



## Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

# Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Site Evaluation Report: February 25, 2025

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## **Links to Resources:**

- [Nevada School Performance Framework \(NSPF\)](#)
- [SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Results](#)
- [SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework Results](#)
- [SPCSA Financial Performance Framework Results](#)
- [Best Practices](#)

# Executive Summary

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation.

Pursuant to [NRS 388A.223](#), 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 years of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the school's academic and organizational effectiveness.

An analysis of the school's academic and operational success is undertaken by reviewing the most current versions of the Nevada State Performance Framework (NSPF), the SPCSA Academic Performance Framework, and the SPCSA Organizational Performance Framework.

In addition, the Site Evaluation Team conducts classroom observations to assess both the classroom environment and the instructional techniques on the day of the evaluation. The purpose of these observations is to collect evidence using a rubric based on the [Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching](#). All classroom rating outcomes are displayed within this report. The overall numbers provide information about the general nature of instruction at a given school during the day of the site evaluation.

SPCSA staff conducts focus group interviews by speaking with school leaders, governing board members, family members, those employed as staff, and most importantly, students enrolled at the school. The information gained during these focus groups is summarized and included in this report.

The site evaluation is 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 to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations during each year of their charter. Final Site Evaluation Reports are published to the SPCSA website and used in conjunction with other performance information to determine renewal decisions.

# 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.

## **High graduation rates**

One strength of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is the high school's four-year graduation rate of 91%, compared to the district average of 83%. This strong number of students graduating has earned the school 30/30 points on the Nevada School Performance Framework<sup>1</sup> (NSPF) for the 2023-24 school year.

## **Middle school English language indicator**

In middle school, Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus achieved a nine out of ten points on the English language indicator on the NSPF, demonstrating a high level of English language development among English language learner students, which is another strength. The middle school's Adequate Growth Percentile<sup>2</sup> (AGP) stands at 33%, well above the district average. This performance shows a supportive learning environment that propels student success in English language acquisition.

## **Clean and beautiful campus**

Another strength of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is its clean and beautiful campus. The well-maintained buildings, neatly landscaped grounds, and vibrant murals create a welcoming and inspiring environment for students. The classrooms provide a comfortable space for learning. Additionally, the school takes pride in keeping hallways and common areas spotless, ensuring a pleasant atmosphere for everyone.

## **Diversity in special populations**

Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has a richly diverse student body, which includes a wide range of special populations. These special populations include free and reduced lunch (FRL), Students with Individual Education Plans (IEP), and English language learners (EL). SPCSA's 2023-24 Academic Performance Report<sup>3</sup> includes a section entitled the Enrollment Diversity Indicator, which allows for a maximum of 15 points. The Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Elementary school report indicates 13 out of 15 points, which breaks into five out of five for the FRL rate, four out of five for the IEP rate, and three out of five for the EL rate. At the Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Middle School, the report indicates 12 out of 15 possible points,

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<sup>1</sup> The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) is Nevada's public-school rating system designed by Nevadans for Nevada public schools and developed in accordance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

<sup>2</sup> Adequate Growth Percentile is a criterion-referenced measure that compares a student's Standardized Growth Percentile (SGP) against the percentile needed to become proficient or stay proficient on the state assessment or WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) for English language (EL) learners. Regarding EL learners, AGPs are used to track their progress towards English proficiency within five years.

<sup>3</sup> SPCSA Academic Performance Framework report. Nevada law requires charter school sponsors to use an Academic Performance Framework. In this framework, schools earn points for performance, which are totaled to a final score and rating.

which break into five out of five for the FRL, four out of five for the IEP, and three out of five for the EL populations.

### **Small groups in elementary school**

Another notable strength of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus, as observed by the SPCSA staff, is the well-structured small group instruction in the elementary school. Lessons were carefully planned, allowing students to engage with grade-level texts while productively grappling with their content. Teachers facilitated learning by posing thoughtful questions that encouraged the use of academic vocabulary and enhanced comprehension. Students were highly engaged, actively expressing their ideas and participating in meaningful discussions with their teachers and peers. It was evident to SPCSA staff that teachers have been coached and trained in a well-planned lesson format.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Challenges

A summary of challenges as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback, and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework.

## **Finding and retaining highly qualified teachers**

A challenge for Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is attracting and retaining fully licensed educators. As the chart below indicates, a significant portion of the staff holds a substitute teaching license. Teachers who are fully licensed usually use effective teaching strategies and classroom management skills and have subject-matter expertise, allowing them to provide higher-quality instruction.

Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus	Full Licensed	Substitute Licensed
Elementary School	23%	77%
Middle School	43%	57%
High School	17%	83%

## **Downward academic trends in elementary, middle, and high school**

Another challenge is the declining academic performance of k-12 students, as evidenced by the NSPF data. In elementary school, the rating fell from two stars in the 2022-23 school year to one star in the 2023-24 school year, a 16-point drop in the index score. Similarly, the middle school experienced a 19-point decrease in its index score, resulting in a reduction from a three-star to a two-star rating. The high school also saw a seven-point decline, placing it at a three-star rating and nearing a two-star level.

## **Chronic absenteeism**

Another challenge for Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is the extremely high chronic absenteeism rates in elementary, middle, and high school, with rates of 49%, 38%, and 42% of students considered chronically absent, respectively. Chronic absenteeism significantly disrupts student learning and overall school engagement. Students miss school regularly fall behind in essential lessons and skills, leading to persistent academic gaps. This pattern undermines individual academic performance and diminishes students' motivation and confidence.

## **Low student engagement**

A final challenge for Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is the low level of student engagement in whole-group settings. As observed by the SPCSA team, this issue is reflected in fractured relationships between students and teachers, frequent disruptions to classroom instruction due to a lack of support with student behavior, and interruptions caused by non-instructional tasks. For instance, on the day of the site evaluation, the SPCSA staff observed 37 classrooms. In measuring student engagement in the learning process, 49% of the classrooms (page 23 of this report) observed were rated as approaching, and seven percent were rated as unsatisfactory. Indicators for the approaching category include students' engagement with the content, which was largely passive; the learning consists primarily of facts or procedures, not

encouraging higher-order thinking. An indicator of the unsatisfactory category was that few students were intellectually engaged in the lesson, or the lesson dragged on or appeared rushed. Collectively, these factors hinder the smooth flow of learning and can significantly impact the overall educational environment.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Recommendations

Recommended items are provided so charter schools may increase their school-wide performance and overall success. The Site Evaluation Team will follow up on these recommendations in preparation for the subsequent site evaluation.

## **Lack of consistent leadership and building leadership capacity**

SPCSA staff recommend establishing greater consistency in school leadership, particularly in light of the high turnover experienced over the past few school years at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. According to SPCSA team observations and information from focus groups, the frequent leadership changes have disrupted continuity, making maintaining a unified vision and stable environment difficult. A more consistent leadership structure is vital for fostering improved instructional quality, consistent communication, and better support for students and teachers. In addition, building leadership capacity within the school is essential for ensuring long-term school success. By enhancing strategic planning, communication, and instructional leadership skills, school leaders can better support professional development among staff, reduce turnover, and create a stable, innovative environment that responds effectively to changing educational demands.

## **Ensure instruction is aligned to the rigor of the Nevada Academic Content Standards for each grade level**

Although Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus follows a designated curriculum, the Nevada Academic Content Standards<sup>4</sup> (NVACS) emphasize that instruction should be guided by the standards rather than the curriculum. According to the SPCSA site evaluation team, some classrooms did not meet the rigor outlined in the NVACS. For instance, in a fifth-grade classroom, students were observed learning to identify characters, settings, and the beginning, middle, and end of a text. However, the NVACS for fifth grade requires students to go deeper by comparing and contrasting two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama while using specific details from the text for support. This misalignment suggests a need for instructional adjustments to ensure students engage in grade-appropriate, standards-based learning. Addressing this gap could involve professional development for teachers, curriculum modifications, or enhanced instructional support through an instructional coach or administrative team member to better align classroom instruction with NVACS rigor and expectations.

## **Parental representation on the governing board**

SPCSA staff recommend adding a parent member to the board at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus, as it is required in Nevada Statute NRS 388A.320 under “membership and qualifications,” which states, “The governing body of a charter school must consist of one parent or legal guardian of a pupil enrolled in the charter school who is not a teacher or an administrator at the charter school.” Including a parent representative will provide invaluable insights and ensure family perspectives are integrated into decision-making. This addition would enhance

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<sup>4</sup> The Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) are a set of clearly defined learning targets for each grade level in grades K-12.



community engagement and reinforce the school's commitment to addressing the diverse needs of students and families throughout the Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus school system.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Strong Recommendations

Strong recommendations identified during this site evaluation are listed here, if applicable.

Per the Site Evaluation Handbook, Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus will be required to create a Site Evaluation Response Plan, which must be approved by the SPCSA, to address each of the strong recommendations listed below. The SPCSA and the school will work together to review and monitor the plan until the strong recommendation requirements have been fully implemented and sufficient evidence has been provided that the Strong Recommendations have been fully satisfied.

## **Improve index scores in elementary, middle, and high school**

It is strongly recommended that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus focus on improving index scores and star ratings in its elementary, middle, and high schools, as current student learning and achievement levels fall well below expectations. The school received a Notice of Breach from the SPCSA Board at the SPCSA Board meeting on November 15, 2024, for academic performance for the 2023–2024 school year. Observations from the SPCSA site evaluation revealed that high-quality instruction is lacking in several classrooms, and Tier 1<sup>5</sup> instruction is not leading to acceptable levels of academic achievement. Significant opportunity gaps persist, with the elementary school scoring only four out of twenty points on the indicator and the middle school scoring five out of twenty, as referenced by the NSPF. Additionally, pooled proficiency in middle school is just 23.7%, earning only three out of twenty-five points on the NSPF, compared to the district rate of 47.3%. In high school, there is a pressing need to improve proficiency rates in math and science, as only 8.8% of students are proficient in math and 10.5% in science, compared to district rates of 24.1% and 23.6%, respectively. Addressing these gaps through stronger instructional practices and targeted academic interventions is critical to enhancing student outcomes and overall school performance.

## **Develop a communication plan**

It is strongly recommended that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus implement a structured and detailed communication plan that ensures clear, consistent, and timely communication among staff, parents, and students. Feedback from the parent focus group revealed dissatisfaction with current communication procedures. One parent expressed frustration, stating, “There is a big lack of communication. There is almost no follow-up when we have a concern. There is no response to emails, and escalation to the administration does not work.” Staff members shared similar concerns, noting that blanket statements are made to staff, undermining morale. Some suggestions to enhance communication include implementing two-way communication through monthly meetings with staff, parents, and student representatives and regular surveys and

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<sup>5</sup> Tier 1 instruction is the anchor of all tiered instruction. It is provided to all students every day. During Tier 1 instruction, teachers use scientifically researched programs and evidence-based practices, curricula, and strategies that have been proven effective for most students.

feedback forms to gather input and address concerns. Additionally, creating a weekly newsletter will help keep stakeholders informed, while a clear communication flowchart can improve internal coordination among staff. More suggestions include ensuring that staff feedback is personalized and utilizing one or two streamlined communication platforms for families which will further support effective and efficient communication.

### **Refine school-wide systems and structures of tiered support for behavior**

To create a more supportive and student-centered environment, the SPCSA strongly recommended that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus refine its multi-tiered system of behavioral support to prioritize proactive interventions and restorative practices. Previous site evaluation reports by the State Public Charter School Authority from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years recommended improvements in school-wide systems and structures for tiered behavioral support. Reducing the emphasis on compliance-based participation will encourage student engagement through meaningful, intrinsic motivation rather than mere rule adherence. Additionally, fostering a culture of respect through explicit instruction on respectful dialogue, conflict resolution, and positive reinforcement strategies will contribute to a more inclusive and constructive school climate. Regular professional development for staff, clear behavioral expectations, and ongoing monitoring of these initiatives will help ensure sustainable progress in these areas.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

Deficiencies identified during this site evaluation are listed here, if applicable.

Per the Site Evaluation Handbook, the Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus will be required to create a Site Evaluation Response Plan, which must be approved by the SPCSA to address the deficiency listed below. The SPCSA and the school will work together to review and monitor the plan until the deficiency requirements have been fully implemented and sufficient evidence has been provided that the deficiency has been fully satisfied.

## Decrease chronic absenteeism rates

Context	<p>A. Per the Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority and Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus which was fully executed on 7/1/2020 the consideration of the legislature in enacting legislation to authorize charter schools is to serve the best interests of all pupils, including pupils who may be at risk. A procedure by which the positive results achieved by charter schools may be replicated, and the negative results may be identified and eliminated.</p> <p>B. Consistent with any oversight practices set out in the Charter School Performance Framework, the Authority shall follow a progressive system of notification and calls for corrective action on the part of the Charter School. (7.5.1)</p> <p>C. The Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority and Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus executed on 7/1/2020 Part 2: School Operations: Student Recruitment, Enrollment, and Attendance: The Charter School shall adopt and adhere to a Truancy and Absence Policy pursuant to NAC 388A.160(5).</p>
Condition	<p>According to the original contract executed on 7/1/2020, Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has committed to (1) Per truancy law in Nevada, it is required by schools to take responsibility for addressing truancy, (2) per the school's mission, "Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is committed to educating responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship."</p> <p>At this time, the levels of chronically absent students and, in turn, achievement at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus fall well below expectations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular attendees: miss five or fewer days a year (less than one day per month)</li><li>• At-risk attendees: miss five percent to nine percent of school (about nine days a year, or one to two days per month)</li><li>• Chronically absent attendees: miss ten percent or more of school (about 18 days a year; more than two days per month)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Severely chronically absent: miss 20% or more days of school (about 36 days a year; more than four days per month).</li></ul>																												
Causes	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus students are not attending school regularly. Chronic absenteeism rates must be improved. School leaders and staff are strongly encouraged to improve chronic absenteeism rates because the rates are significantly above the SPCSA average at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. “Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts a variety of student outcomes including mathematics and reading achievement, social-emotional development, grade retention and dropout, and student discipline” (e.g. Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018; Gottfried, 2017).																												
Effect	<p>The most recent Nevada School Rating Report for the 2023-24 school year, as posted by the Nevada Department of Education in September 2024, indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Elementary: An overall chronic absenteeism rate of 49.9%.</li><li>Middle: An overall chronic absenteeism rate of 38%.</li><li>High: An overall chronic absenteeism rate of 42.6%.</li></ul> <p>Significant increases in chronic absenteeism rates between the 2022-2023 school year and the 2023- 2024 school year at each level took place, as seen in the table below. Thus, the school received a Notice of Breach from the SPCSA Board at the SPCSA Board meeting on November 15, 2024, for academic performance for the 2023–2024 school year.</p> <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>School Level</th><th>Chronic Absenteeism %</th><th>SPCSA Average</th></tr><tr><td>2022-23</td><td>Elementary</td><td>36.7%</td><td>22.9%</td></tr><tr><td>2023-24</td><td>Elementary</td><td>49.9%</td><td>20.7%</td></tr><tr><td>2022-23</td><td>Middle</td><td>46.3%</td><td>18.8%</td></tr><tr><td>2023-24</td><td>Middle</td><td>38.4%</td><td>15.8%</td></tr><tr><td>2022-23</td><td>High</td><td>23.5%</td><td>19.6%</td></tr><tr><td>2023-24</td><td>High</td><td>42.6%</td><td>19.9%</td></tr></table>	Year	School Level	Chronic Absenteeism %	SPCSA Average	2022-23	Elementary	36.7%	22.9%	2023-24	Elementary	49.9%	20.7%	2022-23	Middle	46.3%	18.8%	2023-24	Middle	38.4%	15.8%	2022-23	High	23.5%	19.6%	2023-24	High	42.6%	19.9%
Year	School Level	Chronic Absenteeism %	SPCSA Average																										
2022-23	Elementary	36.7%	22.9%																										
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2023-24	Middle	38.4%	15.8%																										
2022-23	High	23.5%	19.6%																										
2023-24	High	42.6%	19.9%																										

<p>Deficiency Finding</p>	<p>Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is expected to have interventions and systems in place to decrease chronic absenteeism rates. According to the Policy Achievement Level Descriptors within the Nevada School Performance Framework technical guide, “The Measure for the Student Engagement Indicator for schools is Chronic Absenteeism. Research shows that reducing chronic absenteeism is critical to improving student achievement. A chronically absent student is a student who has missed 10 percent or more of the days they were enrolled for any reason, including excused, unexcused, or disciplinary absences.”</p> <p>As Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus considers ways to immediately increase student academic skills and growth gains, the governing board and leadership may want to emphasize the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivate a schoolwide culture of attendance</li> <li>• Use chronic absence data to determine the need for additional supports</li> <li>• Develop staff capacity to adopt effective attendance practice</li> <li>• Advocate for resources and policies to improve attendance</li> </ul> <p>A school with chronic absenteeism rates above 10% requires improvement, including an urgent need to address areas significantly below standard. The school must submit an improvement plan that identifies support and strategies tailored to indicators that are below standard within four weeks of the school board and the school leader receiving the site evaluation report. The school may request an extension in writing if needed. The site evaluation team will review the Response Plan, meet with school leadership, and provide feedback to the school. The site evaluation team and the school leadership will agree upon the action plan, including the documented steps and accompanying timeline.</p>
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# Focus Group Participation Data

Focus groups are conducted on the day of the site evaluation and last for 45 minutes. During an abbreviated site evaluation, focus groups are not conducted.

Name of Focus Group	Number of Participants
Governing Board <sup>6</sup>	3
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	7
Faculty and Staff	10
School Leadership	6
Students	16

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<sup>6</sup> Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

# Focus Group Summary: Governing Board

Three Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Governing Board members met virtually on the day of the site evaluation and participated in the focus group. The board brings diverse expertise, including an educator from a nearby school district, a former Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus Las Vegas teacher with institutional knowledge from both Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus and Teach for America<sup>7</sup>, and professionals with human resources experience. Legal expertise is represented by an attorney and another member with a legislative background from serving on the City Council<sup>8</sup> for the Board of Las Vegas. The board also benefits from financial expertise from the banking sector, experience in local children's nonprofits, special education, and fundraising efforts at UNLV<sup>9</sup>. One board member said, "While we are actively searching for parent representation to join our team, the board meets monthly and establishes committees in finance, governance, development, and academics."

The Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus board defines its role as one of evolving guidance and responsive oversight. They have learned to leverage the insights provided by the CMO<sup>10</sup> while continually refining their approach as they develop a stronger understanding of their goals. One board member remarked on the positive transition, noting that increased engagement through thoughtful questioning is helping the board focus on what is best for students at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. Another member emphasized that the focus has shifted to addressing the needs of the community, students, and parents. A clear example of this change occurred during a recent board meeting when the board critically evaluated a CMO proposal to shut down high school operations. They amplified the community's voice by asking probing questions about planning and process, ultimately rejecting the recommendation and prompting the CMO to revise it.

The board attributes the low performance on the NSPF in elementary, middle, and high school primarily to inconsistent teaching practices. One board member explained that frequent teacher turnover and limited coaching have led to a shortage of strong educators. "Implementing stronger coaching systems, particularly focusing on Tier 1 instruction, along with Tier 2 and Tier 3<sup>11</sup> interventions when needed is essential." While the board at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus said there is confidence that rigorous planning and enhanced coaching can drive improvement, they insist on seeing clear evidence of progress; otherwise, "they will be forced to make tough decisions to halt this trend."

When asked about the school's top strengths, board members at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus highlighted resilience and the strength of community ties. One member emphasized that despite challenges, teachers consistently demonstrate resilience through their day-to-day commitment to students. Another stated, "The students and families are the school's greatest asset, continuously seeking innovative educational opportunities." Additionally, board members articulated that the surrounding

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<sup>7</sup> Teach For America is a nonprofit organization that recruits and trains leaders to teach for at least two years in low-income schools. The organization aims to confront educational inequity and create a nation free from any injustice.

<sup>8</sup> Las Vegas City Council is a municipal body having legislative and administrative powers, such as passing ordinances and appropriating funds.

<sup>9</sup> UNLV stands for University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

<sup>10</sup> CMO stands for charter management organization, providing services such as centralized support, operations oversight, human resources, and more.

<sup>11</sup> Tier 2 is the first level of intervention for students who do not show progress in Tier 1. Students are provided with Tier 2 interventions when they need support to meet academic or behavioral goals. If students do not respond to Tier 2 interventions, they receive Tier 3 interventions.



community plays a crucial role by actively supporting student success and contributing valuable resources to enrich the school's culture.

# Focus Group Summary: Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

One of the concerns families at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus communicated during the focus group is the chronic shortage of permanent teachers. Due to difficulties in hiring, the school relies heavily on substitutes, according to parents, resulting in inconsistent instruction and significant gaps in the curriculum. One parent said, “I was unaware my child was missing a regular teacher for months. I asked my child to search online for the necessary material because I could not help.” In high school, the lack of teachers has also been challenging. For instance, in geometry, according to parents, one teacher was stretched across multiple classes, leading to concerns that the following year's curriculum in the class would fall further behind.

Parents raised concerns about communication across all levels of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus on the day of the site evaluation. One parent with children in elementary, middle, and high school noted that while communication in elementary school is good, the middle and high school levels face significant challenges. Some parents at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus expressed frustration over obtaining timely updates on their child’s academic and disciplinary status. One parent indicated, “Follow-up emails and calls often go unanswered; even escalating issues to a principal reveals a significant disconnect.” Parents said progress reports are not updated promptly, and high school communication “seems to depend” solely on individual teachers. The prolonged downtime of Infinite Campus<sup>12</sup> at the start of the school year further compounded these issues, highlighting a systemic problem in keeping parents adequately informed of their child’s progress.

Parents shared several reasons for choosing Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. They said they value the K-12 system's simplicity, offering a single drop-off and pick-up point, and dependability before care, which gives them confidence in their children's safety. At the high school level, one parent commented, “The exceptional ACT<sup>13</sup> preparation program stands out, as well as significant scholarship opportunities for graduates of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus.” Additionally, parents mentioned that the naming of the classrooms after college reinforces a strong culture of college readiness, which they said is deeply ingrained in the students.

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<sup>12</sup> Infinite Campus is a K12 information technology platform that provides web-based student data management systems to school districts.

<sup>13</sup> ACT stands for American College Testing, a standardized test used by colleges and universities to determine students’ knowledge levels.

# Focus Group Summary: Faculty and Staff

Staff members reported staff morale at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus as inconsistent. While staff members support each other, they “often feel disconnected from leadership, which tends to provide vague, blanket statements rather than addressing concerns individually with staff members.” In elementary school, there is positivity among staff. Still, according to staff, leadership’s miscommunication creates confusion, leading to concerns about possibly being written up by the administration and negative implications for various issues. One staff member reported, “A lack of clarity and feedback from leadership leaves us guessing about expectations, with inconsistent follow-through on verifying tasks and enforcing consequences.” Staff members expressed that leadership’s approach varies. Another staff member indicated, “At times, leadership addresses issues directly, while at other times, they expect staff to hold each other accountable.” Another staff member added, “For instance, during the Black History Project, parents inquired whether the project was mandatory or if there was a rubric, but we could not provide answers because the leadership had promised to follow up and then sent the flyer without clarifying the information.”

A majority of the staff members at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus expressed their belief in the school’s potential and its focus on preparing students for post-secondary plans, emphasizing the passion of the families and students they serve as a motivation for improvement.

High school staff reported that they receive consistent instructional coaching, which helps those staff members improve such things as lesson pacing and rigor for their lessons.

Another concern of staff members at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus is the frequent turnover in leadership, which, according to staff, has resulted in minimal support and inconsistent expectations, compounded by low attendance and limited parent participation. Staff members expressed concern about extra duties that take time away from their primary role in teaching content, highlighting the need for additional aides or the restructuring of responsibilities among staff. Moreover, some staff members mentioned the special education department struggles with insufficient resources, as some student behaviors become particularly severe.

# Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

Six school leaders in the focus group identified several root causes for the drop in index scores across elementary, middle, and high school. At the elementary and middle school levels, key factors included losing teachers mid-year, the pacing of lessons, and students not being adequately exposed to the content. According to leadership, some teachers were not fully prepared for lessons. For middle school, other contributing factors were teacher preparedness, chronic absenteeism, and the need to address learning gaps. One leader on the team at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus emphasized, “It is important to collect data, remediate where needed, and implement daily intervention classes in English language arts and math.” Leadership transitions, particularly with the regional superintendent's role and a lack of senior leadership capacity, also played a role. Leaders said, “A swift and tight response to data was initially lacking, but strategies at both the teacher and administrative levels have made adjustments.”

Leaders at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus stated that the behavior management system is a major challenge for the school. The current approach uses a tiered merit and demerit system, which is tied to a points-based reward structure tracked through the dean’s list, which families can access. For example, there was an incident where a teacher sent a student out of class for not wanting to change his seat. According to leadership, the student should not have been sent out of class for this minor infraction. In response to situations like these happening more frequently, the school held teacher focus groups to review the discipline process. In addition, leadership stated, “Deans actively coach teachers on effective discipline strategies.” One leader added, “Our campus is supported by a dedicated team of social workers, including two full-time and one part-time specialist. They focus on targeted groups, allowing any student experiencing challenges to check in and receive support.” According to leadership, these professionals work closely with families, collaborate with community resources, and hold one-on-one meetings with students who need extra help.

To reduce chronic absenteeism across elementary, middle, and high schools, Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has implemented some changes, according to leadership. Attendance records are pulled daily from Infinite Campus to identify absent students, and follow-up phone calls are made to encourage their return. Families receive timely information and face-to-face meetings to emphasize the importance of regular attendance, including proper procedures for handling doctor's notes. Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus also offers incentives for consistent attendance and has provided targeted training to support at-risk individuals. Recognizing transportation challenges due to long commutes, the school also offers bus pass options. Leadership stated that daily attendance tracking through MyEducationData<sup>14</sup> has shown a slight improvement in absenteeism rates this year.

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<sup>14</sup> MyEducationData is a website with detailed information for families regarding student data.

# Focus Group Summary: Students

On the evaluation day, 16 students participated in the focus group for Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. When asked about recent exciting topics they are learning, students shared a range of subjects they had explored. A student indicated that he studied the three economic systems in economics, analyzing how each system functions and impacts societies. Another student mentioned that in government, they learned about different governance systems, including the roles of the three branches, executive power, and the system of checks and balances designed to prevent any branch from becoming too powerful. Another student commented, "We discussed the U.S. Constitution, its foundational principles, key amendments, and how these amendments shape citizens' rights and responsibilities."

Chronic absenteeism is a big concern across Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus. Some obstacles that students indicated prevent them from attending school regularly, including traffic delays, personal responsibilities, and difficulty waking up on time. Additionally, many students expressed that they do not receive a phone call notifying them or their families when they miss school. Instead, the school primarily communicates absences through email, which some students feel is ineffective in ensuring accountability and follow-up.

When asked about feeling physically and emotionally safe at Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus, many students vocalized concerns. One student said, "No, I don't feel emotionally or physically safe because kids get into fights both in and outside of class, and they also threaten each other. Teachers try to stop it, but it doesn't work sometimes." Another student shared, "I don't feel safe here, especially with all the lockdown drills, and sometimes people are crying." However, not all responses were negative. One student mentioned, "I feel safe. The teachers here are friendly, and the kids are generally cordial. I did get into a scuffle in eighth grade, but it wasn't a big issue." Some students noted that their teachers try to manage arguments, saying, "In my class, the kids argue, but the teachers stop it." Others mentioned how they cope by talking to their parents, while one student pointed out that he doesn't have a staff member he feels comfortable talking to. One mentioned that they would go to "maybe one teacher," while another said they would turn to "a couple of teachers and one staff member." A third student noted they would not approach a teacher but instead would reach out to "a handful of staff members."

Students highlighted strengths of Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus, including the variety of sports offered, such as football and basketball, and the ACT prep opportunities. They also mentioned the availability of scholarships for senior students to further their education as a significant positive aspect of the school.

## Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 20 elementary, 9 middle, and 8 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

<b>Classroom Environment</b>					
	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Highly Proficient</b>	<b>Approaching Proficient</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
<b>Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning</b>	<p>The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond the class and school.</p> <p>When necessary, students respectfully correct one another.</p> <p>Students participate without fear of put-downs or ridicule from either the teacher or other students.</p> <p>The teacher respects and encourages students' efforts.</p>	<p>Talk between the teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful.</p> <p>The teacher successfully responds to disrespectful behavior among students.</p> <p>Students participate willingly but may be somewhat hesitant to offer their ideas in front of classmates.</p> <p>The teacher makes general connections with individual students.</p>	<p>The quality of interactions between teachers and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect or insensitivity.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students with uneven results.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that these attempts are not entirely successful.</p>	<p>The teacher is disrespectful toward or insensitive to students' ages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels.</p> <p>Students' body language indicates feelings of hurt, discomfort, or insecurity.</p> <p>The teacher displays no familiarity with, or care about, individual students.</p>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 14</b>	<b>TOTAL: 20</b>	<b>TOTAL: 2</b>	<b>TOTAL: 1</b>
<b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	<p>The teacher communicates passion for the subject.</p> <p>Students indicate through their questions and comments a desire to understand content.</p> <p>Students assist their classmates in understanding the content.</p>	<p>The teacher communicates the importance of the content and the conviction that with hard work all students can master the material.</p> <p>The teacher conveys an expectation of high levels of student effort.</p> <p>Students expend good effort to complete work of high quality.</p>	<p>The teachers' energy for the work is neutral.</p> <p>The teacher conveys high expectations for only some students.</p> <p>Students exhibit a limited commitment to completing the work on their own.</p> <p>The teacher's primary concern appears to be to complete the task at hand.</p>	<p>The teacher conveys that there is little or no purpose for the work, or that the reasons for doing it are due to external factors.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to at least some students that the work is too challenging for them.</p> <p>Students exhibit little or no pride in their work.</p>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 15</b>	<b>TOTAL: 19</b>	<b>TOTAL: 2</b>	<b>TOTAL: 1</b>

## Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 20 elementary, 9 middle, and 8 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

<b>Classroom Instruction</b>					
	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Highly Proficient</b>	<b>Approaching Proficient</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	<p>If asked, students can explain what they are learning and where it fits into the larger curriculum context.</p> <p>The teacher explains content clearly and imaginatively.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to explain the content to their classmates.</p> <p>Students use academic language correctly.</p>	<p>The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.</p> <p>The teacher makes no content errors.</p> <p>Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.</p>	<p>The teacher provides little elaboration or explanation about what students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.</p> <p>The teacher may make minor content errors.</p> <p>The teacher must clarify the learning task.</p>	<p>At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to students what they will be learning.</p> <p>Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.</p> <p>Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.</p>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>TOTAL: 1</b>	<b>TOTAL: 13</b>	<b>TOTAL: 15</b>	<b>TOTAL: 6</b>	<b>TOTAL: 2</b>
<b>Using Questioning and Discussion Strategies</b>	<p>Students initiate higher-order questions.</p> <p>The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions to deepen student understanding.</p> <p>Students extend the discussion, enriching it.</p> <p>Virtually all students are engaged.</p>	<p>The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.</p> <p>Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher.</p> <p>Many students actively engage in the discussion.</p>	<p>The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many have a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond.</p> <p>The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number participate.</p>	<p>Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.</p> <p>Only a few students dominate the discussion.</p>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 6</b>	<b>TOTAL: 19</b>	<b>TOTAL: 3</b>	<b>TOTAL: 9</b>

## Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 20 elementary, 9 middle, and 8 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

<b>Classroom Instruction</b>					
	<b>Distinguished</b>	<b>Highly Proficient</b>	<b>Approaching Proficient</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	<p>Virtually all students are engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Lesson activities require high-level student thinking and explanations of their thinking.</p> <p>Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.</p>	<p>Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Most learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or encourage higher-order thinking.</p> <p>Students are invited to explain their thinking as part of completing tasks.</p> <p>The pacing of the lesson provides students with the time needed to be intellectually engaged.</p>	<p>Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Learning tasks are a mix of those requiring thinking and those requiring recall.</p> <p>Student engagement with the content is largely passive.</p> <p>The pacing of the lesson is uneven—suitable in parts but rushed or dragging in others.</p>	<p>Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.</p> <p>Learning tasks, activities, and materials require only recall or have a single correct response.</p> <p>The lesson drags on or is rushed.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 11</b>	<b>TOTAL: 18</b>	<b>TOTAL: 7</b>	<b>TOTAL: 1</b>
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	<p>Students indicate they clearly understand the characteristics of high-quality work.</p> <p>The teacher uses multiple strategies to monitor student understanding.</p> <p>Students monitor their own understanding.</p> <p>Feedback comes from many sources.</p>	<p>The teacher makes the standards of high-quality work clear to students.</p> <p>The teacher elicits evidence of student understanding.</p> <p>Students are invited to assess their own work and make improvements.</p> <p>Feedback includes specific and timely guidance.</p>	<p>There is little evidence that the students understand how the work is evaluated.</p> <p>The teacher monitors understanding through a single method, without eliciting evidence of understanding from students.</p> <p>Feedback to students is vague.</p>	<p>The teacher does not indicate what quality work looks like.</p> <p>The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson.</p> <p>Students receive no feedback, or feedback is global or directed to one student.</p>	
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 11</b>	<b>TOTAL: 18</b>	<b>TOTAL: 4</b>	<b>TOTAL: 4</b>



# Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

In an upper elementary classroom, students worked independently on iReady<sup>15</sup> while the teacher led a small group in reading a grade-level-appropriate book. The small-group students took turns reading and listening to one another. However, the teacher's instruction was interrupted three times within a 15-minute period. Additionally, about half of the students working on iReady were not actively engaged in their learning.

The teacher in one classroom carried around a list of students making mistakes, not following along. She stopped the learning process, turned to the student and yelled, "You just added your name to my list. You are not even on the right page." Then the teacher began instruction again. She then stopped and yelled "You are not even listening."

In a middle school ELA classroom, students referred to chapter 15 of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The teacher played an audiobook while the students followed along with their text. The teacher's explanations of content were purely procedural, without indicating how students can think strategically. Student engagement with the content was largely passive.

Students were reading poems from their textbooks and answering related questions on their computers. As they worked, one student walked around the classroom, reading a poem aloud. One of the questions asked students to identify their favorite poem and explain why they chose it. Students were either working independently or in pairs. The teacher engaged them by asking probing questions to encourage deeper thinking. A completed assignment was displayed in which students identified the characters, setting, and the beginning, middle, and end of a story. However, this task did not align with the rigor of fifth-grade NVACS for reading literature.

In an upper elementary classroom, there was one teacher and 25 students. The teacher was walking students through a practice CRT<sup>16</sup> question. The teacher was doing the talking, the reading, and the writing. Some students look at the books, others at the computer. One student was asleep.

In an upper elementary classroom, there were 29 students, one teacher, and another adult reminding students to be quiet and work on iReady. This other adult also selected one child to read with and provided him with support. The second adult in the classroom spoke in an unpleasant voice to students and raised her voice to correct students which disrupted the class and the learning.

Students began a lesson on adjacent angles, vertical angles, triangles, and prisms by writing down the definitions, diagrams, and notes to obtain a baseline understanding as a framework for beginning geometry. The teacher explained this to the students. As the teacher read each definition, she asked the students to repeat what she said. She also had students write a short summary of the formal definition. Students were engaged and followed along.

In a middle school math class, students entered the classroom as the teacher greeted them and introduced the lesson's objectives, which included recognizing the importance of state testing and learning how to use a CRT equation tool editor effectively. The teacher then presented a short video on inverse operations to reinforce the importance and purpose of state testing, followed by a review of why state

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<sup>15</sup> iReady is a computer- adaptive program for English language arts and math with personalized learning pathways.

<sup>16</sup> CRT stands for Criterion-referenced tests. These assessments are designed to measure student performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards

testing is required. The teacher mentioned the importance of doing well on the test because the middle school is currently rated as a two-star school. The teacher then had students log onto their Google<sup>17</sup> slides to follow along as she demonstrated the e-direct platform and portal. There were approximately 26 students, and the teacher primarily used direct instruction to present the information. There was little student discourse and minimal checks for student understanding.

In a primary grade classroom, the teacher and students were discussing the theme of a recent story they read. As part of the discussion, the teacher asked, "What should you do if you have a hard time with your assignments?" The class consisted of 27 students and two adults. The teacher introduced the vocabulary word perseverance, explaining that it means pushing oneself to overcome challenges. She then encouraged student engagement by asking, "Can I see you push hard?" The teacher incorporated movement to help keep students engaged.

Students sat passively as the teacher continually told them to 'be quiet,' 'sit still,' 'behave,' or 'I can make your life miserable,' or 'I don't have to put up with you.' Student body language showed they were uncomfortable, and their eyes gazed at the ground, yet the adult insisted, "look at me when I am talking to you, because you will not disrespect me." The focus on behavior and compliance superseded any conversation about academics. There was no discussion or mention of academics. The unilateral speech between the adult in the room and the students was about compliant behavior and silence.

Students participated in a structured, guided reading group, where they read a text independently while the teacher listened in and provided quiet guidance. The teacher also offered verbal praise to students working on iReady, encouraging positive behavior. To support comprehension, the teacher asked simple questions and required students to respond in complete sentences. Students were highly motivated to complete the task.

Students were engaged in summarizing how to complete writing mathematical computations correctly and procedurally. One student volunteered to read the passage aloud from the handout packet; students were encouraged to underline or write marginal notes in their own words, short phrases or key words of certain lines. After the students completed the reading, the class was provided time to write their summary as the teacher walked the room, checking for understanding and providing words of encouragement. Once students completed the summary, the class moved to the next summary. Once all the summaries were completed, students turned them in for a grade. It was unclear if students used these summaries to assist them as study guides, as part of references when they complete independent work, or how this task assists them outside of completing it and turning it in.

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<sup>17</sup> Google is a popular search engine to find information.

# Measures of Progress from Previous Site Evaluation

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 Site Evaluation Team during the school's previous site evaluation.

Prior Recommendation by Site Evaluation Team	School Assessment of Progress	SPCSA Staff Assessment of Progress
Consider amending bylaws to decrease the governing board to a smaller, more manageable number (25 members in 2022).	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus amended the bylaws, so they now have a limit of 13 members.	SPCSA staff find that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.
Pursue Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) opportunities through the SPCSA.	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has implemented an RTI process.	The SPCSA recommends that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Framework. Additionally, the SPCSA encourages the school to pursue options available through the SPCSA or opportunities the school's stakeholders believe will enhance the development of a comprehensive framework to support the diverse needs of its students. SPCSA staff have recommended Democracy Prep implement MTSS through the SPCSA at no cost to the school for the 2021-2022, 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 site evaluations. SPCSA staff made recommendations on each of those site evaluation reports.
Prioritize attendance at monthly technical assistance calls to ensure that DPAC administers all required assessments during the 2022 – 2023 school year.	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has 90% or better participation in all mandated assessment participation.	SPCSA staff find that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.
Increase timely submission of required documents to the SPCSA.	Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus currently has 100% of its documents submitted, with 87% of those on time.	SPCSA staff find that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.

Continue to implement a formative assessment process, clear learning targets, feedback to students, and student goal setting.	Teachers use Turn and Talks, Think-Pair-Shares, student self-assessments, quizzes, notes on student work, rubrics, checklists, exemplars, exit tickets, and success criteria to give real-time feedback to students.	Based on classroom observations on the day of the evaluation, the SPCSA staff finds that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has not met this recommendation.
Improvement in delivery of instruction, especially in ES.	Teachers understand lesson implementation and internalization on a deeper level and are working on their pacing.	Based on classroom observations on the day of the evaluation, the SPCSA staff finds that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has not met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.
Continue to provide professional development on data-based decision-making for all staff.	Staff participate in weekly professional development every Wednesday.	SPCSA staff find that Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.

# Operational Compliance Checks

Fire Extinguisher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Nurse's Station	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Evacuation Plan in Classrooms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Food Permit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Elevator Permit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

# Appendix A

The school may choose to submit a response to the SPCSA Site Evaluation Team's findings. This response will be included with the report in the public domain. The final report is submitted to the school's leadership and governing board, the SPCSA board, and into the public record via the SPCSA's website.