



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: **Founders Classical Academy of Las Vegas Amendment Request to**
- Adopt a Weighted Lottery Policy
DATE: December 3, 2021

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Founders Classical Academy of Las Vegas (FCALV) currently operates one campus in Las Vegas metropolitan area, located at 5747 W. Alexander Road. FCALV currently serves 900 students in grades K – 12 according to the most recent Validation Day information. The school has submitted an amendment application to implement a weighted lottery policy for student applications for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

After a thorough review of the amendment application, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority grant FCALV a Good Cause Exemption and approve the amendment request to implement a weighted lottery policy for the upcoming application window and enrollment for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

Background and Analysis

FCALV opened to students and families for the 2014 – 2015 school year. The school was renewed for a five-year term on January 31, 2020, and is currently in year 2 of its second charter term. According to the amendment application, FCALV is engaged in a unique philanthropic relationship with the Barney Charter School Initiative (BCSI) of Hillsdale College. BCSI employs classical school content and pedagogy specialists who develop curriculum and instructional practices that best serve classically educated students. Additionally, BCSI provides professional development to ensure the proper implementation of curriculum in K-12 classical classrooms.

The amendment application notes that FCALV's purpose is to grow young children into young adults who are strong in mind and character, and goes on to state that a classical school achieves this through a time-tested, content-rich program that emphasizes traditional learning, virtuous living, and civic responsibility. The submitted policy was approved by the FCALV board on November 24, 2021 in an effort to change the school's policies prior to the upcoming student application and enrollment periods. The amendment application outlines

that FCALV seeks approval to implement a weighted lottery to address enrollment diversity and equity in important demographic subgroups: students with disabilities and students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch. Currently, 5.2% of FCALV's student population are those identified for special education, and 23.7% of the student population qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, both of which lag significantly behind the averages of CCSD, the SPCSA and state of Nevada for the same demographic subgroups.

The amendment application notes that the proposed weighted lottery will help the school ensure that the student population of FCALV more closely resembles the student population of the community where the school is located.

According to the amendment, FCALV's Weighted Lottery Policy will provide a weighted preference of 3.0 for students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and a weight of 4.0 for students with disabilities. This weighted lottery will take place only if it is determined that the percentage of students at FCALV who qualify for free and reduced lunch or students with disabilities is less than 90% of the percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch services in the SPCSA. Students qualifying for both categories will not have a combined weight for the lottery according to the proposed policy.

The amendment application notes that FCALV plans to increase its targeted bulk mail initiative, specifically advertising to zip codes in a two-mile radius of the school campus and explaining the benefits of a classical education to potential special education and students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Additionally, FCALV plans to advertise through family enrollment meetings that will be available both in-person and virtually.

It is also noteworthy that the FCALV board has recently approved the National School Lunch program to be implemented starting in the 2022 – 23 school year. Currently, this is not offered at FCALV, but school leadership believes that targeted marketing and outreach coupled with this new program will help the school address current demographic gaps.

A copy of the complete lottery policy can be found within the amendment submission from FCALV.

Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests

Existing charter schools sponsored by the SPCSA may submit a charter school contract amendment application to the SPCSA. The application is reviewed by SPCSA staff and presented for SPCSA Board action. Amendment requests typically are to, among other things, increase enrollment, add grade levels above and beyond what the charter school is approved to serve, add a new campus, or change mission and vision statements. In this case, SPCSA staff finds that a change to the lottery policy of a charter school represents a material change to the charter contract, necessitating consideration and possible approval by the Authority.

Applicant Eligibility

For this specific type of Amendment request, the sponsor of the charter school shall review the written request to determine if the written request: (a) Complies with NRS 388A.010 to 388A.640, inclusive, and the regulations applicable to charter schools; and (b) Is complete in accordance with regulations of the Department. This review also includes an assessment of the charter school's compliance with regards to such applicable law, regulations and SPCSA requirements including those described in the Academic Performance Framework, Organizational Performance Framework, and the Financial Performance Framework.

When reviewing an amendment application, SPCSA staff reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Academically, the current Nevada School Performance

Framework (NSPF) Report Card for the elementary, middle and high school are at or above the 3-star level. A table summarizing the academic performance of FCALV is provided on page 4 of this memo¹.

The most recent graduation rate data released in December 2021 revealed that the school has maintained high four-year graduation rates over the past three years. It is worth noting that the four-year validated graduation rate for each of the last three school years was higher than both the state and SPCSA averages.

	<u>2018 – 2019</u>	<u>2019 – 2020</u>	<u>2020 – 2021</u>
Graduation Rate	100%	100%	93.7%

Financially, SPCSA staff finds that the school is meeting performance standards as adopted by the Authority under the Financial Performance Framework. The results from the 2019 – 20 school year indicated that the FCALV was ‘Meeting the Standard’ under all seven indicators, and as such, SPCSA staff finds the school to be in good financial health. These results were approved by the Authority on January 22, 2021.

From an organizational perspective, SPCSA staff also finds FCALV to be ‘Meeting Standards’. The school earned 100 points under the 2020 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on November 6, 2020.

Given the historic academic performance, the recent results under both the Financial and Organizational frameworks, SPCSA staff finds FCALV to be eligible for this amendment request.

Summary and Recommendation

As previously noted, FCALV currently serves free and reduced-price lunch populations that are lower than those of CCSD, the SPCSA and state of Nevada. Currently, 5.2% of FCALV’s student population are those identified for special education, and 23.7% of the student population qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Additionally, only 6.2% of students enrolled at the school are English Language Learners.

Given these demographic gaps, SPCSA staff finds that the FCALV amendment application to adopt a weighted lottery policy to be in alignment with the spirit of the SPCSA’s Strategic Plan and Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. A weighted lottery policy can help FCALV become more representative of the community the school currently serves while simultaneously addressing the aforementioned demographic gaps.

As such, SPCSA staff recommends the SPCSA board approve the request of FCALV to adopt a weighted lottery policy for the upcoming application and enrollment periods.

Proposed Motion:

Grant FCALV a Good Cause Exemption Request and approve the amendment request to adopt a weighted lottery policy for the upcoming student application and enrollment period for the 2022 – 23 school year.

¹ Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a school year waiver from the US Department of Education for certain assessment, accountability, school identification, and reporting requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for both the 2019 – 20 and 2020 – 21 school years. For the 2019 – 20 school year, Nevada statewide assessments were not administered and the NDE did not calculate Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings. For the 2020 – 2021 school year, Nevada statewide assessments were administered, but the NDE did not calculate new NSPF school ratings for the 2020 – 21 school year.

If approved, the enrollment cap for Founders Classical Academy of Las Vegas will be as follows for the remainder of the charter term:

	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – 2025
Enrollment Cap	820	855	890	925

Historical Performance and Demographic Information

Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) – Founders Classical Academy of Las Vegas

Year	Ratings		
2021 ²	Elementary: 4-stars	Middle: 5-stars	High: 3-stars
2020 ³	Elementary: 4-stars	Middle: 5-stars	High: 3-stars
2019	Elementary: 4-stars	Middle: 5-stars	High: 3-stars
2018	Elementary: 2-stars	Middle: 3-stars	High: 5-stars
2017	Elementary: 2-stars	Middle: 5-stars	High: Not Rated

² Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2020-21 school year waiver from the U.S. Department of Education for certain requirements established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Nevada statewide assessments were administered in the 2020-21 school year, but the NDE did not calculate new Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2020-21 school year.

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School Total Enrollment and Demographics since 2017⁴

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
17-18	618	2.9%	6.6%	54.9%	25.1%	0.3%	9.7%	0.5%	8.1%	2.6%	18.6%
18-19	714	2.9%	7.0%	49.6%	29.7%	0.1%	10.5%	0.1%	6.3%	5.0%	17.1%
19-20	779	3.5%	7.6%	44.9%	34.8%	0.0%	9.1%	0.1%	6.4%	4.9%	27.0%
20-21	830	3.9%	7.1%	41.8%	36.9%	0.0%	10.1%	0.0%	<5%	6.7%	24.2%
21-22	900	3.8%	7.5%	39.6%	38.6%	0.3%	9.8%	0.0%	5.2%	6.8%	23.7%

A – Asian

B – Black

C - White

H – Hispanic

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – Two or more races

P – Pacific Islander

IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student

ELL – English Language Learner

FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

* - Suppressed data due to n-count

⁴ *indicates a population size >0 and <10; count and rate data are suppressed to protect privacy. <5 is shown for rates below 5% to protect student privacy.