



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Site Evaluation Report: Explore Academy
Evaluation Date: 2/10/2022
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Appendices

A: Nevada State Performance Framework

<http://www.doe.nv.gov/Accountability/NSPF/>

B: SPCSA Academic Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-Academic-Performance-Framework-Guidance-Document.pdf>

C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-OPF-Att-1-Ratings-Scorecard.pdf>

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND



INTRODUCTION

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on February 10, 2022 at Explore Academy. The State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all charters within the portfolio during the first, third, and fifth year of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. A Site Evaluation differentiation process has been implemented for schools operating without a star rating due to a limited number of years in operation. This evaluation was done for the purposes of conducting follow-up to previously issued strong recommendations made during the school's first year of operation which was the 2020-2021 school year. Additional, non-routine site evaluations may be scheduled should there be insufficient evidence to fully determine a new charter is on track to academic success.

An analysis of the school's academic and operational success is undertaken by reviewing the most current versions of the Nevada State Performance Framework (Appendix A) and the State Public Charter School Authority Academic Framework (Appendix B) as well as the Organizational Framework (Appendix C).

In addition, the Site Evaluation Team conducts classroom observations within the areas of classroom environment and instruction. The purpose of these observations is to collect evidence using a rubric which has been normed by our team. All classroom rating outcomes will be displayed within this report so that school leaders have an overall idea of what is happening in general, at any time, in any classroom. The overall numbers will provide information about the school outcomes on this one day.

SPCSA staff will track "best practices", using a checklist and a summary of best practices observed, and will be contained within the report. Using information from focus groups of students, parents, staff, school leaders and the school's board, the SPCSA team will conduct focus groups and summarize results for schools within the report. The operational portion of the evaluation will be observed and take-aways recorded using a checklist and observing all aspects of the school's operational components as outlined in the SPCSA Organizational Framework.

This evaluation has been designed to focus on teaching and learning (e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students) as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The SPCSA uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Explore Academy is in Las Vegas, Nevada in a facility at 4660 North Rancho. The school serves 192 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in 6th through 10th grade. The mission of name of school is: "Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future."

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Nevada School Performance Framework 2019

The school opened during the 20-21 School Year and NSPF data is not available. Explore Academy serves 192 students in grades six through ten.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board	2	30 minutes
Parents/Families	4	30 minutes
Students	5	30 minutes
School Leadership	1	30 minutes
Staff	7	30 minutes

Governing Board¹:

1. Board members reported they meet monthly. One member said, “We receive a report from the principal quarterly. We get attendance data handouts, testing data handouts, a lot of handouts with data about the school. If there are areas of concern, we ask for corrective action.” The board was asked about board training and explained they were expecting to attend a board training in August 2021, but this did not happen due to COVID. Board members report they have completed trainings on special needs, compliance and ethics.
2. The board members explained their view on the uniqueness of the school. One person commented, “One of the important parts of the educational model, is the ability for students to take ownership of their learning. They are responsible for every aspect of their learning and controlling their learning path from the time they reach us to the time they graduate.” Members of the group said they are kept up to date with academics at the school as the leadership team shares the testing outcomes and attends the board meeting to provide an overview of the academic status of the school. Members said they have been monitoring academic outcomes, especially in math and English language arts (ELA). Focus group members commented students were excited to return to campus post-COVID, but said the excitement waned once students had been back to in-person learning for a time. The group explained learning both from home and virtually has had a big influence on students’ academic growth. Board members said there has been a positive stride at the school in terms of the campus seeming to be healthy in terms of students wanting to come to school. One board member commented, “From where student academic outcomes are now, the student body is in a corrective stage at this time.”
3. The board was asked how they see the current state of academics at Explore Academy. One member said, “Up until recently there have been concerns in math and reading. From what we could gather from the data, being at home due to COVID impacted the way Flavors [the curriculum] was delivered. At first, students were excited and engaged and that dipped. We are now in the corrective stage.” Another member shared, “We have made huge strides in engagement and school cultures. We have our issues, but our academics are high and moving forward.” Board members shared that despite the issues with academics, there are some funding issues due to under-enrollment.

¹ Two members of the five member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

One board member commented, “There are now more substitute teachers at the school and increased enrollment would be helpful.” Another board member added, “The primary focus is to help the school grow in terms of enrollment. Having a new person join the board and working on increased enrollment is very important.” Board members mentioned enrollment and funding as two areas they would like to focus attention and seek opportunities for improvement. “I wish we had 300 – 400 students enrolled. We would like to see greater enrollment.” Another board member shared, “We have been under-enrolled for the two years Explore has been opened.” Board members are aware staff have had to be reduced due to low enrollment.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

Parents/Families:

1. Some of the family members said they chose Explore because they knew a person who worked at the school. Several families liked the Flavors portion of the educational plan. According to families, the Flavors curricula program is a part of an educational framework based on choice that is intended to promote student growth and responsibility. Students are provided a series of seminars and are given the choice between two Flavors for each seminar based on student interest. Family members said their children really like coming to this school. One parent mentioned her son goes back and forth on wanting to attend school and changing his mind on whether to stay or transfer to another school. This is concerning to the parent. Another parent said they saw an advertisement for the school and investigated, and as this family discovered more about the school, they determined they liked the way the classes were laid out. The theme of the classes really sold the concept to the prospective high school student. Another parent said her daughter liked the way the curriculum was designed, and the family enrolled their daughter because she wanted to attend.
2. Parents said Explore Academy is different than other public school options because Explore offers a highly personalized environment for learning. Families shared that the curriculum is engaging because the students pick their topic to learn about. Family members said they feel welcome at the school, and they think this is because the teachers and staff know family members by first name. According to families participating in the focus group, the smaller population of the school creates smaller class sizes, contributing to more focused, individualized instruction. One parent said they like the small community and the small class sizes. Family members said they can express their concerns to the school leaders and teachers and resolutions are found, but not always in a timely manner. One parent said she would like to have a list of teacher emails in case she needs to ask a question of a teacher. Another parent shared the teacher will fully explain and help the students to understand the materials and this individualized support is greatly appreciated.
3. Parents shared at times they have questions regarding the quality of teachers at Explore. For example, a parent explained that she wondered in some cases, if the teacher even liked young people. Another parent commented that she is aware of a time when the teacher explained information incorrectly. She said the subject matter presented was in error. Another parent said that an English teacher was apologizing to the class repeatedly for teaching the novel, *Of Mice and Men*. A parent said, "When my son feels he is brighter than the teacher, this is not a good situation." When parents were asked if they feel their children are sufficiently challenged, parents said no. They went on to explain that the school does not offer honors classes, or intensive classes that are demanding. One parent said her daughter is engaged but not challenged. The parent does not see her daughter extending herself and her son has expressed distress that he is not learning anything. One parent questioned if the math content for a 10th grader is at the appropriate level because it seems like a repeat from the prior school year. A few of the parents are considering leaving Explore because they want their children to be challenged. Family members like the Flavors concept and the staff but question if they should move their child to another school.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

Students:

1. Students explained they receive 'Front Loading' the day before new learning takes place. According to students, the practice of front loading consists of notes to begin to generally get some background on the main topics to follow. Sometimes a quiz on the new information is given which allows students to determine what they already know and realize what they will need to learn. Students said they usually get a study guide to help them get ready for a test. "We receive notes, a handout, a baseline quiz, and then we get study guides before a major test." Students explained they know they have learned a concept if they are able to help other students understand the content. Students said if a person doesn't understand what they are learning there are opportunities for assistance. Focus group participants shared that there are two flex period during the school day; one is at lunch and the other is for completing homework. During the flex periods, teachers and students are available to help. Tutoring is offered for one hour after school on Thursdays. One student stated, "There is also group study after school. I can also text my teacher and they will help me. I can also get more practice questions from my teacher. The teacher will offer tutoring after school. In some cases, and if you need help or don't understand you can ask the teacher, or you can join after school groups for learning. Another thing is that teachers will give you more practice questions, and the teachers will review the material again."
2. Students shared, "We have two flex periods built into our schedule each day. One of these is used to eat, and the other to finish assignments." Students said during flex periods, they get help from each other, the teacher, and or use the extra time as a free period. One student commented, "It is like a recess time." Students said they feel respected by their teachers. One student commented, "If you need help, you can get it and the teacher is there to protect you and make you feel safe. They use preferred names and pronouns."
3. The school provides a walking tour of the campus for new students. This is provided by a current student, and the new student is shown where his/her classes are located, which helps get to know another student at the school right from day one. Students in the focus group stated that if you are having a serious problem, there is a Safe Place Form, that can be used to talk to an adult, or the principal about what is troubling them. Focus group participants specifically noted that the science teacher is also a trusted individual if there is a problem. Students said they take a survey on each teacher after each term, and they complete the school climate form. Students like that Explore lets them go outside to decompress and get rid of the excess energy. Students shared that they like the shorter seminar terms that Flavors offers. Students being able to enroll in new Flavors they feel is helpful because it is like a new year, a new beginning. One student said, "After every term we take a test and then move on to new learning." Finally, students indicated that the clubs are very different from other schools, and this is a very accepting of each other with little bullying and issues among students. One student commented, "I like that the school is inclusive."

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

Leadership:

1. The school leader reported that all curriculum is presented through Flavors, a real-world lens or application for content. Leadership said, "This school is run on college and career readiness based on choice theory. Students choose their own curricular pathways, build their own schedule, and monitor their own credit analysis." Additionally, the school leader noted that classes follow a seminar model that strives for student-led discussions with small class sizes. Sixth and seventh grade complete four quarters of Flavors each year and must pass each term with a 70%. Seventh and eighth grade completes six quarters of instruction and must score 80% to pass each term. Explore updates grades on a weekly basis, highlighting the growth on four or five standards that were the focus for that week. At the end of the quarters, students are assessed. The school leader went on to say that if students fail, they retake the class and students may have to repeat classes to show mastery. When asked how students know their purpose for learning, leadership said, " We focus on how you will use the topic for learning in the real world. Objectives are listed in Google classroom for the selected Flavor. At the flagship school in New Mexico, students can point to the standard and objective and say this is how I am learning and meeting the standard and objective. Explore Academy in Las Vegas is still refining and developing this."
2. The school leader went explained that teachers create the assessments and assess the cumulative Flavors end of term exam. Leadership explained that students can re-take an assessment, a failed mid-term or final, or the student can show different ways of understanding to pass. "If students cannot write in an exemplary manner, they can have a conversation with the teacher. It is up to the teacher to evaluate the student's mastery of the content knowledge." It was not specified how many opportunities students had to re-take an exam. For student achievement school leadership said, "The overall school goal is to have 80% of all students passing."
3. The school leader said that Explore Academy uses a digital, cloud-based spreadsheet to track the delivery of special education services and collect feedback on progress toward goals. At the start of each new term, the special education director sends out a list of each students' accommodations to their teachers. Teachers are then responsible for implementing and documenting accommodations in a tracker, which the special education teacher supervises. According to the school leader, the special education director distributes and collects both forms. Student supports are built into the school day, with all students receiving ongoing monitoring and intervention as needed through their flex period." The school leader informed SPCSA staff that Explore Academy uses its proprietary standards matrix to align assessments to learning targets for each seminar, and that teachers align curriculum to the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) with the outcome in mind and then backwards plan for one of the quarterly units. The standards matrix is used for math and ELA common core assessments. Teachers receive training on providing high-quality feedback to students, building assessments, and responding to data. The principal said that teachers build formative and summative assessments as part of their curriculum development. "Teachers have autonomy in their classroom. Teachers don't feel micromanaged." Because teachers create curriculum, the school leader explained that Explore utilizes high differentiation and specialized supports. The school leader further explained that diagnostic assessments from the personalized learning system IXL (an adaptive subscription program that allows students to practice their ELA and math skills, based on their precise level) are used in math and special education. All English language learning (EL) students can use speech to text if they choose. Rosetta Stone is available as well for student use. World- Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) and the Smarter Balanced assessment systems are used yearly to assess student needs.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

Staff:

1. Staff explained how the Flavors Model works. A faculty member shared, “Flavors change every 22 days for high school and every 44 days for our sixth and seventh graders. Another staff member said, “Once a Flavor is created, the seminar stays with the school and any teacher can use catalogued Flavors at another time. We can get Flavors from New Mexico, or we can modify a Flavor using the guidelines.” An instructor provided the example of being interested in anime, so they created a class on Japanese. One person said, “Teachers can teach however they want as long as we use the standard. One person said, “I enjoy putting new things out there. I like trying things to see if they work. People are willing to help each other, and we think of the kids first. We all know each other, and our leader creates a positive environment, and we appreciate it.”
2. Members of the staff explained how they track student progress and measures of achievement. One staff member remarked, “We test on the standards and offer alternative assessments which allows the student to show their understanding of a subject in an alternative way. We do our best to promote student achievement and re-teach if students are not getting a concept. Another teacher said, “We use the state standard to create the test and then we create the curriculum to teach the concept. For example, I created a Zombie apocalypse Flavor to model exponential growth and decay. Students were to learn about exponential growth and how and when decay occurs.” The teacher went on to describe the course, noting that Kuta software creates the test, and if a student fails, they can re-take the test multiple times before the next unit starts.
3. Staff were asked how they adjust instruction to meet the needs of students with special needs (SPED) and EL learners. Staff said they have a coordinator for EL students who works with the school’s special education coordinator. A staff member reported, “We use Rosetta Stone and we have sheltered instruction for our EL students.” Another staff member added, “Students can verbally explain, or write in their native language. Most of the EL students at this school are at intermediate levels according to focus group participants, who also noted that they have not administered assessments to see if students are ready to leave supports. For students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the special education instructor said, “I make sure the accommodations are in place in their classes; make sure they understand the assignment from their mainstream classroom. There are extra supports for any student at Explore who is struggling or who may want extra assistance. Tutoring, extra time, flex periods, and office hours for every teacher are offered as extra support opportunities.”

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

A total of 20 classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes each on the day of the evaluation.

I. Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Areas 1 & 2 Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport Establishing a Culture for Learning	Classroom interactions are highly respectful, and the teacher demonstrates a passionate commitment to the subject.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring and a genuine culture for learning.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict with a minimal culture for learning.	Classroom interactions between the teacher and students are negative and do not represent a culture for learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 4	Total: 16	Total: 0	Total: 0
	Students ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among classmates and assume much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning.	Interactions reflect cultural and developmental differences of students. Teacher and students are committed to the subject.	Interactions may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity and inconsistent expectations for student achievement.	Interactions are characterized by sarcasm, put-downs, and/or conflict. There is a low teacher commitment to the subject and few instances of students taking pride in their work.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 4	Total: 16	Total: 0	Total: 0
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Areas 3 & 4 Managing Classroom Procedures	Classroom routines and procedures appear seamless and student behavior is entirely appropriate.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and the teacher ensures smooth functioning with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 0	Total: 14	Total: 6	Total: 0
	There appears to be no misbehavior during the observation. The teacher monitoring of student behavior is subtle and/or preventative.	Teacher responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Teacher tries to establish standards of conduct for students and monitor behavior. These efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is unsuccessful in monitoring student behavior.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 18	Total: 2	Total: 0	Total: 0

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

II. Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<p>Area 5</p> <p>Purpose and Explanation of Content, Lesson, Unit or Classroom Activity</p>	The purpose of the lesson or unit is clear and connects with student's real-life experiences. The explanation of content is imaginative, and students contribute to the lesson by participating and or explaining concepts to their peers.	The purpose for the lesson or learning activity is clear. The teacher's explanation of content is appropriate, and connects with students.	The teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success. The explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	The purpose for the lesson, learning activity is unclear. Teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 5	Total: 6	Total: 9	Total: 0
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<p>Area 6</p> <p>A</p> <p>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</p>	Students formulate and ask high-level questions.	Teacher formulates and asks several high-level questions.	Teacher questioning and discussion techniques are uneven with some high-level questions	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low level questions, limited student participation and little true discussion.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 4	Total: 6	Total: 4	Total: 6
<p>B</p>	Students assume responsibility for the participation of most students in the discussion.	Teacher assumes responsibility for the discussion which includes most students.	There is some attempt by the teacher to initiate student discussion and student participation.	There is little to no student discussion even though the opportunity is there.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 3	Total: 10	Total: 3	Total: 4

Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable.

1. In Spanish class, the instructions for the activity and the student responses were in English. Students used Pear Deck, an interactive presentation tool used to engage students in individual and social learning. Students worked with a partner as well as whole group and responded verbally in English.
2. In one middle school math class, two students were working out a problem on the white board and verbally sharing their problem solving with the class. Class participants raised their hands and shared input. The teacher then led instruction using academic vocabulary to solve for the variable. The teacher scaffolded concepts by referring to prior knowledge of concepts that students worked on a few weeks ago.
3. In one high school English class of 22 students, seven students had not completed rough drafts that were due on January 27. They were asked to complete the rough draft during class time. Two other students immediately asked to leave, and the teacher dismissed them. It was unclear why they needed to leave. The remaining 15 students who had completed the rough draft were asked to conduct peer reviews. It was unclear if students had been taught how to peer review or which part of peer review the students were tasked to complete.
4. Five of the 20 observed instances concluded instruction 10 or more minutes before the end of class which represents a substantial loss of instructional time. In four classes, it was observed the teachers sat at their desks during instructional time.
5. In one high school classroom, the teacher used a video clip to make connections to current world events regarding prices and food availability in remote geographical areas. It was unclear if this was a math class, a geography class, or a social science class.
6. In one high school classroom, students worked on their laptops to research and write about people from the civil war. Students were asked to write five sentences on the information they learned.
7. The SPSCA team did not observe instances of teachers providing clear, descriptive learning about a given learning goal or target in 17 out of 20 observed occasions.
8. Within area 8a of the Classroom Observation Totals Rubric, 14 classes were rated basic as only some of the students appeared aware of the learning goal or target during this instructional timeframe. SPSCA team members observed several classrooms using technology. This technology such as Khan Academy, news clips, Pear Deck was used for long periods of instructional time.
9. Google Classrooms were utilized and several students in each of the classes were on their personal devices and on screens that were dissimilar to that of the instructor.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The SPCSA uses the Organizational Performance Framework to collect evidence of performance and evaluate schools, at least annually, to monitor schools throughout their charter terms, to report to schools and the public annually, to intervene in schools that do not meet expectations and to make high-stakes decisions, including renewal, non-renewal, possible revocation, expansion, or replication. Most of this work is done through routine submissions by the school to the SPCSA.

A limited number of measures within the organizational performance framework may be at least partially evaluated during the site evaluation process. Measures are partially evaluated based upon evidence from school focus groups, school observations, documents reviewed and information from the school presentation portion of the evaluation. SPCSA staff will note the evidence provided by the school and outline any questions or potential concerns.

Measure	Description	Evidence Collected
1a	<p>The school implements material terms of the education program.</p> <p>Examples of evidence: The scope and sequence of curricular materials have been vetted to align with the Nevada Academic Content Standards and a plan has been mapped by date to ensure the completion of each standard within the grade or content area.</p> <p>The educational program offered by the school is consistent with the program proposed within the charter application. Ex: math science focus, extended day, arts integrated.</p>	<p>Teachers receive professional development on creation of Flavors and assessments. Teachers use the Standards by Content, Grade, and Seminar to create assessments and plan content for students. Teachers work in grade level teams to ensure assessments are aligned. Over the course of the year, the curricula materials from Flavors are offered according to need. Students choose between Flavors and build their own schedules. Classes follow a seminar model that strives for student-led discussions with small class sizes. Student supports are built into the school day, with all students receiving ongoing monitoring and intervention as needed through their flex period.</p>
1b	<p>The school complies with applicable education requirements.</p> <p>Examples: Completing the submission of required items to epicenter in a complete and timely manner. (Licensing of staff, Special Education and ELL Handbook and all others) Assessments/Data requirements.</p>	<p>Explore Academy aligns assessments to learning targets for each seminar. Teachers receive training on providing high-quality feedback to students, building assessments, and responding to data. Diagnostic assessments from IXL are used in math and special education. Teachers build formative and summative assessments as part of their curriculum development. Explore Academy participates in WIDA and Smarter Balance testing.</p>

<p>1c</p>	<p>The school protects the rights of students with disabilities.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>A narrative of processes in place to ensure decisions made by the IEP Team are communicated to all staff who work with the student.</p> <p>A narrative of how the school/campus documents the delivery of service and progress toward achieving the IEP goals.</p>	<p>At the start of each new term, the special education director sends out a list of each students' accommodations to their teachers. Teachers are then responsible for implementing and documenting accommodations in a tracker, which the Special Education teacher supervises. Explore Academy uses a digital, cloud-based spreadsheet to track the delivery of services and collect feedback on progress toward goals. The special education director distributes and collects these forms.</p>
<p>1d</p>	<p>The school protects the rights of ELL students.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>A narrative explaining how content teachers are trained in specific methodologies to provide EL students with meaningful access to content.</p> <p>A description of how EL students are acquiring English language skills in all four domains (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, and writing)</p> <p>A description of how EL student progress within the four domains is monitored.</p>	<p>EL students receive specialized support through their flex period. Teachers work to cultivate relationships and culturally responsive curriculum through differentiation, intervention (supported by PLCs), digital tools (translation and speech-to-text/read-aloud software) and language acquisition with Rosetta Stone. In the regular classroom, students regularly participate in classroom discussions, activities, and assessments that support language acquisition by EL students. All students have access to reading and writing tools that support language acquisition, including Rosetta Stone, Snap & Read, and Cowriter, and the school reports that. ELD students receive specialized support through their flex period, working in a smaller group toward language acquisition goals.</p>

Measure	Description	Evidence Collected
3a	<p>The school complies with governance requirements.</p> <p>Examples: Board policies, including those related to oversight of an Education Service Provider, state open meeting law, code of ethics, conflicts of interest, board composition, routine meetings.</p>	<p>The school holds governing board meetings every two months. The board posts agendas and public notices as required. The school board follows policies and procedures related to open meeting law. The school maintains a policy on conflict of interest.</p>
4a	<p>The school protects the rights of all students.</p> <p>Examples: Admissions, waiting lists, fair and open recruitment, enrollment, due process protections, conduct of discipline- (discipline hearings, suspension and expulsion policies and practices, protects student information.</p>	<p>Explore Academy collects applications from interested families via lottery application from December 15 - March 30th. After this period, the process moves to a lottery or to an open enrollment dependent on the total number of applications and available seats. The lottery is held on March 31st annually. Students will be enrolled in the order of their randomly drawn lottery number. Explore Academy follows guidelines for priority enrollment outlined in NRS 388A.453 and 388A.456. Regarding discipline, Explore Academy utilizes a point system for the reporting offenses and the levying of consequences. Students who are assessed points keep their points for the duration of a semester (four academic terms). At the beginning of term five (the beginning of the spring semester), student point totals are erased, except for Level III and Level IV offenses. At the beginning of the following school year, all disciplinary points are erased from a student's record. In addition to the point system, Explore Academy Las Vegas uses a restorative approach to discipline to help students learn and recover from behavior incidents. The school's point system identifies students who continue to demonstrate continual non-compliance with the school's rules and as such, disciplinary consequences escalate as point totals accumulate. As point values increase, it becomes clear that a student is focused on areas other than education and compliance. Upon reaching ten points, a student may be expelled from Explore Academy.</p>

5b	<p>The school complies with health and safety requirements.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Timely and accurate submission of epicenter documents: (Crisis/Emergency Response Plan Emergency Operation Plan Certificate of Occupancy)</p> <p>Appropriate nursing services and dispensing of pharmaceuticals, food service, and other health and safety services.</p>	<p>The school has a crisis response plan that is reviewed by staff and families annually. The school has a nurse on staff to oversee the appropriate storage and distribution of medication. Food service is managed by experienced staff.</p>
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Measures of Progress from Previous Site Evaluations

The extent to which the school has been successful in maintaining areas of strength, removing challenges, and acting upon the recommended items made by the SPCSA during the school's previous evaluation

<p>School staff ability to address previous recommendations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school has addressed and has developed and vetted well-defined procedures and policies for Special Education and Second Language Learners. 2. The school has addressed the need to provide formal training of each board member in open meeting law (quorum, electronic communications). SPCSA staff will recommend a written training and implementation plan of action for current and future members of the board in the recommendation section of this report. 3. The school has addressed the requirement of developing and implementing an evaluation for the school leader. 4. Although the school has created an on-going and elevated target to make sure all Nevada Academic Content Standards are both taught and learned; the second part of the recommendation regarding more reliable and valid assessment of those standards has not been fully met. This will be addressed as a Strong Recommendation in this report. 5. The school has addressed the requirement to use the newly detail oriented Special Education procedures and implement written procedures by providing clear expectations for all teaching staff administrators. at the school.
<p>Evidence the school can provide to support the implementation of previous recommendations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence for meeting the need to develop and vet well defined policy and procedures in the areas of Special Education and ELL has been reviewed and recorded in 2021. 2. Evidence for meeting the board training has already been reviewed and recorded in 2021. 3. Evidence for creating a school leader evaluation has been reviewed and recorded. 4. Evidence for the school to make sure academic content standards are taught and learned has been reviewed and recorded in 2021. However-the site evaluation on February 10, 2022 also indicates that there appears to be no school-wide standards-based assessments. Explore does have teacher created assessments in place based on standards. The school reports that they have diagnostic IXL for math and Special Education only. 5. Although evidence of implementation of Special Education and ELL procedures and policy appear to exist, the SPCSA team will address the need for continued and on-going monitoring of these policies and procedures as the school becomes more seasoned at instances involving such procedure and policy. The school is currently in year two of operation.

<p>The reasons school will require additional time to fully address the recommended items.</p>	<p>There is no need for extra time to fully address previous recommended items with the following exceptions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure the school is on track to meet performance goals, it is increasingly important the school create a more data-driven environment. A strong and robust plan to create a testing environment for diagnostic testing will provide essential information to the staff about current levels of student achievement and provide feedback regarding the measure of learning up to a certain point in the year. Although teacher created assessments exist, this is not the same as an outside assessment created by a third-party. It is critical that teachers know the impact of their instruction in terms of their ability to recognize when a student has mastered a standard and when they have not. But it is even more critical that the school understand where each student in grades sixth through tenth grade, achievement in terms of their peers and in terms of meeting or exceeding every Nevada Content standard. This is not in place. (See Strong Recommendation number one on page 21.) 2. Create a board training plan as mentioned above. (See Recommendation number one on page 21). 3. More time is needed to make sure to monitor all special education implementation as the school moves forward into year three of operations. (See Recommendation number 2 on page 21.)
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SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

STRENGTHS

A summary of strengths: Academic, Classroom, Focus Groups, and Organizational Performance.

1. One of Explore Academy's strengths is their unique educational model which offers a seminar approach to instruction. The strength of this model was a topic within the staff, student, board, and family focus groups. In several cases, families and students made the choice to attend Explore Academy because the educational model offers choice to students and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning.
2. Explore is a school with 192 enrolled students ranging in grades six through ten. This small school and small class size is a strength and is appreciated by families, students, and teachers. The smaller class size provides students more opportunities to participate and has created a community of learners. One example of this is the walking tour offered to new students by existing students.
3. Students at Explore Academy reported that they feel safe at school. SPCSA staff observed a morning house meeting where the principal provided a social-emotional learning lesson (SEL) to the students on how to positively express feelings. The lesson set the tone for the day. SPCSA staff observed positive behaviors from most students.
4. The Explore leader and staff have built in time called flex periods, where students can engage individually, with peers, or with teachers to work on areas of the educational day which take additional time, small group, or practice to achieve expectations. In addition, tutoring is offered after school on an as needed basis.

CHALLENGES

A summary of challenges as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework. Evidence is described within the body of the report and summarized here.

1. A very serious challenge at Explore is low levels of (1) feedback to students, (2) student engagement, (3) students knowing the purpose for the learning, (4) student discussion and questioning techniques, and (5) students knowing a learning target. All of these were findings of the SPCSA evaluation team through classroom observations. Low levels of evidence of the above criteria were found to be at basic and unsatisfactory levels on the day of the evaluation as noted previously within this report.
2. There were some members of the board believing they had not attended an April training, while the Principal stated that the training had taken place. Keeping record of these trainings is a challenge at the school. The SPCSA recommends that the school establish a document training calendar to overcome this challenge.
3. A more data-based classroom and school-wide assessment model is needed. It is critical that teachers know the impact of their instruction in terms of their ability to recognize when a student has mastered a standard and when they have not. It is even more critical that the school understand where each student in grades sixth through tenth grade, achievement in terms of their peers and in terms of meeting or exceeding every Nevada Content standard. This creates some challenges in terms of performance monitoring.

4. Leadership reports that parental involvement has been a challenge. While Explore Academy has a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and supports the school by planning a school dance and after school events, more parental involvement would be helpful..

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended items are provided so charters may increase their school-wide ratings as well as their overall success. Authorizing Team members will follow up on each listed recommendation.

1. The board is encouraged to create a list of trainings which includes the type of training, who should attend and a timeline for a given calendar year. Although the Explore Academy Board has been trained in several areas regarding school governance, SPCSA staff recommends that a written training plan be used to remain up to date with trainings. This may support the board in future years as new members join and formal training of Charter School governance is helpful. The plan might serve as a reminder to current board members who are encouraged to review school governance responsibilities from time to time. A list of trainings will also help Explore Academy maintain compliance with new legislative requirements on school governance.
2. Because additional time may be needed to experience the variety of circumstances to which the Special Education and ELL policy and procedures may need to be referenced, it is recommended that these newly established handbooks and procedures be closely monitored. Although there was evidence of implementation of Special Education and ELL policy and procedures taking place, the SPCSA team realizes that these will need to be monitored and updated as laws change and experience with such operations becomes more common. As the school leadership and staff become more seasoned involving these instances, the procedures and policies must also fit the needs of the school, students, staff, while adhering to legal requirements. The opportunity to use the policy and procedures will increase as the student population increases and as the school begins year three of operation.
3. SPCSA staff recommend Explore Academy board and leaders develop a robust plan to increase student applications, acceptance, and enrollment. The school may wish to highlight Explore's highly individualized approach to student learning. The school-wide increased enrollment plan may include exploring marketing opportunities, community outreach, on-site tours of the school facilities, and virtual presentations of school offerings. Explore Academy is encouraged to work with a group of parents and families to include student success stories as an avenue to increase communication with feeder schools and prospective students. Finally, based on information shared during focus groups, Explore Academy is highly encouraged to sit down with students and families to understand challenges to maintain high levels of student retention.

STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is strongly recommended that Explore Academy implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement which contain both reliability and validity. The school has reported that each seminar assessment at the school is designed by either the current teacher or taken from a group of ready-made content from a similar school. The school leader and staff have explained that teachers use the standards to create assessments. Although teachers work to ensure assessments are aligned, teacher created tests do not consistently offer a measure of the academic standard and may not be an accurate measure. It is increasingly important the school create a more data-driven environment. Benefits to implementing a school-wide interim or benchmark test include:
 - Allowing leaders, teachers, students, staff, board members and family members a way to review school-wide data within subjects and determine how a student is progressing compared to their grade-level peers within a much broader peer group and over several years of time.
 - Data driven adaptations to instruction and curriculum can be made to better meet student needs. Changes to content for increased challenge and better designed interventions or extensions can be planned before, during, or after instruction.
 - Determining students' strength and weaknesses and providing feedback to students for motivational and metacognitive reasons.
 - Illuminate strengths and weaknesses of individuals or groups of students, using a bank of items aligned with the state curriculum and evaluate student learning on the concepts taught to date and make changes to the curriculum as needed by students.
2. Within the Classroom Instructional area on the rubric on pages 10 and 11 of this report, there were several instances of basic and unsatisfactory ratings. In addition, the comments regarding classroom observations on page 12 of this report are noted. It is strongly recommended that Explore Academy reexamine Classroom Tier 1 Instruction to drive continuous improvement. This might include:
 - Shared learning targets (Area 5A and 8A) Comments from pg. 12 #3,5,8,9
Consider having teachers share their learning goals for students' learning, both by telling or writing the goals and by giving assignments and activities that embody them. Consider checking for students' understanding of learning targets by using strategies that help assess students' comprehension of the degree to which they have mastered a learning goal. Teachers may use this information to affirm understanding of a target, and to clarify misconceptions during lessons.
 - Shared criteria for student success (Area 5A and 8A) Comments from pg. 12 #3,5,8,9
Consider ways to help students to envision the learning target more clearly. This might include showing students some good examples and having them discuss why they were good examples. Using rubrics with specific descriptions could help with this and would be a good default strategy if no examples are available.
 - Increased feedback from the teacher to the students (Area 8B) Comments from pg. 12 #7, #4.
Consider ways to provide students more descriptive and corrective feedback to meet their needs during individual and group learning. This may consist of more evaluative or improvement-oriented feedback. It may also consist of a planned time for peer feedback to obtain ideas and suggestions.

- Increased levels of strategic teacher questioning (Area 6A and 6B).
Consider methods to increase the number of teachers knowing and using discussion to drive instruction. By building in time for students to discuss concepts with the teacher whole group, small group, and paired up in most of the lessons, the engagement and learning levels will most likely rise. Here are 10 learning structures for questioning and discussion that you may want to consider.

- Fishbowl or Socratic Circles
- Save the Last Word for Me
- Philosophical Chairs
- Pinwheel Discussion
- Concentric Circles
- Snowball Discussion
- Talk Moves
- Kagan Structure: Rally Robin
- Kagan Structure: Timed Pair Share
- Kagan Structure: Numbered Heads Together

DEFICIENCIES

There were no deficiencies identified for Explore Academy during this site evaluation.