



# Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

## Site Evaluation Report: **Explore Academy** Evaluation Date: December 5, 2023

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

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction and School Background ..... | 3  |
| Academic Performance .....               | 4  |
| Focus Group Summaries .....              | 7  |
| Classroom Observation Totals .....       | 13 |
| Organizational Performance.....          | 17 |
| Site Evaluation Findings .....           | 21 |

# Appendices

## A: Nevada School Performance Framework

<https://doe.nv.gov/accountability/nspf/>

## B: SPCSA Academic Framework

[https://charterschools.nv.gov/Performance\\_Reports/2020-2021\\_Academic\\_Reports/](https://charterschools.nv.gov/Performance_Reports/2020-2021_Academic_Reports/)

## C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

[https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/19062\\_8-OPF-Att-1-Ratings-Scorecard.pdf](https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/19062_8-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 12/5/23 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.

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.

Members of the SPCSA staff will note additional information regarding the classroom observations on one page of this report. This page will be located on the page immediately following the classroom rubric readings. Using information gathered from 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 located in North Las Vegas, Nevada in a facility at 3551 Ferrell St. The school serves 269 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in 6 - 12th grade. The mission of Explore Academy 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." The school's vision statement is: "Explore Academy is a college preparatory school which will serve grades 6 to 12."



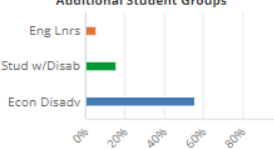
# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## Nevada School Performance Framework 2023

### Middle School

#### Explore Academy

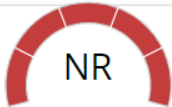

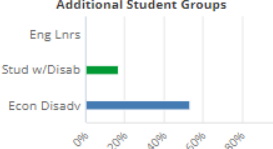
#### School Year 2022-2023 Nevada School Rating

| <p><i>School Level:</i> Middle School<br/><i>Grade:</i> 06-11<br/><i>Levels:</i><br/><i>District:</i> State Public Charter School Authority<br/><i>School:</i> 4660 North Rancho<br/><i>Address:</i> Las Vegas, NV 89130</p>  |  <p><b>11.1</b><br/>Total Index Score</p>  | <p>School Type: <i>SPCSA</i><br/>School Designation: <i>Additional TSI</i><br/>95% Assessment Participation: <i>Penalty</i></p> |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|--|
|  <p><b>Student Race/Ethnicity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27.5% White</li> <li>23.8% BI/Afr Am</li> <li>35.9% Hisp/Latino</li> <li>1.5% Asian</li> <li>0.5% Am Ind/AK</li> <li>0.0% Nat</li> <li>0.0% Pac Isl</li> <li>10.5% Two or More</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Performance History</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>School Year</th> <th>Index Score/Star Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021-2022</td> <td>18.8 NR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-2021</td> <td>N/A N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | School Year   | Index Score/Star Rating | 2021-2022 | 18.8 NR | 2020-2021 | N/A N/A | <p><b>Additional Student Groups</b></p>  |
| School Year   | Index Score/Star Rating   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
| 2021-2022   | 18.8 NR   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
| 2020-2021   | N/A N/A   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |

### High School

#### Explore Academy

#### School Year 2022-2023 Nevada School Rating

| <p><i>School Level:</i> High School<br/><i>Grade:</i> 06-11<br/><i>Levels:</i><br/><i>District:</i> State Public Charter School Authority<br/><i>School:</i> 4660 North Rancho<br/><i>Address:</i> Las Vegas, NV 89130</p>  |  <p><b>NR</b><br/>Total Index Score</p>  | <p>School Type: <i>SPCSA</i><br/>School Designation: <i>No Designation</i><br/>95% Assessment Participation: <i>Met</i></p> |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|--|
|  <p><b>Student Race/Ethnicity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25.0% White</li> <li>22.0% BI/Afr Am</li> <li>39.0% Hisp/Latino</li> <li>4.0% Asian</li> <li>0.0% Am Ind/AK</li> <li>0.0% Nat</li> <li>0.0% Pac Isl</li> <li>10.0% Two or More</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Performance History</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>School Year</th> <th>Index Score/Star Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021-2022</td> <td>40.0 NR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-2021</td> <td>N/A N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | School Year   | Index Score/Star Rating | 2021-2022 | 40.0 NR | 2020-2021 | N/A N/A | <p><b>Additional Student Groups</b></p>  |
| School Year   | Index Score/Star Rating   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
| 2021-2022   | 40.0 NR   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |
| 2020-2021   | N/A N/A   |   |                         |           |         |           |         |  |

# Math and ELA Results

## Nevada School Performance Framework

### 2023

## Proficiency Rates

### Middle School

#### Math Proficient

| Groups                            | 2023 % | 2023 % District | 2023 % MIP | 2022 % | 2022 % District | 2022 % MIP |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| All Students                      | 6.9    | 38.5            | 42.7       | 17.5   | 36.5            | 39.7       |
| American Indian/Alaska Native     | -      | 35.0            | 35.3       | -      | 36.3            | 31.9       |
| Asian                             | -      | 62.5            | 62.6       | -      | 62.7            | 60.6       |
| Black/African American            | <5     | 19.4            | 31         | <5     | 18.2            | 27.3       |
| Hispanic/Latino                   | 6.3    | 28.3            | 36.2       | 14.7   | 26.4            | 32.8       |
| Pacific Islander                  | -      | 37.9            | 43.1       | -      | 28.3            | 40.1       |
| Two or More Races                 | 11.7   | 44.5            | 46.4       | -      | 41.8            | 43.6       |
| White/Caucasian                   | 9.7    | 51.4            | 52.3       | 26.3   | 48.1            | 49.8       |
| Special Education                 | <5     | 11.5            | 26.5       | <5     | 9.7             | 22.7       |
| English Learners Current + Former | <5     | 21.5            | 28         | 5.8    | 20.1            | 24.2       |
| English Learners Current          | <5     | 6.5             | -          | -      | 7.6             | -          |
| Economically Disadvantaged        | 5.4    | 24.9            | 36.1       | 10.3   | 23.9            | 32.7       |

#### ELA Proficient

| Groups                            | 2023 % | 2023 % District | 2023 % MIP | 2022 % | 2022 % District | 2022 % MIP |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| All Students                      | 17.6   | 53.4            | 58.6       | 35.0   | 57.3            | 56.4       |
| American Indian/Alaska Native     | -      | 45.6            | 49         | -      | 53.7            | 46.3       |
| Asian                             | -      | 74.7            | 78.2       | -      | 79.0            | 77.1       |
| Black/African American            | <5     | 37.4            | 43.9       | 9.5    | 41.1            | 40.9       |
| Hispanic/Latino                   | 15.8   | 44.8            | 50.5       | 35.2   | 48.2            | 47.9       |
| Pacific Islander                  | -      | 47.2            | 57.8       | -      | 53.3            | 55.5       |
| Two or More Races                 | 17.6   | 60.0            | 65         | -      | 64.6            | 63.2       |
| White/Caucasian                   | 31.8   | 64.0            | 69.6       | 40.6   | 67.2            | 68         |
| Special Education                 | <5     | 17.4            | 29.6       | <5     | 18.0            | 25.8       |
| English Learners Current + Former | <5     | 34.0            | 31.7       | 17.6   | 38.8            | 28.1       |
| English Learners Current          | <5     | 12.0            | -          | -      | 16.7            | -          |
| Economically Disadvantaged        | 16.4   | 40.8            | 49.8       | 24.7   | 45.9            | 47.1       |

### High School

#### Math Proficient

#### Math Proficient Points Earned: NA/10

| Groups                            | 2023 % | 2023 % District | 2023 % MIP | 2022 % | 2022 % District | 2022 % MIP |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| All Students                      | -      | 25.7            | 39.38      | N/A    | 25.2            | 36.19      |
| American Indian/Alaska Native     | -      | 20.0            | 30.62      | N/A    | -               | 26.96      |
| Asian                             | -      | 50.2            | 55.12      | N/A    | 55.1            | 52.76      |
| Black/African American            | -      | 11.0            | 26.37      | N/A    | 10.2            | 22.5       |
| Hispanic/Latino                   | -      | 16.0            | 30.44      | N/A    | 14.2            | 26.78      |
| Pacific Islander                  | -      | 28.0            | 36.16      | N/A    | 23.0            | 32.8       |
| Two or More Races                 | -      | 35.5            | 43.1       | N/A    | 31.9            | 40.11      |
| White/Caucasian                   | -      | 33.6            | 49.68      | N/A    | 33.8            | 47.04      |
| Special Education                 | -      | 6.2             | 20.93      | N/A    | 6.6             | 16.76      |
| English Learners Current + Former | -      | <5              | 22.86      | N/A    | <5              | 18.8       |
| English Learners Current          | -      | <5              | 20.23      | N/A    | <5              | 16.04      |
| Economically Disadvantaged        | -      | 14.5            | 31.41      | N/A    | 14.6            | 27.8       |

#### ELA Proficient

#### ELA Proficient Points Earned: NA/10

| Groups                            | 2023 % | 2023 % District | 2023 % MIP | 2022 % | 2022 % District | 2022 % MIP |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| All Students                      | -      | 54.0            | 53.55      | N/A    | 54.3            | 51.11      |
| American Indian/Alaska Native     | -      | 70.0            | 42.92      | N/A    | -               | 39.92      |
| Asian                             | -      | 75.2            | 68.51      | N/A    | 78.7            | 66.85      |
| Black/African American            | -      | 34.6            | 38.08      | N/A    | 40.6            | 34.82      |
| Hispanic/Latino                   | -      | 43.8            | 42.69      | N/A    | 42.3            | 39.67      |
| Pacific Islander                  | -      | 56.1            | 53.74      | N/A    | 35.8            | 51.31      |
| Two or More Races                 | -      | 65.5            | 62.16      | N/A    | 60.5            | 60.16      |
| White/Caucasian                   | -      | 64.6            | 65.93      | N/A    | 65.7            | 64.14      |
| Special Education                 | -      | 19.2            | 23.93      | N/A    | 16.5            | 19.92      |
| English Learners Current + Former | -      | 10.9            | 25.56      | N/A    | 12.5            | 21.64      |
| English Learners Current          | -      | 6.0             | 20.18      | N/A    | 9.2             | 15.98      |
| Economically Disadvantaged        | -      | 41.8            | 43.73      | N/A    | 43.4            | 40.77      |

# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Geographic Comparison Report

## Middle School

**GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS INDICATOR (25 POINTS)**  
SPCSA school NSPF performance vs. comparison district/school(s).

**0/25** 0 automatic points in indicator.  
A 4- or 5-star equivalent NSPF score earns 15 or 25 automatic points.

**NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (10 POINTS)**

**0/10** NSPF score difference of -29.4 between school (11.1 points) and comparison district (40.5 points).

**NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON SCHOOL (15 POINTS)**

**0/15** NSPF score difference of -8.9 between school (11.1 points) and comparison school (20 points).

## High School

**GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS INDICATOR (25 POINTS)**  
SPCSA school NSPF performance vs. comparison district/school(s).

**N/A** Indicator cannot be calculated. Indicator measures are unavailable.

**NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (10 POINTS)**

**N/A** Measure cannot be calculated. The school and/or comparison district NSPF score is unavailable.

**NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON SCHOOL (15 POINTS)**

**N/A** Measure cannot be calculated. The school and/or comparison school NSPF score is unavailable.

# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Diversity Comparison Results

## Middle School

**ENROLLMENT DIVERSITY INDICATOR (15 POINTS)**  
SPCSA school FRL, IEP, and EL enrollment rates vs. comparison district.

**12/15** 0 bonus points in indicator.  
One bonus point per group with 25%+ increase over prior year.

**ENROLLMENT RATES VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (5 POINTS EACH)**

**4/5** School FRL rate of  $\geq 50$  to  $< 60\%$  compared to district Gr6-8 FRL rate of  $> 95.0\%$ .

**5/5** School IEP rate of  $\geq 15$  to  $< 20\%$  compared to district Gr6-8 IEP rate of 12.6%.

**3/5** School EL rate of  $\geq 5$  to  $< 10\%$  compared to district Gr6-8 EL rate of 13.8%.

## High School

**ENROLLMENT DIVERSITY INDICATOR (15 POINTS)**  
SPCSA school FRL, IEP, and EL enrollment rates vs. comparison district.

**12/15** Indicator bonus points for: IEP.  
One bonus point per group with 25%+ increase over prior year.

**ENROLLMENT RATES VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (5 POINTS EACH)**

**3/5** School FRL rate of  $\geq 50$  to  $< 60\%$  compared to district Gr9-12 FRL rate of  $> 95.0\%$ .

**5/5** School IEP rate of  $\geq 15$  to  $< 20\%$  compared to district Gr9-12 IEP rate of 10.4%.

**3/5** School EL rate of  $< 5\%$  compared to district Gr9-12 EL rate of 13.2%.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

| Group             | Number of Participants | Duration of Focus Group |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Governing Board   | 2                      | 45 minutes              |
| Parents/Families  | 5                      | 45 minutes              |
| Students          | 10                     | 45 minutes              |
| School Leadership | 2                      | 45 minutes              |
| Staff             | 5                      | 45 minutes              |

### Governing Board<sup>1</sup>:

- Members of the governing board indicated there are six members that include representatives from the areas of education, finance, law, non-profit organizations, and parents of students enrolled at Explore Academy. Board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month. Agendas, public notices, minutes, and meeting materials are available on the school’s website. Policies and procedures related to open meeting laws are followed. Governing board members are up to date on state required training, including open meeting law. The governing board reported receiving extensive reports to review at monthly board meetings, including financial reports and data on student academic standing. Board members expressed their desire to receive monthly meeting materials in greater advance due to their individual professional obligations. One board member said, “As a board we are committed to the school and its mission and receiving materials a few days before the monthly meeting doesn’t provide us enough time to really delve into the information and formulate questions or a response. Obtaining items at least two weeks before a meeting would be wonderful.”
- Governing board members were asked to speak about the status of the financial audit and amended budget. Participants in the focus group were forthright saying, “The process has been challenging. The board has been concerned about the audit process and meeting audit standards. We believe we are on track based on the information provided to the board.” The delinquent PERS obligation has been followed very closely by the board and the board is confident to have PERS current by January 2024. Board members shared they have offered their professional acumen and time to the school to support the school’s efforts but have not felt leadership and network personnel have asked for assistance from board members.
- Board members said the governing board is very aware of the decrease in student enrollment, and the impact enrollment has on funding, as well as the 1-star NSPF rating. One board member said, “We discuss enrollment monthly. There is a program in place for ongoing continuous enrollment. We have discussed and continue to have conversations about what the school is doing to reach out to the community. The school hosts weekly tours of the school, is active in the community, and is developing a marketing plan.” Board members indicated they have a thorough understanding of the curricula and its alignment to the state standards. One board member said, “We have been paying close attention to the data that is run routinely. We know where students are and where they are expected to be academically. We are aware of the math and ELA scores and the school’s plans to improve its academic standing.” Board members shared that as a board, a large concern has been the safety of

---

<sup>1</sup> Two members of Explore Academy member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

students and school personnel this year. “We want everyone to be safe so academics can be the center of focus.” Another board member said, “With the change in school leadership this year, we wanted to ensure leadership could gain traction and complete things at the school responsively. There is a lot for the leader to carry on her shoulders. The day-to-day operations are heavy and giving time to establish oneself and gather metrics is important.” The governing board has plans to review the first half of the 2023-2024 year in January and establish greater oversight if needed.

- Members of the governing board focus group provided a status update on prior site evaluation recommendations to evaluate Explore Academy’s Charter Management Organization (CMO). One board member said, “We have three options or solutions for an evaluation tool that we are examining. We have not read through each of these thoroughly as of yet. We discussed evaluating the CMO a few meetings ago, but not recently. It is in process.” Members of the governing board indicated they would like to meet with both network personnel and the school leader to establish which metric is the best fit for the evaluation. A board member stated, “We have informally evaluated the CMO, as we receive information monthly regarding operations, but have yet to finalize a formal evaluation”.

### Parents/Families:

- Some parents in the family focus group indicated Explore Academy communicates with families weekly. One parent said, “We receive emails weekly about our child’s academic progress. We receive information from both leadership as well as information from the teachers. The school lets us know whether our child is on track to pass a class or not.” Another parent shared their child Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and she receives information about behavior, and whether or not their student is focused or on task in the weekly report.
- While some parents reported regular weekly communication that is helpful, other members of the focus group said emails are inconsistent. One parent said, “Sometimes I receive emails and then some weeks I do not.” A second parent said, “I don’t hear from teachers unless I reach out.” A third parent indicated, “the commentary in the software programs seems to be pre-written statements that teachers can select from a drop-down menu, rather than individuated notes on my child’s progress. For example, I often receive notes that say, ‘outlook is mixed’. What does that even mean? That is not a true progress report. Where are the specifics or the individual information that I can use at home to help my child?” Several parents agreed, with a parent stating, “I received one notification stating my child was expected to pass and then the very next communication said my child has not passed. This is frustrating and doesn’t give me the information I need to help my child at home.” Other parents said the school will communicate information stating their child is passing the core but not passing the Flavor<sup>2</sup> and this is confusing. Parents of students in high school indicated contradictory information regarding updated credit analysis is problematic. Some parents said an updated credit analysis has not occurred since July, while others said they received an updated progress report in October.

---

<sup>2</sup> Flavors are 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. Teachers create different versions or themes (Flavors) of each seminar that differentiate the way in which the seminar can be offered to students. It is from this diversity that students can choose the manner in which they are educated. Specific themes for the seminar flavors, and their prominent strategies, are developed through the creativity of the school’s teachers.



# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

- Parents expressed a desire to have a class in how to navigate Infinite Campus<sup>3</sup> and Google Classroom<sup>4</sup>. Both of these software platforms are used school-wide to record student academic progress. One parent said “I want to know in Infinite Campus exactly which assignment my child has missed or received a poor grade in. Detailed notes would really help.” Another parent said, “emails are great, but emails do not always come through and if an email is missed, then information is missed.” A quick verbal interaction would be really helpful.” Other parents in the family focus group said it is also challenging to know what information is older and what information is newer in Infinite Campus and Google Classroom. A parent explained, “Once Flavors change, notes still stay in my child’s record. Those notes do not go away, and notes do not sunset inside the platform automatically. The teacher needs to archive the class, parents cannot do this on their end.” Several parents said, “Google classroom is problematic in that once an assignment is submitted, we cannot see the assignment to help my child see where they made mistakes or where they need help.” Another parent articulated, “The software programs are time consuming and create anxiety and frustration.
- The site evaluation team asked families if they receive weekly phone calls home. Leadership and staff indicated a school-wide emphasis on communication during the 2023-2024 year. This includes weekly telephone conversations with families about students’ progress behaviorally and academically. Family members in the focus group said they were unaware of this initiative, and they have not been receiving weekly telephone communications from school personnel.

### Students:

- Students said they are motivated to come to school and enjoy learning. One student said he is motivated to come to school because he wants to gain a reputation for putting in effort to do the work. A second student said, “If I am absent, I miss things and I can’t catch up. I miss out on opportunities to complete class activities I am interested in. I miss my friends. I want to be here to learn.”
- Students were candid about circumstances that prevented them from attending school. A few students said the way some teachers treat the students prevents them from wanting to be in school. One student shared, “Some teachers act like they dislike kids or hate being here. Every question is an annoyance or somehow bothers them. That outlook doesn’t make me want to be here.” A second student followed up with the comment, “What prevents me from coming to school is the idea that nobody cares about me.” Several students said they rely on others for school transportation. “If I cannot come to school, it’s because I don’t have a way to get here,” a third student said. Another student shared he is responsible for younger siblings and if they are ill, he stays home and cares for them.
- Students were asked how teachers provided feedback on assignments or projects. Students indicated some teachers write only a few words or verbally provide quick feedback, such as ‘good job,’ or you need to spend a little more time on your assignment,’ but nothing specific. Students said there are some teachers who give “really good, detailed feedback” either written or verbal.

---

<sup>3</sup> Infinite Campus is a web-based program providing families the ability to view academic information for their children.

<sup>4</sup> Google Classroom is a free blended learning platform developed by Google for educational institutions that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Leadership:

- Leadership is aware of the 40% enrollment reduction from the 22-23 school year to the 23-24 year. The principal said, “We are enrolling students all the time. We have seen increases in our English learner (EL) and students with special needs (SPED) populations this year. We have also seen an increase in our high mobility, transient population. As a Title I school that serves economically disadvantaged students, we concentrate our focus on the needs of these populations.” To ameliorate the fiscal loss that accompanies a reduction in enrollment, leadership indicated strategizing where monies can be saved and purchasing only necessities. For example, the school leader teaches two math periods a day rather than hiring a part-time math instructor which would add to the retirement, insurance and salary payments. The school leader said, “We want to be financially sustainable and consider what talents are readily available without impacting our bottom line.”
- Leadership provided ways in which Explore Academy has increased family engagement by focusing on the culture of communication from school personnel. Leadership said, “We send out regular emails outlining upcoming events and school activities. I try to provide instant responsiveness to feedback from families. I am seeing an increase in community event participation and an increase in family participation. Families have been donating their time and supplies in larger ways this year. I am on the phone with families every day. We started an athletic program and tutoring opportunities based on feedback from families and students.” Leadership said families receive weekly progress reports, as well as telephone calls, sharing positive information about their child. “A credit analysis is completed every term so students are aware of their progress and know where they need to be in selecting their next term classes,” leadership stated.
- Leadership discussed how proficiency data is monitored at the leadership level. Students complete CERT<sup>5</sup> three times throughout the year. CERT data “shows students and teachers where students are strong in their development and where students need to develop.” Students practice and track growth in math and reading in alternating 15-minute targeted IXL<sup>6</sup> sessions Monday through Thursday. “Students reading content one day and math the next. Faculty have participated in professional development (PD) to understand how to review data and use learning assessments to spiral and scaffold instruction.” Leadership said, “Standardized core assessments from term one to term three have seen an increase of 18.4% in math scores and a 30% growth in sixth grade from the beginning of the year.” Varying levels of rigor throughout classes have been strengthened to be more horizontally and vertically consistent.
- Leadership shared, “PD occurs every Friday where we meet as an entire faculty and talk about data and specialized populations. Our emergent language learners (EL) are supported through sheltered instruction” (SIOP)<sup>7</sup>. The principal said she discusses WIDA scores intently and in-depth at the weekly meetings as Explore Academy has many students on the cusp of testing out of EL services. “We are intentional in providing EL supports and testing students. We have a front-loading process in which we build vocabulary up front and reinforce that vocabulary through targeted instruction.”

---

<sup>5</sup> CERT is an online assessment tool aligned with Career and College Readiness Standards and ACT content areas of math, English, reading and science. Data is organized using language familiar to students and parents.

<sup>6</sup> IXL is a personalized learning platform with a comprehensive k-12 curriculum, individualized guidance, and real-time analytics.

<sup>7</sup> The *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol*® (SIOP®) is a framework for planning and delivering instruction in content areas such as science, history, and mathematics to English language learners. The goal of SIOP® is to help teachers integrate academic language development into their lessons, allowing students to learn and practice English as it is used in the context of academic textbooks, discussions, and lectures.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Staff:

- Faculty focus group participants indicated a school-wide focus on communication for the 2023-2024 academic year. Faculty reported behavioral and academic expectations were clear for both students and faculty at the beginning of the year. “These have been examined and revisited as needed.” In describing the ways in which communication between school personnel and families has grown one teacher said, “Explore Academy uses weekly progress reports that discuss where students are struggling and excelling. We as teachers can input commentary such as ‘behavior is affecting grades, or attendance is affecting grade.’ We can also input accommodations that we have made for our students.” Another teacher indicated the weekly progress reports have assisted students in keeping track of assignments submitted. “Sometimes a student will let me know they submitted an assignment but upon looking at the computer together, we can discover what happened. Usually, the student submitted an assignment but forgot to attach the document.” Faculty also reported introducing themselves to families at the beginning of the year and including contact information, and class content. A third teacher said, “We are encouraged to telephone home and make two positive phone calls per week.” Faculty said some parents prefer to communicate through emails rather than on the telephone. Explore Academy utilizes Google Classroom and Infinite Campus to record student’s academic progress. The Flex classroom period teaches students how to log into and use the software platforms.
- Faculty stated they participate in weekly PD. One teacher said, “Leadership is very data driven. Data is shared with the faculty, and we are encouraged to use the data and adjust our content so students can do better academically.” Explore Academy uses IXL<sup>8</sup> to pinpoint student strengths and areas in need of attention. We also look at our interim testing data and hold friendly competitions amongst the students to see who can make the most gains. Students with large academic gains celebrated in a quarterly school-wide assembly. The faculty said leadership is very invested in not only student academic growth but also in teachers’ professional growth. One teacher said, “Leadership’s commitment makes us want to do better and work harder. Our school leader jumps into the classroom and teaches herself. We are not talked down to, we have a dialogue. There is empathetic listening, and we are encouraged to think outside of the box and think about results.”
- Faculty reported using various strategies to foster academic talk in the classroom. Scaffolding techniques, sentence stems, individual white boards, small groups, and individual class roles were some of the strategies described. Teachers also shared that curricular instructional goals are aligned to the Common Core<sup>9</sup> and Nevada state standards. One teacher explained, “if the focus is on analysis, all of the activities are tailored to that particular goal.” Another teacher said, “I use a lot of high visibility strategies from the theorist, John Hattie. For example, if there is an engagement question as a prompt, I can circulate and watch students’ progress and engage them with more questioning or ask them to include a visual with their prose writing. This allows a lot more one-on-one interaction time between me and my students.”

---

<sup>8</sup> IXL is a personalized learning platform with a comprehensive k-12 curriculum, individualized guidance, and real-time analytics.

<sup>9</sup> The Common Core is a set of academic standards for what every student is expected to learn in each grade level, from kindergarten through high school.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

---

## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

- Faculty shared staff culture being more positive during the 2023-2024 academic year than during the previous 2022-2023 school year. One teacher said, “We have new staff members this year that have contributed to us being a more cohesive team. This is our second year in this building, and we now have a sense of building ownership. We are no longer teaching in the lunchroom. The new staff hires have been so helpful in making us feel more of a team. The new hires have a more professional attitude than in previous years.” Another teacher stated, “The new staff align with the expectations and mission of the school.”

# 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.<br><br>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.<br><br>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.<br><br>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.<br><br>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: 2</b>   | <b>Total: 9</b>  | <b>Total: 0</b>   | <b>Total: 1</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: 2</b>   | <b>Total: 8</b>  | <b>Total: 0</b>   | <b>Total: 1</b>  | <b>Total: 1</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: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 10</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: 9</b>   | <b>Total: 1</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: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 7</b>   | <b>Total: 0</b>   | <b>Total: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 3</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: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 9</b>   | <b>Total: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 0</b>   | <b>Total: 1</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: 8</b>  | <b>Total: 2</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: 1</b>  | <b>Total: 9</b>  | <b>Total: 1</b>   | <b>Total: 0</b>   | <b>Total: 1</b>                           |

Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable

1. In one high school classroom, students individually completed end of term projects on their laptops. The teacher circulated the room intermittently answering student questions and checking on student progress. The teacher also consulted with students at his/her desk, as well as wrote individual feedback to student's work through the instructor's computer.
2. Students participated in small groups explaining mathematical concepts and steps in completing inverse operations for solving equations. Students were engaged in the learning, respectful of their peers, and used academic language when speaking in their small groups.
3. In one classroom, the instructor encouraged students to provide examples from their lived experience in using household appliances and machines to introduce how the industrial revolution created machinery to assist everyday work.
4. One yoga class had one teacher and 15 students. There was music, dimmed lights, mats and students listened to the teacher's directions for various yoga poses. The teacher provided many types of feedback and students were fully engaged.
5. In one middle school class, students were partially engaged in the learning. A few students used profanity toward their peers, were off task, and attempted to disrupt the learning environment. There were 17 students in the class and one teacher. The teacher approached some students individually in attempt to redirect behavior.
6. One middle school English language Arts class based its flavor on "Scary and Weird Stories." There were 22 students and one teacher. Students worked independently on their laptops, (some of which are provided by the school, and some are purchased by the student's family) to write several short stories. Students talked between themselves but were highly engaged in the writing assignment.
7. One middle school math class had 23 students, all of whom were engaged in solving algebraic expressions. Students used white boards to solve. The teacher walked around the room providing clear feedback to students. Students showed their work on their white boards. The teacher asked for student volunteers to go up to the board and solve the equation for all. The teacher asked students to check their work against the student volunteer working on the board. The teacher narrated the solved equation on the board and provided multiple forms of positive and meaningful feedback to the student's work.



# 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   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Indicator 1:</b><br>Education Program        | <p><b>Measures 1a and 1b:</b> The school implements the material terms of the education program.<br/>           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.<br/>           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> | As presented during the leadership presentation, Explore Academy implements the material terms of the education program. Curricular materials align to Nevada Content Standards (NVACS). Classroom observations indicated students have instructional supports.  |
| <b>Indicator 3:</b><br>Governance and Reporting | <p><b>Measure 3a:</b> The school complies with governance requirements<br/>           Ex: Board policies and oversight of Education Service Provider</p>  | Explore Academy leadership reports timely notice of Governing Board Meetings. Each board meeting contains an agenda item for public comment for stakeholders to ask questions, provide comments or concerns pertaining to Explore Academy. Meeting agendas and minutes are publicly accessible a via the school’s website. Per the governing board and leadership focus group sessions, the Explore Academy governing board follows governing board policies. Board composition is aligned with Nevada state requirements. |
| <b>Indicator 4:</b><br>Students and Employees   | <p><b>Measure 4a:</b> Student records under lock and key/stored appropriately</p>   | Student and faculty records are stored under lock and key in a secure room designated just for records.  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | <b>Measure 4d:</b> Personnel files are under lock and key/stored appropriately   |   |
| <b>Indicator 5:</b><br>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, an active food service permit, and an elevator 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.

Prior recommendations by SPCSA staff

- Continue to work on Tier One instruction:
    - Shared learning targets
    - Shared criteria for student success
    - Increase feedback from the teacher to the students
    - Increase levels of strategic teacher questioning
  - Leadership commits to attending SPCSA trainings on the topic of NSPF measures and the Nevada Report Card.
  - Continue to work on family relationships and seek out methods to improve overall levels of parent engagement.
  - Explore Academy's governing board commits to evaluating their CMO and to learning more about their role in monitoring charter school academic performance.
- Strong Recommendations**
- Implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement which contain both reliability and validity.
  - Rectify delinquent PERS payments by February 1, 2023, to avoid SPCSA intervention under the Organizational Performance Framework.

School Assessment of progress made against recommendations and evidence provided, or reasons school believes additional time may be necessary to fully address past recommendations

- Tier One Instruction
- Teacher strategy of the term
  - Professional development in learning targets; scaffolding strategies
  - Data analysis
  - Faculty Professional Development
  - January 2023 implemented the SBAC interim assessment blocks with grades six through eight.
- Family engagement
- Weekly communication
  - Family forums
  - Weekly progress reports
  - Positive points of contact
- Evaluate CMO  
incomplete, on monthly governing board agenda
- Strong Recommendations**
- Interim assessments in place: CERT, IXL, Standardized Core Assessments

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PERS: Financial plan in place to clear delinquent accounts.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>SPCSA staff assessment based upon findings during site evaluation</p> | <p>Explore Academy leadership believes the following recommendations from the 2022- 2023 site evaluation have been addressed and/or are ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tier One instruction</li> <li>✓ Regularly attending SPCSA trainings on the topic of NSPF measures and the Nevada Report Card</li> <li>✓ Family engagement</li> <li>✓ Measures of Progress</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation of the CMO is a continual discussion on the governing board agenda.</p> <p>PERS: Financial plan in place to clear delinquent accounts. Plan to complete by January 2024.</p> <p>SPCSA staff agrees with the information provided here. Clearing the delinquent PERS account and a plan to evaluate the CMO was strongly emphasized during the site evaluation.</p> |

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## 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.

- **Ongoing leadership feedback and teacher capacity-building**

Staff and family focus group participants reported strong support from leadership and the CMO representation on campus. CMO members present at site evaluation and focus group participants appreciated that the school leader willingly participates in cleaning the school and teaching classes. “She doesn’t ask anyone to do something she isn’t willing to do herself.” Staff, parents, and the representative from the CMO said the school leader attentively listens to concerns and implements suggestions with thoughtful consideration. The school leader has been successful in creating a school environment where students feel safe, supported, engaged, and accepted.

- **Cultivating a culture of communication**

Leadership routinely strategizes ways to build and model a clear and transparent culture of communication amongst school stakeholders. The family, student, and staff focus groups provided anecdotes of consistently improving school communication. The staff and family focus groups spoke highly of the support they receive from leadership and one another in building and maintaining school culture. SPCSA staff observed civility and manners between adults and students modeled in the classrooms and the common areas. SPCSA staff observed teachers and students displaying positive interactions within classrooms and in common areas. The SPCSA site evaluation team observed comfortable classroom communication between students and the teacher, and students to their peers. Classroom teachers have cultivated trust with their students. Students felt comfortable asking peers and teachers for academic support. Several positive and useful teacher responses to student questions, learning engagement, and teacher dedication to student learning were observed.

- **Diverse student population**

Explore Academy has a diverse student population that aligns with the spirit of the SPSCA Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment. The SPCSA is committed to “equitable access to diverse, innovative, and high-quality public schools for every Nevada student” as indicated in the mission statement. Within the 2019-2024 SPCSA Strategic Plan, one of the goals is to increase the diversity of students served by SPCSA Schools, students learning English as a new language, recipients of free and reduced lunch, and students with an Individualized Education Plan. Validation day information indicates 100% of currently enrolled students at Explore Academy qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). This is above the SPSCA’s 51% FRL average. Explore Academy’s English learner population is 29%, compared to the SPCSA’s ten percent. Twelve-point six percent of Explore Academy’s students receive special education services.

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

### 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.

- SPCSA staff appreciate school leadership sharing there is work to do at Explore Academy. The 2023-2024 academic year of the school has presented opportunities for new school leadership to reflect and create systems of support to increase academic standing. Explore Academy was rated one star on the 2022 -2023 NSPF. Leadership indicated an action plan has been created to address the 1-star rating and improve.
- Explore leadership reported challenges in recruiting quality certified talent. Once personnel are hired, onboarding midyear is challenging given the responsibilities of daily operations and the time and attention critical to orienting new school personnel.
- Lower than anticipated enrollment has challenged the school during the 2023-2024 academic year. Lower than anticipated enrollment and students unenrolling at Explore Academy has impacted state received monies for in-pupil funding and consequently impacted resource support. Explore Academy has continuous enrollment during the 2023-2024 year. As a consequence of continuous enrollment, onboarding new students to the Flavors model and academic structure of Explore Academy can be intricate.
- The Governing Board for Explore Academy is challenged to responsibly complete state documentation in a timely manner. SPCSA personnel and leadership indicated challenges with the governing board completing tasks such as submitting legally required items by the state of Nevada and creating an evaluation tool for the CMO. The Governing Board are not in compliance with board member disclosure forms, and not all board members have completed the fingerprinting/background checks. One board member has been on the board since Sep 2022, and forms have not been completed. Two of the five governing board members have completed and submitted legally required forms.
- School leadership acknowledged chronic absenteeism is an ongoing challenge. Attendance information from the most recent data indicates chronic absenteeism of 38.2%.

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

### 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.

- **Chronic Absenteeism**

SPCSA staff recommend Explore Academy continue strategizing ways in which to address chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism rate levels are an important opportunity for improvement. Chronic absenteeism predicts low academic success and eventually is a predictor of students who may drop out of school (Sugrue, Zuel, & Laliberte, 2016). The 38.2% absenteeism rate has a direct effect on the NSPF index score for a school. The Nevada State Point Attribution Table (PAT) for chronic absenteeism rates has been provided below. The school index ratings (displayed on page four of this report) could have been up to ten points higher if absenteeism rates were improved.

Chronic Absenteeism Point Attribution Table

| Rate         | Points | Rate          | Points | Rate          | Points |
|--------------|--------|---------------|--------|---------------|--------|
| <5           | 10     | ≥ 11 and < 12 | 6.5    | ≥18 and <19   | 3      |
| ≥ 5 and <6   | 9.5    | ≥ 12 and < 13 | 6      | ≥ 19 and < 20 | 2.5    |
| ≥ 6 and <7   | 9      | ≥ 13 and < 14 | 5.5    | ≥ 20 and < 21 | 2      |
| ≥ 7 and <8   | 8.5    | ≥ 14 and < 15 | 5      | ≥ 21 and < 22 | 1.5    |
| ≥ 8 and <9   | 8      | ≥ 15 and < 16 | 4.5    | ≥ 22 and < 23 | 1      |
| ≥ 9 and <10  | 7.5    | ≥ 16 and < 17 | 4      | ≥ 23 and < 24 | 0.5    |
| ≥ 10 and <11 | 7      | ≥ 17 and < 18 | 3.5    | ≥ 24          |        |

School personnel may want to access SPCSA’s Canvas repository containing updated information on Nevada state attendance laws, specifically Nevada Legislature Bill SB 249 to be excluded from chronic absenteeism calculations in the NSPF. Appropriate use of the MDP codes may lower a school’s chronic absenteeism rate. The SPCSA’s Canvas repository also contains information on Best Practices within the SPCSA charter school portfolio. One of these best practices is information on formalizing a school-wide chronic absenteeism plan. Continue efforts to increase attendance and educate families on the “direct correlation between good attendance and student achievement” (Dekalb, 1999).

- **Increase enrollment**

Explore Academy has lower than anticipated enrollment during the 2023-2024 academic year. Small class sizes and student absences can correlate adversely to overall reports Explore Academy’s lower enrollment can impact testing data and a smaller “n” size for overall data reporting. SPCSA staff recommend Explore Academy pursue solutions to address lower than anticipated enrollment. SPCSA staff encourages Explore Academy leadership to develop a school-wide plan to increase student applications, acceptance, and enrollment to optimize the new building and bolster low enrollment. Taking an asset-based approach to enrollment can optimize governing board support and expertise. Explore Academy should consider highlighting its unique mission and vision in their marketing materials.

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

- **Formalize a communication plan**

SPCSA staff recommend Explore Academy formalize a communication plan between school stakeholders, leadership, families, students, and faculty. School leaders, family members, students, and staff report that the school has undergone significant strides in cultivating communication for the 2023-2024 academic year. However, continued focused efforts in this area are recommended. Developing healthy relationships amongst stakeholders and providing frequent means of information with stakeholders undergirds agency and trust and establishes a sense of stability. The leadership team may want to read *Better Conversations* by Jim Knight (2016) as a communication plan is developed. Techniques for developing conversation partners, building connections through listening, finding common ground, and reframing emotion are provided in the text. Each chapter of the text contains bibliographical suggestions for further reading. For example, Knight lists several resources for leadership communicators including the powerful *Seven Thousand Ways to Listen* (Nepo 2013) and Goldsmith's *What got You Here Won't Get You There* (2007). Examples to consider for inclusion in the communication plan with each of the stakeholders are delineated below:

a) families:

Placing a suggestion box at the front of the school is a good first step to indicate a desire to develop a rapport with families and their thoughts. Leadership and faculty should strive to have personal conversations with families as they pick-up and drop-off their children. Impromptu conversations about the weather, sports, local events, etc. help parents see school personnel as approachable. School personnel could also randomly select five to ten families to telephone weekly and ask a short series of survey questions about the school, school personnel, media dissemination, etc. Another consideration is to invite parents to lunch with leadership and exchange ideas. Leadership may want to create a volunteer calendar in which parents can sign up and volunteer for various school activities that can include anything from assisting with reading to students to helping with lunchroom, tutoring, or classroom assistance (replacing bulletin board decorations, filing, making copies, organizing classroom space). Promoting parental participation in school committees and monthly meetings with families to discuss school policies and procedures are other ideas that leadership may want to consider. Hosting a parent university in which parents can practice accessing and navigating the various software platforms that house their child's data can build bridges between school personnel and families.

b) faculty

Developing common language for terms such as engagement, discourse, and empathetic listening provides a foundational means to building trust. Leadership may want to conduct a SWOT<sup>10</sup> analysis amongst faculty to encourage faculty voice, build agency, and buy-in. Teachers are last to have a voice in over 150,000 surveys when asked "at work do my opinions count?" (Lopez 2013). People are rarely motivated when they do not feel they have agency in an organization. Leadership could have a working lunch with faculty. The topics could be places to build empathetic listening and connecting with day-to-day concerns. Having a school-wide book study beginning with *Better Conversations* (Knight 2016) and completing the exercises at the end

---

<sup>10</sup> A SWOT analysis is a method for identifying and analyzing internal Strengths and Weaknesses and external Opportunities and Threats that shape institutional operations and in developing strategic goals.



# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

of each chapter may be a productive start. *The People Code* (Hartman 2007) or De Bono's six thinking hats exercise are also powerful tools to use in capacity building.

### c) Students

The formalized communication plan can detail strategic ways in which students can practice the use of academic language inside and outside the classroom. Staff and leadership shared there is a school-wide effort to celebrate student growth each quarter. The low student- to- teacher ratio at Explore Academy can empower educators to provide steady, high-quality formative and summative feedback to students in a timely manner. For example, asking students to “explain their thinking” using academic language while explaining concepts to their peers reinforces academic knowledge. Other examples of providing feedback include checking for understanding, individual student conferences, encouraging students to help each other, and making a comfortable space in which students can ask questions. This level of individual instruction and student feedback can strengthen students conceptual understanding. While Explore Academy is continually striving for greater and more helpful feedback, there is room to grow substantially in this area. SPCSA staff can connect Explore Academy leadership with other charter schools within the SPCSA portfolio that have identified strong instructional practices for academic growth as a strength if Explore Academy would like assistance.

- **Governing Board responsiveness**

It is important the Governing Board demonstrate it can meet deadlines consistently. The Governing Board are not in compliance with the board member disclosure forms. Not all board members have completed fingerprinting/background checks. One board member has been on the board since Sep 2022, and forms have not been completed. The board should have consistent, well attended meetings, providing strong oversight of the CMO and school. If communications break down, it is the board's responsibility to oversee operations as the board is ultimately responsible for the charter. Board members should work together to delegate and complete operationally important responsibilities. The Governing Board should strive to appear well prepared and timely with internal and external communications.

## STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluation of the CMO. This has been referenced in several previous site evaluations. The October 2022 site evaluation report stated:

It is recommended that the Explore Academy governing board commit to evaluating their CMO and to learning more about their role in monitoring charter school academic performance. The National Charter School Resource Center may be a good resource to use. The website offers areas of focus, resources, and FAQs as they relate to governing boards across the country.

<https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/>

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

While governing board members shared they are in-process of completing a metric for evaluating the CMO, the board has not evaluated the CMO despite numerous recommendations from the site evaluation team.

## DEFICIENCIES

- **Academic Performance**

Explore Academy received a Notice of Concern for academic performance during the 2022-2023 school year. The site evaluation team has recommended Explore Academy implement a method to assess student progress and measures of achievement and improve academic growth for four site evaluation cycles: 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. Previous strong recommendations regarding academic performance were listed in the October 2022 and February 2022 site evaluation reports for the 2022-2023 and 2022-2023 years respectively. In the February 2022 site evaluation report the site evaluation team wrote:

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 that the school create a more data-driven environment.

The site evaluation team also listed benefits of implementing a school-wide interim/benchmark metric as well as underscored the importance of school stakeholders understanding how to read and implement student academic data to make informed curricular decisions. A similar recommendation was made in the November 2020 site evaluation report:

Work to fine-tune a way to implement baseline and mid-year testing, such as interim tests, common formative assessments, daily formative assessments, and diagnostic assessments so as to 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. It is critical that teachers know the impact of their instruction in terms of their ability to recognize if and when a student has mastered a standard and when they have not.

While Explore Academy has implemented stronger use of student data according to leadership, the 2023 NSPF Star ratings report a one-star rating for Explore Academy with 11% proficiency. Continued monitoring of student needs for specific academic skills and interventions is critical at this time. Explore Academy should continue focusing on building and monitoring student academic gains by collaborating across grade bands and vertical alignment of instructional student outcomes. Continuing to educate teachers and families on current student performance data will benefit

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

---

## SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS Continued

teachers' ability to read and utilize the data when making curricular and instructional decisions. Concentrated PD on creating differentiating learning targets, tiered questioning, student centered discussion techniques, and intentional instructional approaches that engage all students will assist in bolstering student academic growth. Consider educating families with an ongoing 'Parent University' on how to access and read student academic data so families can support their children from home.

- **Delinquent PERS account**

Explore Academy is delinquent in PERS payments despite multiple conversations with SPCSA staff over the past several years. As a public school, Explore Academy is required to make timely payments to PERS to remain in compliance with SPCSA and state requirements. SPCSA staff requested a timeline for becoming current with PERS obligations and school leadership indicated that Explore would be current by February 1, 2023. That has not occurred, and Explore Academy is delinquent at the time of the site evaluation. Explore Academy governing board members and leadership report being current by January 2024. SPCSA emphasizes Explore meet this deadline to avoid SPCSA intervention under the Organizational Performance Framework.