrollment

updates to staff showing the number of students enrolled per grade level for the 2020 – 2021 school year.