



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO:	SPCSA Board
FROM:	Katie Broughton, Director of Authorizing Danny Peltier, Management Analyst IV
SUBJECT:	Explore Academy – Charter Renewal Recommendation
DATE:	December 12, 2025

Background and Summary

Explore Academy (Explore) submitted an application to renew its charter contract as the current charter contract expires on June 30, 2026. Explore Academy is a brick-and-mortar public charter school that currently serves 329 students in 6th through 12th grade on one campus in Clark County.

After a thorough review of the historical data and charter renewal application, SPCSA staff recommends that the Authority approve the charter renewal of Explore Academy for a three-year term, beginning July 1, 2026.

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 Explore Academy renewal report was sent to the school leader and board chair on June 26, 2025, 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 renewal determination. The charter school may submit a response to the renewal report².

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 application³. Explore Academy submitted its notice of Intent to

¹ [NAC 388A.415\(2\)](#) provides 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 on the performance framework

² [NRS 388A.285\(1\) and NRS 388A.285\(2\)](#)

³ [NAC 388A.415\(1\)](#)

Renew its charter contract on September 1, 2025, and the notice of intent to renew can be found with the supporting documents.

The window to submit the actual renewal application is October 1 through October 15. The application for renewal must include, without limitation⁴:

- (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.

Explore Academy submitted its renewal application, which can be found with the supporting documents, on October 15th.

The Explore Academy renewal application identifies the mission of the upcoming charter term is to provide all students, regardless of background, with a personalized, standards-based educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a personalized and engaging educational pathway in preparation for college. The key design elements of the school include greater student accountability using a standards-driven system in course design and academic reporting; selectivity and student choice for all classes to promote both a customized and individualized form of an elective-based education; and college preparation through the implementation of a curriculum that increasingly resembles and simulates college academics in structure, rigor, and content.

Decisions to renew a charter school contract or deny a renewal application are made and based upon Nevada's charter school statutes and regulations; 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 Education⁵. It is important to note that no factor may be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school⁶. As such, the academic performance of the charter school is the touchstone of any renewal decision.

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, the 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 performance⁷.

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 decision⁸. Again, as stated above, no factor is to be given more weight than the academic performance of pupils at the charter school.⁹

The Authority Board may accept or reject, in whole or part, the recommendation of the Executive Director¹⁰. At its sole discretion, the Authority Board may renew a charter contract for a term of three (3) to ten (10) years or deny the renewal application¹¹.

⁴ [NRS 388A.285\(3\)](#).

⁵ [NRS 388A.285](#)

⁶ [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(b\)](#)

⁷ [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#)

⁸ [NAC 388A.415\(9\)](#)

⁹ [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.

¹⁰ [NAC 388A.415\(10\)\(a\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)\(b\) and \(c\)](#)

¹¹ [NRS 388A.285\(6\)](#) and [NAC 388A.415\(11\)](#)

Analysis

Academics

Explore Academy currently offers instruction at the middle and high school levels, grades 6-12, at one campus. As demonstrated by three Nevada School Performance Framework and SPCSA Academic Framework ratings over the current charter contract term, the middle school has not met or been below state and SPCSA academic standards, while the high school has had insufficient data for ratings. Due to academic underperformance, the middle school is currently under an Academic Notice of Breach. Additional notes include:

- The middle school was identified in 2023 by the NDE as an Additional Targeted Support and Intervention (ATSI) school due to its Black/African American student group performing in the bottom five percent of statewide NSPF scores.
- Until recently, the high school lacked a graduating class, and with a four-year graduation rate needed to receive NSPF and SPCSA Academic Performance Framework ratings, the high school was not rated on either framework during the current charter term. Additionally, although the high school had a graduating class in the 2023-24 school year, it was of insufficient population size (<10) to meet NSPF requirements, and the school again did not receive an NSPF rating for the 2024-25 school year.¹²

As a result of this persistent underperformance, the middle school is currently under an Academic Notices of Breach. While [NRS 388A.300](#) mandates charter contract termination when a school receives three one-star NSPF ratings in three years, SB460 (2025) established a temporary exemption to these provisions when a school's NSPF performance meets certain criteria. Although Explore Academy MS received a third consecutive 1-star NSPF rating for the 2024-2025 school year, they met the SB460 exemption criteria via an NSPF score that was within 10 points of a two-star NSPF rating (score of 22, with 2-star threshold at 29) and a 50% improvement in NSPF score over the prior year (prior score of 13 to current score of 22 is a 69% improvement).

Explore Academy was issued two deficiencies during its most recent site evaluation on February 19, 2025. The first deficiency pertained to low academic performance, and the second addressed high levels of chronic absenteeism. The school has complied with the requirements associated with these deficiencies and has identified both areas as priorities for the next charter term in its renewal application.

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 Education¹³, but the Nevada Department of Education published index scores¹⁴.

The Authority adopted its own Academic Performance Framework in 2019¹⁵ and most recently revised it in July 2025. Full results for Explore Academy's NSPF and SPCSA Academic ratings through the entirety of the charter term can be found below.

¹² Graduation rates in the NSPF are lagged one year, i.e., the 2024-25 school year NSPF ratings used class of 2023-24 four-year graduation rates.

¹³ Page 72 of the [NSPF Technical Manual](#).

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

2021–2022 NSPF Index Score	Middle: 18.8 High: 40.0
2021–2022 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 31.2 / Does Not Meet Standard High: Not Rated
2022–2023 NSPF Index Score / Star Rating	Middle: 11.1 / 1-star High: 20.0 / Not Rated
2022–2023 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 18.6 / Below Standard High: Not Rated
2023–2024 NSPF Index Score / Star Rating	Middle: 13.0 / 1-star High: 38.8 / Not Rated
2023–2024 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 20.8 / Does Not Meet Standard High: Not Rated
2024–2025 NSPF Index Score / Star Rating	Middle: 22 / 1-star High: 31.5 / Not Rated
2024–2025 SPCSA Academic Performance Score / Rating	Middle: 35 / Does Not Meet Standard High: Not Rated
CSI, ATSI, or TSI Identification	Middle: ATSI (2023 identification for Black/African American group) High: None
Four-Year Graduation Rate	Class of 2024-25: insufficient population size, data suppressed for student privacy ¹⁶

Organizational

The SPCSA’s Organizational Performance Framework was adopted by the Authority in the summer of 2019 and most recently revised in July 2024. The organizational health and performance of the school has been relatively strong over the current charter term. Explore Academy was rated as ‘Meets Standard’ on four of the five SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework cycles throughout the current charter term. The school has not received any Notice under the Organizational Performance Framework.

SPCSA Organizational Framework Findings:

Year	Findings & Framework Results
2020 – 2021	Meets Standard
2021 – 2022	Meets Standard
2022 – 2023	Meets Standard
2023 – 2024	Meets Standard
2024 – 2025	Partially Compliant

Financial

The SPCSA Financial Framework was adopted in January 2019 and most recently revised in August 2025. Regarding the financial performance and viability of the school, SPCSA staff finds the financial performance of Explore Academy to be of ongoing concern. The school most recently had their Notice of Breach continued for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and this

¹⁶ Explore Academy’s first year with a graduating class was the 2023-24 school year. However, there were less than 10 students in that graduating class, and the graduation rate is therefore suppressed to protect student privacy.

Notice included additional monitoring.

SPCSA Financial Framework Findings:

Year	Findings & Framework Results
2020 – 2021	Meets the Standard
2021 – 2022	Does Not Meet Standard—Notice of Concern
2022 – 2023	Does Not Meet Standard—Notice of Breach
2023 – 2024	Does Not Meet Standard—Notice of Breach

Explore Academy showed improvements in its financial metrics from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024. The Total Margin, Cash Flow, and the Debt/Lease Service Coverage Ratio metrics all improved to “Meets Standard.” The Current Ratio, Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand, Current Year Margin, and Debt-to-Asset Ratio metrics also experienced modest gains, though they remain below standard. While these changes reflect progress toward a stronger financial position, further improvement is still necessary. The school has complied with the monthly reporting requirements associated with the Notice of Breach, and no additional major indicators of financial distress have been identified.

Recommendation: Approve the renewal request for Explore Academy for a three-year term.

As described above, Explore Academy has struggled to meet academic performance expectations throughout the charter term, with the middle school earning three consecutive 1-star NSPF ratings as well as repeated ‘Does Not Meet Standard’ and ‘Below Standard’ ratings on the SPCSA Academic Performance Framework. These persistent outcomes raise significant concerns about the school’s ability to improve student achievement.

Organizationally, Explore Academy has generally exhibited few performance concerns. While the school’s financial performance has been an area of concern, recent year-over-year improvements indicate progress toward greater financial stability.

Ultimately, while academic performance has not yet met expectations and financial results have been mixed during the current charter term, SPCSA staff recommends renewing Explore Academy for a three-year term. This shorter renewal provides the school with an opportunity to build on recent progress, demonstrate meaningful academic gains, and continue strengthening its financial position.

School Year	2026–2027	2027–2028	2028–2029
Grade Levels	6 – 12	6 – 12	6 – 12
Enrollment Cap	390	390	390

Proposed Motion

Approve the Explore Academy renewal application for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and the enrollment caps 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 2020¹⁷

Year	Total Enrolled	A %	B %	C %	H %	I %	M %	P %	ELL %	FRL %	IEP %
2020-2021	136	2.2	19.8	50.0	24.2	0.0	0.7	2.9	0.0	41.1	13.9
2021-2022	192	4.1	19.2	39.0	29.6	1.0	6.7	0.0	5.2	46.3	14.5
2022-2023	289	2.4	23.1	26.6	37.0	0.3	10.3	0.0	<5.0	54.6	15.9
2023-2024	269	2.9	18.9	18.9	46.8	0.0	10.4	1.8	10.7	>95.0	12.6
2024-2025	356	2.8	23.8	14.6	47.1	0.2	8.7	2.5	13.2	69.9	15.1
2025-2026	329	2.1	20.9	10	53.1	0	10.3	3.3	14.5	77.8	17.6

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.

¹⁷ Enrollment Count totals are from Nevada Department of Education’s annual October Validated Count Day data.