Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Discovery Charter School Sandhill

Site Evaluation Report: October 23, 2025

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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 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.

Increased Academic Performance
Academic outcomes at the Discovery Charter School Sandhill are a commendable strength. The NSPF[1] star rating and the index score trend over the last three years have a strong upward trend. See table below:

Year	Index points	Star rating
2024-25	79	4-star
2023-24	60	3-star
2022-23	40	2-star

Full points on the English Language Adequate Growth Percentiles (AGP)[2] indicator
The Discovery Charter School Sandhill experienced outstanding Adequate Growth Percentiles (AGPs) as displayed on the 2024-25 Nevada Report Card, NSPF. The AGP indicator is used to determine if EL[3]s are meeting growth goals toward becoming proficient in English. English proficiency refers to the ability to speak, write, read, and comprehend the English language effectively. Students meeting their growth targets should be on track to become English proficient and exit EL status in five years. Discovery Charter School Sandhill received full points (10/10) in measured adequate growth percentiles for their English Language learners.

Strong outcomes on the Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator
Another strength at the Discovery Charter School Sandhill is its strong performance on the Closing Opportunity Gaps indicator, where the school earned 19 out of 20 possible points. Within this indicator, 40.9% of previously non-proficient students in math met their Adequate Growth Percentile (AGP) targets, compared to 31.2% across the SPCSA district. In ELA, 63.1% of previously non-proficient students met their AGP targets, exceeding the SPCSA district rate of 51.8%. These results indicate that Discovery Charter School Sandhill is effectively accelerating the growth of students who were previously performing below proficiency in both math and ELA.

The campus is highly diverse
The Discovery Charter School Sandhill is highly diverse. Per the 2024-2025 Nevada School Rating, 17% of students enrolled are English Learners. Additionally, 12.8% of students are Students with Disabilities, and 100% are Economically Disadvantaged. The school campus is diverse within student race and ethnicity as well. See the link for details.
NSPF Report for Discovery Charter School Sandhill - Nevada Accountability Portal

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[1] 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.
[2] AGP stands for Adequate Growth Percentiles, and it refers to the growth needed for a student to reach grade level proficiency within a specific timeframe.
[3] EL stands for English Language Learner

High levels of parent participation

According to participants in the leader focus group, the Discovery Charter School Sandhill has high levels of parent involvement. Data from the school outlines a set of informational sessions conducted for family members by the school leader. Session topics vary; however, one recently held meeting was focused on teaching family members how to read and analyze i-Ready[4] reports. Another example of strong parent involvement was when several family volunteers helped the school leader to install privacy tarps throughout the fencing on the perimeter of the school, thus teaming up for the safety of all students. School leaders reported, and sign-in sheets confirmed, that there was standing room only at the annual Title I meeting held on the campus this fall.

There are high expectations

As reported by school leaders, high expectations for student achievement are monitored and valued. The site evaluation team noted swift pacing of lessons and teacher commitment to individualized instruction and high levels of student feedback. The school leader has created a Treat Train incentive for students meeting set goals within the i-Ready system. The school leader sets high expectations for student's completing lessons and provides a different treat on the Train each month. This has become a creative and effective way of keeping students aware of and committed to the completion of their learning goals. John Hattie said, the single greatest influence on student achievement is the teacher's belief that students can succeed.

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[4] i-Ready Learning is a digital instructional resource assessing and providing instructions to students with grade-level materials in reading and math.

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.

Chronic absenteeism
Although the level of chronic absenteeism has declined from the previous, 2023-24 school year, the current chronic absenteeism level is still above SPCSA average. Chronic absenteeism for the 2024-25 school year was 28.2% as compared to the SPCSA District average of 16.4%

Continued improvements for the outside infrastructure
Although the school has improved safety measures on the outside of the campus by creating barriers that provide students privacy, the campus, as self-reported by school leaders, would like to add additional security measures to make the campus safer. The Executive Director has written and submitted a grant for this purpose. The approval is pending.

Desire to increase the wait list
As self-reported, the school would like to increase the number of students waiting to enroll in the school's campus. School leaders reported levels of enrollment at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year at about 132 students. Since that time, enrollment numbers have declined with 11students transferring to the Discovery Charter School Hillpointe campus. The school would like the numbers to increase to about 132 enrolled students.

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.

Lower chronic absenteeism rates
The SPCSA recommends Discovery Charter School Sandhill continue to refine plans and bolster outcomes to lower chronic absenteeism numbers. The current chronic absenteeism level is still above SPCSA average, and the current level does not allow the campus to receive full points on the Engagement Indicator for the NSPF star rating. Discovery Charter School Sandhill chronic absenteeism for the 2024-25 school year was 28.2% as compared to the SPCSA District average of 16.4%.

Increase academic proficiency in science
The SPCSA recommends the Discovery Charter School Sandhill team consider improving proficiency in the subject area of science. The science proficiency rate at the school is less than 5%. The SPCSA District has 26.6% proficiency in science.

Place evacuation plans in all classrooms/ lock students records cabinet
The SPCSA recommends that all classrooms and areas of the school contain clearly labeled and visible evacuation plans. In addition, it is vitally important that all student and staff records are housed in a locked cabinet that is not easily accessible. The SPCSA will need confirmation that these items have been addressed no later than <u>December 19, 2025.</u>

Continue to work on infrastructure improvements
It is recommended the Discovery Charter School Sandhill team continue to address all infrastructure planned improvements. The SPCSA is aware the school is waiting to receive funds from a safety grant and encourages the school to move forward with those plans once funds are disbursed.

Site Evaluation Findings: Strong Recommendations

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

There are no strong recommendations for Discovery Charter School Sandhill during this site evaluation.

Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

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

There are no deficiencies for Discovery Charter School Sandhill 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[5]	Not applicable due to an abbreviated site evaluation
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	Not applicable due to an abbreviated site evaluation.
Faculty and Staff	Not applicable due to an abbreviated site evaluation.
School Leadership	2
Students	Not applicable due to an abbreviated site evaluation.

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[5] Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

Focus Group Summary: Governing Board

Schools operating with a 4 or 5-star NSPF status and in good standing on all SPCSA issued frameworks within the third and fifth year of their charter undergo an abbreviated site evaluation.
The Discovery Charter School Sandhill underwent an abbreviated site evaluation, and a board focus group was not necessary.

Focus Group Summary: Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

Schools operating with a 4 or 5-star NSPF status and in good standing on all SPCSA issued frameworks within the third and fifth year of their charter undergo an abbreviated site evaluation. The Discovery Charter School Sandhill underwent an abbreviated site evaluation, and a Family member, parent and guardian focus group was not necessary.

Focus Group Summary: Faculty and Staff

Schools operating with a 4 or 5-star NSPF status and in good standing on all SPCSA issued frameworks within the third and fifth year of their charter undergo an abbreviated site evaluation. The Discovery Charter School Sandhill underwent an abbreviated site evaluation, and a staff focus group was not necessary.

Focus Group Summary: Students

Schools operating with a 4 or 5-star NSPF status and in good standing on all SPCSA issued frameworks within the third and fifth year of their charter undergo an abbreviated site evaluation. The Discovery Charter School Sandhill underwent an abbreviated site evaluation, and a student focus group was not necessary.

Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

There were two school leaders present during the leadership focus group. Leaders spoke about numbers of enrolled students. One leader said the school reached decent levels of enrollment at the beginning of the school year with 132 students. Since that time, enrollment numbers have declined with 11 going to the Discovery Charter School Hillpointe. The school would like the numbers to improve to about 132 enrolled students.

In speaking about previous SPCSA recommendations, the school leaders noted a major increase in the NSPF star rating and index points at the school. This has been a recommendation that is now met. Leaders attributed the strong academic growth to following the school's SPP[6] (School Performance Plan) which called for WIDA[7] training. The school principal organized a WIDA training and welcomed the trainer back at a later date to talk about changes in teaching strategies. School leaders were excited about the school's perfect score of 10/10 on the English Language Proficiency Indicator. The school rate of students meeting their EL, AGP target is 64.2% as compared to the SPCSA district rate of 55.3%. The school principal attributed other strong measures, such as Closing Opportunity Gaps with 19/20 points, to the school team intentionally writing individual intervention plans for every student at the school.

Other strengths at the school were noted. The school leaders reported a culture shift at the campus. One leader remarked, "We are getting a pattern of students enrolling and having their younger siblings and friends decide to attend our school, and we are proud of that." The principal commented on a recent Title I[8] meeting. "We had standing room only at our meeting, and this is a sign that our parents are buying into the education part of school, not just the fun activities."

The principal shared information about the school's commitment to improve both chronic absenteeism and overall student achievement. She said that if a student who previously had some barriers to attending school makes it on time to school for two weeks, the student is invited to spin a wheel located in the lunchroom with the opportunity to win a prize. The school principal explained that students who miss too many days of school are not allowed to attend field trips. The leader made a point of showing parents why missing school is harmful to their children and how it was a barrier to the school reaching a five-star status. The school leader spoke about another successful initiative. The leader sets an academic challenge for students, such as passing 30 i-Ready lessons. The leader uses a rolling cart with treats and walks from classroom to classroom. Students who have reached their goal are invited to join the treat train on its journey throughout the school. The event concludes with students receiving a treat. Another addition to the campus is the implementation of science kits, which were awarded to the school due to the school leader's writing and being approved for funding for the kits.

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[6] SPP -School Performance Plans identify goals and improvement strategies along with detailed actions steps designed to increase the achievement of all students.

[7] WIDA is a comprehensive assessment measuring English language proficiency in four categories: identification, placement, progress, and achievement. The WIDA screener is used to determine ELL support services as well as determining when a student has developed proficiency to exit ELL school services

[8] Title-I schools are public schools that receive federal funding to support students from low-income families

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 12 elementary 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	The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond the class and school. When necessary, students respectfully correct one another. Students participate without fear of put-downs or ridicule from either the teacher or other students. The teacher respects and encourages students' efforts.	Talk between the teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful. The teacher successfully responds to disrespectful behavior among students. Students participate willingly but may be somewhat hesitant to offer their ideas in front of classmates. The teacher makes general connections with individual students.	The quality of interactions between teachers and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect or insensitivity. The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students with uneven results. The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that these attempts are not entirely successful.	The teacher is disrespectful toward or insensitive to students' ages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels. Students' body language indicates feelings of hurt, discomfort, or insecurity. The teacher displays no familiarity with, or care about, individual students.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Establishing a Culture for Learning	The teacher communicates passion for the subject. Students indicate through their questions and comments a desire to understand content. Students assist their classmates in understanding the content.	The teacher communicates the importance of the content and the conviction that with hard work all students can master the material. The teacher conveys an expectation of high levels of student effort. Students expend good effort to complete work of high quality.	The teachers' energy for the work is neutral. The teacher conveys high expectations for only some students. Students exhibit a limited commitment to completing the work on their own. The teacher's primary concern appears to be to complete the task at hand.	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. The teacher conveys to at least some students that the work is too challenging for them. Students exhibit little or no pride in their work.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 9	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 12 elementary 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 explains content clearly and imaginatively. The teacher invites students to explain the content to their classmates. Students use academic language correctly.	The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students will be learning. The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking. The teacher makes no content errors. Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.	The teacher provides little elaboration or explanation about what students will be learning. The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students. The teacher may make minor content errors. The teacher must clarify the learning task.	At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to students what they will be learning. Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented. Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Questioning and Discussion Strategies	Students initiate higher-order questions. The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions to deepen student understanding. Students extend the discussion, enriching it. Virtually all students are engaged.	The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers. Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher. Many students actively engage in the discussion.	The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many have a single correct answer. The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond. The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number participate.	Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer. The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking. Only a few students dominate the discussion.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 12 elementary 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	Virtually all students are engaged in the lesson. Lesson activities require high-level student thinking and explanations of their thinking. Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.	Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson. Most learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or encourage higher-order thinking. Students are invited to explain their thinking as part of completing tasks. The pacing of the lesson provides students with the time needed to be intellectually engaged.	Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson. Learning tasks are a mix of those requiring thinking and those requiring recall. Student engagement with the content is largely passive. The pacing of the lesson is uneven—suitable in parts but rushed or dragging in others.	Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson. Learning tasks, activities, and materials require only recall or have a single correct response. The lesson drags on or is rushed.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 3	TOTAL: 9	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Assessment in Instruction	Students indicate they clearly understand the characteristics of high-quality work. The teacher uses multiple strategies to monitor student understanding. Students monitor their own understanding. Feedback comes from many sources.	The teacher makes the standards of high-quality work clear to students. The teacher elicits evidence of student understanding. Students are invited to assess their own work and make improvements. Feedback includes specific and timely guidance.	There is little evidence that the students understand how the work is evaluated. The teacher monitors understanding through a single method, without eliciting evidence of understanding from students. Feedback to students is vague.	The teacher does not indicate what quality work looks like. The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson. Students receive no feedback, or feedback is global or directed to one student.	
	TOTAL: 3	TOTAL: 8	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

In an early elementary classroom, students appeared comfortable and engaged in the learning. An objective was posted in the classroom and the teacher called students by their first name in several instances.

Students in a small group ELA lesson were reading words in context and identifying synonyms for Tier-2 vocabulary terms. For example, they explored the word dispute and discussed alternative words with similar meanings. Students shared their own explanations and examples, using their own language to define and apply the words. The atmosphere was lively and positive as students laughed, exchanged ideas freely, and were clearly engaged in the learning process.

In a science class, students observed a scorpion that was safely contained under a cup. The teacher asked, "Why would I let the scorpion go at the end of the day?" and encouraged students to agree or disagree respectfully with one another's ideas. He reminded them to practice active listening, and students effectively used the strategy during their discussion. All students were highly engaged in the conversation. The lesson then transitioned to an analysis of student data, including scores and completion rates on various learning platforms. The teacher guided students in reflecting on their progress and asked, "What might be holding you back if you are not yet meeting your goals?" He clearly explained how students would summarize and share their data with their parents.

In a resource room, one teacher worked with one student on writing. The teacher scaffolded the content, asked several open-ended questions related to the assignment, and praised the student for completing the work. The teacher said, "Use your strategy for this one." The student was successful.

In a primary classroom, the teacher provided clear instructions to all students about the math assessment before they entered the room. Once inside, each student found the test placed on their desk, and the class read through the problems together. Students then worked quietly and independently on their assessments, demonstrating focus and understanding of the expectations.

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
Ensure compliance with required document submissions.	The school's Executive Director has committed to submitting required documents in a timely manner.	Not yet met: Until the 2025-26 school year totals have been compiled and published, it is unclear if this has been improved, overall, at this time, the submissions have been on time.
Decrease the chronic absenteeism rate.	The school recognizes the need to improve chronic absenteeism.	Not Met: The school's chronic absenteeism rate was 28.2% and above the district rate of 16.4%
Increase student achievement.	The school has committed to strong levels of student achievement.	Met: The SPCSA staff agrees with the school's assessment of this recommendation. The school has increased its star rating from 60 index points and a 3-star elementary school to 79 index points and a 4-star status.
Increase opportunities for staff and stakeholders to review the school's budget.	The school's board reviews budget items at each board meeting.	Met: Board members reported continual monitoring of the school's financial status.
Safety concerns	The school leaders reported a need to increase safety measures at the school, including the installation of cameras, more secure door systems, a key card setup, taller gates, need to rekey items.	Not yet met: The SPCSA agrees with the Sandhill leadership team. The school is waiting to hear about an additional funding stream and will begin improvements in the spring if the grant is approved.

Operational Compliance Checks

Fire Extinguisher   ☒ YES   ☐ NO

Nurse's Station   ☒ YES   ☐ NO

Evacuation Plan in Classrooms   ☒ YES   ☐ NO

Food Permit   ☐ YES   ☐ NO   ☒ N/A

Elevator Permit   ☐ YES   ☐ NO   ☒ 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.