



# Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

## Explore Academy

## Site Evaluation Report: February 19, 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 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 conduct 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.

## **School safety**

School safety is consistently implemented at Explore Academy. To gain access to the office of the school, visitors must be granted access by front entrance personnel through locked doors. Office staff identify who is seeking admittance and their purpose for being on school grounds. Visitors gain access using this highly secure procedure.

## **Diverse representation**

Explore was observed to have an ethnically diverse student population, an ethnically diverse faculty and staff, and an ethnically diverse leadership team. SPCSA staff recognize having diverse faculty and leadership members mirror the student population and the neighborhood in which the school resides as a strength.

# 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.

## **NSPF rating**

Academic proficiency is a challenge at Explore Academy Middle School. The index score, as measured within the NSPF<sup>1</sup> for middle school is 13 out of 100 possible points. This places the middle grades at a one-star rating. For English language arts (ELA) the proficiency rate is 15.4 percent, and the math proficiency is 8.2 percent.

## **Chronic absenteeism**

School leadership acknowledged chronic absenteeism is an ongoing challenge at Explore Academy. Currently the levels indicate chronic absenteeism at 37 percent for middle school grades six through eight. Chronic absenteeism is linked as a condition to poor academic achievement.

## **Instability of staffing**

There has been a pattern of teachers leaving their teaching positions at Explore Academy, both during the school year and between one year and the next. This causes inconsistency of classroom routines and procedures, as well as school rules for the students. Further, there appear to be issues and concerns with teachers knowing when a student has accommodation for an IEP<sup>2</sup>. This was noted in the family focus group. It has been difficult for some members of the staff to develop and maintain strong student-to-teacher relationships and build classroom trust due to the high levels of staff turnover. Building trust and rapport is further compounded by classes changing every 22 days with the Flavor Instructional Model. The Explore Academy utilizes a seminar approach to instruction, which is intended to offer students multiple versions, or “flavors,” which run for one month in length and two months for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.

## **Lack of remediation plan**

A serious issue is the lack of a system to remediate for incoming students who may fall several grade levels behind their peers has been noted. The school has begun using the IXL<sup>3</sup> program to provide some support. Teaching staff report that the program is not implemented across all classrooms. In addition, the staff did not report using any type of testing data to create small groups of students or to implement Tier-1 or Tier -2 instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> NEPF was designed in 2011 and passed by Nevada’s 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) have 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.

<sup>2</sup> Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a plan that outlines the specialized instruction and support services a child with a disability will receive in school

<sup>3</sup> IXL is an interactive online learning providing practice problems, and up to date tracking on student progress

# 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.

## **Create strong Tier-2 and Tier-3 instruction within the school framework**

Due to a serious issue with a lack of a system to remediate for incoming students, the SPCSA recommends the school leaders create a more robust system within the school to address those students who fall several grade levels behind their peers. Although the school has begun using a program (IXL) to provide some support, the implementation is not strong enough to support each student falling below grade level, or those requiring support with literacy skills such as learning to read.

## **Professional learning on using data**

SPCSA recommends school leaders provide in-depth training on using data to inform instruction. In addition, the proper use of data may help the school to better understand and implement much stronger levels of Tier-1, 2, and 3 instruction at the school.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Strong Recommendations

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

There are no strong recommendations for Explore Academy during this site evaluation cycle.

# Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

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

Two deficiencies have been identified for Explore Academy. One is a continuation from the previous site evaluation, issued during the 2023-2024 school year for low levels of academic school performance. The second deficiency is for high levels of chronic absenteeism.

## Explore Academy deficiency for low level of academic school performance

Context	<p>Per the Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority and Explore Academy dated on July 1, 2020, pursuant to NRS 388A.255 the considerations 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; and 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>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>The Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School authority and Explore Academy executed on July 1, 2020: Part 3: Education Program Element: Curriculum: the charter school shall have control over and responsibility for delivery of the educational program and for attainment of the performance standards as set forth in the charter school performance framework.</p>
Condition	<p>According to the contract Explore Academy has committed to first, provide a sound education program for students to attain the Nevada Performance standards and second, per the school’s mission, “Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future.”</p> <p>The current levels of student learning and achievement in the middle grades at Explore Academy fall well below expectations. Explore Academy earned an index score of 13 for middle grades for the 2023-24 school year, which is the equivalent of a one-star rating. For English language arts (ELA) the proficiency rate is 15.4 percent, and the math proficiency is 8.2 percent.</p>

	Several of the students attending Explore Academy are not provided with the opportunity to learn to their at their greatest potential and are not having their student achievement maximized as observed during the site evaluation and reflected in the one-star rating. High quality instruction is not present in several of the classrooms. Tier-1 instruction is not providing acceptable levels of academic achievement.
Causes	<p>Explore Academy students are not offered a robust Tier-1 instructional program. There are extensive gaps in student learning and overall achievement levels. Tier-1, Tier-2 and Tier-3 instruction must be improved. School leaders and staff are strongly encouraged to improve academic achievement. As teachers become more effective, students become more actively engaged, and they both become intentional learners<sup>4</sup>. The following elements are usually present in high quality instructional classrooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent communication of learning objectives</li> <li>• Teachers familiar with the curriculum</li> <li>• A clear understanding of what and why students are learning a concept</li> <li>• Students' actively engaged in their own learning</li> <li>• Students explaining their thinking</li> <li>• Strategic teacher questioning</li> <li>• Students displaying self-efficacy</li> <li>• Formative assessments</li> </ul>
Effect	Explore Academy earned a one-star NSPF rating for the 2023-24 school year. The academic deficiency issued during the 2023-2024 school year remains in place for the 2024-2025 school year, making this the second consecutive year of a SPCSA issued Deficiency.

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<sup>4</sup> Moss & Brookhart, 2019

Deficiency Finding	<p>The expectation is that Explore Academy will provide a sound educational program for students to maximize student achievement. According to the Policy Achievement Level Descriptors within the Nevada School Performance Framework technical guide, a three-star school identifies an adequate school that has met the state’s performance standards.</p> <p>Explore Academy middle school has been identified as a one-star school at middle school level for the 2023-24 academic year. Explore Academy has not met Nevada state's standard of performance and urgently needs to address areas that are significantly below standard. Students and subgroups are inconsistent in achieving performance standards. The school must submit an improvement plan that specifically identifies tailored supports to subgroups and indicators that are below standard. The school is subject to state interventions.</p>
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	<p>Monitoring students' needs for specific academic skills and interventions is critical. As the Explore Academy governing board and leadership team consider ways to immediately increase student academic skills and growth gains, the governing board and leadership may want to emphasize the following areas which are usually present in high performing classrooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tier-1 instruction:</b> Build and monitor student academic gains by collaborating across grade bands and vertical alignment of instructional student outcomes. Educating teachers on current student performance data will benefit teachers' ability to read and utilize the data when making curricular and instructional decisions. Implementing high-quality, standards-based, differentiated lessons with meaningful text-dependent student discourse opportunities is usually essential to the goal of increasing quality Tier-1 instruction.</li> <li>• <b>Lesson plans:</b> Lessons should contain scripted scaffolded questions. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>Quantifiable objectives:</i> Measurable objectives provide clarity to the students. Quantifiable objectives assist both the teacher and the students with concrete deliverables and evaluate student mastery.</li> <li>◦ <i>Closure activities:</i> Closure activities reinforce learning, refer back to the objective and the standard, and assess what students have learned. Students describe how, why, or what they learned at the end of each lesson.</li> <li>◦ <i>Pacing:</i> Well-organized lessons with time frames that address rigor and urgency, keep the teacher and the students on task, and enables the teacher to ensure s/he is always referring to the planned objective, standard, differentiation, and assessment.</li> </ul> <p>Teachers <b>make visible the learning objectives</b> and go over them at the beginning and end of each lesson with the students. Objectives are referenced and emphasized throughout instruction. This keeps both the students, and the teachers focused on the task. This assists students internalize lesson goals and objectives, promoting stronger engagement.</p> </li> <li>• <b>Time management:</b> Teach bell-to-bell to optimize learning time.</li> <li>• <b>Efficient classroom procedures:</b> Streamlining classroom procedural tasks for entering the classroom, getting ready to work, turning in paperwork, transitioning from one activity to another, obtaining materials, and clearing materials should be routine and expeditious to unencumber the learning. Some resources to consider in this area include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>Classroom management for middle and high school teachers</i> (Emmer and Evertson, 2021)</li> <li>◦ <i>The first days of school: how to be an effective teacher</i> (Wong, 2018)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p><i>Managing diverse classrooms</i> (Rothstein-Fisch &amp; Trumbull, 2008) o Professional development on questioning techniques, student centered discussion techniques, and intentional instructional approaches that engage all students to assist in bolstering student academic growth.</p> <p>A deficiency is considered highly serious and in urgent need of immediate attention. Once issued, school leaders are asked to complete a Site Evaluation Response Plan within four (4) 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. Both the site evaluation team and the school leadership will agree upon the plan of action including the documented steps and accompanying timeline.</p>
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### Explore Academy deficiency for chronic absenteeism

Context	<p>Per the Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority and Explore Academy beginning on July 1, 2020, pursuant to NRS 388A.255:</p> <p>2.5.2 The Charter School shall adopt and adhere to a Truancy and Absence Policy pursuant to NAC 388A.160(5).</p> <p>3.1.2 In determining whether the Charter School complies with the essential terms of the educational program, the Authority will use the Charter Application (initial or as amended) as the basis to assess fidelity.</p> <p>3.3.1 The Charter School shall be subject to and comply with all requirements related to the state assessment and accountability system for public schools.</p> <p>3.3.2 Nothing in this section prohibits the Charter School or the Authority from assessing student learning outside of and in addition to the state’s testing program.</p>
Condition	<p>According to contract negotiated on July 1, 2020, pursuant to NRS 388A.255: Explore Academy committed to first, provide a sound education program for students to attain the Nevada Performance standards and second, per the school’s mission, “Provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future.” Currently the levels indicate chronic absenteeism for 37 percent for middle school grades 6-8 at Explore Academy. Chronic absenteeism is linked as a condition to poor academic achievement and is defined as a student missing at least 10 percent of days in school per year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences .</p>

Causes	Attendance information from the most recent data indicates chronic absenteeism is 27.2 percent according to the Nevada Department of Education school year 2023-2024 Nevada School Rating report for Explore Academy Middle School.					
	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Points</b>
	<5	10	≥ 11 and < 12	6.5	≥18 and <19	3
	≥ 5 and <6	9.5	≥ 12 and < 13	6	≥ 19 and < 20	2.5
	≥ 6 and <7	9	≥ 13 and < 14	5.5	≥ 20 and < 21	2
	≥ 7 and <8	8.5	≥ 14 and < 15	5	≥ 21 and < 22	1.5
	≥ 8 and <9	8	≥ 15 and < 16	4.5	≥ 22 and < 23	1
	≥ 9 and <10	7.5	≥ 16 and < 17	4	≥ 23 and < 24	0.5
	≥ 10 and <11	7	≥ 17 and < 18	3.5	≥ 24	

	<p>The absenteeism rate has a direct effect on the NSPF index scores. The Nevada State Point Attribution Table (PAT) for chronic absenteeism rates has been provided:</p>
Effect	<p>Chronic absenteeism impacts learning, academic performance, social development, and the overall educational progress of a student. Students who are chronically absent often fall behind in coursework, struggle to grasp concepts, and have trouble keeping up with their peers due to missed instruction time. Chronic absenteeism rate levels are an important opportunity for improvement. Chronic absenteeism predicts low academic success and eventually is a predictor of students who may drop out of school<sup>5</sup>. There is a “direct correlation between good attendance and student achievement”<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p>Chronic absenteeism is a strong indicator of potential academic failure and increased risk of dropping out of school. Missing school regularly can disrupt a student's social connections with classmates and contribute to feelings of isolation or disengagement<sup>7</sup>.</p>

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<sup>5</sup> Sugrue, Zuel, & Laliberte, 2016

<sup>6</sup> Dekalb, 1999

<sup>7</sup> McKenzie, 2022

Deficiency Finding	The expectation is that Explore Academy will immediately create and implement a chronic absenteeism plan to improve chronic absentee rates at the middle school level. A critical plan may want to consider best practices in partnership with leadership and Explore's Governing Board. A deficiency is considered highly serious and in urgent need of immediate attention. Once issued, school leaders are asked to complete a Site Evaluation Response Plan within four (4) weeks of the
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	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. Both the site evaluation team and the school leadership will agree upon the plan of action including the documented steps and accompanying timeline.
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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>8</sup>	2
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	4
Faculty and Staff	9
School Leadership	2
Students	9

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<sup>8</sup> Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

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# Focus Group Summary:

Two members of the Explore Academy board participated in the focus group. Board members confirmed that there are currently four seats filled, and the board meets monthly. Board members indicated they are looking for three new members to complete the group. The board members said they are looking for an educator to add to the group.

Board members were asked to share some of the positive events taking place. One person said, “In my time on the board, which has been six months, we have been able to build our board. I’m from this area, and work in education. I believe our process has been transformative. We have been involved in uplifting the community and the city in this short time.” Another member of the board added, “I’m learning how to conduct board meetings, and I have made great progress in that area. Our board consists of shared stakeholders.”

As a parent of a child attending Explore, one board member shared her views. “When my son hit middle school, he did not have a good experience. When he enrolled at Explore, he felt safe, and the communication was excellent. I think Explore has a unique way of teaching our students. I feel it is more captivating to all students and breaks down the learning in a more interesting way.” Board members shared they value the small school setting, high levels of individualized attention, with the teachers knowing the students. One board member said, “The teachers will work with the parents and have more ability to engage with students and families. It is much safer than other schools.”

When board members were asked to describe their understanding of academics at Explore, both members of the board commented. One person said, “We must get past this one-star status, and I think we are making progress.” Another person remarked, “I am familiar with the academic achievement levels at the school. When our principal is short staffed in classrooms, things fall through the cracks. I hope we improve, and I believe we can take the next step to no longer be a one-star.”

Board members shared their vision for the future of Explore Academy. One person said, “I’d like to see a higher level of retention for our teachers. We need them to stay here. That alone will help the school, drastically.” Another person remarked, “I would add the legislative session started, hoping some positive changes for teacher pay take place. Retaining quality teachers and having our community grow is vital to our success. We must realize that we don’t all learn the same. Covid affected our students.”

Board members were asked if they or the previous group on the board conducted an evaluation of the CMO<sup>9</sup>. One board member said, “The previous board did conduct an evaluation, and the current board

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<sup>9</sup> Charter Management Organization (CMO) is a non-profit educational organization that operates a charter school in the United States. CMO’s may write the charter application, file for grants, or shop for vendors.

# Focus Group Summary:

has plans to evaluate the CMO this school year.” Board members said they do conduct evaluations of the school leader on a regular basis.

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## Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

Four family members participated in the focus group. Families spoke about their understanding of the learning taking place for their young person. One parent said, “I feel my child is learning. He comes home and is very talkative. He tells me what he has learned. It seems like the school’s model, ‘Flavors’ provides a big topic idea and then students build their knowledge around that topic.” Another parent added, “I like that students must come home and do homework. The fact that my child is assigned homework makes me happy.” A different parent said, “My son is learning. He is a special needs child, and I can see a big difference in how he was before this school to how he is now. I call a meeting, and I get notification emails and phone calls about my son.”

Parents spoke about the positive aspects of their child attending Explore Academy. One person shared, “I enjoy this atmosphere and the more personable feeling. If something is not working, the staff try to fix it or talk through issues.” One parent confided that her child has a 504<sup>10</sup> plan and the school has supported this child. The parent said, “My child had anxiety when she first came to this school. Now she comes home from school, and she knows she has a goal to work toward.” Families said the educational experience at Explore Academy is very positive. Parents explained that if students get overwhelmed, they are always welcome to go to the school office and talk to someone. One parent commented, “The people in the front office know everyone. As a parent I feel very comfortable and welcome calling and coming into the school.” Parents said they appreciate that they are informed about testing results. Families said they receive e-mails and log into Infinite Campus<sup>11</sup>. One parent said the teachers send a weekly update which may include items for a student to practice or work on to achieve a higher academic level.

When families were asked to share suggestions to improve the school, several ideas were offered. A parent in the group suggested, “I would like to see students challenged more academically and I would like to see more stability with teachers.” Another person said, “I’ve noticed that IEPs are not read or followed with the teachers who are new to the school.” Family members suggested students be allowed additional time outside, and the school should provide a basketball hoop and a garden. One family member suggested the school obtain a sign with the school’s name clearly visible. Another family member said she would like to see students allowed to re-take a test if they didn’t do well the first time.

# Focus Group Summary:

Parents said they like the school offering events such as a Valentines Day dance, Hispanic Heritage activities, and the Fall Festival. Parents reiterated that they love the family environment and safety measures at school. One person said, “My child is safe and not traumatized, he is happy!”

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<sup>10</sup> 504 plan is a written document developed for students with disabilities that support students and remove barriers to learning.

<sup>11</sup> Infinite Campus is an online portal providing students, families, and teachers access to student information such as grades and attendance records

## Faculty and Staff

Nine members of the staff met to discuss Explore Academy. Staff were asked to describe how they know students are learning. One teacher commented, “ I ask them, and I can see it in their work and enthusiasm. When they will come up to me in the hallway and tell me they are learning.” Another teacher said, “I’ll pose a question to see if the students already know something about the topic.” One educator said, “I provide students with an exit ticket each day and can tell how each student is learning. If one or more students are struggling, I’ll call those students to see me one on one so that I can clarify the student’s understanding of the topic.”

Teachers were asked to explain how they use student data to inform their instructional practices. A teacher explained, “When I see an assignment has been submitted quickly, I ask the student to look and review the questions.” Another teacher said, “I listen to the student’s conversations about the learning topic.” A third teacher commented, “ I do a lot of checking for understanding and gathering information on student’s understanding in their classes. I have a lot of students expected to write in my class and I go back and compare writing samples from earlier in the school year to see how students are progressing.”

When asked about how staff feel things might improve, staff mentioned that behavioral routines and processes need to be unified because they differed from one classroom to another. One person remarked, “There’s been instability in staffing in middle school. The staff turnover has been difficult on everyone.”

Teachers spoke candidly about the Explore/Flavors educational model. One teacher said, “There is an issue with the Explore model. Our student population in Las Vegas is transient. With the current Explore/Flavors model, I don’t have to do anything for several weeks and many teachers here just hand out projects to students. There is no accountability for students during this initial time frame.” Another educator said, “The model assumes all students know basic information about the topic/ flavor and the truth is our students do not. There is no time allowed in our academic calendar to pause and remediate. The Explore/Flavors model allows teachers 22 days in middle school or 44 days in high school to begin

## Focus Group Summary:

and end a unit. It is unrealistic.” A third teacher added, “The one thing that can counteract the discrepancies or need for remediation is the IXL program. However, the decision to utilize this tool is left up to the teacher, so there really is no system in place.” A fourth educator said, “There are a few major issues here. At times eighth graders take freshman level classes yet they don’t have the maturity to be in that class. If a student fails a flavor, they are still moved up to the next level even though this is the opposite of what is written in the school’s handbook.” A fifth teacher added, “We have a wide range of academic achievement levels yet no remediation plan. This has taken place now year after year and the school does not stop and remediate.” A sixth teacher commented, “I think with the lack of staffing and the way the courses are offered it is counterproductive to students.” Teachers were highly concerned that the model is harmful to students and added that they are not made aware of accommodations for students with an IEP. They said there were probably many students who qualify for special education yet remain unidentified.

# Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

Two leaders participated in the focus group on the day of the evaluation. Leaders shared information about some of the challenges they have been experiencing during this school year. One challenge has been the resignation of three teachers since winter break. Another issue is that most of those teaching at Explore have substitute licenses only. Leaders shared that they are having difficulty finding services for specialized positions such as occupational therapist and a licensed school counselor. According to school leaders, enrollment numbers are still below where they had planned. The school had hoped to set enrollment at 420 students and are currently well below that number. One leader said, “We are planning on submitting an amendment to the SPCSA board and request a reduction in enrollment.” When asked about the overall status of student achievement, school leaders said they have concerns. One leader remarked, “Our NSPF scores are not where they need to be. We are not sugar coating it. At this time, we are focusing on ACT<sup>10</sup> preparation, and we know that every junior in the school participated in ACT boot camp. We believe it will help build test-taking stamina for students.”

Leaders were asked to update SPCSA staff about the current deficiency in academic performance. One leader said, “We revamped our curriculum map to ensure all competencies are completed prior to the State summative test. We provide test-taking skills classes and guide our students with test taking skills such as learning how to read a test.” School leaders confirmed that the educational model, “Flavors” is still in place with 22-day courses, credit analysis, and students completing work within the time frames. One leader said, “We teach students how to read their credit analysis so they can plan and advocate for themselves. Our core assessments are traditional tests and are aligned to the NVACS<sup>11</sup>.” Leaders explained that the history and science classes at the school now have a writing component within the assessments to help students focus on the skill of writing. Leaders said students in middle school are taking more core curriculum classes. The school leader said they are looking at student IXL scores, and having students focus more on traditional classes such as ELA, math, science, social studies until they can show their competencies and move forward with the Flavors model.

The school leader was asked about the audit that was due to the SPCSA and is now late. The leader said, “We are aware. It is unacceptable that our back-office provider said it would be completed on time. From my understanding, Axiom is our back-office provider, and they talk to our auditor. I am out of the discussion loop yet what we are doing what we can.” School officials said they have put the topic of audit discussion on every board agenda since November 2024. According to the school leader, the CMO representative said she has contacted the auditor several times and they seem to have put them on the back burner.

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<sup>10</sup> ACT is a standardized test used for college admissions in the United States. English, math, reading and science skills are assessed

<sup>11</sup> NVACS are the Nevada Academic Content Standards as set forth by the Nevada Department of Education

<sup>14</sup> PERS is the Public Employees Retirement System

Some of the previous challenges have been resolved, according to school leaders. The delinquent PERS<sup>14</sup> is up to date.

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An evaluation of the CMO took place before the prior board disbanded. A new board has been created. There are five new board members. The school leader reports this group is more engaged and has completed all the training required. In addition, the school leader reported that there are now regular board meetings with quorum being met at the meetings.

# Focus Group Summary: Students

Nine students participated in the focus group. Students spoke about what they have recently learned while in attendance. Topics included Shakespeare, graphic novels, trigonometry, algebra, fossils, and about abolitionists. Students said they appreciate the opportunity to improve their skills at presenting, and presentation skills. One student remarked, “I am in sixth grade and learning eighth grade math. I’m doing well and this surprises me.” Another student said, “I’m getting better at completing assigned work prior to deadlines.”

Students were asked if they have noticed any increase in the amount of writing they are required to complete. Students indicated they were unaware of this change. They did say they were asked to summarize, make claims, cite evidence, and quote a text but were not told why these skills are expected. Students said they didn’t really compare their writing from earlier in the semester or talk with their teachers about ways to improve their writing.

Students were asked to explain what happens during the advisory period. Students commented they usually sit and do nothing during advisory. One student said, “We stand and say the pledge of allegiance and then listen to school announcements. Afterwards we sit and wait for the time to be over in advisory.”

Students described relationships at the school with the adults. A student explained, “I feel like I could talk to my teacher. I only have one I could talk to.” Other students said some teachers know them well, others reported some teachers make things worse if they know the students are having a bad day. Students said they feel physically and emotionally safe for the most part.

Some of the students spoke about their favorite thing about school. One student said, “We have free time in class after we finish an assignment.” Another student commented, “I can go on YouTube or listen to music. We have more hands-on projects and group work than at other schools.” Students said they like to pick their groups and appreciate being with friends. One student remarked, “I like the teachers here and I go help teachers.”

Students were asked if they have suggestions for improvement at the school. Students said they would like teachers to explain directions and content more clearly. One student said, “I would like to know what we are learning and why we are learning it. Some teachers do this, and others do not.” One student said, “in math our teacher will connect our learning to real life. In anatomy we learn about if we break a bone, how it will affect different bones.”

# Classroom Environment and Instruction

## Observation Rubric

A total of 11 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
<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 putdowns 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>
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 6</b>	<b>TOTAL: 4</b>	<b>TOTAL: 0</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>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</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>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>

# Classroom Environment and Instruction

		Students expend good effort to complete work of high quality.	to complete the task at hand.	Students exhibit little or no pride in their work.	
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 4</b>	<b>TOTAL: 6</b>	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 1</b>

## Observation Rubric

A total of 11 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
<b>Communicating with Students</b>	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.		

# Classroom Environment and Instruction

	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 5	TOTAL: 3	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 1
<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 rapidfire 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>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 3	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 4

## Observation Rubric

A total of 11 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

# Classroom Environment and Instruction

<b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	Virtually all students are engaged in the lesson.	Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.	Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.	Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<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 learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or encourage higherorder 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>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>Learning tasks, activities, and materials require only recall or have a single correct response.</p> <p>The lesson drags on or is rushed.</p>	
	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>	<b>TOTAL: 3</b>	<b>TOTAL: 6</b>	<b>TOTAL: 2</b>	<b>TOTAL: 0</b>
<b>Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	Students indicate they clearly understand the characteristics of high-quality work.	The teacher makes the standards of highquality work clear to students.	There is little evidence that the students understand how the work is evaluated.	The teacher does not indicate what quality work looks like.	
	<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 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>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 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: 2</b>	<b>TOTAL: 2</b>	<b>TOTAL: 3</b>	<b>TOTAL: 4</b>

# Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

Students completed a worksheet on different stippling techniques using a pencil to demonstrate Pointillism. The worksheet illustrated and guided students through different ways to use shading, patterns, and other stippling techniques to show how stippling has been used by different artists.

During advisory period, students sat and talked to each other or worked individually on their computers. The instructor did not engage with any individual students. Several students got up and went to the restroom at the same time; they were gone for a lengthy amount of time. The instructor put on a movie after a while. There was no advising or discussion of skills, guidance, assistance, social-emotional learning or focus on schooling taking place at all.

There were twenty students and one teacher in one high school class. The teacher explained that students are to make notecards on an animal of their choice. One student played a video game while the teacher explained the directions. The teacher went and spoke to the student about his animal later. Students were working independently at table groups and there were low levels of learning.

Students followed along as the teacher provided direct instruction on how to write an equation to determine a trigonometric function for the inverse of a right triangle on paper and on a right triangle. The teacher walked the students through two examples, stopping and allowing students to answer how to complete the next step orally for the class. Then she allowed the students to work independently on their own.

In one middle school math class, the teacher projected math problems onto the white board and asked students to complete the problems on their own, then asked for student volunteers to show how they completed the problem for the class explaining their thinking. Students were eager to share and talk about what they did to solve the problem.

Students sat passively waiting for class to start for over five minutes in a middle school class. The teacher never stated what the students would be learning or why. Some students did not have their laptop to follow along. Students were called upon to read the text. Most could not read the text and stumbled over most of the words. Students did not take notes. The teacher stopped and talked about what the students read but never explained what the students should be learning or why.

# 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
Delinquent PERS account (Deficiency)	School reported PERS has been brought current.	SPCSA team agrees with the school. This has been met and is no longer in place.
Academic Performance (Deficiency)	School reported academic performance continues to be a challenge.	SPCSA finds the academic levels of performance are unsatisfactory and the <b>deficiency remains</b> .
Governing board commit to evaluating their CMO. (Strong Recommendation)	School reported that the governing board has evaluated the CMO.	SPCSA team agrees with the school. This has been met and is no longer in place.
Governing Board responsiveness (Recommendation)	School reported they have created a new governing board.	SPCSA team agrees with the school. This has been met.
Formalize a communication plan (Recommendation)	School reported that a communication plan has been designed and implemented.	SPCSA team agrees with the school. This has been met.
Increase enrollment (Recommendation)	School reported they are still working on increasing enrollment.	SPCSA team finds the school must continue to work on increasing enrollment. This has not been met.
Lower chronic absenteeism (Recommendation)	School reported chronic absenteeism is still very high.	SPCSA finds the current levels of chronic absenteeism are unacceptable and this has not been met. This is a new deficiency.

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