



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
Mike Dang, Manager of Organizational and Financial Performance
SUBJECT: **Doral Academy of Northern Nevada request to add an additional K-8 campus for the 2023 – 24 school year**
DATE: June 27, 2022

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Doral Academy of Northern Nevada (DANN) has submitted an amendment application requesting that the State Public Charter School (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the school to open a second, kindergarten – 8th grade campus beginning in the 2023 – 24 school year. The amendment application states that the DANN community desires an additional campus to reach under-served students residing in central Reno and Sparks. Additionally, the amendment notes that the school anticipates primarily serving students and families residing in the 89502 and 89431 zip codes, although it will be open to all students.

Finally, the DANN board adopted a resolution to allocate funds during FY24 to provide student transportation starting in the proposed opening year of this campus.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application, including recent action by the DANN board that commits the school to providing student transportation to this proposed campus, and recommends that the Authority grant the Good Cause Exemption and conditionally approve the amendment request. A proposed motion along with conditions can be found on page 6 of this memo.

Background and Overview of the Amendment

Doral Academy of Northern Nevada is a kindergarten – 8th grade arts integration school replication of Doral Academy Inc. schools in Florida and the Las Vegas area. It is located at 3725 Butch Cassidy Drive in the South Reno area on the southside of the Mt. Rose Highway and west of the I-580. The school is in its first charter term, with the current contract expiring on June 30, 2023.

According to the most recent Validation Day information, the school served 925 students during the 2021 – 22 school year. Only 6.4% of students qualified for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) during the past school

year, a decrease from the 2020 – 21 school year of nearly 23%, and the school served fewer than 10 students identifying as English Language Learners (ELL) according to validation day data. By comparison, the school district in which DANN is located, Washoe County School District (WCSD), has a FRL student population of 45.4% and an ELL student population of 14.1%. These figures represent significant demographic gaps, and as a result, the school has been directed to develop a Student Recruitment and Enrollment plan as approved by the Authority on April 15, 2022¹.

DANN serves a somewhat comparable number of students with disabilities as the local school district at approximately 10.8%. Validation day data indicates WCSD serves approximately 13.6% of students in this category.

The amendment application states that the target community the school intends to serve is the central Reno/Sparks area, and that the school has identified a facility site at 1315 Financial Boulevard Reno, NV 89502. The amendment submission goes on to note that both the 89502 and 89431 zip codes were identified in the 2022 SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment as areas of academic need, and that the school is requesting to establish an additional campus in order to meet the local community's demand for a better school that can provide the type of quality educational option that parents of disadvantaged and underserved students enrolled in 1- or 2-star schools who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch are seeking. It is noteworthy that all 1- or 2-star elementary or middle schools in the identified zip codes have 100% FRL eligibility.

In terms of outreach, the amendment indicates that the DANN team has worked to conduct targeted marketing and outreach in the target zip codes of 89502 and 89431, leveraging a number of strategies including in-person, online, social media, direct mail and community partnerships. The focus of these efforts has been recruiting and enrollment and serving more FRL and ELL students as all materials were provided in both English and Spanish and concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and with businesses and organizations serving a majority of low-income population. The amendment lists a number of community partners that support DANN, and notes ten new partners located in the identified zip codes. The proposed campus does anticipate participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

As a result of these efforts, the amendment states that a total of 680 households/families residing in ten (10) of the eleven (11) zip codes with underperforming schools in the Washoe County School District expressed interest in their students attending the proposed new campus, which translated to interest from 1,052 students. The amendment states that 576 students reside in the same ten of eleven previously referenced zip codes, with 207 coming from the targeted zip codes of 89502 and 89431.

In terms of academic performance, the amendment notes that the current DANN campus received a 5-star rating for the 2018 – 19 school year for both the elementary and middle school programs, and that this proposed campus would be another replication of the current school and model of Doral schools in both Florida and the Las Vegas area. Along these lines, the current principal of the operating campus, Angela Orr, would serve as a mentor and system-wide lead principal assisting in the initial search for a principal for the second K-8 campus according to the amendment application. DANN will be looking to identify an individual that has experience working with at-risk students, and especially ELL students. The amendment submission goes on to indicate that once hired by the board, the principal will be working part-time to help with the development of the new campus and will receive training from Doral Academy Inc. and the current campus.

The proposed campus, also called the Meadows campus in the application, would open with kindergarten through 5th grades, eventually expanding to 8th grade by the 2026 – 27 school year and serving 966 students. A

¹ <https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2022/220415-Recruitment-and-Enrollment-Plans-2022-04-15.pdf>

complete enrollment chart for the first five years of the campus is provided below. The proposed enrollment cap for the inaugural year of operations is 544 students.

Grade Level	Number of Students				
	2023 – 24	2024 – 25	2025 – 26	2026 – 27	2027 – 28
Kindergarten	100	100	100	100	100
1 st Grade	104	104	104	104	104
2 nd Grade	104	104	104	104	104
3 rd Grade	104	104	104	104	104
4 th Grade	78	104	104	104	104
5 th Grade	54	81	108	108	108
6 th Grade		124	124	124	124
7 th Grade			124	124	124
8 th Grade				124	124
TOTAL	544	721	872	996	996

On June 21, the DANN board adopted a resolution to contract to provide or provide at least one route of student transportation to the second campus with a route that will originate in an area currently zoned for an elementary or middle school that last received a 1- or 2-star rating according to the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). The board resolution included a commitment to allocate no less than \$75,000 of its fiscal year budget to provide this service, however, such allocation of funds will not obligate the school to spend that amount should a more cost-efficient option be found. This resolution can be found with the materials submitted for the amendment.

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. Furthermore, the academic, organizational and financial performance of other charter schools that contract with the same Charter Management Organization or Educational Management Organization is taken into account when reviewing an expansion application².

² There are limited exceptions to these eligibility requirements for those charter schools that have been approved by the State Board of Education and the SPCSA Board to be rated under Nevada’s Alternative Performance Framework.

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. In the case of DANN, SPCSA staff finds the school to be meeting academic and organizational performance expectations. As previously mentioned, the elementary and middle school programs at the current campus are both rated as 5-star programs under the NSPF ratings for the 2018-19 school year. Additionally, the school earned 100 points (out of 100) points under the SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework for the 2020 – 21 school year as approved by the Authority on January 28, 2022. As such, SPCSA staff finds the school to be 'Meeting Standards'.

Regarding financial performance, Doral Academy of Northern Nevada has shown improvement over the past two fiscal years under the SPCSA Financial Framework. As a result of the FY20 performance, the school was directed to adopt a Targeted Remediation Plan, and SPCSA staff saw progress under this plan during FY21. Given the school's improvement, the Authority did not issue a Notice of Concern to the school despite the school Falling Far Below Performance Standards in one measure (Debt to Asset Ratio) within the framework for the previous fiscal year. SPCSA staff continues to monitor the school's quarterly financial statements, and expects the school to maintain its current trajectory for their FY22 results.

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

Analysis and Staff Recommendation

As previously noted, the school aspires to meet the local community's demand for a better school that can provide the type of quality educational option that parents of disadvantaged and underserved students enrolled in 1- or 2-star schools who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are seeking. The amendment also states that the school anticipates a majority of students at the proposed campus will come from the neighborhoods nearest to the new school campus.

SPCSA staff note that the amendment states the school will ensure adequate resources to provide a robust system of student support for at-risk populations such as, but not limited to, ELL students, students in need of Special Education Services, and Gifted and Talented students. It further states that bringing together the resources involved to support at-risk populations will be critical, and as such, will be looking to identify an individual to lead the proposed campus that has experience working with at-risk students, and especially ELL students. Additionally, the proposed staffing plan includes an EL coordinator as well as four special education teachers to serve the anticipated student population. These resources, coupled with planned trainings and professional development described in the narrative, have the ability to effectively support all students.

Importantly, SPCSA staff believes that the recent adoption of student transportation services by the DANN board can eliminate barriers to access for parents and families. SPCSA staff see this as a critical service given the proposed location of the school facility, which is not located in a dense residential area.

With regard to community outreach and student demand, SPCSA staff notes that a total of 680 households/families (or 1,052 students) expressed interested in their students attending the proposed new campus. These families come from ten (10) of the eleven (11) identified zip codes with underperforming schools in the Washoe County School District noted in the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. Some of these zip codes have many 1- or 2- star schools; others have a small number. Of the 1,052 students, 207 students (or 141 families) expressed interest in attending the proposed school, and come from the two targeted zip codes the school aims to serve as described in the amendment. These two zip codes also include some 3 and 4-star elementary and middle schools, but the amendment does not provide information about the current schools these students attend. SPCSA staff is unable to conclude how many of the families from the 89502 and 89431 zip codes attend 1- or 2- star schools.

The remaining evidence included in the amendment indicates that the majority of students expressing interest in the campus come from outside of the target zip codes (89502 and 89431). Stated another way, only 36% of interested students originate in these zip codes, which again, also include 3 and 4-star elementary and middle schools.

Based upon this evidence and information, staff finds that there is additional work to do in order for the proposed school to fulfill its commitment to create a high-quality school for parents of disadvantaged and underserved students enrolled in 1- or 2-star schools.

This concern is enhanced by the demographic gaps at the current DANN campus, which as previously noted, serves a FRL population significantly below the WCSD average. The school implemented a weighted lottery prior to the 2020 – 21 school year in an effort to address this gap, but results have not met expectations.

DANN has conducted significant outreach, but with a sizeable waitlist at the current campus that is likely to mirror the current demographics at the current campus, SPCSA staff is concerned that more evidence is needed to be included in the amendment submission to demonstrate that the school would, in fact, serve disadvantaged and underserved students enrolled in 1- or 2-star schools who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch as stated in the amendment. To be clear, the school has submitted evidence of outreach over the past several months, and has cultivated significant interest from the Reno/Sparks community. SPCSA staff believes that the school would be able to meet its planned enrollment trajectory due to these efforts, but is concerned that the current weighted lottery policy is not enough to result in the proposed school effectively meeting its intended audience.

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommends that the school adopt a revised lottery policy for the new campus which establishes preferential enrollment for student enrolled in a public school that received an annual rating established as one or the two lowest ratings under the NSPF. When combined with the recently adopted student transportation commitment approved by the DANN for the proposed campus, as well as the ongoing student recruitment and outreach to occur prior to the 2023 – 24 school year, SPCSA staff believes that DANN is best positioned to fulfill its goal of creating a school that serves disadvantaged and underserved students currently enrolled in 1- or 2-star schools who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch as stated in the amendment submission. These efforts will also be enhanced by the formal student recruitment and enrollment plan to be developed by the school in the coming months.

Proposed Motion: Grant the Good Cause Exemption Request and approve the expansion of Doral Academy of Northern Nevada (DANN) as presented in both the amendment submission on April 29, 2022 and the recent resolution adopted by the DANN board on June 21, 2022 which includes a commitment to providing student transportation starting in the first year of the school, with the following conditions:

- 1) That by September 30, 2022 the Doral Academy of Northern Nevada board:**
 - a. Adopt a revised lottery policy for the new campus which establishes preferential enrollment pursuant to [NRS 388A.456\(1\)\(g\)](#) offering priority enrollment to those students enrolled in a public school that received an annual rating established as one of the two lowest ratings possible indicating underperformance of a public school, as determined by the Department pursuant to the statewide system of accountability³. This can be incorporated into the school’s Recruitment and Enrollment plan to be provided by the same date; and**
 - b. Provide a detailed plan, approved by the DANN governing board, to reach an additional 750 students who reside in the zone of attendance of a 1- or 2-star school within the targeted zip codes. This can be incorporated into the school’s Recruitment and Enrollment plan to be provided by the same date⁴;**
- 2) That the school provide evidence that it has reached the additional 750 students (per condition #1b above) who reside in the zone of attendance of a 1- or 2-star school within the targeted zip codes at least one month prior to the lottery to select students for the 2023-24 school year;**
- 3) That the school submit a tentative transportation plan that provides at least one route originating in an area currently zoned for a 1- or 2-star elementary or middle school, and which is open to any student, to SPCSA staff for review on or before April 30, 2023; and**
- 4) That the school complete the SPCSA pre-opening process for new schools and campuses.**

If approved, DANN would have the following enrollment caps for the upcoming academic years⁵:

School Year	2022 – 23	2023 – 24	2024 – 25	2025 – 26	2026 – 27	2027 – 28
Mt. Rose Campus	950	996	996	996	996	996
Meadows Campus (proposed campus)		544	721	872	996	996
TOTAL ENROLLMENT	950	1,540	1,717	1,868	1,992	1,992

³ The most recent ratings are from the fall of 2019 and there will not be ratings in the fall of 2022, so this preference would apply to students currently enrolled at a school rated in 2019 as 1- or 2- Stars.

⁴ <https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2022/220415-Recruitment-and-Enrollment-Plans-2022-04-15.pdf>

⁵ If approved, the second campus would open in the 2023 – 24 school year. DANN is up for renewal in the Fall of 2022, meaning that this new campus would not open until after the Authority takes action regarding renewal. The enrollment caps on page 6 of this memo would be incorporated into any renewed contract.

Historical Performance and Demographic Information

Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) – Doral Academy of Northern Nevada (DANN)

Year	NSPF Ratings
2017 – 2018	Elementary – 5 Stars Middle – N/A
2018 – 2019	Elementary – 5 Stars Middle – 5 Stars
2019 – 2020 ⁶	Elementary – 5 Stars Middle – 5 Stars
2020 - 2021 ⁷	Elementary – 5 Stars Middle – 5 Stars

School Total Enrollment and Demographics since 2017⁸

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
17-18	161	4.9%	0%	72%	16.1%	0%	6.2%	0.6%	6.2%	*	*
18-19	626	5.1%	0.6%	74.2%	12.9%	0.3%	6%	0.6%	9.2%	*	6.5%
19-20	814	5%	0.2%	73.2%	13.1%	0.3%	7.8%	0.1%	10.8%	*	*
20-21	899	4.8%	0.6%	70.1%	14%	0.2%	9.8%	0.1%	11.1%	*	8.3%
21-22	925	4.8%	0.3%	71%	14.9%	0.1%	8.6%	0.1%	10.8	*	6.4%

- 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

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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

⁸ * 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.