



# **Nevada State Public Charter School Authority**

Site Evaluation Report:  
**Girls Empowerment Middle School (GEMS)**  
Evaluation Date: 10/19/2022  
Initial Draft Report Date: 12/30/2022

State Public Charter School Authority  
775-687-9174  
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40  
Carson City, Nevada 89706  
2080 East Flamingo Road, Suite 230  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

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# Appendices

## A: Nevada School 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

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## INTRODUCTION

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on 10/18/2022 at Girls Empowerment Middle School (GEMS). 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. Schools identified as having a rating of a two-star or below, and those schools with a Notice of Concern, Notice of Breach, or Notice of Termination will have a differentiated procedure for their site evaluation. GEMS is in year three of their charter contract thus meeting the criteria for a comprehensive site evaluation.

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

GEMS, formerly known as GALS, is located in Las Vegas, Nevada in a facility at 4220 S. Maryland Parkway, Building B. The school serves 103 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in sixth through eighth grade<sup>1</sup>. The mission of GEMS is: "GEMS fosters the academic excellence and personal development necessary for every girl to become a powerful advocate for herself and leaders in their community."

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<sup>1</sup> Because the GEMS site evaluation occurred before the enrollment count for 2022 – 2023 was finalized, this information may be dated at the time this report is released.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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## Nevada School Performance Framework 2022

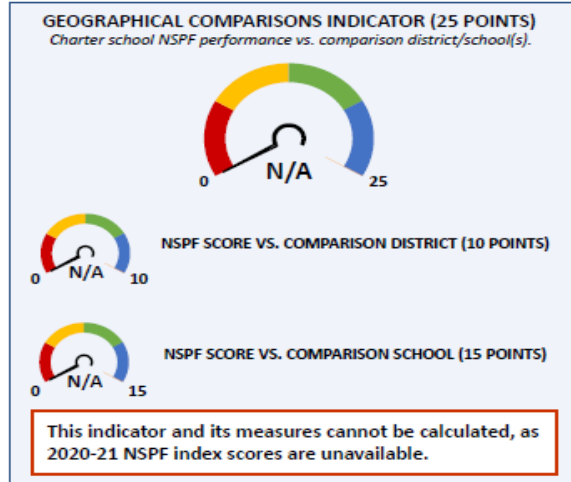
GEMS serves 103 students in sixth through eighth grades. As the school opened in the 2021 – 2022 school year, no summative academic performance data has been measured under the statewide accountability system.

### Math and ELA Results Nevada School Performance Framework

No Report Available

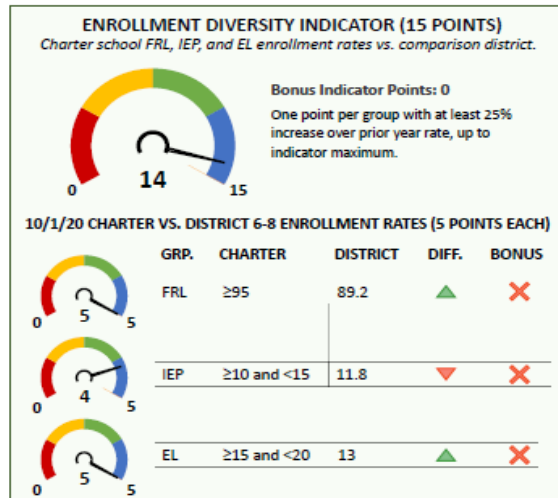
# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework<sup>2</sup> Geographic Comparison Report

## Middle School



# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Diversity Comparison Results

## Middle School



<sup>2</sup> Because the GEMS site evaluation occurred before the adoption of 2021 – 2022 academic performance results by Authority, this may be dated at the time this report is released.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board	3	30 minutes
Parents/Families	2	30 minutes
Students	6	30 minutes
School Leadership	2	30 minutes
Staff	7	30 minutes

### Governing Board<sup>3</sup>:

- Governing board members reported that GEMS charter consist of an 11-member board. Currently, seven of the 11 seats are filled. The current board votes to accept new members. Members of the governing board explained, “We would like to add someone from finance, banking, legal, or a principal. We have been sourcing some community members. The board vets the applications and then votes on applicants to ensure it’s a good fit. We meet with them, take them on a tour of the school, and offer them a second oral interview with the whole board before a final decision is made.”
- Governing board members reported that annual board training is progressing well. Board members in the focus group shared, “A third-party company provides in-person training for compliance and data training. This has brought us closer together as a board. We are focused on strategic planning, top priorities, and vision exploration.”
- Members of the governing board reported they discuss ways the school can support struggling students during each board meeting. One board member said, “For example, during the last meeting we talked about the academic gaps with Special Education (SPED) students and other resources we can implement.”
- Board members shared GEMS’s greatest strengths from a board perspective. Members of the board reported that the staff loves the students. One board member stated, “Watching the students blossom socially and emotionally at GEMS has been special. We have the potential of changing the trajectory of girls’ futures and showing them opportunities. The board is mission-driven and there is no fighting.”

### Parents/Families:

- Several parents in the family focus group session reported they feel welcome at GEMS. One parent said, “The board is welcoming to family attendance at board meetings.” Another parent shared, “The staff is nice to families, and they know us by name. Parents appreciate that they call the students by their name.” Families shared, “They ask about the students and how they are doing. The staff makes eye contact. Staff will help impaired families and will escort them to the elevator and help them get to where they need to be.”

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<sup>3</sup> Three members of the Eleven member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

- Families reported that if they have a problem, they can go to a staff member for help. One parent said, “I like that inclusivity is through all classes.” One parent said, “My child needed speech services and GEMS strategized ways to provide those services. My child was given immediate attention.” Another parent shared, “A group of girls was being a little catty and administration came to the class and spoke to all of the students and the problem was addressed directly. There has not been a problem since then.”
- Families reported they feel their child is sufficiently challenged at GEMS. One family member said, “Yes, little by little students are learning new things. They are pushed out of their comfort zone a little at a time, so growth is occurring socially as well as academically.” Several parents reported that students are excited to learn about the skeletal system and STEM concepts.

### Students:

- Students reported that most of the classes get to participate in sharing their thinking and solving problems on the board. One student shared, “The students and the teachers help if students got the problem wrong.”
- Several students reported their teacher helps them if they are struggling with a subject like reading or math. One student shared, “They’ll give us assignments based on our ability level and as we get better it gets more challenging. If we don’t finish something, we can take it home and complete it there.” Another student said, “i-Ready<sup>4</sup> is helpful as well. We have an hour every day of math and then an hour of English the following week. There is some self-direction where if we finish one we can move to another subject.”
- Students reported several concepts they have learned this school year. One student said, “I learned a lot in math like decimals and dividing fractions. Another student shared, I’m learning about mythology and geology. Students expressed their love for the empowerment class and learning about empathy.”

### Leadership:

- Leadership explained they have incorporated feedback from the community it serves throughout the process of redefining and rebranding the school since the school formally separate from the former CMO, Girls Athletic Leadership Schools (GALS). Members of leadership shared, “Empowerment was already incorporated into GALS, but some skeletal items remain. We moved away from GALS as a charter management organization (CMO) because they were not supporting us at all. Money was being spent that was of no benefit to us. So, we kept what the students and parents liked, and tailored it to meet the needs of the school. We have a different schedule with less focus on movement and more focus on empowerment.”

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<sup>4</sup> I-Ready Personalized Instruction provides students with lessons based on their individual skill levels and needs, so your student can learn at a pace that is just right for them.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

- Leadership reported the school is budgeting so it can continue to operate in a fiscally healthy manner when the ESSER<sup>5</sup> funds expire during the 2024-2025 school year. Leadership stated, “Regardless of ESSER funds, we have to have enrollment. Our break-even is at 175 students to offset ESSER funds. The majority of our funding comes from per-pupil funding. This is the main reason the enrollment component is at the board level. Also, we are looking at ways to market our school. We’ve created a calendar of systems and processes to ensure we are working on something every single month.”
- Leadership reported how GEMS is maintaining its fiscal well-being while seeking to achieve its enrollment goals. Leadership shared, “We are hoping to receive grant funding to assist in offsetting funding needed. Additionally, we are looking for a foundational grant to cover foundational expenses like rent.”
- Leadership discussed additional plans to build a positive school environment for the 2023-24 school year. Leadership reported, “In addition to our plans for next school year, we will be implementing a school-wide positive reinforcement program called the Houses of GEMS inspired by the Ron Clark Academy. The goal is to create a safe, respectful, and responsible learning environment.”

### Staff:

- Staff reported they provide targeted support to students in efforts to close opportunity gaps. One staff member stated, “We meet to analyze data and form small groups. We rely on instructional assistants for SPED students and students who need some remediation. We scaffold prior learning for more complicated mathematical concepts.”
- Staff shared they work together to meet the needs of students with an IEP or students who are English learners. A staff member shared, “At the beginning of the year we received a list of all students who have an IEP. We receive copies of the IEPs. We also have instructional assistants to help provide targeted interventions to students. The SPED instructor will write short notes on related services or modifications to provide in the classroom. This was beneficial when we met with parents as we could summarize easily in one paragraph services provided and targeted interventions.”
- Several opportunities for students to participate in student-led activities were described by staff members. Staff members reported student opportunities in the classroom, such as presenting on a topic, participating in a group discussion, solving an equation on the board, and explaining their thinking.” Another staff member said, “Every day there are opportunities for students to work with each other.”

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<sup>5</sup> Funds are provided to SEAs and LEAs to help safely reopen and sustain the same operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Nation's students.



# CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

A total of 12 classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the evaluation.

Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning</b>	Students create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Students take ownership in explaining, modeling, and reinforcing classroom routines.  Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher creates and maintains a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines.  Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher attempts to create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers attempt to explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines.  Learning experiences make an effort to guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is sometimes maximized.	The teacher does not create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers do not explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines.  Learning experiences do not guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is seldom maximized.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	Students and teachers respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher responds appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher attempts to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher does not attempt to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and does not demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Purpose and Explanation of Content, Lesson, Unit or Classroom Activity</b>	The purpose of the lesson or unit is clear and connects with student's 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 of the lesson and learning activity is unclear. The teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing, or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>
<b>Students' Cognitive Awareness of Learning Goals/Targets</b>	Students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Most of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Some of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Students cannot explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional time frame.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
<b>Quality and purpose of questions</b>	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.
	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>
<b>Opportunities for student discourse and student use of academic language</b>	Students use academic language while participating in discourse. Students demonstrate mastery through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	Teachers encourage the use of academic language and provide students opportunities for discourse. Students are encouraged to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage the use of academic language. Students are provided limited opportunities for discourse. There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher order thinking.	There is little to no opportunity for student discourse. There is little to no opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>

Classroom Instruction (continued)					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Intellectual Engagement in Learning</b>	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is differentiated and allows high levels of student engagement.	Students appear to be intellectually engaged throughout most of the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is differentiated and adequate.	Students are partially intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is somewhat differentiated and inconsistent.	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning. The pacing and structure of the lesson is not differentiated and inadequate.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
<b>Using Formative Assessment in Instruction</b>	The teacher purposefully and consistently provides clear, descriptive feedback in regard to student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	Most of the time, the teacher, provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher provides clear, descriptive feedback inconsistently regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is seldom timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher does not provide clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is not timely and is not in a reasonable amount.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>

Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable:

1. Students participated in developing empathy by responding to question prompts with a partner. The prompts reflected real-life scenarios.
2. Students solved mathematical equations and then volunteered to show their work on the whiteboard. The teacher provided encouraging feedback by asking "can you go farther?" Students were encouraged to explain how they solved the equation in different ways. The teacher asked the class if the solution the student arrived at was correct. Students responded and supported their decisions by explaining their reasons for the solution being correct or incorrect. Students supported each other by applauding those who volunteered to go to the board.
3. In one middle school classroom, the teacher-led discussions about the salt in the ocean. Students worked individually on their laptops to complete a science activity.
4. In one math classroom, students led discussions on strategies used to multiply fractions. The teacher scaffolded students through steps to solve equations.
5. In one targeted intervention class students used their laptops and the i-Ready application to practice skills readiness in math and science. The teacher and aide supported student understanding by monitoring student progress, answering questions, and asking students to explain their thinking.

# 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, visual inspection and information from the school presentation portion of the evaluation. SPCSA staff will note the evidence provided by the school and also outline any questions or potential concerns.

Indicator	Measure Description	Evidence Collected
<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> Education Program</p>	<p><b>Measures 1a and 1b:</b> The school implements the material terms of the education program. Ex: SPCSA site evaluations will confirm that the school is staying true to its approved application and programming, as well as review curricular materials and their alignment to Nevada Academic Content Standards.</p> <p><b>Measures 1c and 1d:</b> The school protects the rights of students with disabilities and EL students. Ex: For example, classroom observations include examples of students with an IEP or those learning English as a language. Student support is provided within small groups or teachers using interventions and supports to provide students with special needs and EL learners with meaningful access to grade-level content and standards.</p>	<p>The Girls Empowerment Middle School (GEMS), formerly known as the Girls Athletic Leadership School of Las Vegas (GALS LV) is a middle school charter operating in Las Vegas' urban core, near the University of Nevada Las Vegas campus. The GEMS empowerment program was observed to be a strength by SPCSA evaluators. GEMS has reviewed curricular materials and their alignment with NV Academic Content Standards. GEMS school-wide Tier 1 Math and ELA Program is i-Ready curriculum. Administrators use whole group instruction, modeling, and role-play scenarios to train teachers to use strategies to help provide EL students and students with an IEP with meaningful access to content.</p>
<p><b>Indicator 3:</b> Governance and Reporting</p>	<p><b>Measure 3a:</b> The school complies with governance requirements Ex: Board policies and oversight of Education Service Provider</p>	<p>GEMS has developed board policies and bylaws that are reviewed annually for any revisions to be re-approved by the Board as needed. GEMS complies with open meeting laws and posts agendas at the</p>

		school, on the website, at the library, and at www.notice.nv.gov. Board meetings follow open meeting laws, and board meeting minutes are approved by the Board at the subsequent meeting and once approved are posted on the school website. Board meetings are conducted in-person at the school with a Zoom meeting link option for those unable to attend in person.
<b>Indicator 4:</b> Students and Employees	<b>Measure 4a:</b> Student records under lock and key/stored appropriately <b>Measure 4d:</b> Personnel files are under lock and key/stored appropriately	Student and faculty records are stored under lock and key in secured offices.
<b>Indicator 5:</b> School Environment	<b>Measure 5b:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evacuation plans for classrooms are posted</li> <li>• The school has fire extinguishers on all floors which are tagged</li> <li>• Active permit for food service (if applicable)</li> <li>• Nurse requirements are met through visual check of health office, disposal of sharps, cot, refrigeration</li> </ul>	The site evaluation team saw evacuation plans in classrooms, tagged fire extinguishers throughout the building and common areas, as well as an active food service permit. The site evaluation team visually checked and located a cot, a refrigerator, and a receptacle for disposing of sharp objects in the nurse's area.

## 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>Summary of recommendations from most recent site evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPCSA staff recommend that the school continue to engage with these community stakeholders through and beyond the school's upcoming amendment process to redefine the school and what success looks like.</li> <li>• SPCSA staff recommend that the school revisit these practices so as to help students internalize lesson goals and objectives each period, thus promoting stronger engagement.</li> <li>• Continue to think about ways to engage students in peer-to-peer learning.</li> <li>• Board members should continue to assume active roles at the school by participating in regular board member training, facilitated by a third party so as to enhance members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• SPCSA staff recommend that the school develop a robust recruitment and enrollment plan so that the school can maximize revenues in the 2023 - 2024 school year and beyond.</li> <li>• Speak with other schools and boards regarding EMO/CMO separations and lessons learned.</li> </ul>
<p>School assessment of progress made against recommendations and evidence provided, or reasons the school believes additional time may be necessary to fully address past recommendations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the last site visit, GEMS has hired a new principal, assistant principal, executive director, counselor and office manager. The office manager started her first day at GEMS during the first week of October 2022. The new administrative staff is currently in the process of reviewing, revising, and implementing new and old school-wide procedures. The administrative staff is also in the process of communicating, training, and assisting all staff as they are becoming knowledgeable of school procedures. The current staff at GEMS is also working to correct, revise, and implement previous recommendations that were made as a result of the previous site evaluation.</li> </ul>
<p>SPCSA staff assessment based upon findings during site evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the rebranding of GEMS and the formal separation between the local school and former CMO, additional time will be needed to fully address the recommended items.</li> </ul>

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

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## STRENGTHS

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

- GEMS serves a student population that is diverse and representative of the community it primarily serves. In addition, GEMS staff mirrors the diverse student population and community in which it serves. Over 100% of students at the school qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and the school serves a greater percentage of students with disabilities and students identified as English language learners than both the Clark County School District and the SPCSA. The school is to be commended for its efforts to diversify the student population and should continue to make this priority for the remainder of the charter term so as to remain aligned with the SPCSA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. GEMS offers inclusive classrooms with special populations integrated fully into the classrooms. SPCSA evaluators observed staff at GEMS to have a strong ability to respond quickly to student needs due to small class sizes.
- GEMS staff has a strong ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable student groups, such as our students with an IEP, English learners, and students who receive free or reduced-priced lunch. Leadership reported, “Our administration and teaching staff combined have over 100 years of experience in the field of education. We have specialized degrees in various subject areas to enhance our service to all students.” The GEMS principal has a degree in special education and has served as a special education administrator in the past. Therefore, she monitors and provides special training to the staff on a quarterly basis and during weekly staff development to all staff. Additionally, GEMS has two teachers with a TESL endorsement and a full-time counselor that helps students on a daily basis deal with emotional and mental health issues. Leadership shared, “The counselor is well-versed in trauma, and is a licensed family and marriage counselor. She has good community resources for students who have trauma or experienced very challenging circumstances.”
- SPCSA evaluators observed GEMS empowerment program to be a strength. Leadership reported, “In addition to the changes at GEMS, we are empowering our students by allowing them to participate in organizations such as student council, student-led conferences, and other activities which allow them to make decisions and voice their opinions. We also have plans this school year to infuse STEM activities both on and off campus into our current curriculum to strengthen our student's knowledge in math and science.”



## CHALLENGES

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

- GEMS has a new principal, assistant principal, executive director, counselor, and office manager for the 2022-23 school year. The new staff is currently in the process of reviewing, revising, and implementing new and old school-wide procedures. This includes addressing the previous recommendations from the 2021-22 school year. Leadership shared, “We are operating amidst all the changes and building the plane while flying it.”
- GEMS has a low NSPF index score, which serves as a challenge. Leadership stated, “We are planning on hiring a data strategist and literacy specialist to assist with how and when to examine data and then utilize the data to make informed decisions about curriculum and learning, targeted interventions, etcetera.” Leadership shared, “Every PD has an aspect of skills and strategies used for specialized populations.”
- GEMS is faced with challenges to increase student enrollment numbers. Leadership reported, “Our biggest challenge is to increase our enrollment. Since the school was rebranded and the school separated from the former CMO, we have been struggling to advertise and let the community know that we are still open and operating. We have exhausted all media outlets, passed out flyers, met with community partners, and solicited help from current staff and students to help us spread the word.” Low student enrollment numbers have impacted funding for GEMS. Leadership explained, “We can always use more grant funding, donations, and other items to help enhance our educational environment. Therefore, funding is always considered a challenge when we rely on those things to keep our organization operating on a daily basis.” Leadership explained, “We are working on maintaining fiscal well-being while seeking to achieve our enrollment goals. We are hoping to receive additional grant funding to assist in offsetting funding needed due to low student enrollment numbers and to cover STEM at GEMS.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended items are provided so charters may increase their school-wide ratings as well as their overall success. Since the last site visit, GEMS has a new principal, assistant principal, executive director, counselor and office manager. The new staff is currently in the process of reviewing, revising, and implementing new and old school-wide procedures. This includes addressing the previous recommendations from the 2021-22 school year. Authorizing Team members will follow up on each listed recommendation.

- Continue to monitor your plan to increase enrollment numbers. As noted in the school leader focus group, GEMS remains under-enrolled for the third year in a row, creating a significant strain on the annual budget. This problem is enhanced by low funding levels in Nevada. SPCSA staff recommends the school develop a robust recruitment and enrollment plan so that the school can maximize revenues in the 2023 – 2024 school year and beyond. The school should continue to market in both English and Spanish and is encouraged to develop recruitment and enrollment goals and plans for monitoring progress toward these goals throughout the fall and winter. Additionally, the school may wish to pursue an articulation agreement with one or more sponsored schools in the near vicinity as permitted under [NRS 388A.456\(1\)\(d\)](#). SPCSA staff is willing to provide further guidance on articulation agreements if requested as they would require approval by the Authority board prior to implementation.
- SPCSA staff recommends that GEMS continue to engage with community stakeholders as they redefine the school and what success looks like. This will help GEMS ensure that the mission of the school is brought to life in all content areas and will assist in creating realistic expectations for the assessment systems, curricula, and common features of each classroom. By working with the community, GEMS can continue to build its brand while also incorporating feedback from the community it serves. This may include after-school events and extracurricular activities.
- Board members should continue to assume active roles at the school by participating in regular board member training, facilitated by a third party, so as to enhance members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This includes onboarding new board members as the board continues to work on efforts to fill board seats. Given the transition GEMS has undergone for the 2022 – 2023 school year, the importance of this work is magnified since the board will set the true vision for the school and will ensure goals are met. Additionally, board members should make it a priority to visit the school often and familiarize themselves with important documents such as the bylaws and charter contract with the SPCSA.
- Continue to work on efforts to increase your NSPF index score. While GEMS has yet to receive a formal rating under the statewide accountability system, the 2021 – 2022 index score of 47.5 would have been equivalent to a two-star rating in a typical year. This would have traditionally resulted in SPCSA intervention. SPCSA evaluators recommend that GEMS continue to progress monitor for academic growth and utilize data to make curricular and instructional decisions. This may include providing staff with professional development opportunities on how to interpret data to inform differentiated instructional decisions.

## **STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no strong recommendations identified for GEMS during this site evaluation.

## **DEFICIENCIES**

There were no deficiencies identified for GEMS during this site evaluation.