



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: **Mater Academy of Northern Nevada – Charter Renewal Recommendation**
DATE: December 16, 2022

Background and Summary

Mater Academy of Northern Nevada (MANN) has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2023. MANN is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 489 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade at one campus in Reno.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of MANN for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2023.

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 MANN renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 30, 2022 and can be found within the supporting documentation for the item.

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\(1\)](#). MANN submitted its notice of

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\(2\)](#).

Intent to Renew its charter contract on August 31, 2022 and MANN'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 14, 2022, MANN submitted its renewal application, which can be found included with the supporting documents.

MANN's renewal application outlines the various key components of the MANN educational model, which includes the following: honoring and building strength of community, ensuring social justice for all students, teaching with a sense of community by serving as "generalists first, specialists second" and embodying multiple responsibilities, personalized teaching and learning, collaborating with the principal to decide the course of study, personalizing curriculum to introduce concepts otherwise abstract to the students, coaching students to acquire skills to enhance their ability to learn, and developing students' self-efficacy. The renewal application goes on to state that in the formation of a teacher as coach and student as worker model, the teacher and students form vital relationships which give the teacher invaluable insight into each student's life, and in turn provide opportunities for each teacher to draw relevant connections between the student's life and the curriculum.

The renewal application also outlines various academic initiatives that have occurred at MANN to help the school sustain recent performance, including plans to address gaps in student group SBAC data through the hiring of an additional ELA teacher in middle school support classes, which resulted in smaller class sizes. MANN also hired another ELL teacher allowing for a dedicated elementary and middle school teacher holding weekly professional training for assistants and teachers in order to better target instruction for ELL students. The renewal application also states that Springboard curriculum training occurred for all middle school core instructors and the instructional coach, and the school is also holding monthly schoolwide trainings from Community Training and Assistance on ELL strategies.

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\(10\)\(a\)](#). 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 \(f\)](#).

Analysis

Academics

MANN currently operates one campus in Reno. This campus has received NSPF ratings over the course of the charter term which indicate improved performance since the school opened. The MANN elementary school program earned a 1-star rating according to the 2017 – 2018 NSPF ratings, which was the school’s first year of operations. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 1-star rating identifies a school that has not met the state’s standard for performance. Students and subgroups are inconsistent in achieving performance standards. A 1-star school has multiple areas that require improvement including an urgent need to address areas that are significantly below standard. This rating resulted in the Authority issuing a Notice of Concern to MANN on September 28, 2018, although the school did qualify for additional interventions.

The MANN elementary school then demonstrated improvement, earning a 3-star rating according to the 2018 – 2019 NSPF ratings. 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 standard. Due to the 3-star rating for the elementary school, the Authority removed the previously issued Notice of Concern on October 4, 2019. 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.

Since being rated, the MANN middle school program has historically exhibited strong performance according to the NSPF ratings, earning a 5-star rating according to the 2018 – 2019 NSPF ratings. As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 5-star school rating recognizes a superior school that exceeds expectations for all students and subgroups on every indicator category with little or no exception. A 5-star school demonstrates superior academic performance and growth with no opportunity gaps. The school does not fail to meet expectations for any group on any indicator.

As previously noted, NSPF school ratings and accountability for the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 school years have been carried over from the 2018 – 2019 reporting year. Star ratings were not calculated for the 2021 – 2022 school year due to lack of data brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic as approved by the U.S. Department of Education³, but the Nevada

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 Page 72 of the NSPF technical guide:

<http://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/MoreDownload?filename=Nevada%20School%20Performance%20Framework%20Manual%202021-22%20School%20Year.pdf>

Department of Education published index scores⁴. The MANN elementary program earned an index score of 64.0 while the middle school program earned an index score of 55.5. In a typical year when star ratings are issued, these index scores would be equivalent to three-star ratings.

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

School Year	NSPF Rating
2021 - 2022 ⁵	- Elementary: 64.0 - Middle: 55.5
2020 – 2021 ⁶	- Elementary: 3 – stars - Middle: 5 – stars
2019 – 2020 ⁷	- Elementary: 3 – stars - Middle: 5 – stars
2018 – 2019	- Elementary: 3 – stars - Middle: 5 – stars
2017 – 2018	- Elementary: 1 – star

The Authority adopted its own Academic Performance Framework in 2019⁸. Results for MANN during the 2021 – 2022 can be found below.

Campus	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Elementary	74.4	Meets Standard
Middle	66.3	Meets Standard

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 earned 100 points under the 2021 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on January 28, 2022. SPCSA staff have not noted any substantial organizational performance concerns during the 2022 – 2023 school year.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings

2021 – 2022	<i>To be reported in December 2022</i>
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)

⁴ According to the NSPF technical guide released by the Nevada Department of Education, star ratings were not calculated for the 2021 – 2022 school year in accordance with flexibility offered in the U.S. Department of Education’s addendum to Nevada’s consolidated state plan due to COVID-19. Star ratings will resume in 2023.

⁵ According to the NSPF technical guide released by the Nevada Department of Education, star ratings were not calculated for the 2021 – 2022 school year in accordance with flexibility offered in the U.S. Department of Education’s addendum to Nevada’s consolidated state plan due to COVID-19. Star ratings will resume in 2023.

⁶ 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.

⁷Due 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.

⁸ Despite being adopted in 2019, results under the SPCSA Academic performance Framework were not adopted for the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 school years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of NSPF scores. 2021 – 2022 was the first academic year with reported scores.

2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)
2018 – 2019	No organizational performance concerns identified
2017 – 2018	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. MANN met performance standards for FY20 as the school earned a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under all seven of the seven indicators within the framework. For FY21, MANN again demonstrated strong performance, earning a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under five of the seven reported indicators.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings

2021 – 2022	<i>To be reported in January 2023</i>
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2018 – 2019	No financial performance concerns identified
2017 – 2018	No financial performance concerns identified

Recommendation: Renew Mater Academy of Northern Nevada for a 5-year term

As described above, MANN has exhibited improved academic performance over the charter term, particularly after the first year of operations. Except the school’s first year, the elementary school program has historically met performance expectations according to the NSPF. The middle school program has also consistently met performance expectations under the NSPF over the current charter term. This level of performance was reaffirmed by the 2021 – 2022 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework ratings as well as the index scores issued by the Nevada Department of Education for the 2021 – 2022 school year.

MANN has not exhibited any major organizational or financial performance concerns over the course of the current charter term.

Ultimately, because the academic performance of MANN has a positive trend, and that the school has consistently met performance expectations for the majority of years throughout the current charter term, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority renew MANN for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2023. Sustained performance at or above a three-star rating as measured by the NSPF, particularly with regard to the school’s elementary school program, is needed to warrant a longer charter term. The new term would be subject to the enrollment caps outlined below.

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Enrollment Caps					
MANN	480	480	480	480	480
Grades Served <i>(all campuses)</i>	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8

Proposed Motion

Approve the Mater Academy of Northern Nevada Renewal Application for a five-year term beginning July 1, 2023 and the enrollment caps as outlined above in the recommendation memo. In the event of academic, financial or organizational underperformance the Authority may impose additional oversight.

Appendix: School Demographics since 2017⁹

Mater Academy of Northern Nevada (MANN)

Year	Total Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
17-18	169	1.1%	8.8%	18.9%	65.0%	0.5%	4.1%	1.1%	7.6%	34.3%	76.3%
18-19	269	0.7%	10.0%	16.3%	66.1%	0.7%	3.3%	2.6%	10.4%	18.5%	81.4%
19-20	339	0.8%	9.4%	14.4%	68.4%	2.0%	3.8%	0.8%	10.9%	37.4%	>95.0%
20-21	432	1.1%	7.1%	15.5%	68.9%	2.3%	4.3%	0.4%	15.0%	39.1%	>95.0%
21-22	483	1.4%	5.1%	14.6%	72.2%	3.1%	3.3%	0.0%	14.6%	38.0%	>95.0%
22-23	489	1.4%	4.9%	12.4%	75.4%	3.4%	2.2%	0.0%	15.5%	38.0%	>95.0%

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.

⁹ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).