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**ACTION MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** SPCSA Authority Board  
**FROM:** Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III, SPCSA  
**SUBJECT:** **Explore Academy – Charter Amendment Request to Reduce Enrollment Cap**  
**DATE:** March 7, 2025

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**Summary of Request and Recommendation**

Explore Academy Las Vegas (Explore) is requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption Request and approve the school to reduce the enrollment cap for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years.

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 Analysis**

Explore is a charter middle and high school that is approved to serve grades 6-12. Explore moved into its permanent facility, located at 3551 N Ferrell Street, North Las Vegas, to start the 2022-23 school year. Explore had 356 students enrolled as of the 2024 Validation Day.

According to the amendment application, Explore is seeking an amendment in order to reduce its enrollment cap and revise the plan for enrollment. Projections have been adjusted in part due to the following factors which were primarily related to the facility. First, according to the application, the delay in securing and preparing the school’s permanent facility, in large part due to the pandemic, impacted enrollment during 2021-22 when the school was temporarily co-located with another school at 4660 N Rancho Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89130. Explore originally proposed opening the permanent facility in January 2022 but encountered delays with construction and supplies which ultimately led to the school moving into its permanent facility

beginning during the 2022-23 school year. This impacted growth of the school each year since its opening. According to the amendment application, though the school has not met the projected number, it has increased enrollment each year with end of year enrollments listed as 150 (2020 – 21), 198 (2021-22), 275 (2022-23), and 285 (2023-24). The average enrollment for 2024-25 to date is 355.

Additionally, Explore noted in their amendment application that they continued to struggle in many aspects during 2022-23 and the board eventually agreed with the CMO that a change in school leadership was necessary. A new principal was hired and the school explained that it has shown significant improvement in school culture, instructional practices, student discipline, and parent/community relationships under her leadership. According to the amendment application, enrollment recovered from a 40 percent loss in student retention at the end of the 2022-23 school year (dropping from 275 to 165 before recruitment efforts over the summer resulted in 285 for 2023 – 24) to the present average enrollment of 355. Explore has seen increased interest in attending, and continuing to attend, the school since the change in leadership.

Explore continues to modify its budget to account for lower than expected enrollment. According to the application, as student enrollment has increased each year, staffing was adjusted accordingly with an increase in three new teachers each year. Additional support staff will be added each year, primarily to include educational assistants which assist with student tutoring, flex period administration, and overall student supervision. Explore also noted that current positions have been added and include a dean of students, campus security, and additional support staff.

Explore also explained in the amendment application that a significant portion of the budget goes towards their lease. According to the amendment application the school anticipates an annual lease rate of approximately \$1,080,000. The school hopes to finance the purchase of its facility in the coming years to better adjust its facility debt service payment to meet its enrollment and staffing demands if the plan is deemed viable by the board.

If approved, the remaining approved enrollment cap for Explore’s charter term would be as follow:

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
Grade Levels	6-12	6-12
Total Enrollment	365	390

### **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. 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<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 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. Explore's middle school received a 1-star rating under the 2023-24 NSPF and scored 20.8 points on the SPCSA's Academic Performance Framework. The middle school was issued a Notice of Breach at the November 15, 2024, SPCSA Board meeting. The Explore high school was not rated.

Additionally, the school earned 90.70 points (out of 100) under the SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework for the 2023-24 school year as approved by the Authority on October 4, 2024, which met standard. Explore was issued a Notice of Breach on the 2023 SPCSA Financial Framework which was approved at the June 21, 2024, SPCSA Board meeting.

Overall, SPCSA staff will continue to monitor Explore with regard to academic performance and financial performance, but SPCSA staff believe that ongoing monitoring should not affect this request to reduce the schools year enrollment cap. SPCSA staff does have concerns regarding Explore which have been noted in both the Notices of Breach in the Academic and Financial results. However, a charter school is required to be within 10% of the approved enrollment cap thus making this amendment approval necessary for contract compliance.

### Proposed Motion:

**Grant Explore Academy a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request of the school to reduce the enrollment cap for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years as detailed in the recommendation memo.**

If approved, the enrollment cap for Explore Academy will be:

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
Grade Levels	6-12	6-12
Total Enrollment	365	390

The currently approved enrollment cap for Explore Academy is:

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
Grade Levels	6-12	6-12
Total Enrollment	450	525

**Historical Performance and Demographic Information – Explore Academy**

**School Total Enrollment and Demographics since 2020**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>IEP</b>	<b>ELL</b>	<b>FRL</b>
20-21	136	2.2%	19.8%	50%	24.2%	0%	0.7%	2.9%	13.9%	*	41.1%
21-22	192	4.1%	19.2%	39%	29.6%	1%	6.7%	0%	14.5%	5.2%	46.3%
22-23	289	2.4%	23.15	26.6%	37.0%	0.3%	10.3%	0.0%	15.9%	<5%	54.6%
23-24	268	2.9%	19.0%	19.0%	46.6%	0.0%	10.4%	1.8%	12.6%	10.8%	100.0%
24-25	356	2.8%	23.8%	14.6%	47.1%	0.2%	8.7%	2.5%	15.1%	13.2%	69.9%

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

**Explore Academy Charter School Financial Performance**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rating</b>
2022 – 2023	Notice of Breach
2021 – 2022	Notice on Concern
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard

**Explore Academy Charter School Organizational Performance**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rating</b>
2023 – 2024	Meets the Standard
2022 – 2023	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets the Standard
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard

## Explore Academy Academic Performance

Year	Rating
2023 – 2024 Star Rating	Explore MS: 1-star Explore HS: Not Rated
2022 – 2023 Star Rating	Explore MS: 1-star Explore HS: Not Rated
2021 – 2022 Index Scores	Explore MS: 18.8 <i>Explore HS: Not Rated</i>
2020 – 2021 <sup>2</sup>	N/A

### Explore Academy 2023-24 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results

Campus	2023-24 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2023-24 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Explore Acad MS	20.8	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD
Explore Acad HS	Not Rated	Not Rated

### Explore Academy 2022-23 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results

Campus	2022-23 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2022-23 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Explore Acad MS	18.6	BELOW STANDARD
Explore Acad HS	Not Rated	Not Rated

### Explore Academy 2021-22 SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results<sup>3</sup>

Campus	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Score	2021-22 SPCSA Academic Framework Rating
Explore Acad MS	31.2	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD
Explore Acad HS	Not Rated	Not Rated

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 at: <http://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/MoreDownload?filename=Nevada%20School%20Performance%20Framework%20Manual%202021-22%20School%20Year.pdf>



