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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Authority Board
FROM: Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III, SPCSA
SUBJECT: **Leadership Academy of Nevada– Charter Amendment Request to:**

- **Expand Grade Levels**
- **Increase Enrollment Cap**

DATE: January 24, 2025

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Leadership Academy of Nevada (LANV) submitted an application to amend its charter contract to expand grade level offerings to 4th and 5th grade and to increase its approved enrollment cap beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

SPCSA staff have reviewed the application and recommends that the Authority approve the request. A proposed motion can be found on page 5 of this memo.

Background and Overview of the Amendment

Leadership Academy of Nevada currently offers statewide virtual instruction at the middle and high school levels. LANV serves 284 students in 6th through 12th grade as of the 2024 Validation Day. LANV was recently renewed at the December 13, 2024, SPCSA board meeting for a charter term of 7 years which begins July 1, 2025.

According to the amendment application, LANV is requesting to expand its grade levels to include 4th and 5th grade and to increase the enrollment cap to 370 students. LANV is seeking to make these changes for two reasons. First, LANV evaluated data and saw positive correlation between the years of enrollment and the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the MS Smarter Balanced assessments (SBAC). LANV noted that 54% of 8th graders who attended LANV for all

three years of middle school scored proficient, compared to only 29% who attended less than 3 years. ELA and Science SBAC scores also show an increase in students scoring proficient if enrolled in all three years at LANV. Based on these findings, LANV believes that if they are able to enroll students beginning in 4th or 5th grade, students will have a higher likelihood of demonstrating proficiency by the 8th grade. Secondly, LANV noted that there are currently no other virtual options available for 4th and 5th grade in the SPCSA portfolio of schools, and based on feedback they have received from parents across the state, they found a need for additional grade level offerings.

LANV described a number of strategies to incorporate the additional grade levels into the school. According to the amendment application, LANV plans to hire two additional full-time teachers, one full-time Student Achievement Specialist, one full-time special education teacher, and one full-time social worker. In addition to an increase in staffing, LANV will continue to utilize daily live instruction through Zoom. The following instructional strategies will be used to promote engagement, understanding, and collaboration in this environment: frequent checks for understanding using polling, Kahoot, Quizizz, Google Forms and other technology; breakout rooms to facilitate small group instruction, grouping by ability level, mixed-level collaboration, small group discussions; multimedia visual aids including slideshows, videos, and animations to engage learners and illustrate concepts during live instruction. Tools like Nearpod, PearDeck, and Formative will be used to allow students to actively participate in class while the mentor can monitor student work in real time. Through Zoom classes, mentors will be able to build relationships with students and allow students to collaborate and get to know each other which will help build a strong classroom community. Canvas will continue to be used as the Learning Management System to organize content in clear, weekly modules including objectives, resources, activities, and assessments that are easy for students and parents to access. Assignments and content in Canvas can be modified for differentiation so students can learn at their own pace and in a way that better meets their needs.

Regarding the new 4th and 5th grade students, LANV will implement Canvas Elementary, which will provide students and parents with better workflow, organization, and time-management features. For differentiated instruction, mentors will use data from Canvas assessments, Formative, STEMscopes, screener tools, and observations to determine students who need additional support in the classroom. Mentors will have time built into their schedules for small-group instruction, as well as time to meet with parents when needed. LANV will have a 3-level intervention model where struggling students will have the opportunity to receive small group instruction based on specific needs with frequent progress monitoring. Mentors will also have the ability to adjust lessons in Zoom by utilizing breakout rooms, as well as in Canvas as noted above. All students will have access to mentors during Office Hours for additional support and instruction. Mentors will implement regular communication with parents through Canvas messaging and observer accounts where parents can monitor student progress and have access to all course materials.

LANV also described the schedule and calendar for students including adjustments for students in 4th and 5th grade compared to the students in the existing 6th through 12th grade levels. According to the amendment application, the academic schedule for the 4th and 5th grades will be slightly

different. Currently, students in grades 6th through 12th have midterm and semester exams. The 4th and 5th grade students will not participate in exam weeks. Instead, the midterm week will be used for class instruction as well as Parent/Mentor Conferences, where semester exam week will be a regular instructional week. LANV believes the 4th and 5th grade students will benefit from the additional instructional time, as well as allowing the mentors adequate time to cover standards and meet with parents.

According to the amendment application, the current school day begins at 8:00 AM with live online classes running until 2:20 PM. Online classes are 50 minutes with a 10-minute break in between each class and a school-wide lunch period from 11:50 AM-12:20 PM. Office Hours run daily from 2:30-3:30 PM. Students have a regular daily schedule and are expected to attend all classes daily. The proposed 4th and 5th grade students will follow a similar schedule with their school day beginning at 8:00 AM and ending at 2:20 PM.

LANV also recognizes that there are risks involved with adding lower grade levels into an online environment because 4th and 5th grade students have different needs than 6th through 12th grade students. In LANV’s current 6th – 12th grade model, students have live ELA, Social Studies, and History classes twice a week, with math classes 4 day a week and Fridays being a study/work day. For the 4th and 5th grades, students will have all classes 4 days a week. Additionally, Social Studies, ELA, Math, and Science classes will be more integrated and will have longer block times so that all respective grade standards can be met. LANV provided an example which explained that in 4th and 5th grades, students will have two-hour ELA/Social Studies and Math/Science block Monday through Thursday. In addition, there will be a one-hour office hour where students can meet with their teachers for additional support. As noted previously, LANV will also hire a full-time Student Achievement Specialist and a full-time special education teacher to work with only the 4th and 5th grade students.

LANV has increased its marketing beginning in the 2023-24 school year and has increased efforts to reach out to students who meet the SPCSA’s Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. This marketing and outreach will be expanded to include students who may enter the school in 4th or 5th grade if the amendment is approved.

If approved, LANV’s enrollment cap, with the inclusion of the additional grades would be:

School Year	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Grade Levels	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12
Enrollment	335	360	370	370	370	370	370

Finally, in the event the school is unable to fully enroll the additional 4th and 5th graders with 25 students per grade, beginning in 2025-26, LANV has set aside money in its reserves to meet expenses until the school is able to fully enroll the additional two grade levels.

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, SPCSA staff reviews the academic, financial and organizational performance of the applicant charter school. Academically, the middle school received an NSPF index score of 75.56 for the 2021 – 2022 school year. The middle school earned a 3-star NSPF rating for the 2022 – 2023 and the 2023 – 2024 school years. Additionally, on the SPCSA Academic Performance Framework, the middle school was rated as ‘Meets Standard’ in 2021 – 2022, 2022 – 2023, and 2023 – 2024. The high school received an NSPF index score of 81.67 for the 2021 – 2022 school year and a 4-star NSPF rating for the 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024 school years. Additionally, on the SPCSA Academic Performance Framework, the high school was rated as ‘Meets Standard’ in 2021 – 2022, 2022 – 2023, and 2023 – 2024.

According to the most recent organizational data, LANV earned 97 points (out of 100) on the 2023 – 24 Organizational Framework which was approved at the October 4, 2024, SPCSA Board meeting. Additionally, LANV received a Meets Standards rating on SPCSA’s Financial Performance Framework that was approved at the Authority’s March 1, 2024, meeting.

SPCSA staff notes that LANV has shown consistently adequate academic outcomes over the course of its charter term, which is one of the key reasons staff recommended the Authority renew the charter contract for a 7-year term. However, SPCSA staff has concern with the expansion to elementary grades by a virtual school. Historically, full-time virtual schools have struggled to meet elementary student needs, and the SPCSA has approved closure of elementary schools in both of the other full time virtual schools in the SPCSA’s portfolio. However, when analyzing the performance of LANV specifically, SPCSA recognizes the school has continually met standards under both the NSPF and the SPCSA’s Academic Performance Framework. Additionally, LANV has shown a clear, and intentional, curriculum and instructional design which has met the needs of the students enrolled, and the school has maintained a smaller enrollment which has allowed for more direct communication with students by school staff.

As described above, Leadership Academy of Nevada has consistently exhibited strong academic performance over the charter term, consistently earning 3- and 4-star ratings. The middle and high school programs have historically met or exceeded performance expectations according to the NSPF. This level of performance was reaffirmed by the 2021 – 2022, 2022 – 2023, and 2023 – 2024 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework ratings, as well as the star ratings issued by the Nevada Department of Education for the 2023 – 2024 school year.

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

Ultimately, because the academic performance of LANV has been consistently at or above expected performance levels throughout the current charter term, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority approve the request to expand LANV’s grade level offerings to include 4th and 5th grade and increase the approved enrollment cap beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

Proposed Motion: Approve Leadership Academy of Nevada’s request to increase its enrollment cap beginning in the 2025-26 school and expand grade level offerings to include 4th and 5th grade.

If approved, the enrollment cap for LANV will be:

School Year	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Grade Levels	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12	4-12
Enrollment	335	360	370	370	370	370	370

The current, approved, enrollment cap for LANV is:

School Year	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Grade Levels	6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12
Enrollment	300	300	300	300	300	300	300

Historical Performance and Demographic Information – Leadership Academy of Nevada

School Total Enrollment and Demographics since 2019

Year	Enrollment	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
19-20	261	2.2%	5.7%	65.1%	20.6%	0.3%	4.2%	1.5%	9.5%	0%	16.0%
20-21	325	3.0%	3.6%	65.2%	20.3%	0%	7.3%	0.3%	5.2%	*	21.2%
21-22	287	2.7%	4.5%	56.4%	25.0%	0.6%	10.1%	0.3%	8.3 %	*	25.4%
22-23	261	2.6%	6.8%	54.0%	24.9%	1.1%	9.1%	1.1%	9.9 %	*	17.6%
23-24	277	5.0%	5.0%	49.0%	30.3%	0.3%	9.3%	0.7%	13.3%	*	26.3%
24-25	284	4.9%	4.2%	48.2%	31.3%	0.3%	9.5%	1.4%	15.1%	*	26.7%

- 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
- * n size too low

Leadership Academy School Financial Performance

Year	Rating
2022 – 2023	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard

Leadership Academy Organizational Performance

Year	Rating
2023 – 2024	Meets the Standard
2022 – 2023	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2019 – 2020	Meets the Standard

Leadership Academy Academic Performance

2021–22 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 79.3 / Meets Standard High: 74.9 / Meets Standard
2021–22 NSPF Index Score	Middle: 75.56 High: 81.67
2022–23 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 63.0 / Meets Standard High: 67.9 / Meets Standard
2022–23 NSPF Index Score / Star Rating	Middle: 65.0 / 3-star High: 73.33 / 4-star
2023–24 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 60.9 / Meets Standard High: 68.9 / Meets Standard
2023–24 NSPF Index Score / Star Rating	Middle: 58.3 / 3-star High: 71.6 / 4-star