



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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**ACTION MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** SPCSA Board  
**FROM:** Danny Peltier, Management Analyst I, SPCSA  
Mike Dang, Management Analyst IV, SPCSA  
**SUBJECT:** **Explore Academy request to reduce 2022-23 approved enrollment cap**  
**DATE:** June 27, 2022

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**Summary of Request and Recommendation**

Explore Academy Las Vegas (Explore) is requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption request and approve the school to reduce the enrollment cap for the 2022 – 23 school year from 510 to 355 students. According to the amendment application, this reduction is being requested due to the ongoing impact of the COVID pandemic, during which the school opened, and as a way to allow a smooth transition from the temporary facility to the permanent facility the school will be opening during the 2022-23 school year.

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, as outlined within this memo.

**Background and Analysis**

Explore Academy was conditionally approved by the SPCSA to open its doors to students for the 2020 – 21 school year. 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. Additionally, on June 26, 2020, the Authority approved the school's request to serve grades 6 – 9 in an effort to attract more families. On July 24, 2020, the Authority approved a reduction to the school's enrollment cap for the 2020 – 2021 school year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, on June 25, 2021, the Authority approved an additional reduction to the school's enrollment cap due to the ongoing pandemic and also approved the school to remain operating at their temporary facility at 4660 N. Rancho Drive Las Vegas, NV 89130.

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.

Explore is a charter middle and high school that is approved to serve grades 6-12 at full-scale. Explore intends to continue serving the North Las Vegas community. The permanent site is currently planned to open in the 89032 zip code at 3551 N Ferrell Street, North Las Vegas. The amendment application reiterated Explore’s commitment to serving the zip codes of 89106, 89030, 89031, and 89032 and the school continues to reach out and engage potential students in those areas.

The current enrollment cap for the 2022 – 23 school year is 510 students. Validation Day numbers for the 2021 – 22 school year show that the school served 192 students in grades 6 – 10.

According to the amendment application, Explore is projecting roughly 355 student applications for the coming year. With the inclusion of the 160 students intending to return, the projection of 355, or an addition of 195 students, seems reasonable as a conservative estimate. As mentioned previously, the pandemic and securing the permanent facility impacted the school’s enrollment during its first two years. The amendment application goes on to state that now that the school will be able to move into its permanent location and return to more normal day-in-day-out operations, the proposed 2022-2023 enrollment cap, along with the existing caps for the remaining three years of the charter are reasonable and expected to be met.

If approved, the remaining approved enrollment cap for Explore’s charter term would be as follow:

School Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Grade Levels	6 – 11	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12
Enrollment	355	530	550	570

**Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests**

Existing charter schools that are sponsored by the SPCSA may submit a charter school contract amendment application to the SPCSA – which is reviewed by SPCSA staff and presented for SPCSA Board action – in order to, among other things, increase enrollment, add grade levels above and beyond what the charter school is approved to serve, or add a new campus. Only those existing charter schools that are meeting expectations in regard to academics (under both the Department of Education’s Nevada School Performance Framework -- the “Star Ratings” -- and the SPCSA’s Academic Performance Framework), are compliant in regard to the SPCSA’s Organizational Framework, and are fiscally sound may be approved for expansion

**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

Given the historic academic, organizational, and financial performance under SPCSA Performance Frameworks, SPCSA staff finds Explore Academy to be eligible for this amendment request.

**Recommendation**

Overall, SPCSA staff will still continue to monitor Explore with regard to enrollment and to request updates regarding the progress of meeting the 2022-2023 School Year targets, and enrollment targets in future years. However, SPCSA staff is supportive of this amendment request and recommends the Authority approve Explore Academy’s request for a Good Cause Exemption and reduction to the 2022-23 enrollment cap.

**Proposed Motion:**

**Grant Explore Academy a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request of the school to reduce the enrollment cap for the 2022 – 23 school year to 355 students across grades 6 – 11.**

*Historical Performance and Demographic Information*

**Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) –**

Year	NSPF Ratings
2019 – 2020 <sup>1</sup>	N/A
2020 - 2021 <sup>2</sup>	N/A

**School Total Enrollment and Demographics since 2020<sup>3</sup>**

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
<b>20-21</b>	136	2.2%	19.8%	50%	24.2%	0%	0.7%	2.9%	13.9%	*	41.1%
<b>21-22</b>	192	4.1%	19.2%	39%	29.6%	1%	6.7%	0%	14.5%	5.2%	46.3%

- 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Due to COVID-19, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) applied for and was granted a 2020 – 21 school year waiver from the US 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 Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2020 – 21 school year.

<sup>3</sup> \*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.