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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Sports Leadership and Management (SLAM!) Academy - Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE: December 3, 2021

1. Background and Summary

Sports Leadership and Management (SLAM!) Academy of Nevada has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2022. SLAM is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 1,626 students in grades K – 12 at one campus in Henderson.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of SLAM for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2022.

2. The Process Related to Renewal Applications and the Standards Under Which an Application for Renewal of a Charter Contract Will Be Granted

The first step in the renewal process is the submission of a renewal report by SPCSA staff to the charter school.¹ Specifically, on or before June 30 immediately preceding the final school year prior to expiration of a charter school's charter contract, the SPCSA submits to the governing body a report regarding renewal. The SLAM renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 29, 2021 and can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

¹ Charter school regulations provide for an expedited and streamlined renewal process for high-performing charter schools. Generally, charter schools qualifying for expedited renewal review are those charter schools that are consistently rated as four-and five-star schools under the NSPF and have received no notices of concern or notices of breach for academic, organizational or financial performance. See [NAC 388A.415\(2\)](#).

The renewal report summarizes the performance of the charter school under the terms of the charter contract, identifies any deficiencies related to performance of the charter school that might lead to non-renewal of the charter contract, sets forth the requirements for the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the sponsor will apply in making a determination on the application for renewal. The charter school may submit a response to the renewal report. [See NRS 388A.285\(1\) and \(2\).](#)

Next, the governing body of the charter school must submit a written notice of intent to submit an application for renewal to the SPCSA 45 days prior to submitting a renewal application. See [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). SLAM submitted its notice of Intent to Renew its charter contract on August 4, 2021 and SLAM's notice of intent to renew can be found along with the supporting documents.

In regard to the renewal application, the window to submit the actual renewal application is October 1 through October 15. See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#). The application for renewal must include, without limitation:

- (a) The requirements for the application identified by the sponsor in the performance report prepared by the sponsor;
- (b) A description of the academic, financial and organizational vision and plans for the charter school for the next charter term;
- (c) Any information or data that the governing body of the charter school determines supports the renewal of the charter contract in addition to the information contained in the performance report prepared by the sponsor and any response submitted by the governing body; and
- (d) A description of any improvements to the charter school already undertaken or planned.

See [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#). On October 15, 2021 SLAM submitted its renewal application, which can be found included with the supporting documents.

SLAM's renewal application includes a summary of the key design elements that are currently being implemented at the school. As noted in the application, while the school is not planning to change any key design elements, programs, structures and principles, SLAM will continue to implement unique and innovative strategies aimed at student achievement, which have proven to be successful with all student populations.

According to the application, SLAM's education model is derived from research-based strategies proven successful in raising student achievement nationwide. The program is based on the "career academy" concept and grounded on the philosophy of the three R's: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. The three R's represent the essential components that must be in place to effectively prepare students for the demands of the 21st century, and this philosophy has been linked by research to higher attendance and graduation rates, stronger test scores, and safer schools.

At SLAM, students in grades K-5 will develop a foundation to think critically and apply knowledge across disciplines to support them in grades 6-12 and throughout their lives. The application goes on to state that sports is to be used as the hook to engage students and develop their love for learning. Additionally, there is an emphasis on sports science in the STEM fields through STEM project-based learning courses as well as computer science courses. The application states that through this unique curriculum, students will have opportunities to engage in both predictable and unpredictable real-world situations, which ensures relevance.

The application also notes that as of February 23, 2021, SLAM has an adopted Restorative Justice Plan, which was developed to integrate with the school's Positive Behavior Plan and create a model that is more collaborative, inclusive, and positive approach to developing effective interventions for personal behavioral growth. In order to empower student's positive behavior, the school-wide model will create a safe and

positive school climate, and help foster positive relationships with teachers, peers, staff members and the community. The application indicates that the model is a three-tier problem-solving process that provides a continuum of tiered interventions with increasing levels of intensity and duration to prevent inappropriate behavior by means of reinforcing appropriate behavior.

Decisions to renew a charter school contract or deny a renewal application are made and based upon the Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations related to charter school renewal (see [NRS 388A.285](#)) and the collective record of a school's academic, financial, organizational, findings from the site evaluation process, and all data and information provided by the Department of Education.

Note that no factor may be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school, and the academic performance of the charter school is the touchstone of any renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

In making its recommendation to the Authority regarding a renewal application, SPCSA staff considers the past performance of the charter school, including information contained in the application for renewal, any site evaluations, academic achievement of pupils, and any other information that is determined to be relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed, including financial and organizational performance. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#).

When determining whether to grant an application for renewal of a charter contract, the Authority Board considers the foregoing factors, any other information that the Authority Board determines is relevant to whether the charter contract should be renewed. The Authority Board will consider the "totality of the evidence" presented to it when making a renewal decision. See [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#). Again, as stated above, no factor is to be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school.² See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#).

At its sole discretion, the Authority Board may renew a charter contract for a term of three (3) to ten (10) years, or, alternatively, deny the renewal application. See [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)](#). Note that a variable term length upon renewal was discretion afforded to the Authority under Senate Bill 451 during the 2019 Legislative Session and is now codified in [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#).

The Authority Board may accept or reject, in whole or part, the recommendation of the Executive Director. See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(a\)](#). If a charter contract is renewed, that Authority Board may include a provision for a high stakes review during the term of the renewed charter contract which may result in the termination of the renewed charter contract prior to its expiration, or renew the charter contract and include any additional provisions, requirements or restrictions which the State Public Charter School Authority determines are appropriate. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(b\) and \(c\)](#).

Alternatively, the Authority Board may deny the renewal application for the purpose of reconstituting the governing body of the charter school pursuant to [NRS 388A.330](#) and assigning the charter contract to a charter management organization or a new governing body which may include, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school or a governing body assembled by the Executive Director; deny the renewal application for the purpose of restarting the charter school and issuing a new charter contract pursuant to [NRS 388A.300](#) to a charter management organization or a new governing body, including, without limitation, the governing body of another charter school, which will inherit any assets of the charter school which remain following dissolution; or deny the renewal of a charter contract for the purpose of closing the charter school. See [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(d\),\(e\) and \(f\)](#).

² See [NAC 388A.415\(10\)](#). With regard to a second renewal, the Authority is required to place an even greater weight on academic performance than was assigned to it on the first renewal.

3. Analysis

Academics

SLAM is currently rated as a 3-star middle school program. As the Authority is aware, NSPF school ratings and accountability for the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 school years have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 3-star rating identifies an adequate school that has met the state’s standard for performance. The all-students group has met expectations for academic achievement or growth. Subgroups meet expectations for academic achievement or growth with little exception; however, no group is far below the standard. It is noteworthy that this represents an improvement from the 2 -star rating the middle school earned during the 2017 – 18 school year. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 2-star rating identifies a school that has partially met the state’s standard for performance. Students and subgroups often meet expectations for academic performance or growth but may have multiple areas that require improvement. Additionally, areas requiring significant improvement are uncommon. SLAM was issued a Notice of Concern as a result of the 2017 – 18 NSPF ratings, but the elementary program was removed from the intervention ladder as a result of the 2018 – 19 ratings. While SLAM’s overall academic performance is adequate and showing improvement, the school was identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) by the Nevada Department of Education based on data from the 2017 – 2018 school year due to academic performance gaps for certain student groups.

Currently, the high school program has yet to be rated, but recent graduation rates are strong and above the state average. The 2021 four-year graduation rate was 96.7%, an improvement from the 2020 four-year graduation rate which was 94.3%.

The elementary program opened for the 2020 – 21 school year and has yet to be rated.

The NSPF results for this current charter term are summarized and provided in the table below:

School Year	NSPF Rating
2020 – 2021 ³	Middle School: 3 stars High School: Not Rated
2019 – 2020 ⁴	Middle School: 3 stars High School: Not Rated
2018 – 2019	Middle School: 3 stars High School: Not Rated
2017 – 2018	Middle School: 2 stars High School: Not Rated
2016 – 2017	Middle School: 3 stars High School: Not Rated

Organizational

The current iteration of the SPCSA’s Organizational Performance Framework was adopted by the Authority in the summer of 2019. The school earned 100 points under the 2020 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on November 6, 2020 and SPCSA staff have not noted any

³ 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.

⁴ Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2019 – 20 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). Accordingly, 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.

substantial organizational performance concerns during the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, SLAM has not received a Notice of Breach or Notice of Concern under this framework during the current charter term.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings

2020 – 2021	<i>Will be reported in January of 2022</i>
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)
2018 – 2019	No organizational performance concerns identified
2017 – 2018	No organizational performance concerns identified
2016 – 2017	No organizational performance concerns identified

Financial

In 2018, the Authority requested that the SPCSA Financial Framework be modified so as to be better assess the financial health of sponsored schools. The revised SPCSA Financial Framework was approved on January 18, 2019, with results for FY20 approved by the Authority in January 2021. SLAM earned a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under each indicator for the FY20 Financial Performance Framework, and the school has a history of clean audit findings. As such, SPCSA staff finds the school to be currently meeting standards against performance expectations within the financial framework.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings

2020 – 2021	<i>Will be reported in January of 2022</i>
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2018 – 2019	No financial performance concerns identified
2017 – 2018	No financial performance concerns identified
2016 – 2017	No financial performance concerns identified

4. Recommendation: Renew SLAM for a 6-year term

Despite the issuance of a Notice of Concern due to academic underperformance at the middle school in the 2017 – 18 school year, SLAM has improved academic performance at the middle school level, earning at least a 3-star rating according to the NSPF results in each year since that time. The high school has not yet been rated under the NSPF, but graduation rates over the past two years have been high at 94% and 96.7%, respectively.

As previously stated, NSPF school ratings and accountability indicators have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year for both the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 school years, respectively.

It is also noteworthy that the school has not been issued any financial or organizational notices.

SPCSA staff is confident the school will maintain above average graduation rates, and will perform well under the NSPF at the elementary school once rated. Despite operating under a notice previously, the school has improved performance at the middle school level. As such, staff’s recommendation is that the Authority renew SLAM for a six-year term, beginning July 1, 2022. The new term would be subject to the enrollment caps outlined below which reflect enrollment increases to accommodate filling out the elementary school that opened in the fall of 2021.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Enrollment Cap	1,710	1,805	1,835	1,835	1,835	1,835
Grades Served	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12

5. Proposed Motion

Approve the SLAM Renewal Application with a six-year term beginning July 1, 2022 and the enrollment caps as outlined above in the recommendation memo.

Appendix: School Demographics since 2016⁵

Year	Total Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
16-17	472	3.1%	6.9%	29.6%	49.5%	0.2%	8.2%	2.1%	7.6%	5.0%	26.6%
17-18	738	2.9%	7.9%	28.5%	51.0%	0.6%	6.7%	1.8%	8.5%	7.3%	32.6%
18-19	921	3.4%	12.1%	23.4%	52.2%	0.3%	6.0%	2.2%	9.5%	10.3%	52.0%
19-20	1043	3.6%	11.0%	21.8%	54.6%	0.5%	5.7%	2.4%	11.3%	10.7%	52.3%
20-21	1066	2.9%	12.5%	18.5%	56.0%	0.5%	7.0%	2.2%	12.6%	8.8%	52.2%
21-22	1626	2.7%	12.0%	15.4%	57.3%	0.2%	9.3%	2.8%	10.5%	10.2%	58.3%

A – Asian

B – Black/African American

C – Caucasian/White

H – Hispanic/Latino

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – Two or More Races

P – Pacific Islander

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

ELL – English Language Learner

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

To protect student privacy, rates associated with IEP, ELL, and FRL populations less than 10 students are displayed with an asterisk (*), and extreme values less than 5 or greater than 95 percent are shown as <5 and >95, respectively. N/A indicates the population did not exist.

⁵ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).