



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Signature Preparatory

Site Evaluation Report: April 22, 2025

State Public Charter School Authority
775-687-9174
3427 Goni Rd, Suite 103
Carson City, Nevada 89706

702-486-8895
500 East Warm Springs, Suite 116
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119

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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.

PRAISE¹ Values promoted by the school leaders and staff

A strength of the leadership team and the staff was fostering the school's PRAISE Values. The leadership team shared their firm conviction in promoting the school's values. Several focus groups referenced these beliefs and how they positively impacted them and their overall school experience. For instance, on the day of the site evaluation, students and staff were often observed modeling respect towards each other and visitors. Students greeted the SPCSA personnel cordially in many of the classrooms they entered. One leader noted the importance of weaving values into their daily lives. Several students shared their positive experiences in using the set of values. One shared, "The school can teach you how to do things later in life," referring to the values the student learned.

Low chronic Absenteeism

A strength of Signature Preparatory was its high student attendance rates. According to the 2023-24 Nevada School Performance Framework² (NSPF), Signature Preparatory's chronic absenteeism rate was less than five percent compared to the district average of 20 percent. The elementary school earned the maximum ten points, reducing the rate of chronically absent students from 25 percent (2022-23) to less than five percent. Middle school also showed remarkable improvement, earning 15 out of 15 points in the Student Engagement Indicator³ and reducing the rate from 23 percent (2022-23) to less than five percent.

The leadership team shared their efforts to reduce the rates of chronically absent students, which included explicit communication with all stakeholders on the importance of daily attendance and consistently following up with students and families when patterns of absence occurred. The student, faculty, and family focus groups mentioned that the school administrators communicated their expectations to keep absences to a minimum. Additionally, incentives such as free dress day and attendance recognition awards reinforced the urgency to attend school regularly.

Improved index score in middle school

According to the 2022-23 and 2023-24 NSPF, the middle school improved its index score from 41 to 66.5 points, moving from a two-star rating to a three-star. Noteworthy was the improvement in the Student Growth Indicator⁴, which went from earning 15.5/30 to 22.5/30 points, and in the Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator⁵, which improved from 6/20 to 12/20 points. The improved index score of the middle school was a strength for Signature Preparatory. During the leadership focus group, the team

¹ The P.R.A.I.S.E. values—Purpose, Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, and Empathy—are woven throughout daily life at Signature Preparatory.

² NSPF is Nevada's public school rating system designed by Nevadans and developed in accordance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) per NRS 385A.600 and classifies schools within a five-star performance rating system.

³ The Student Engagement Indicator measures chronic absenteeism and contributes up to 10% to the school's total index score on the Nevada Report Card.

⁴ Student Growth Indicator is a measure of student achievement over time. Student growth is sometimes more generally referred to as student progress.

⁵ The Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator focuses explicitly on elementary and middle school students needing improvement.

shared their aspirations of ascending to a four and eventually five-star rating. Members of the faculty focus group noted the success of the middle school, which provided the group with optimism.

Eighth-grade credit requirement percentage

Signature Preparatory's relative strength was its high eight grade credit requirements percentage. According to the 2023-24 NSPF, the school's rate exceeded 95 percent, surpassing the district rate of 92 percent. Students who met this measure were on track for grade promotion to high school. The faculty focus group members expressed positivity about the middle school's improved star rating, which improved from two-star rating to three-star. They noted increased confidence levels from their students and staff and emphasized the collective efforts to ensure students meet course requirements to transition to high school.

Student diversity in middle school

A strength of Signature Preparatory was the diversity of its student population, particularly the high numbers of specific student population groups, including students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch⁶ (FRL) and students with special needs. According to SPCSA's Academic Performance Framework⁷ (APF), the middle school earned 13/15 points in the Enrollment Diversity Indicator section, which measured the school's percentage rate of these groups of students compared to its comparison district. The student diversity aligned with SPCSA's vision of equitable access to public schools for all.

⁶ The Free/Reduced Price Lunch (FRL) designation applies to students who qualify for free or reduced lunch based on household income.

⁷ The Academic Performance Framework (APF) incorporates corresponding school year NSPF school ratings under the NSPF Index Score indicator. The NSPF includes key performance measures such as academic achievement and proficiency, academic growth, English Learner (EL) growth, opportunity gaps, graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism.

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.

Low academic achievement in elementary school

A challenge at Signature Preparatory was the low achievement rate in elementary school. According to the 2023-24 NSPF, the academic measures were below the district averages, resulting in a 42.5 index score out of 100. Thus, the elementary school earned a two-star rating of a possible five for the second consecutive year (2022-23, 43.5 index score), indicating that the school may have multiple areas that required improvement, including increasing student proficiency in math, English language arts, and science.

- The leadership team noted the challenge of addressing students' learning gaps to ensure students met their academic growth targets and worked towards grade-level proficiency. The school is currently focusing on improving instruction to increase student achievement. Action steps included pre-teaching students with foundational skills and concepts that assist them in accessing tier one⁸ instruction and utilizing a reading and math strategist to help students with their learning gaps. The faculty focus group members discussed the importance of pre-teaching their students and highlighted the benefits, including more confident students. Additionally, the leadership team emphasized providing their staff with professional development of Kagan's instructional strategies⁹ to increase student participation and added discussion opportunities to improve student content comprehension to support academic outcomes.

Meeting students' social and emotional needs

Ensuring students' social and emotional health needs were met was a challenge for Signature Preparatory. According to the Nevada Student Social and Emotional Learning Survey¹⁰, areas needing improvement included student engagement, relationships, and physical and emotional safety. The report presented the school's results on the five topic areas: cultural and linguistic competence, relationships, emotional and physical safety, and social and emotional competencies. The survey also measured students' perceptions of their social and emotional competencies. These results provided schools with data to make informed decisions to support students' needs. The leadership team discussed this as a challenge in their slide presentation in the leadership focus group and shared action steps taken to assist students with their social and emotional needs, including concentrating on developing their school-wide support systems and utilizing a social worker to help students with their social and emotional needs. Several members of the faculty focus group also emphasized the need to address students' wellness needs, noting a need to develop further the school's framework for collaboration and communication.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Kagan's instructional strategies are designed to promote cooperation and communication in the classroom, boost students' confidence, and retain their interest in the content.

¹⁰ The Nevada School Climate / Social Emotional Learning Survey was explicitly developed for the state of Nevada and represents the priorities shared for building positive school climates for the children of Nevada.

Staying competitive with teacher compensation

Signature Preparatory faces a challenge in staying competitive with teacher compensation at levels the local school district offers. The pay difference can make staff retention difficult. According to the leadership team and the members of the board focus group, the school has taken a proactive approach and has increased staff salaries by eight percent to retain staff.

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.

Improve academic achievement in elementary school

The SPCSA recommends that Signature Preparatory continue its improvement efforts to enhance academic achievement in elementary school. The elementary school earned a two-star rating for the second consecutive year. One area of focus may be to continue to improve student engagement in all classrooms to enhance academic achievement. The leadership team has invested in providing staff professional development in Kagan's instructional strategies to promote verbal communication and active student engagement in the learning process. Signature Preparatory may consider using the observational data from this site evaluation to improve classroom instruction. For instance, in measuring student engagement in the learning process (noted on page 19), out of the 25 classrooms observed, 13 were rated in the approaching category, and one classroom was rated as unsatisfactory. Improving lessons to ensure students are invited to explain their thinking while completing tasks can move classroom instruction to the highly proficient category—further, lesson activities requiring high-level student thinking and explanations of their thinking can move instruction to the distinguished category.

- As Signature Preparatory focuses on academic progress, the school may find utilizing resources from the Nevada Department of Education School Improvement Division helpful ([School Improvement](#)). Specifically, Nevada's School-Level Continuous Improvement Process ([CIP – SPP Padlet](#)) may support refining the school's action steps to increase student achievement. For example, when exploring root causes of negative impact on student learning, the school can reference the slide deck on root cause analysis, or when creating school goals, the team may examine the facilitation guides. Referencing and using these tools can be instrumental in supporting the school's goal to increase student achievement, specifically in elementary school.
- The school's leadership team and staff may also find it integral to continue to utilize their current curricular resources, which are valuable assets, to increase student achievement. To bolster the implementation of these resources and ensure high fidelity, the school should consider targeted and personalized professional development to improve staff efficacy in delivering high-quality lessons to all students using the school's existing curriculum. For instance, Signature Preparatory utilizes Houghton Mifflin Harcourt¹¹ (HMH) as its comprehensive curriculum and provides evidence-based intervention programs and tools to help striving learners succeed. The school may find offering professional development opportunities for staff to maximize Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's (HMH) diverse curricular teaching tools helpful. Additionally, focusing on personalized professional development options for staff through the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's (HMH) resources section can be foundational to further developing the staff's knowledge and mastery when using the school's chosen curriculum. Lastly, as the school devotes efforts to professional development, the team must ensure lessons align with the Nevada Academic and Content Standards.

¹¹ Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Company (HMH) is an American publisher of textbooks, instructional technology materials, assessments, and reference works.

Improving student achievement in elementary school can propel the school toward a three-star rating on the NSPF and support the school's beliefs in academic excellence, creating an exceptional educational experience for all students.

Continue to refine the school's multi-tiered systems of support¹² (MTSS) framework

The SPCSA recommends that Signature Preparatory continue refining its multi-tiered systems of support framework. A theme that emerged from focus groups was appreciation for the leadership team's emphasis on school advancement aimed at student academic achievement and supporting students' social and emotional needs. However, the various groups mentioned the need to refine school-wide systems to continue improving student academic and social-emotional outcomes.

- The school leadership team may find it helpful to utilize resources from the Nevada Department of Education website, specifically the [MTSS Guidance Document](#). This document provides comprehensive suggestions on implementing and refining multi-tiered support systems, which align with the school's improvement goals. For instance, page eleven of the guidance document highlights the importance of using data to drive school-wide initiatives to bolster a school's MTSS framework. Data provides the means for making data-based decisions, and the outcomes assist in identifying the necessary information sources (such as universal screeners, office discipline referrals, and academic assessments) to measure progress or identify areas needing more support.
- The school can leverage its data collection systems to identify strengths and potential areas for development to strengthen its MTSS framework. For instance, a thorough behavioral data analysis can pinpoint professional development needs in areas such as classroom management or restorative practices. This data-driven approach can identify strengths or validate the need for specialized or possibly additional staff. When analyzing data to refine school-wide systems, the school is encouraged to ensure all stakeholders are provided the opportunity to give feedback on topics such as progressive discipline and systems for communication when addressing student behavioral concerns. A few faculty members shared a need for improved communication when supporting students' behavioral and emotional needs.
- Signature Preparatory can enhance its MTSS framework to help students with their social and emotional needs by referencing and using the Nevada [School Climate-Universal Supports](#)¹³ listed below to refine the school's systems and structures. These resources may provide the school with tools to assist students' emotional wellness needs.

Resources for Enhancing Emotional Safety:

[The Learning Classroom: Feelings Count - Emotions and Learning](#)

[Active Minds](#)

[New York State Center for School Safety](#)

[Promote Prevent](#)

[The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)

¹² MTSS-Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a framework schools use with a tiered infrastructure that uses data to help match academic and social-emotional behavior and instructional resources to each student.

¹³ Nevada School Climate Universal Supports provides tier one/universal support to Nevada public and charter school districts to improve school climate and culture.

- Regarding educational support systems for students, regular review of academic data trends and the use of universal screeners can confirm successful strategies or further refine the school's tier-two¹⁴ support systems for struggling learners. Members of the faculty focus group, and the leadership team mentioned the importance of building upon the school-wide academic support structures, such as providing students with small group instruction, to bolster the school's overall framework.
- Signature Preparatory has engaged with the Project AWARE¹⁵ (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Grant to enhance its MTSS framework. An integrated MTSS framework aims to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. By continuously refining this framework, the school can continue to focus on meeting the academy's expectations for educational excellence and character development.

¹⁴ Tier two is the first level of intervention for students who do not show progress in tier one. Students receive tier two interventions when they need support to meet academic or behavioral goals.

¹⁵ Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) program aims to develop a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services.

Site Evaluation Findings: Strong Recommendations

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

There were no strong recommendations for Signature Preparatory during this site evaluation.

Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

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

There were no deficiencies for Signature Preparatory during this site evaluation.

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 ¹⁶	2
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	5
Faculty and Staff	12
School Leadership	3
Students	12

¹⁶ Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

Focus Group Summary: Governing Board

The Signature Preparatory Board is comprised of seven members, including a teacher, the owner of an education non-profit company, a local district assistant principal, a parent, an entrepreneur, two members with legal backgrounds, and one member who served with the original school board. The participants added that all members are current with their required training, the board meets at least quarterly, and they have three subcommittees: education, operations, and finance. A member discussed that a priority was to ensure the school remains financially stable, noting the recent removal of the Notice of Concern¹⁷ for Financial Performance from the Board of SPCSA, signifying an improved financial status. The participants also highlighted the group's ability to work together effectively to support the school and its administrators.

Recent successes noted by the two board members were the improved attendance rates, growth of students in recent assessments, increased parent involvement, a welcoming school environment, weekly and daily updates from the school leaders, and the importance of the school's financial stability helped with the staff's eight percent pay increase. The board members discussed the importance of staff retention and its value in paying the salaries of staff who compete with the local school district. One member shared that over 90 percent of the staff are projected to return for the next school year. The conversation highlighted the board's value in advocating for their staff to receive an eight percent pay increase, which they approved.

The board's primary challenge is supporting the elementary school's focus on improving academic achievement. One member mentioned that students attending school regularly and having a "one size does not fit all" mindset can propel improvement efforts. Specifically, ensuring that students receive the necessary instruction for academic growth is a priority. The members appreciated the school leaders and staff's endeavor to increase student outcomes and improve the elementary school's star rating. An additional challenge mentioned was ensuring parents had access to support their children, including offering parent university¹⁸ classes. Lastly, the members shared the challenge of attempting to provide transportation for their students, citing the importance of removing obstacles that can impede some families.

The two board members reflected on their evaluation procedure for the school leaders, noting the need to refine the process and explore additional instruments to enhance the board's methods. The SPCSA staff shared their insights into possible tools to consider including accessing the protocols from the Nevada Educator Performance Framework¹⁹ (NEPF).

¹⁷ Notice of Concern-Evidence of weak financial, academic, or organizational performance through ongoing oversight or at the time of annual review.

¹⁸ Parent University seeks to educate and empower families as partners, advocates, and lifelong educators in their student's education through free courses, resources, events, and activities.

¹⁹ NEPF was designed in 2011 and passed by Nevada legislators. It was created by the Teachers and Leaders Council (TLC) as a statewide performance evaluation system for teachers and building-level administrators. During the subsequent legislative sessions of 2013, 2025, 2017, 2019, and 2021, NRS (Nevada Revised Statutes) changed AB222. The overall goals of the framework are to foster student learning, improve instructional practices, and engage stakeholders in the continuous improvement and monitoring of a professional growth system.

Focus Group Summary: Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

Families who participated in the focus group shared what their child/children were learning, which included working on a book report that involved dressing up as a character, engaging in Lexia²⁰ lessons, practicing using the school's PRAISE values, English language arts, and math concepts involving geometry and decimals. The members shared that, generally, teachers communicate regularly to provide updates on their child/children. One parent shared, "Communication is excellent: emails and texts in real-time" are helpful to effective communication. A participant noted she likes receiving videos of her child dancing during the day when he is having a good day. Another member said, "The school is very good about communicating good news, upcoming events, student needs, classroom needs, troubleshooting, positives, incentivizing, and teacher encouragement. The teachers are wonderful."

The discussion included Signature Preparatory's improved daily attendance rates, as noted on the NSPF. Group members commented on the school's active communication, emphasizing the importance of regularly attending school as an influential factor. Several participants highlighted the positive effect of attendance incentives such as free dress days and recognition awards. A parent emphasized, "Teachers encourage students to attend school," noting the importance of a teacher's positive mindset to support student engagement.

Members shared their reasons for enrolling their children at Signature Preparatory, which included the high academic expectations, good communication, the school's values, the school's size as not being too large, and the school's special education program. One participant shared that her child, who has special needs, has made progress, noting, "He is learning at school. He enjoys math a lot. He enjoys music."

A portion of the session focused on seeking feedback from the participants regarding what aspects of the school they would like to see improved or refined, if any. One member shared how they would like the school to focus more on academic progress for high-achieving students, noting that advanced students need to be challenged more to achieve higher academic growth. A few parents shared the need for the school to consider limiting group punishments. One member shared a situation where students were not allowed to check out a book or go to recess due to one student's behavior. Others added similar views, highlighting the ineffectiveness of a group or whole class punishment for the actions of one or a few students.

²⁰ Lexia is a software program that supports emergent bilingual students' English language acquisition through academic conversations. The program integrates speaking, listening, and grammar in math, science, social studies, general knowledge, and biographies through adaptive blended learning.

Focus Group Summary: Faculty and Staff

Twelve faculty members participated in the focus group, which started with a discussion of recent successes. One participant shared that the winter Measure of Academic Performance²¹ (MAP) data for special education students was promising, citing that growth data yielded gains in reading and math. A few faculty members also highlighted that a portion of the school's MTSS framework, designed to provide small-group instruction for students, appeared to be more organized and better planned than last year. Several staff members discussed the school's emphasis on front-loading or pre-teaching students the necessary skills to access grade-level instruction as a success, noting that it provided the school with a foundation to develop additional support systems for struggling learners. A member said that it had strengthened her students' skills, explaining that "students have a better grasp of the concepts" and that it boosted their confidence, leading to "more attempts to work independently," highlighting the students' growth. Another staff member noted the positive change in the increased middle school students' participation in physical education classes as a success, emphasizing that "student participation was lower in previous years." Lastly, the middle school's improved rating (two to three stars) and the significant reduction of its chronic absenteeism rate for grades kindergarten through eighth grade from over twenty percent to less than five percent gave the group much optimism.

A few members shared their appreciation for their school leaders' efforts in school advancement and commitment to continuous progress, including having a social worker and emphasizing the school's PRAISE values. They also provided a few suggestions that support the focus on improvement, including the need to enhance the school's MTSS framework to help students with social, behavioral, and emotional challenges. Ideas mentioned included refining the school's progressive discipline systems, specifically improving the need for prompt communication of the disciplinary findings and resolutions to staff. A few staff members noted the importance of feedback loops between staff and administration to ensure clear communication so staff can effectively support their students. Several faculty members discussed the importance of understanding the reasons and factors for decisions within the school's progressive discipline policy, reiterating the importance of timely communication. A related topic was the need to consider refining the support structures for special education students, particularly the school's system for helping special education students with more intense behaviors. The staff acknowledged that high caseloads challenge the administration and the special education personnel and that more staffing would be helpful. Additional suggestions included creating a Gifted and Talented Education²² (GATE) program, starting a school library, adding hall monitors for added supervision, a structured in-school suspension option for students, adding another school-level position to assist with behavioral referrals, and considerations to create a Family Liaison Position to assist with family engagement.

²¹ Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is a computer-adaptive assessment used to monitor student growth and inform and personalize instruction. The State Board of Education officially adopted MAP to assess Nevada students as part of the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) program.

²² G.A.T.E. is the acronym for Gifted and Talented Education. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education defines GATE students as children with outstanding talent performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment compared to others of their age, experience, or environment.

The group shared their communication systems with students and parents, which included immediate feedback to students during instruction or through Google Classroom²³. Communication with parents included ClassDojo²⁴, emails, Infinite Campus²⁵ Grades, and special education service logs. Members also highlighted recent professional development sessions, including i-Ready²⁶ data training and focusing on utilizing MAP data to improve instructional practices.

²³ Google Classroom is a free blended learning platform developed by Google for educational institutions. Its goal is to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments.

²⁴ ClassDojo is an online classroom management platform where teachers can record and track student behavior, facilitate classroom activities, curate student portfolios, and engage in school-to-home communication in over 35 languages through photos, videos, and direct messaging to parents and students.

²⁵ Infinite Campus connects districts to the most modern, innovative, and comprehensive student information system.

²⁶ i-Ready Learning is a digital instructional resource assessing students with grade-level materials in reading and math.

Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

Three school leaders participated in the leadership focus group and discussed the school's success in reducing chronic absenteeism from above twenty percent to under five percent. The administrators shared their action steps to ensure their students attended school regularly, including clear communication with all stakeholders on the importance of limiting missed instruction. A school leader noted the significance of follow-up communication, holding numerous meetings with parents, citing, "One hundred twenty-one parent meetings in three months" were held, which reinforced the message. The administrator added, "We defined chronic absenteeism and what it meant when they fail to report to the school."

The team also mentioned their priority of addressing students' learning gaps by implementing a system to pre-teach students the necessary skills and concepts to thrive in their classrooms. The leadership team referred to this as front loading, which involved staff working with small groups of students to introduce or review necessary foundation skills before whole-group lessons to help them better access the content. The team cited that these measures have supported their students' learning. The group also stressed the usefulness of examining MAP data to plan instruction, utilizing i-Ready, switching to MobyMax²⁷, implementing walk-to-math groups and reading classes where students received small group instruction, and working with a private consultant to monitor student progress.

A challenge noted by the team was the fiscal hardship of remaining competitive with compensation wages offered by the local school district. A priority was ensuring staff received an eight percent pay increase, which helped to support overall staff retention. Additionally, the members emphasized the importance of creating a positive school culture to retain staff at Signature Preparatory. One leader said, "We want relationship builders. We want customer service—parents are trusting us with their children." Further adding, "Staff come to work in the best interests of students. You come for the culture," referencing reasons why staff choose to join or remain at the school. The team stressed maintaining a positive mindset to build trusting relationships with their staff members and fostering the school's PRAISE values as essential to creating a positive school experience.

The school leaders also addressed students' social and emotional needs, citing this as a challenge. The team discussed the school's use of a social worker to support students' wellness needs and the response to intervention²⁸ (RTI) team to assist students needing additional behavior support. The group praised their special education staff for their dedication to ensuring students with IEPs²⁹ progress, recognizing that their caseloads have increased. A leader noted that the school is a Project AWARE school focused on creating a school-wide framework to help all students.

²⁷ MobyMax is an online education program used by students in grades K-8. It covers 27 subjects, including math, reading, phonics, language, vocabulary, spelling, writing, science, social studies, preparation for state examinations, and more.

²⁸ RTI (Response to Intervention) is an educational framework that uses a multi-tiered system to identify students struggling academically or behaviorally and provide them with increasingly intensive interventions based on their needs.

²⁹ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are legal documents that outline the special education instruction, services, and support a student with specific types of disabilities needs to receive in a learning environment.

Focus Group Summary: Students

Twelve Signature Preparatory students participated in the session. They shared their recent academic experiences, which included learning to research weather, earthquakes, and scientific notations and studying volume, spheres, division, and decimals in math classes. Also mentioned was learning about the Battle of the Alamo and a book study as part of a culminating classroom activity. Several students shared that their teachers and staff provided feedback by emailing them with details on their assignments. A student mentioned, "I can send an email after school to my teacher for help." Other responses included teachers providing additional examples in class, supplementary reviews, and opportunities for students to rewrite their assignments.

The group was asked to share factors that hinder their learning. One student cited his behavior as a factor negatively impacting his progress, elaborating that concentrating can be an issue that influences classroom work production. A few students noted that other students' negative classroom behavior can distract them from focusing on their assignments. One student said that less engaging teachers negatively impacted the learning process. Students were also asked to share if they had difficulty or a problem in school and if they had someone they could talk to on campus. All students in the group conveyed that they had a staff member from whom they could seek assistance. One student said, "Yes, we have a social worker, a dean, and the administration." Another student shared, "I talked to my teacher, who helps me."

When the group was asked to share what they would advise other students interested in attending the school, responses included that the school's staff is supportive and comprises many "nice" people. A student stated, "If you have a problem, you can talk to someone, and they will help you." Another student mentioned the appreciation for the school's PRAISE values, stating, "The school can teach you how to do things later in life," referencing the values they were learning to help them prepare for their future. Additional responses conveyed that the schools' lunches were good, elementary teachers prepared students for middle school, and the school provided incentives such as free dress days, restaurant coupons, awards, and movie tickets.

The session solicited suggestions for the school to consider, including adding a mascot, a separate gym and lunchroom, stricter rules for repeatedly disrespectful students, more clubs that cost less to join, and purchasing recess equipment—swings, see-saws, and merry-go-rounds.

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary and 6 middle school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning	<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>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 17	TOTAL: 8	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Establishing a Culture for Learning	<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>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 17	TOTAL: 8	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary and 6 middle school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Communicating with Students	If asked, students can explain what they are learning and where it fits into the larger curriculum context.	The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students will be learning.	The teacher provides little elaboration or explanation about what students will be learning.	At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to students what they will be learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	The teacher explains content clearly and imaginatively.	The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.	The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.	Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.	
	The teacher invites students to explain the content to their classmates.	The teacher makes no content errors.	The teacher may make minor content errors.	Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.	
	Students use academic language correctly.	Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.	The teacher must clarify the learning task.		
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 17	TOTAL: 8	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Questioning and Discussion Strategies	Students initiate higher-order questions.	The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.	The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many have a single correct answer.	Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions to deepen student understanding.	Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher.	The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond.	The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.	
	Students extend the discussion, enriching it.	Many students actively engage in the discussion.	The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number participate.	Only a few students dominate the discussion.	
	Virtually all students are engaged.				
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 11	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 4

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 19 elementary and 6 middle school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation.

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Engaging Students in Learning	<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>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 12	TOTAL: 12	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0
Using Assessment in Instruction	<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>	
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 14	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

In a primary classroom, students exchanged word work papers. The teacher had established a clear and effective phonics routine, guiding the class in sounding out words with the "ew" and "oo" sounds. As part of their word work, students were instructed to write their spelling words three times, arrange them alphabetically, and use spring-themed words to create a story.

A special education self-contained classroom contained 10 students, two aides, and one teacher. Students finished eating their snacks while the teacher spoke on the phone and scrolled through computer modules, looking for the prompt to play for the lesson once the snack was over. Students watched a video on how vegetables were grown, harvested, and moved from the farm to the home. The food depicted was corn and the nutritional value of corn and popcorn was also discussed. The teacher asked the students about the video and reminded them to raise their hands before answering. Students were engaged and asked the instructor questions.

Lower elementary school students sat on the carpet as they shared their projects. Students were called on to stand up and present their projects, briefly explaining the project. Although the teacher posed questions, only a few required students to demonstrate their thinking, make logical connections to everyday life, or refer to the project's objective.

In one primary classroom, some students talked while the teacher gave instructions, showing a lack of respect for listening. As a result, the teacher struggled to gain their attention. During the math lesson, students measured various objects using Unifix cubes³⁰.

Students read a text about greenhouses, independently reflecting on their comprehension and using metacognition (thinking about thinking) by answering questions such as, "What is the hardest part for you to understand?" and "What are you learning about?" They also completed comprehension questions related to the text. Some students referred to the text for their answers. All students were focused and engaged in responding. Meanwhile, the teacher worked with a small group of two students on a math assessment.

Lower elementary students worked on writing verbs to complete sentences. They were provided with a worksheet with sentences that required them to fill in the correct verb to complete the sentence. The teacher provided direct instruction as the worksheet was projected on the board. The teacher worked through the questions individually and read each sentence while the students wrote the verb in the blank. Regarding engaging students in the learning process, the materials and resources supported the learning goals and required intellectual engagement. The pacing of the lesson was appropriate, and the teacher frequently checked on students' progress.

Lower elementary students worked on writing verbs to complete sentences. They were provided with a worksheet with sentences that required them to fill in the correct verb to complete the sentence. The teacher provided direct instruction as the worksheet was projected on the board. The teacher worked through the questions individually and read each sentence while the students wrote the verb in the blank.

³⁰ Unifix cubes are little plastic, smooth-sided cubes with a single "stud" or connector on top and a hole on their bottom that allows them to be vertically linked together and taken apart quickly and easily.

Regarding engaging students in the learning process, the materials and resources supported the learning goals and required intellectual engagement. The pacing of the lesson was appropriate, and the teacher frequently checked on students' progress.

In a middle elementary classroom, students were engaged in a small group lesson with the teacher. The teacher read short fables aloud during the session and asked students to share their predictions. However, there was a missed opportunity to guide students in discovering the story's morals. Although the teacher posed the question about morals, she provided the answer for the students on two separate occasions.

In one elementary math lesson, students completed division problems and then walked through the problems with the instructor. The instructor sat at the desk and asked the whole class questions about solving the equation. Students responded as an entire class in choral response. The instructor validated the students' responses. Having students validate their peers would have elevated student voice.

In a math class, middle school students learned about area and perimeter. The teacher provided direct instruction and reviewed the concepts with examples while the students listened and were asked to assist in solving the question presented on the board. There were 12 students in the class; all were engaged and actively participated.

In a primary classroom, students worked in pairs to write about and discuss how natural resources have been used in the past and present to make goods. Each student wrote on a sticky note, sharing either what they already knew, wanted to know, or had learned. These notes were then added to a class chart and used as a springboard for a group discussion. Throughout the activity, the teacher circulated, checking in with students and offering support as needed.

The teacher sat at his/her desk while leading a science lesson. Students were engaged and raised their hands enthusiastically to respond to the prompts on the whiteboard. Students read the words aloud presented on the whiteboard and shared their own experiences with planting, growing, composting, and water conservation.

Students were working in their math notebooks, describing a line of symmetry. During the lesson, the teacher did most of the talking while several students called out and made disrespectful comments and noises, disrupting the learning environment. The class would benefit from clear expectations, established rules for respectful behavior, and discussion opportunities to promote active engagement.

In one special's classroom, students were highly engaged and participated in active listening. The teacher spoke in a very quiet, conversational tone as students quickly followed procedures. Because students were engaged and listened actively, pacing and lesson activities were optimized. Students appeared happy.

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
Increase Instances of student discourse and intellectual engagement in learning.	The leadership team shared that the school has provided Kagan training for staff to embed more structured class discourse opportunities for students.	The SPCSA staff acknowledged the school's focus on increasing discourse and intellectual engagement for students. It encourages Signature Preparatory to continue developing teachers' skills to promote highly engaged students learning the classroom content. Continued development in this area can be foundational for deeper levels of education and improved academic outcomes.
Consider new ways to set up staff for continued success.	The school's leaders discussed that they have focused on supporting staff by creating a positive school culture built on trust and collaboration.	The SPCSA staff recognized the leadership team's efforts to support staff for success. A sustained commitment to fostering a positive school culture can be the foundation for long-term success and support high staff retention.

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 type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" 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.