



## NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

**December 11, 2020**

In compliance with the Governor's Emergency Directives related to COVID-19, the December 11, 2020 Meeting of the State Public Charter School Authority was conducted virtually and livestreamed.

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

#### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (via video):**

Member Lee Farris  
Member Tamika Shauntee Rosales  
Member Don Soifer  
Member Tonia Holmes-Sutton  
Member Mallory Cyr  
Member Sami Randolph  
Member Sheila Moulton  
Vice Chair Randy Kirner  
Chair Melissa Mackedon

#### **AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT (via video):**

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director  
Ryan Herrick, General Counsel  
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing  
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I  
Michael Dang, Management Analyst IV  
Selcuk Ozdemir, Manager of Academic Performance  
Brandon Gaytán, Education Programs Professional

#### **AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:**

Marlo Tsuchiyama  
Doug Goodman  
Denise Crosby  
Ashley Perkins  
Dennis Zimmerman  
Lori Lynch  
Tawni Novotny  
Maria Pimienta  
Kristofor Jacobson  
Raul Carranza  
Kim Hodge

### **Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order and Roll Call [00:00:36]**

Chair Mackedon called the meeting to order at 9:03am, with attendance reflected above.

### **Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1 [00:01:32]**

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, spoke to the written public comment submitted via email.

1. Anne Perkins, wrote regarding agenda item 3.
2. Amy Jeffreys, wrote regarding agenda item 3.
3. Scot & Marne Sherman, wrote regarding agenda item 3.
4. Paula Ringkob, wrote regarding agenda item 3.

In addition, public comment was provided on the line during the meeting from the following participants:

Member Cyr provided a statement in regarding to the last few meetings and the commentary received from Doral Academy of Northern Nevada families, while she appreciates it, she hears that the team is doing everything they can to work with schools, she would ask that they work with them and understand the team is doing their very best to accommodate what Doral Academy of Northern Nevada is trying to accomplish.

### **Agenda Item 3 – COVID-19 In-Person Learning Guidance. [00:03:13]**

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, said at least week's meeting she provided an update and there has not been any major changes in the status. They continue to see additional COVID-19 cases amongst students and staff at SPCSA-sponsored schools and school leaders continue to work with local health officials on the response. Despite the high case count and test positivity, she believes it is critical to maintain the flexibility for up to 40% in-person learning and she hopes that come January they will see a decline in cases and particularly as we see vaccinations begin across the country, we may see a more sustainable relief that will allow her to increase in-person learning further. SPCSA staff will continue to communicate with schools regularly and to monitor what is going on and ensure they have the supports and information needed.

Member Randolph asked about receiving an update between now and the next board meeting, recognizing that it is 6 weeks out and in the event any further guidance is given by the Governor or other health officials,

Member Kirner asked where teachers are in the hierarchy for the vaccine. Executive Director Feiden replied teachers are slated in the second tier and they are anticipating beginning in February to see teachers being vaccinated. In response to Member Randolph's inquiry, she said she will prepare an update for the board to send in the beginning of January.

Member Soifer asked if Executive Director Feiden could speak about the provision of service to children with special needs, how that has gone, are there SPCSA-sponsored schools that have adopted/modified their strategies, are they improving their capacities to serve groups of special needs, and what she would like to see from our schools moving forward. Executive Director Feiden said SPCSA-sponsored schools have been intentional about how they serve their special needs students, many of them prioritized bringing those students back into school buildings as one of their first student groups to serve. SPCSA staff have been in close communication with the Department of Education Special Education Office in order to make sure our schools have all the information they need, and we have provided assistance as needed. Member Soifer said he was wondering about kids on the autism spectrum, how do we feel about our capacity to provide services to those families and continuing to improve. Executive Director Feiden said she can't speak in detail about that today but she can speak with their special education team and see if they can find additional context.

Member Moulton asked about resources or facilities we can put our schools in touch with in regard to emotional and social help for students. Executive Director Feiden replied they are in partnership with the Department of Education on a pulse check survey they developed which has a student family and a family survey, some questions will potentially trigger giving specific information to schools so they can directly reach out to individual kids. They are also digging into their project aware grant which will allow them to expand in that area.

**Agenda Item 4 – Information related to validated demographic enrollment data for SPCSA-sponsored charter schools for the 2020-2021 school year, including enrollment and student demographics. [00:16:01]**

Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, said a lot of this information was shared at the Department of Education’s meeting yesterday and staff is eager to share.

Selcuk Ozdemir, Manager of Academic Performance, began the presentation for the SPCSA Enrollment Data School Year 2020-21. The student-level enrollment data contains demographic information, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) eligibility, whether the student has an Individual Education Program (IEP), and English Language Learner (ELL) status. It is carefully validated by LEAs and charter schools and are used by the NDE, SPCSA, LEAs, charter schools, and other stakeholders for official and state reporting and findings.

Brandon Gaytán, Education Programs Professional, took over for the next part of the presentation about specific student populations at the SPCSA. He compared the SPCSA data vs. state student group enrollment, Clark and Washoe Counties vs. those local districts themselves, and student group enrollment for the new SPCSA schools. He highlighted the schools with large changes in populations of interest, specifically of greater than or equal to 25%. In conclusion, the official SPCSA enrollment for 2020-21 school year is 53,223 students—a 7.7% increase over the 2019-20 school year and the SPCSA remains the third largest location education agency (LEA) in Nevada.

Member Soifer asked about the data in the special populations as compared to their immediate adjacent jurisdiction, he wonders if there is a public document that has that information and if we could add that to the long-range calendar for discussion. Executive Director Feiden said they did recently post the performance reports and so the organizational performance that the board recently approved as posted, as well as what they refer to as partially completed academic reports because there were not star-ratings this year so they couldn’t complete that part of the report, however, they were able to compile the portion of the academic framework as it relates to demographics and where SPCSA-sponsored schools fall in that regard and where the local school districts fall. With regard to a future discussion item, we can certainly look into that.

There was further discussion between the Authority and SPCSA staff about the validated demographic enrollment data for SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

**Agenda Item 5 – Information related to graduation rate for SPCSA-sponsored charter schools for the class of 2020, including data disaggregated by student group. [01:04:02]**

Dr. Ozdemir, previously identified, began with the overview of the adjusted cohort graduation rates. He went over the SPCSA graduation rate highlights including the 4-year graduation rate for the SPCSA class of 2019-20 which is 84.2%. This is the first time the SPCSA has outperformed the state.

Dr. Gayton, previously identified, talked about the next part of the presentation with regard to the graduation rate by student population which shows every student population improved over the last year. He provided the highlights within the populations and student groups.

There was further discussion between the Authority and SPCSA staff about information related to the graduation rate for SPCSA-sponsored charter schools.

*A 5-minute convenient break was taken.*

**Agenda Item 6 – Charter School Contract Renewal Applications. [01:45:25]**

**a. Elko Institute for Academic Achievement**

Director Modrcin provided an overview of the renewal process and how these recommendations are formulated. He then proceeded to provide the summary of Elko Institute for Academic Achievement's (EIAA) application to renew its charter contract as the current contract expires June 30, 2021. After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of EIAA for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2021.

Ashley Perkins, Principal, EIAA, provided an update on behalf of the school.

**MOTION:** *Member Moulton made the motion to approve the Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Renewal Application for renewal with a five-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and the enrollment caps as outlined in [staff's recommendation](#) memo. Vice Chair Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**b. Alpine Academy [02:07:03]**

Director Modrcin gave a summary of Alpine Academy's application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2021. After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Alpine Academy for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2021.

Tawni Novotny, Executive Director, provided an update on behalf of the school.

**MOTION:** *Vice Chair Kirner made the motion to approve the Alpine Academy Renewal Application for renewal with a six-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and the enrollment caps as outlined in [staff's recommendation](#) memo. Member Soifer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**c. Equipo Academy [02:22:21]**

Director Modrcin gave a summary of Equipo Academy's application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2021. After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Equipo Academy for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2021.

Ben Salkowe, Founding Principal, Equipo Academy, provided the update on behalf of the school.

**MOTION:** *Member Moulton made the motion to approve the Equipo Academy Renewal Application for renewal with a six-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and enrollment caps as outlined above in the [staff's recommendation](#) memo. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**d. Silver Sands Montessori [02:43:16]**

Director Modrcin gave a summary of Silver Sands Montessori application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2021. After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Silver Sands Montessori for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2021.

Marlo Tsuchiyama, Head of School, Silver Sands Montessori, provided the update on behalf of the school.

**MOTION:** *Member Farris made the motion to approve the Silver Sands Montessori Renewal Application for renewal with a six-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and enrollment caps as outlined above in the [staff's recommendation](#) memo. Vice Chair Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **Agenda Item 7 – TEACH Las Vegas New Charter School Application [02:59:55]**

Director Modrcin provided the summary of the TEACH Las Vegas New Charter School Application. He noted the reason the applicant is coming to the Authority in December is because they were approved for a good cause exemption in June to submit by October 1, 2020. The application was submitted by this time and the review committee and SPCSA staff rated the Meeting the Need, Academic, Operations, and Financial plans, along with the Addendum as 'Approaches the Standard' with some strengths and weaknesses. For these reasons, in addition to those described in [staff's recommendation](#), SPCSA staff recommend denial of the charter school application for TEACH Las Vegas.

Maria Pimienta, Assistant Superintendent of TEACH Public Schools, began with updates on behalf of the school. She discussed some of the steps they have been taking to address the deficiencies that have been presented.

Matt Brown, CFO/COO of TEACH Public Schools, spoke to the topics related to the fiscal plans in terms of operations.

Raul Carranza, Superintendent of TEACH Public Schools, said they are still devoted to providing a quality education to kids in Las Vegas regardless of the recommendation today. They plan to continue moving forward to develop the necessary partnerships.

Director Modrcin provided the timeline for the resubmission process. If the recommendation is affirmed today, staff would have 30 days to notify the school of the deficiencies. Once they are notified there is a 30-day window for them to resubmit. We would anticipate action coming back to this body at the February meeting.

**MOTION:** *Member Moulton made a motion to deny the TEACH Las Vegas charter application as submitted during the 2020 Summer Application Cycle based on a finding that the applicant has failed to satisfy the requirements contained in NRS 388A.249(3) and delegates to staff the responsibility to meet and confer with the applicant on the method to correct the identified deficiencies. Member Shauntee Rosales seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **Agenda Item 8 – 2021 Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment [03:36:10]**

Executive Director Feiden spoke about Assembly Bill 462 from the 2019 Legislative Session which requires the SPCSA to annually conduct an "evaluation of demographic information of pupils, the academic needs of pupils and the needs of any pupils who are at risk of dropping out of school in this State. The first Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment was published in July of 2019 and the most recent version was approved by the State Public Charter School Authority on December 13, 2019 and can be found on the SPCSA website. Without recent state assessment data and star ratings, the SPCSA staff is proposing a limited number of updates for the 2021 Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The most substantive item is the addition of a section on Implementation of the Needs Assessment that summarizes new schools that have been approved and data regarding those schools.

**Agenda Item 9 – Long-Range Calendar [03:41:28]**

Executive Director Feiden said she has taken from the conversation today that she will provide a written update at minimum to the Board in the beginning of January about in-person learning, the multiple requests for additional data and including the opportunity to hear from Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada with regard to their demographics and perhaps other new schools in terms of where those demographics landed.

**Agenda Item 10 – Public Comment #2 [03:49:00]**

1. Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, spoke to the additional written public comment submitted via email which will be posted on the website later today, which was in regard to in-person learning.

Mr. Peltier reported that there is no further public comment on the line.

**Agenda Item 12 – Adjournment [03:49:07]**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:52pm.