

Steve Sisolak
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

Rebecca Feiden
Executive Director



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706-2543
(775) 687-9174 · Fax (775) 687-9113

2080 East Flamingo Road Suite 230
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119-5164
(702) 486-8895 · Fax (702) 486-5543

ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing, SPCSA
Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III, SPCSA
SUBJECT: **Strong Start Academy Elementary School Charter Amendment Request to Reduce 2022-2023 Enrollment Cap**
DATE: December 16, 2022

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Strong Start Academy Elementary School (SSA) has submitted an amendment application requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request to reduce its first-year enrollment cap from 180 students to 85 students as well as adjust the enrollment cap in years 2 through 5 as a result of current enrollment in the school's first year of operations.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends that the Authority grant the Good Cause Exemption and approve the amendment request. A proposed motion can be found on page 3 of this memo.

Background and Overview of the Amendment

SSA is located at the Tony Hsieh Education Center at 310 S. 9th Street in Downtown Las Vegas. SSA was approved by the Authority in January 2022 and opened in August 2022 with three classes of students in kindergarten and two classes in 1st and 2nd grades. The school will add one grade level each year ending at 5th grade. As of Validation Day 2022, SSA had 80 students enrolled.

The mission of SSA is, "To provide equitable, high- quality academics as we prepare our bilingual, civic-minded thinkers to maximize their potential in their community and the world."

The vision is a culturally diverse learning community that prepares children to excel academically in two languages and have a positive impact on an increasingly evolving and global society.

According to the application, SSA is seeking to reduce its enrollment cap to 85 students from its currently approved enrollment of 180 students for its initial year of operation during the 2022-23 school year. The reason for this reduction according to the amendment application is due a delay in securing a contract at the current school site which eventually occurred on June 14, 2022. SSA noted in their application that this delay caused a number of parents to rethink enrolling their children at Strong Start Academy for the 2022-23 school year. In addition to the reduction of its 2022-2023 enrollment cap, SSA also seeks to adjust its enrollment cap in Years 2 through 5, but ultimately seeks to serve the same number of students at full-scale.

SSA did note in their application that it had contracted Graphicka to assist the school in marketing the school within our targeted communities and open social media links to assist parents with enrolling their children in the school. SSA is also working to create an Outreach Specialist position for a staff member to reach out directly to interested families in support of enrolling their children at the school. According to the amendment application, the Executive Director will also provide presentations at Strong Start Academy Pre-Schools to strengthen the possible transition from pre-schools to kindergarten for prospective families. As stated in the amendment application, SSA believes it will maintain enrollment of 80-85 students in the 2022-23 school year and reach enrollment of 180 students for the 2023-24 school year once third grade is added and the outreach efforts begin to show results.

The request for a reduction in enrollment contemplates a reduction in Year 1 through Year 5 of operation. If approved, SSA’s enrollment cap for the remainder of its charter term would be:

| School Year | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Grade Levels | K – 2 | K – 3 | K – 4 | K – 5 | K – 5 | K – 5 |
| Total Enrollment | 85 | 180 | 240 | 300 | 320 | 360 |

SSA also provided an updated budget which continues to show the school being able to meet financial obligations even with lower enrollment. According to the application SSA believes that a \$900,000 annual commitment for the next 5 years from the City of Las Vegas will address the decreased revenues as a result of lower than anticipated enrollment.

Legal Authority

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. When

determining whether to approve an amendment request, the sponsor considers the charter school’s compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations and evidence relating to the academics, finance and organization of the charter school. (See NAC 388A.400(8) and NRS 388A.276).

Analysis and Staff Recommendation

When reviewing an amendment application for RFA eligibility, SPCSA staff reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. SSA is in its first year of operation and has not been rated academically, financially, or organizationally, however, staff finds no current issues that would impact the eligibility of this amendment request. In light this, SPCSA staff finds that SSA’s amendment request as eligible to be approved.

SPCSA staff recommends the SPCSA board approve the request of SSA to change its enrollment cap from 180 students to 85 students for the 2022-2023 school year and to adjust the enrollment cap for Years 2 through 5 as a result. SPCSA staff will continue to monitor the enrollment of SSA throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Proposed Motion: Grant the Good Cause Exemption request and approve Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s request to reduce its approved enrollment cap in Years 1 through 5.

If approved, Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s enrollment cap for its charter term will be:

| School Year | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Grade Levels | K – 2 | K – 3 | K – 4 | K – 5 | K – 5 | K – 5 |
| Total Enrollment | 85 | 180 | 240 | 300 | 320 | 360 |

The current approved Strong Start Academy Elementary School’s enrollment cap for its charter is:

| School Year | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Grade Levels | K – 2 | K – 3 | K – 4 | K – 5 | K – 5 | K – 5 |
| Total Enrollment | 180 | 240 | 300 | 360 | 360 | 360 |

School Demographics since 2022 – Strong Start Academy Elementary School

SSA

| Year | Enrollment | A | B | C | H | I | M | P | IEP | ELL | FRL |
|--------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 22-23 | 80 | 2.5% | 13.7% | 6.2% | 62.5% | 0.0% | 13.7% | 1.2% | * | 21.2% | 82.5% |

A – Asian

B – Black

C – Caucasian

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

SSA Financial Performance – Not Rated

SSA Organizational Performance – Not Rated

SSA Academic Performance – Not Rated