



NEVADA STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

July 30, 2021

The State Public Charter School Authority Board Meeting was conducted virtually and at the following physical location:

Nevada Department of Education
2080 East Flamingo Road
Board Room
Las Vegas, Nevada

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT IN-PERSON:

Member Erica Mosca
Member Randy Kirner
Member Mallory Cyr
Vice Chair Sheila Moulton

AUTHORITY STAFF IN-PERSON:

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
Mark Modrein, Director of Authorizing

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY:

Chair Melissa Mackedon
Member Tonia Holmes-Sutton
Member Lee Farris
Member Sami Randolph
Member Tamika Shauntee Rosales

AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT VIRTUALLY:

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Member Don Soifer

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristine Burgess
Jim Friedel
Holly Stevenson
Ashley Wilkinson
Patricia Fernandez
Eve Breier
Jennifer McCloskey
Rodney Saunders
Jackie Working
Tricia Wilbourne
Jessica LeNeave
Renee Fairless

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order and Roll Call, and Pledge of Allegiance [00:00:47]

State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), Board Chair, Melissa Mackedon called the meeting to order at 9:01am, with attendance reflected above and Vice Chair Moulton facilitated the pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Comment #1 [00:02:33]

Ryan Herrick, General Counsel, said they received 6 written public comments (attached hereto). All are related to mask mandates in schools and imploring the Authority to not impose any mask requirements on students and schools. He noted that any mask mandates related to schools have always come from the Governor’s office and not the Authority.

Public comment on the line:

1. Victor Salcido, Charter School Association of Nevada (CSAN), spoke about the newsletter from CSAN and reiterated the item related to the concerning federal action that would affect charter schools. He also flagged that CSAN is planning a seminar on September 24th at CIVICA Academy, and they are looking for presenters from charter schools in terms of best practices.
2. Anonymous, regarding agenda item 5 and the virtual learning component.
3. Anonymous with Coral Academy Eastgate, regarding agenda item 5 and the virtual learning component.
4. Anonymous, regarding agenda item 5 and the virtual learning component.

Public comment in the Las Vegas Board Room:

5. Ashley Wilkinson, parent of students in this district, related to mandated masks.
6. Gavin, child of Ms. Wilkinson, related to mandated masks
7. Riley, child of Ms. Wilkinson, related to mandated masks
8. Kristine Burgess, parent at Doral Academy – Saddle, regarding mandated masks
9. Jim Friedel, parent of students at Pinecrest Academy – Horizon
10. Holly Stevenson, parent of children at charter schools, related to mandated masks.

Agenda Item 3 – Consent Agenda [00:27:30]

a. Approval of June 25, 2021 Board Meeting Action Minutes.

Member Kirner abstained from the minutes as he was not present at the June 25, 2021 board meeting.

MOTION: Vice Chair Moulton made the motion to approve the June 25, 2021 minutes. Member Holmes-Sutton seconded the motion. The motion carried.

b. Equipo Academy Adjustment to Renewed Charter Contract [00:28:42] – request to adjust their enrollment cap in the Equipo Academy charter contract from 750 to 756 for each year of the current charter term.

c. Charter School Contract Amendment Applications:

- Mater Academy of Las Vegas – changes to the mission and vision statements
- Mater Academy of Northern Nevada – changes to the mission and vision statements
- Doral Academy of Nevada – addition of dual credit (with conditions)

MOTION: Member Kirner made a motion to approve items b and c. Vice Chair Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – SPCSA Executive Director’s Report. [00:29:27]

a. Initiatives related to Serving All Students Equitably

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, said within the materials for today’s meeting is the [update](#) for this item. This year they’ve taken several steps including updating their site evaluation protocol to ensure more representative focus groups and to include a component in the school presentation where schools share information regarding culturally responsive practices. They’ve also updated their new school amendment and renewal applications to

dig into efforts to close opportunity gaps, address disproportionate discipline practices, implement restorative justice practices, incorporate parent and community engagement, conduct staff training on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as efforts to serve a representative population of students. Throughout the year they've looked at a range of data disaggregated by student group to better understand the performance and experiences of all of their students. They've heard from numerous schools about their efforts to elevate their focus on equity and through their community working group they continue to get input and feedback on how they can continue to increase equitable access to high quality public charter schools. Through the SPCSA's Project Aware grant, they will be providing access to a range of trainings over the coming year on diversity, equity and inclusion but also on related topics such as restorative justice practices, such as social and emotional learning and trauma informed care and instruction. Staff has also made several updates to the SPCSA website to make information more accessible. Executive Director Feiden said she has engaged directly with the school board chairs in writing and through focus groups to discuss how they can continue to elevate their focus on equity. As they look ahead, many of these efforts will continue and they are continuously looking for input and feedback. She paused to take any questions or recommendations looking ahead.

Member Randolph asked about the focus on schools items and if they will continue to hear directly from school leaders. Executive Director Feiden said she has not yet reached out to schools but intends to continue to hear from schools on this topic.

b. Summer cycle for new charter school applications [00:33:43]

Executive Director Feiden said the SPCSA is in receipt of 9 complete applications and have initiated the review process. The applications will be posted to their website next week and they are looking towards the November board meeting for potential board consideration. A list of applicants can be found alongside the materials for this meeting.

c. SPCSA staff and Authority board member update [00:34:14]

Executive Director Feiden welcomed the new board member on the Authority, Erica Mosca. Member Mosca said she is a previous CCSD teacher and has worked in policy and started a nonprofit a decade ago that supports students to be the first in their families to graduate from college but more importantly come back to our community as leaders. As a first-generation college graduate herself and someone that understands the importance of equitable education, she is excited to be a part of the board and push their vision and the strategic plan forward. Executive Director Feiden noted as staff knows, Member Kirner has not been reappointed but has graciously agreed to continue serving until they receive appointment of a new board member.

d. SPCSA Annual Initiatives for the 2021-22 school year [00:35:54]

Executive Director Feiden said SPCSA strategic plan was adopted in December of 2019 and last year staff took initiatives to further their strategic priorities. This included implementing a new based grant monitoring approach. They've wrapped up the first year and are making some improvements as they move to year 2. They also developed annual performance reports and these are now posted to their website and are aimed to be public friendly reports on academic, financial, and organizational performance and these will be updated annually. They have also completed the work of transforming their initial growth management plan working group into an ongoing community working group and are looking forward to continuing their engagement with this stakeholder group. Staff has conducted and developed base line training for new schools and new school staff to ensure they have foundational knowledge to be set up for success on topics such as federal grants and performance expectations and they have continued to evolve their site evaluations to formalize a differentiated approach to following up on and supporting their schools even in years outside of their formal site evaluation. She took a moment to thank staff.

This year, staff has decided to take a narrow but deep approach in taking on 2 substantial initiatives. First, they will be reevaluating and retooling their process and systems for collecting data, information, and reports, and disseminating data, information, and reports to meet statutory requirements as a charter school sponsor and

location educational agency. With the growth of the SPCSA's portfolio, as well as various changes to statutes and regulations, they have simply outgrown their current processes and systems and they know that this has caused some confusion and frustration amongst their schools, and they know their internal systems are not as efficient and effective as they could be. Their aim, and it may be multiple years before they reach this reality, is to ensure they have a clear consistent documentation on reporting requirements, including templates, resources, and rubrics needed to ensure consistency as well as protocols for regular updates. In addition, they want to ensure schools receive clear and consistent communication regarding compliance and reporting requirements and they want to make sure they have a user friendly, intuitive, and efficient process and software for soliciting, collecting, reviewing, approving, and accepting all of these documents. They have called this initiative Annual Reporting and Document Management.

Their second initiative they call the Library of Resources. Through this initiative, the SPCSA will develop a library of resources that is constantly accessible to schools, which includes guidance documents, manuals, FAQs and training videos. With this initiative, their team aims to ensure that schools can rely on documentation and training rather than phone calls to get the majority information they need. This will ensure consistency in the information they share and free up staff time to focus on core work. Staff will still need to answer questions and provide technical assistance to schools, but these activities will focus on the more nuanced and complex issues, rather than the basics. In addition, the SPCSA will have a method for regularly reviewing the content of the library of resources and making revisions. This will ensure systematic, long-term management of high-quality content.

There was further discussion between Executive Feiden and the Authority regarding the initiatives.

e. Governance Standards for Sponsored Charter Schools [00:48:10]

Executive Director Feiden said Assembly Bill 419 made a number of changes related to charter schools, among these are some new requirements with regard to governance, charter school posting and reporting requirements, and New Charter School Applications and Expansion Requests. Specific to charter school governing boards, Section 3 of AB419 lays out three new requirements:

1. Charter school sponsors, such as the SPCSA, must establish standards for the governance of sponsored charter schools;
2. Charter school sponsors must provide training or identify organizations that can provide training on the governance of charter schools; and
3. Each member of the governing body of a charter school must complete training before the opening of the charter school and at least every three years thereafter.

SPCSA staff have begun research to develop the governance standards for SPCSA-sponsored schools using both local and national examples. In addition, this week and next Executive Director Feiden said she will hold focus groups with charter school board members to get their input on the characteristics of effective boards. SPCSA staff anticipate providing a draft of proposed governance standards for sponsored schools to the Authority at the August 27, 2021 board meeting with the intent of finalizing the standards for the October board meeting and subsequently move into the piece regarding training.

Agenda Item 5 – COVID-19 Update. [00:49:37]

Executive Director Feiden said they again find themselves amid rising cases and test positivity rates for COVID-19. There have been a number of developments in the last few days. She gave a recap their last meeting.

The CDC's new guidance prioritizes safely returning students to in-person instruction in the fall of 2021. The guidance "emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated" and covers a range of prevention strategies including promoting vaccination, consistent and correct mask use, physical distancing, screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfection. Of note, the guidance states that "masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated" and the updated guidance issued on July 27 reiterates the CDC's

recommendation for universal masking in K-12 schools. In addition, the guidance recommends that schools “maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms” and adds that when it is not possible to maintain social distancing due to space limitations it is “especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.” Additionally, the guidance suggests that localities monitor community indicators regarding transmission and vaccination to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies. With this guidance in hand, she expects most if not all of their charter schools will be open in-person for those parents that want to bring their children to school this fall.

In the last week, there have been a number of other developments. The CDC updated their guidance for fully vaccinated individuals, they now recommend that in communities designated with substantial or high transmission, everyone, including those who are fully vaccinated, wear face coverings. It’s important to note that this high and substantial category that they indicate, is based on specific transmission numbers and test positivity and there is a website kept live 24/7 and they actually send this data out to their schools every week in their weekly email, so they know where they are, low, moderate, high or substantial in terms of where their community is.

Nevada’s previous emergency directives effectively tie Nevada’s requirements for COVID-19 mitigation measures to the CDC. Meaning, that Nevada automatically adopted the latest guidance from the CDC. Because a majority of counties in Nevada, including Clark and Washoe, the two largest counties, are currently designated as high community transmission, masks are now required in most of the state regardless of vaccination status in indoor public spaces. She briefly noted over the last week there have been some similar developments in Clark County from both the Clark County Commission and the South Nevada Health District, both pointing towards increased use of face coverings, at least while they are in these levels of high and substantial transmission.

With regard to schools, she has been involved in ongoing conversations with the district superintendents, the Nevada Department of Education, and the Governor’s office regarding face covering requirements in schools. The most recent guidance for schools allows schools to relax face coverings for students 9 and under, while this has not changed as of yet, there may be changes in the coming days she expects they will hear something within the week.

At this point, the Clark County and Washoe County School Districts have confirmed that they will open the school year requiring masks for all students and adults. She also knows there has been resistance in this approach in their rural school districts, given the rapidly evolving circumstances, she believes the Authority should continue to recommend that schools follow all prevailing CDC guidance and any guidance provided by local health officials. Obviously, their schools are also bound by any emergency directives by the Governor’s office. Therefore, given the Authority’s vote last month for schools to follow CDC guidance and any guidance from local health districts, she doesn’t believe there is any action needed today but she will keep the Authority members and schools informed of any further developments. Finally, please know school’s have begun submitting their re-opening plans and they will continue to monitor any changes or revisions to those plans. There was further discussion between Executive Director Feiden and the Authority.

A 7-minute convenience break was taken.

Agenda Item 6 – Charter School Contract Amendment Applications [01:25:11]

a. TEACH Las Vegas

Director Modrcin provided the summary of the request and staff’s recommendation related to the charter school contract amendment application submitted by TEACH Las Vegas. TEACH Las Vegas is requesting that the SPCSA grant a good cause exemption request and approve two modifications to the school’s charter contract:

- 1) To reduce its enrollment cap for the 2021 – 2022 school year from 325 to 150 students. This is request will allow TEACH Las Vegas to sublease a portion of its facilities to Explore Academy.

- 2) To delay the implementation of their student transportation plan to the 2022 – 23 school year. Student bus transportation was included in the approved charter application.

More information related to the amendment can be found in the supporting materials. Staff is supportive of these requests and recommends approval. Director Modrcin said he and other staff from the SPCSA team were on site Wednesday of this week and believe they are on the right track to open on August 9th. Staff believes that despite having the enrollment cap for TEACH for the upcoming year, available information suggests that the school will be financially viable for the upcoming school year until they can get back to their projected numbers that they were initially approved for. Additionally, while staff is disappointed with the current reality surrounding the student transportation plan, they do look forward to working with the school as they implement student transportation in school year 2022-2023. Member Farris emphasized the transportation piece.

Maria Pimienta, TEACH Las Vegas, said they have been in close communication with all families and all stakeholders, and having parent meetings conveying the information regarding the transportation piece. They are working diligently to enroll more students.

MOTION: *Vice Chair Moulton made the motion to grant TEACH Las Vegas a good cause exemption and approve the requests of the school to:*

- 1) *Reduce the enrollment cap for the 2021 – 22 school year to 150 students across grades K – 7, and*
- 2) *Approve the school to postpone student transportation services until the 2022 – 23 school year.*

Member Kirner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Girls Athletic Leadership School – contingent temporary facility for beginning of 2021-22 [01:31:33]

Director Modrcin provided the summary of the request and recommendation related to the charter school contract amendment application submitted by Girls Athletic Leadership Schools (GALS). GALS is requesting that the SPCSA grant a good cause exemption request and grant temporary approval for the school to remain at its current location, the Boys & Girls Club at 920 Cottage Grove Avenue, in the short-term due to permitting delays at their permanent location. According to the information provided, GALS plans to move the school to the permanent facility, located at 4220 S. Maryland Parkway, shortly after all appropriate permits have been issued. Relocation to this facility was approved by the Authority at its April 23, 2021 board meeting. Since that time, the leadership and Board of the school has been closely monitoring facility progress to ensure a smooth transition for students, families, and staff. In recent weeks, the school has been preparing a contingency plan in case of any construction or permitting delays that would impact the availability of the permanent facility. GALS is seeking to maintain an August 9 start date to align with Clark County School District (CCSD). SPCSA staff was notified by GALS leadership in July that it did not appear permitting would occur on or before August 3rd, less than a week prior to the start of school. As a result, the school has secured a facility use agreement with the Boys & Girls Club to remain at their current site given the permitting delays at the permanent location. Staff is comfortable with the contingency plan as proposed and recommends that the Authority approves the school to open at the Boys & Girls Club and they anticipate this is a very short stay and when permitting allows, likely in August, the school will move to its permanent home less than a mile away.

MOTION: *Member Shauntee Rosales made the motion (as described in [staff's recommendation](#)) to grant GALS Las Vegas a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request of the school to temporarily locate at the Boys and Girls Club (920 Cottage Grove Avenue) for the start of the school year with the condition that GALS complete the SPCSA Pre-Opening process prior to relocating to its permanent facility at 4220 S. Maryland Parkway. Vice Chair Moulton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Agenda Item 7 – Nevada Connections Academy [01:35:49]

Director Modrcin said Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) serves grades 9-12 in its current 3-year charter school contract that commenced on July 1, 2020. The most recent rating from the 2018 – 19 school year had the high school at a 1-star with an index score of 13.8. Projected scores for the 2019 – 20 and 2020 – 21 school years

in today's slide but these would not be at the 3-star level and as the Authority is aware it has been made abundantly clear to the school that the expectation is for the high school to reach 3-stars by the time they are up for renewal. Preliminary data from last year showed some progress, though the school would have still been well shy of a 3-star cut off of 50 points, so to be clear they will get all available and final data for the 2020 – 21 school year in the coming weeks and then they will only get one more year of complete data at the end of the 2021 – 22 and that data could inform any recommendation regarding renewal in the fall of 2022.

Dr. McBride, Superintendent at NCA, began the NCA's update presentation (which can be found in the materials for this meeting). He shared NCA's celebrations which includes the below:

- Expected 20-21 school year graduation rate of at least 84.6%,
- Expected 20-21 school year College and Career Readiness Participation Status of approximately 52%,
- Over 80% of NCA families are returning for the 21-22 SY
- Over 95% of NCA Staff are returning for the 21-22 SY o 100+ students participated in summer school this summer.
- Two Olympians and at least one medal winner

He spoke to the school's past performance vs. their performance framework targets before Mrs. Christine Dzarnoski, Principal, took over for the slides regarding NCA's academic achievement. Dr. McBride discussed the school's graduation rates, college & career readiness, and student engagement. Mr. Scott Harrington, Board Chair, closed with sharing their board updates and training. There was further discussion between the Authority and school representatives.

Agenda Item 8 – Schools Previously Under Receivership. [02:19:20]

a. Quest Academy Update.

Director Modrcin provided a brief update regarding Quest Academy before turning it over to the school representatives to provide their update regarding the receivership at Quest Academy. Quest Academy was transitioned from receivership to a fully constituted board in August of 2020. The receivership was put into place by the Authority a number of years ago to address a number of academic and financial performance shortcoming in addition to some governance and compliance deficiencies. Quest Academy was renewed for a 3-year term that started July 1, 2020. The school is still operating under a notice at the elementary level. This means that the final results for 2020-21 school year and 2021-22 school year will be critical in any renewal decision made by the Authority.

Jackie Working, Student Support Director, said she was joined by their school's Finance and Facilities Director, Mr. McNeil. She spoke to some of the school's efforts and how she felt things were going.

b. Discovery Charter School. [02:24:59]

Director Modrcin provided a brief update regarding Discovery Charter School. The school was transferred from receivership to a fully constituted board in 2019. The upcoming school year is the 5th year of the 6-year charter contract which expires June 30, 2023. The school is still operating under a notice at the elementary and middle school level at the Sandhill campus and this means that the final results for 2020 – 21 school year and 2021 – 22 school year will be critical in any renewal decision made by the Authority.

Tricia Wilbourne, Principal at Discovery Charter School, shared their teacher return for this coming school year is 93% and their student/family return is 98%. As of today, they have 422 students enrolled at Hillpointe campus and 116 students at their Sandhill campus. 64% of their enrollment includes subgroups. They have no staff vacancies and two therapy dogs that will serve students at both campuses. She talked about their academic and curriculum changes for the coming school year. Discovery Charter School is part of cohort 1 for the MTSS which is sponsored by the SPCSA.

Agenda Item 9 – Updates on approved new charter schools for Fall 2021. [02:34:44]

a. TEACH Las Vegas

This update was given during agenda item 6(a).

b. CIVICA Nevada Career and Collegiate Academy

Director Modrcin said CIVICA Nevada Career and Collegiate Academy, as the board is aware, was conditionally approved in May of 2020 to open this fall and serve grades K – 7, eventually growing to K – 12 at full scale. SPCSA staff has been working with the school and overseeing their progress in the pre-opening process, their walk through is scheduled for Monday of next week and hope to sign off on completion of that so the school can successfully open as planned on August 12th.

Dr. Eve Breier, said as of this week, they filled all their staff positions. Fully registered enrollment to date is 556 and they have about 14 pending applications, which would bring them to about 570. They have 215 applications in the queue that still need to be processed, but obviously all of those won't be because of their enrollment capacity. She spoke to the school's initiatives and community outreach and some of the professional development the staff was able to attend. There was further discussion between the Authority and school representatives regarding their enrollment and outreach.

Agenda Item 10 – Charter School Renewal Process. SPCSA staff will provide the Authority with an overview of the charter school renewal process. [02:47:58]

Director Modrcin provided the brief presentation of the charter school renewal process, which will be in front of the Authority before the end of the calendar year. He recapped the renewal timeline and key dates. Last month each of schools up for renewal received their performance reports and SPCSA staff has already provided guidance with regard to the letter of intent to renew which are due no later than September 1st and applications are expected to be received in early October and staff plans to bring recommendations before the end of the calendar year. He shared some of the information/data staff uses to make a recommendation regarding the renewals which include: academic performance, organizational performance, financial performance, site evaluation findings and other information provided in the renewal application and provided some examples.

Agenda Item 11 – Proposed Regulatory Changes (Nevada Administrative Code 388A.260). [02:52:34]

Executive Director Feiden said the SPCSA has limited regulatory authority and within that authority staff is contemplating some potential changes to existing regulations. Mr. Herrick said the one of the areas where the SPCSA has the ability to make regulations is in regard to the SPCSA application process. Executive Director Feiden said they are looking primarily at the application process here and for them that contemplates the letter of intent and charter application. For the letters of intent, they are looking at slightly shortening the length of notice from the current 120 days prior to application to more like 90 days as well as adding some information and details regarding the letter of intent. With regard to the application process, they currently have 2 applications cycles, one where they are due January 15th and the other due July 15th. They've seen over the last several schools' new openings, that schools coming out of the July cycle in particular, struggle in terms of being ready to open on time and have seen several schools receive their certificate of occupancy days before the school year started. Staff has been uncomfortable with this and have worked to back those days up to 30 days which regulation and statute allow. They have also seen schools have to delay due to late starts or run into issues finding sufficient enrollment. Also with the July timeline, their approvals will typically happen end of November or December, if they go through resubmission that puts them in January-February which is months before the beginning of the school year. Staff feels that timeline is too tight, and they are looking potentially moving it to a single cycle with applications due in the springtime and the aim of having board action by the end of summer. That will provide a full 12 months of preopening. This approach has numerous other potential advantages, with regard to staff capacity and how they allocate their time. Staff has asked for feedback from their stakeholders and generally feedback has been positive.

Mr. Herrick spoke about the regulatory process which will include a public workshop and public regulatory hearing. SPCSA staff will handle the workshop and at the SPCSA's November or December board meeting they will have the regulatory hearing and both the workshop and public hearing will provide time for public comment and input and any regulatory changes approved, ultimately have to be approved by the legislative commission which is made up of legislators, and it is also subject to legislative oversight as well.

Agenda Item 12 – Long-Range Calendar. [02:59:59]

Executive Director Feiden highlighted a couple of items. At the August meeting they will have some proposed changes to their site evaluation process and a draft of their governance standards as discussed earlier. At the October meeting they do anticipate a review of academic performance, this year is unique as they will not have star-ratings but will have other data to dig into and expect to hear from schools that remain under notice due to past performance concerns. New charter school applications are expected to be during the November meeting and renewals at the December meeting. She said she believes there also was a comment about wanting to hear how the ESSER funds are used and looking to October to provide more information on that and will incorporate the focus on schools as discussed today. Member Moulton encouraged schools to share with one another about what they are doing with the ESSER funds, there is so much money and so much need.

Agenda Item 13 – Public Comment #2 [03:03:27]

There was no further public comment submitted, on the line or in the room.

Agenda Item 14 – Adjournment [03:03:17]

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04pm.