



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III
SUBJECT: Honors Academy of Literature – Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE: December 8, 2023

Background and Summary

Honors Academy of Literature (Honors) has submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2024. Honors is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 217 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade in Washoe County.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Honors for a four-year term, beginning July 1, 2024.

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 school¹. 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 Honors renewal report was sent to the board chair on June 29, 2023, 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 of the renewal application, and identifies the criteria that the sponsor will apply when making a determination 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\(1\)](#). Honors submitted its notice of Intent to Renew its charter contract on July 31, 2023, and Honor's notice of intent to renew can be found with the supporting documents.

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\(2\)](#).

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 limitation²:

- (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.

Honors submitted its renewal application, which can be found with the supporting documents, by the October 15th deadline.

The Honors Academy of Literature Charter School's key design elements are centered around creating an immersive and engaging educational experience for students. These elements include Literacy-Centric Curriculum, Project-Based Learning, Technology Integration, and Individualized Learning Paths. Additionally, in looking ahead to the upcoming charter term, Honors proposes adding enriched elective programs, additional community partnerships, enhanced professional development, and strengthened parental involvement. Honors' mission for the next charter term is to provide a comprehensive and nurturing learning environment that fosters a deep appreciation for literature and literacy skills in each content area. By implementing project-based learning, technology integration, and personalized instruction, Honors will strive to develop well-rounded individuals who excel in academics, critical thinking, and communication. Proposed changes, including enriched electives, community partnerships, professional development, and parental involvement, aim to enhance the overall learning experience and fulfill our commitment to preparing students for a successful future.

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 per [NRS 388A.285](#) and the collective record of a school's academic, financial, organizational frameworks, 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 and 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.³ 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

² [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#).

³ 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.

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

Honors Academy of Literature currently offers instruction at the elementary and middle school levels. According to the NSPF ratings for the 2018 – 2019 school year, the elementary school was rated as 3-stars, and the middle school was rated as 5-stars.

As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 3-star school program 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. The school must submit an improvement plan that identifies supports tailored to subgroups and indicators that are below standard. A school identified for comprehensive support and improvement is not eligible to be classified as a three-star school or higher. Schools identified for targeted support and improvement are eligible to be classified as three-star schools. 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. These schools are recognized for distinguished performance.

As the Authority is aware, NSPF school ratings and accountability for the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 school years were 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 Education⁴, but the Nevada Department of Education published index scores⁵. For the 2021 – 2022 school year, Honor’s elementary school received a 38.8 NSPF index score and the middle school received a 45.0 NSPF index score.

The Nevada Department resumed the issuance of star ratings for the 2022 – 23 school year and those ratings were included as part of the SPCSA’s Academic Performance Framework. Honors elementary was rated as 1-star and the middle school was rated as 3-stars.

As noted in the NSPF guidance document, a 1-star school program 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. The school must submit an improvement plan that identifies supports tailored to subgroups and indicators that are below standard. The school is subject to state interventions. A 3-star school program 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. The school must submit an improvement plan that identifies supports tailored to subgroups and indicators that are below standard. A school identified for comprehensive support and improvement is not eligible to be classified as a three-star school or higher. Schools identified for targeted support and improvement are eligible to be classified as 3-star schools.

Full results for Honor’s Nevada School Performance Ratings through the charter term can be found below.

School Year	NSPF Rating ⁶
2018 – 2019	Honors Academy of Literature - Elementary School: 3 stars - Middle School: 5 stars

⁴ Page 72 of the [NSPF Technical Manual](#)

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) did not calculate Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) school ratings for the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school years and instead applied NSPF school ratings from the 2018-2019 school year to both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

2019 – 2020	Honors Academy of Literature - Elementary School: 3 stars - Middle School: 5 stars
2020 – 2021	Honors Academy of Literature - Elementary School: 3 stars - Middle School: 5 stars
2021 – 2022 Index Score ⁷	Honors Academy of Literature - Elementary School: 38.8 - Middle School: 45.0
2022 – 2023	Honors Academy of Literature - Elementary School: 1 star - Middle School: 3 stars

The Authority adopted its own Academic Performance Framework in 2019⁸. The SPCSA calculated Academic Performance Ratings again beginning with the 2021 – 2022 school year. For the 2021 – 2022 school year, Honors’ elementary school received a 30.2 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework rating score which did not meet standards and the middle school received a 39.0 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework rating score which did not meet standards. For the 2022 – 2023 school year, Honors’ elementary school a 19.9 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework rating score which did not meet standards and the middle school received a 65.3 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework rating score which meets standards.

Results for Honors during the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 school years can be found below.

2021 – 2022 Academic Performance Framework

Campus	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Elementary	30.2	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD
Middle	39.0	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

2022 – 2023 Academic Performance Framework

Campus	2022-23 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2022-23 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Elementary	19.9	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD
Middle	65.3	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, earned 100 points under the 2021 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on January 28, 2022, and earned 99 points under the 2022 Organizational Performance Framework as approved by the Authority on December 16, 2022. SPCSA staff have not noted any substantial

⁷ The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) calculated NSPF index scores for the 2021-22 school year but did not calculate corresponding star ratings (shown as N/A). 2021-22 NSPF details and rules can be found in the [NSPF Technical Manual](#).

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.

organizational performance concerns during the 2022 – 2023 school year.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings

2018 – 2019	No organizational performance concerns identified
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard (99/100 points)
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard (100/100 points)

Financial

In 2018, the Authority requested that the SPCSA Financial Framework be modified so as to 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. Honors met performance standards for FY20 as the school earned a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under five of the seven reported indicators within the framework. For FY21, Honors again earned a ‘Meets Standard’ rating under five of the seven reported indicators. For FY22, Honors was rated as Meets Standard and was found to have met the standard on five of the seven reported indicators. Honors was found to have fallen Far Below Standard in separate indicators on the FY20 and FY22 framework ratings but was not issued a notice. SPCSA staff worked with Honors to identify and address issues that led to ratings of Falls Far Below in the Total Margin and Aggregate Three Year Total in FY20 and Cash Flow in FY22. During those meetings, Honors noted that financial reporting timelines and deposits led to ratings that did not fully reflect the actual financial health of the school.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings

2018 – 2019	No financial performance concerns identified
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard

Recommendation: Renew Honors Academy of Literature for a 4-year term

As described above, Honors has exhibited a range of academic performance over the charter term for both the elementary and middle school. The elementary school has been rated as high a 3-star, but also fell to 1-star, and Does Not Meet Standards, during the most recent NSPF and SPCSA Academic Performance ratings. The middle school has been rated as high as 5-star and was rated as 3-stars and Meets Standard for the most recent rating scoring.

Additionally, Honors was issued a Notice of Concern for Academic Underperformance at the Authority’s November 3, 2023, meeting. However, Honor’s is a small school with 217 students enrolled, and smaller charter schools can have wide swings in ratings year-over-year. Additionally, as the school noted in its renewal application, Honors academic vision and plans for the next charter term are rooted in the principles of equity, personalized learning, and holistic development. The school plans to build upon successful existing elements, introduce improvements to further enhance students’ learning experiences, and remain dedicated to ensuring equal opportunities for every student. By staying committed to these objectives, Honors aims to create an inclusive, nurturing, and intellectually stimulating environments for all members of their school community. Honors will also add additional professional development opportunities for staff with a strong emphasis on culturally responsive teaching, differentiated instruction, and inclusive practices. Specifically, Honors will continue to work to build capacity in math instruction alignment. Honors has hired WestEd in prior years and will continue to contract with WestEd for this professional development. Furthermore, Honors will continue to utilize data analysis to identify areas for improvement, track student progress, and ensure that all students receive the necessary support to thrive academically. Honors will continue to utilize the Data Wise Improvement Process school-wide to make evidence-based data driven decisions.

Honors has not exhibited any major organizational performance concerns over the course of the current charter term. Honors worked with SPCSA staff to address financial concerns that have been identified during past rating cycles and was never found to not have met standard or issued a notice.

Ultimately, due to the varied academic performance of Honors, SPCSA staff is recommending the Authority renew Honors for a 4-year charter term. A 4-year term will allow Honors to continue to work to improve its elementary and strive to further improve the middle school, which will allow the Authority to consider those outcomes during the next the school's next renewal cycle.

School Year	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade Levels	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8
Enrollment	225	225	225	225

Proposed Motion

Approve the Honors Academy of Literature Renewal Application for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2024, and the enrollment cap 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 2018⁹

Honors Academy of Literature

Year	Total Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	FRL	IEP	ELL
2018-19	211	0	1.4	75.3	16.5	0	5.6	0.9	18.4	11.8	*
2019-20	216	1.3	1.3	71.2	19.9	0	4.6	1.3	16.2	12.9	*
2020-21	228	0.8	1.3	67.1	25.4	0	3.9	1.3	11.8	14	*
2021-22	220	1.3	2.2	62.7	26.3	0	6.8	0.4	12.7	16.8	*
2022-23	215	0.9	1.3	61.3	29.3	0.4	6.5	0	8.8	15.8	*
2023-24	217	0.9	3.2	58.0	29.0	0.4	7.3	0.9	14.2	18.8	*

A – Asian

B – Black

C – Caucasian

H – Hispanic

I – American Indian/Alaskan Native

M – Two or more races

P – Pacific Islander

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

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

ELL – English Language Learner

* Indicates data are suppressed to protect student privacy as the group size is less than 10.

⁹ Enrollment Count totals are from Nevada Department of Education’s October 1 Validated Count Day data.