

Joe Lombardo
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

Melissa Mackedon
Executive Director



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

PO Box 19983
Carson City, Nevada 89721
(775) 687-9174 · Fax (702) 486-5543

500 East Warm Springs Rd, #116
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119
(702) 486-8895 · Fax (702) 486-5543

ACTION MEMORANDUM

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

- **Alter Grade Level Offerings**
- **Enter into an Articulation Agreement with FuturEdge Charter Academy**

DATE: March 7, 2025

Summary of Request and Recommendation

Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy of Nevada (PTAAN) has submitted an amendment application requesting that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) grant a Good Cause Exemption and approve the request to modify grade level offerings in Year 1 and Year 2, co-locate with FuturEdge in Year 1 and Year 2, and to enter into an Articulation Agreement with FuturEdge for 8th grade students enrolled at FuturEdge.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the application and recommends that the Authority grant the Good Cause Exemption and 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

PTAAN was approved by the Authority at its August 25, 2023, board meeting. The school requested, and was granted, and deferral to open in 2025-26. The school was originally approved to open in grades K – 8th. PTAAN is requesting the Authority approve a modification to its grade level offerings in Year 1 from K – 8th to 6th – 10th and to co-locate with FuturEdge in Years 1 and 2. Additionally, PTAAN is requesting the Authority approve an Articulation agreement with FuturEdge for 8th grade students currently enrolled at FuturEdge to have priority enrollment at PTAAN.

Modification of Grade Level Offerings and Co-Location with FuturEdge

According to the amendment application, PTAAN proposes to launch with grades 6-10 instead of K-8 in the 2025-2026 school year, as was approved by this board on [DATE], with a phased expansion to grades 6-11 in Year 2 and full K-12 implementation by Year 3. PTAAN determined that affordable, long-term school facilities remain limited in North Las Vegas. The opportunity to co-locate with FuturEdge Charter Academy was identified as the most viable solution.

According to the school, this amendment will ensure PTAAN can open on schedule without significant financial risk while establishing an academic pathway for students in North Las Vegas who seek STEAM-focused, early college and career programs. PTAAN noted that the co-location agreement was finalized later than anticipated, requiring PTAAN to adjust its grade-level configuration to align with FuturEdge's existing student population and enrollment pipeline. Additionally, PTAAN must meet the minimum enrollment requirement of 100 students, and they hope this adjustment will allow the school to meet that Year 1 enrollment requirement. PTAAN explained that this amendment represents a necessary adaptation to current conditions rather than a departure from PTAAN's original vision. PTAAN was always designed as a K-12 institution, and grades 6-10 were already included for later years of operation in the approved plan.

PTAAN explained the rationale for this significant change and listed several strategies to ensure the school would be ready to offer middle and high school in Year 1 instead of elementary and middle school, which was originally proposed in the approved charter application. According to the amendment application, launching high school grades early allows PTAAN to immediately implement dual-credit pathways, workforce training, and early college programs, providing students with a competitive advantage for postsecondary success. PTAAN explained that the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) Model ensures that students earn college credits and industry certifications as early as 9th grade, increasing postsecondary persistence and career readiness. The P-TECH will allow students to earn up to 60 transferable college credits, industry certifications, and workforce credentials while still in high school. PTAAN proposed that this program will be offered in partnership with the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and Arizona State University (ASU), institutions with strong dual-credit programs and Articulation agreements that align with Nevada's higher education system.

Additionally, according to the amendment application, PTAAN will use a multi-tiered performance monitoring framework that evaluates both academic and non-academic outcomes, ensuring that students, teachers, and the school are making continuous progress toward achievement goals and postsecondary readiness. PTAAN's academic performance management system will rely on a combination of state-mandated assessments, nationally normed benchmarks, and real-time progress monitoring tools to track student growth and ensure that all students are making adequate progress in STEAM coursework, literacy, and workforce-aligned competencies.

PTAAN also noted that to assess student achievement, PTAAN will implement a structured assessment cycle that includes formative assessments to guide daily instruction, interim assessments to measure mastery of core concepts, and summative evaluations to determine proficiency against Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS). PTAAN will track college readiness progress using a tiered data collection and reporting system that captures student outcomes at every stage of the postsecondary transition process. The school will use a centralized Student Information System (SIS) integrated with Infinite Campus, ensuring that student data, transcript records, and college application milestones are tracked and updated in real time.

Regarding students with special needs, PTAAN explained that the school has developed a structured process to identify student needs in the newly approved grade levels, ensuring that all students receive

appropriate academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports. The school will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework that incorporates universal screening, data-driven intervention strategies, and targeted student support services to ensure that students can access the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment (LRE) while fulfilling Nevada's Response to Intervention (RtI) requirements. To ensure all students are accurately identified for academic or behavioral support, PTAAN will conduct universal progress monitoring assessments during scheduled benchmark testing windows. These assessments will be followed by data analysis meetings among grade-level teams to identify students needing intervention. Students performing in the bottom 15% on assessments, students failing core subjects, and students exhibiting frequent absences will be reviewed, and an individualized intervention plan will be developed based on collaborative input from general education teachers, special education staff, and school administrators.

According to the amendment application, to ensure PTAAN is fully staffed for the new grade levels, the school has communicated the grade-level modification to all prospective and previously interested candidates. Any staff members who would qualify and were in the hiring pipeline for the originally planned K-8 model have been informed of the new grade structure and given the opportunity to remain in the hiring process for middle and high school positions. From March to April 2025, initial job postings will be published, and outreach to local and national teacher networks will begin. In April 2025, PTAAN will conduct interviews and extend offers to the first round of teachers, with a focus on securing core subject and STEAM instructors. By June 2025, final hiring decisions will be made, and onboarding and professional development planning will commence. During July and August 2025, teachers will participate in comprehensive training sessions and curriculum alignment meetings.

Regarding the co-location with FuturEdge, PTAAN explained that securing a standalone facility for a full K-8 school proved significantly challenging due to limited availability of affordable school buildings, zoning regulations, and construction delays that increased the complexity and cost of securing a permanent site. After an extensive facility search, PTAAN secured a sublease agreement with FuturEdge Charter Academy which would allow for a cost-effective launch that maximizes resources and supports sustainable expansion. This co-location allows PTAAN to launch on time in a fully equipped educational environment. PTAAN will use existing services such as internet infrastructure, food services, maintenance, and janitorial work through its sublease with FuturEdge.

According to the amendment application, PTAAN has not yet formally engaged parents and community members in the grade-level modification process, but direct input has been gathered from FuturEdge's current 8th-grade students and their families, who were asked whether they would be interested in continuing to 9th grade at PTAAN if the grade-level modification is approved. PTAA noted that the response was overwhelmingly positive, with families expressing strong interest in a seamless transition from FuturEdge's K-8 program. PTAAN will also continue to implement various marketing strategies to achieve the minimum 100 student cap proposed as part of the amendment request and required by the SPCSA. PTANN will also continue to recruit a significant population of minority, low-income, and first-generation college students, many of whom attend 1- and 2-star rated schools. These students have historically lacked access to dual-credit programs, workforce certifications, and STEAM-focused learning experiences that prepare them for high-growth careers. The school day will begin at 8:00 AM for grades 6-10 and end at 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday. According to the amendment application, the overall academic schedule will remain relatively similar to what was proposed for the K – 8 schedule, with some modifications to accommodate for different testing and semester schedules required for high school students. PTAAN explained that this schedule allows for an extended instructional day that ensures adequate time for core subjects, STEAM integration, and workforce-aligned learning experiences. Breakfast will be served starting at 7:30 AM, allowing students to arrive

early and prepare for the school day. The daily schedule will also include advisory periods, structured intervention blocks, and designated enrichment opportunities to ensure a well-rounded educational experience.

If approved, the enrollment cap for PTAAN will be:

School Year	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31 ¹	2031-32
Grade Levels	6-10	6-11	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12
Enrollment Cap	100	201	508	792	1055	1243	1404

PTAAN provided an updated budget that reflected the changes proposed as part of the amendment application. According to the budget narrative provided by the school, starting with 100 students in Year 1 and growing to approximately 1,243 by Year 6, total per pupil revenue is projected to increase from about \$724,268 in Year 1 to nearly \$10.1 million by Year 6. Additionally, according to the budget narrative PTAAN expects to receive approximately \$633,000 in start-up funds in Year 1, and while recurring grants or large-scale donations are not a primary revenue source, this conservative approach minimizes risk by avoiding overdependence on variable income. Instead, the financial plan is built around stable state funding, with supplementary variable income viewed as an opportunity rather than a necessity.

Articulation Agreement with FuturEdge Charter Academy

The second request PTAAN has included in their amendment application is an Articulation agreement with FuturEdge. As previously noted in this memo, PTAAN is requesting to allow for priority enrollment for 8th grade students currently enrolled at FuturEdge to enroll at PTAAN. According to the amendment application, the lottery policy for PTAAN will remain largely unchanged from its original submission in the charter application to SPCSA. However, a key update is that 8th-grade students currently enrolled at FuturEdge Charter Academy will receive priority enrollment at PTAAN under the updated Articulation agreement. This policy will be in effect for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years. The Articulation agreement will grant automatic enrollment preference to FuturEdge 8th-grade students transitioning to PTAAN for 9th grade. As a result, these students will bypass the lottery process and receive priority placement, provided they complete the required registration. The enrollment process remains unchanged, with families still required to submit necessary enrollment forms and meet all deadlines. The priority given to FuturEdge students does not modify the general enrollment process but ensures a structured transition for those students.

PTAAN noted in the amendment application that this enrollment preference aligns with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 388A.456, which allows Articulation agreements between charter schools to support student retention and educational continuity without additional enrollment barriers.

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 – 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.²

¹ Contingent on approval of a second charter term

² 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. PTAAN has not started operating yet and therefore does not have performance results to analyze. However, SPCSA staff does have concern regarding the completion and submission of required pre-opening requirements. These missed deadlines cause concern regarding the organizational and operational performance of the school. Additionally, due to missing information, the school was unable to provide evidence of some of the programs outlined in their application, including formative, interim, and summative assessments and a centralized student information system. Both of which are identified as key components of the educational model.

Regarding the amendment request, SPCSA staff is recommending approval, but does have concerns regarding the timing and viability of the plan. While it is not unique for a charter school to co-locate with another operating charter school for its initial years of operation, nor is it unique to have minor modifications to grade level offerings in the beginning of a charter term, this request requires significant changes to what was approved in the charter application. Additionally, due to the timing of this request, SPCSA staff has concerns regarding PTAA's ability to completely alter the grade level offerings, going from K – 8 to 6 – 10 and manage to ensure the school can meet its Year 1 enrollment requirements and ensure proper staffing for the upper high school grades.

SPCSA staff also has concerns regarding the lack of communication to families in grades K – 5 who may have been expecting to enroll at PTAAN beginning in the 2025-26 school year. SPCSA staff strongly encourage PTAAN to ensure that no family is left confused or without an alternative educational option due to this decision to modify grade level offerings. PTAAN must make sure all families who had expressed interest in attending the school in grades K – 5 are given resources and options as soon as possible.

While PTAAN provided a budget with projections that appear to be financially viable, SPCSA staff have concerns about the financial plan long-term. The budget provided hinges on a few key points. The first, and by far most important, is the school's ability to meet its Year 1 enrollment requirement of 100 students. If the school is unable to meet this requirement, the plan does not appear to be viable, and the school ultimately may not open. If PTAAN can meet its Year 1 enrollment requirement, the school predicts doubling its Year 1 enrollment in Year 2 to 201 students. SPCSA staff would note this projection may be overly optimistic, especially considering the school is not in a permanent facility. SPCSA staff has seen many recent examples of schools operating in either temporary facilities, or co-locating with other charter schools, not being able to increase enrollment as projected year over year. SPCSA staff strongly recommend that PTAAN aggressively market, and increase community and family engagement, to meet the Year 2 projection. Finally, the financial plan projects the school will be in a permanent facility by Year 3 with a fully enrolled K – 12 grades and an enrollment of 508 students. Since this amendment is being requested due to difficulties in finding a facility over the past 2 years, SPCSA staff has concerns that PTAAN will both be able to find the permanent facility and add grades K – 5 and 12th and be able to recruit and enroll more than double the students in Year 2.

Staffing will also be of utmost importance over the next few months. A change from K – 8 to 6 – 10 requires staff with very different skill sets and credentials and ensuring the school is fully staffed with high-quality teachers who are comfortable with the PTAAN model in a short time will be difficult. SPCSA staff notes the school provided a reasonable plan for recruitment and hiring, but the short timeline is cause for concern.

SPCSA staff does not have concern regarding the Articulation agreement between PTAAN and FuturEdge. The agreement aligns with NRS 388.456 and staff would note this agreement may help in ensuring the school is able to meet its Year 1 enrollment requirements.

Ultimately, SPCSA staff is recommending approval of these requests because this is the only viable plan the school has to open in 2025 – 26. PTAAN has deferred opening once already and would not be permitted to

open if the school is unable to begin operations beginning next school year. As such, SPCSA staff recommends the Authority approve the request while reiterating the concerns discussed above. SPCSA staff will continue to monitor PTAAN closely through its pre-opening process and expects the school to complete and submit any outstanding pre-opening requirements and ensure timely submission of all future pre-opening requirements on time. Finally, the proposed motion below includes the conditions related to this approval, as well as previous conditions that are still outstanding.

Proposed Motion: Grant Pioneer Technology and Arts Academy of Nevada’s Good Cause Exemption request and approve PTAAN’s request to modify grade level offerings, co-locate with FuturEdge Charter Academy, and enter into an Articulation Agreement with FuturEdge Charter Academy using the enrollment caps noted in the recommendation memo with the following conditions:

- **By June 1, 2025 PTAAN provides a fully executed Dual Enrollment agreement or agreements with an institution, or institutions, of higher of education.**
- **By June 1, 2025, PTAAN provides evidence that PTAAN has 100 or more students fully enrolled for the 2025 – 2026 school year.**
- **By June 8, 2025, PTAAN submits a board approved Final Budget that includes revenue based upon the confirmed enrollment and expenses that incorporate the cost of the identified facility.**
- **By March 15, 2025, PTAAN submits any outstanding pre-opening requirements that were due February 15, 2025 or prior.**
- **By May 1, 2025, PTAAN provides evidence that PTAAN and FuturEdge Charter Academy have each hired their own school leader, and that each school leader is employed at the school they are identified to lead.**
- **By September 30, 2025, PTAAN provides an update to the SPCSA regarding the academic, organizational, and financial performance of all other PTAA affiliated schools.**
- **PTAAN complete the SPCSA pre-opening process for new charter schools, including on time submission of required documents.**

If approved, the enrollment cap for PTAAN will be:

School Year	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31³	2031-32
Grade Levels	6-10	6-11	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12
Enrollment Cap	100	201	508	792	1055	1243	1404

Historical Performance, Demographic Information, Academic, Financial, and Organizational Performance – Not Applicable

³ Contingent on approval of a second charter term