



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Explore Academy Las Vegas Site Evaluation and Risk Based Monitoring Report: January 21, 2026

State Public Charter School Authority

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Links to Resources

Links to Site Evaluation Resources:

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

Links to Risk Based Monitoring Resources:

- [Risk Based Monitoring Canvas](#)
- [Resource- Updated Policy Checklist: FY2025-2026 Policy and Procedure Checklist Fillable](#)
- [Grants Administration Canvas](#)
- [SPCSA Risk Based Monitoring Training Modules](#)

Summary of School

Location 3551 North Ferrell Street, North Las Vegas,
Nevada 89032

Date of Monitoring Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Date of Report Friday, February 27, 2026

- Total Number of Students: 329
- Grade Levels: 6 - 12

Part 1
Explore Academy LVS
Site Evaluation Report

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.

Increased school safety

A key strength of Explore Academy Las Vegas (Explore Academy) is its strong focus on campus safety and supervision. Leaders increased campus security and invested in additional cameras to expand monitoring across the site. Dismissal procedures are well organized and consistently supervised, with adults visibly present to support smooth transitions. A dedicated security monitor adds an additional layer of oversight and helps maintain a secure, orderly environment for students and staff.

Improvement in supporting English Language Learners

Explore Academy has demonstrated improvement in supporting English Language Learners¹ (ELLs). According to the 2024-25 NSPF², in the English Language Proficiency Indicator section, the middle school's adequate growth percentiles³ (AGPs) rate of 23.5 percent exceeded the prior year's rate of less than five percent, earning the school six index points of a possible ten. In high school, there was even greater proficiency among ELLs, 20 percent, earning the school ten out of ten points on the indicator. Thus, the school is commended for its notable improvement in helping its English language students meet their AGPs and supporting their skills to become proficient in English.

Small class sizes

Explore Academy prides itself on maintaining small class sizes across all grade levels. This structure supports strong teacher-student relationships and creates more frequent opportunities for individualized feedback and targeted support. As John Hattie and Helen Timperley note, "Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Teachers can adjust instruction in real time based on student needs. Small groups also allow for richer discussion, increased participation, and deeper exploration of grade-level content than is often possible in larger classroom settings.

Student mediation program

Another strength of Explore Academy is its peer mediation program, which provides students with a structured, supportive process to resolve conflicts and repair relationships. During the student focus group, students described the peer mediation process in detail and shared that it is used often and has been effective in helping peers talk through concerns, practice active listening, and agree on solutions that feel fair and respectful to everyone involved. This approach builds student leadership and accountability while reinforcing communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills. Over time, peer mediation can help strengthen school culture by promoting a calmer environment where students feel heard and are better equipped to manage disagreements productively.

¹ In education, ELL stands for English Language Learners, referring to students who are acquiring English alongside their native language(s).

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

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.

Star rating and index scores

One main challenge for Explore Academy is improving academic performance, as reflected on the Nevada School Performance Framework⁴ (NSPF) index scores for both middle and high school. Middle school currently has an index score of 22 out of 100, resulting in a one-star rating. Similarly, high school has an index score of 31.5 out of 100. This is a continued trend from the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. These results indicate a need to strengthen student achievement and growth outcomes across content areas through consistent, standards-aligned instruction, targeted interventions for students performing below grade level, and ongoing progress monitoring to ensure supports are accelerating learning over time.

Academic proficiency

Another challenge for Explore Academy is that academic proficiency remains an area of need. In middle school, math proficiency is only 6.3 percent, compared to the SPCSA district average of 43.6 percent. English language arts (ELA) proficiency is 25 percent, well below the SPCSA district average of 60.7 percent. Similar gaps are present in high school, where math proficiency is less than five percent at Explore Academy, compared to the SPCSA district average of 25.2 percent.

Chronic absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism⁵ continues to be a challenge for Explore Academy. According to the 2024–25 NSPF, 27.4 percent of middle school students and 35.2 percent of high school students are classified as chronically absent. When students miss school, they miss instruction, fall behind on coursework, and often become less connected to the campus community. This pattern is reflected in broader research on attendance and course performance; in a study of ninth-grade outcomes, Elaine Allensworth and John Q. Easton found that “Just one week of absence is associated with a much greater likelihood of failure, regardless of incoming achievement” (Allensworth & Easton, 2007).

Low enrollment

Low enrollment remains a challenge for Explore Academy. Current enrollment is 315 students, and the school’s goal is to reach 330. Maintaining enrollment at or above target levels is important for program sustainability, staffing stability, and access to resources that support student learning. Persistently lower-than-target enrollment is also contributing to fiscal strain, as reduced per-pupil revenue limits the school’s ability to maintain staffing levels, sustain programming, and cover fixed operating costs. In response, Explore Academy is currently pursuing a charter contract amendment with the SPCSA board to reduce its enrollment cap. Explore has applied to reduce the enrollment cap three times since the beginning of its charter contract. Continued attention to recruitment and retention strategies, clear communication of the school’s value to families, and ongoing outreach within the community will be key to meeting enrollment goals and sustaining a strong school model.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Students are considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more days in a school year.

Facility issues

Facilities continue to be a challenge for Explore Academy and require significant time and resources. Facility-related costs account for approximately 27 percent of the school's budget, limiting funding available for other priorities. The campus has also experienced ongoing maintenance issues, including a sinkhole caused by a burst water pipe, roof or plumbing leaks, and the need to replace a water pump. In several cases, staff have had to step in to address repairs, with front office personnel assisting with maintenance tasks and staff building replacement backflow covers after weather damage. While this responsiveness reflects commitment and adaptability, the frequency and severity of facility issues create operational strain and underscore the need for more sustainable long-term solutions.

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.

Work on increasing proficiency in math and ELA

One key recommendation for Explore Academy is to continue strengthening math and ELA proficiency across all grade levels by ensuring consistently rigorous Tier one⁶ instruction for every student and providing timely, targeted Tier two⁷ interventions for students who need additional support. This work can be supported through regular analysis of student performance data, clear progress-monitoring routines, and ongoing coaching for teachers to refine instructional practices and respond to learning gaps in real time.

Sustainable leadership team

SPCSA recommends that Explore Academy consider strengthening staff capacity by developing a distributed leadership team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Relying on one person to carry the majority of school leadership work places a strain on leadership capacity over time and increases the risk of inconsistency if staffing changes occur. Establishing a strong leadership structure, building internal teacher-leaders, and creating shared systems for decision-making and accountability can support continuity, improve implementation of schoolwide priorities, and promote long-term stability.

Increase enrollment

SPCSA recommends that Explore Academy continue prioritizing enrollment growth while working with SPCSA to adjust the school's enrollment cap to better align with recruitment goals and operational needs. Strengthening outreach and retention strategies, clarifying the school's value to families, and monitoring enrollment progress regularly will support long-term sustainability and ensure the school is positioned to staff and resource programs effectively.

Alignment to Nevada Academic Content Standards

Explore Academy is recommended to ensure the current curriculum is fully aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards⁸ (NVACS) so that instruction reflects appropriate rigor and supports students in meeting grade-level expectations. This work should include reviewing pacing guides, unit plans, and assessments to verify that daily instruction and tasks are standards-aligned and provide students with regular opportunities to demonstrate mastery of grade-level content.

Increase rigor, discourse structures, and metacognition in lessons

⁶ 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.

⁷ Tier two is the first level of intervention for students who do not show progress in Tier 1. Students are provided with Tier 2 interventions when they need support to meet academic or behavior goals.

⁸ Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) are a set of grade-level standards intended to provide a focus for instruction each year. They are a framework for curriculum and instruction in the state of Nevada.

SPCSA recommends that Explore Academy consider strengthening lesson rigor by intentionally embedding discourse structures and metacognitive routines so students are doing more of the cognitive work during instruction. In the classroom observation rubric on page 25 of this report, under the *Engaging Students* indicator, five classrooms were rated as Highly Proficient, and 13 were rated as Approaching Proficient. This pattern suggests an opportunity to increase the consistency of student engagement across classrooms. To support this shift, teachers can consider providing more frequent opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, content-based discussions with peers. Structured academic discourse helps students clarify their thinking, test ideas, and deepen understanding through collaborative sensemaking. SPCSA also recommends increasing student “heavy lifting” by setting clear expectations for high-quality work, modeling effective reasoning, and routinely requiring students to explain and defend their solutions. Strategies such as student-to-student talk protocols, collaborative problem solving, and student presentations can strengthen ownership, perseverance, and mastery of new concepts.

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 visit.

Site Evaluation Findings: Deficiencies

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

Continued Deficiency

Academic performance: Improve the index scores in middle and high school.

Context	<p>A. Per the Charter School Renewal Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority Board and the Explore Academy Las Vegas Governing Board, which was fully executed on July 26, 2019, the consideration of the legislature in enacting legislation to authorize charter schools is to serve the best interests of all pupils, including pupils who may be at risk. A procedure by which the positive results achieved by charter schools may be replicated, and the negative results may be identified and eliminated.</p> <p>B. Consistent with any oversight practices set out in the Charter School Performance Framework, the Authority shall follow a progressive system of notification and calls for corrective action on the part of the Charter School. (7.5.1)</p>
Condition	<p>The Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority Board and the Explore Academy Las Vegas Governing Board was renewed on July 26, 2019, for a six-year term, and took effect on the same date. Explore Academy Las Vegas has committed to (1) providing a sound education program for students to attain Nevada performance standards and (2), per the school's mission and vision, to ensure that each student receives a rigorous and engaging education in a supportive culture of accountability and kindness.</p> <p>Current student learning and achievement levels at the middle school at Explore Academy Las Vegas fall below expectations according to the 2024-25 NSPF data. Additionally, several students attending the middle and high school are not being given the opportunity to learn to their full potential. They are not maximizing their student achievement, as observed during the site evaluation. High-quality instruction is not consistently present in several classrooms, and Tier one⁹ and Tier two¹⁰ instruction are not providing acceptable levels of academic achievement.</p>
Causes	<p>Explore Academy Las Vegas students are not offered a robust Tier one and Tier two instructional program, and they earned a one-star rating at the middle school level, according to the 2024-25 NSPF. Extensive learning gaps exist in middle and high school students' learning, and overall achievement levels are significantly below district levels. The school must improve its Tier One and Tier Two instruction.</p> <p>According to classroom observations by the SPCSA staff on the day of the site evaluation, the following classroom elements were rarely observed by the SPCSA staff, which could contribute to the causes of low academic performance and learning gaps.</p>

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Tier 2 is the first level of intervention for students who do not show progress in Tier 1. Students are provided with Tier 2 interventions when they need support to meet academic or behavior goals.

1. Communicating with students:

The teacher describes strategies students might use, inviting them to interpret them in their learning context.

On the day of the site evaluation, eight of 18 classrooms observed were rated in the approaching proficient category.

2. Using questioning and discussion techniques:

The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers. The teacher asks students to justify their reasoning, and most attempt to do so.

On the day of the site evaluation, 11 out of 18 classrooms observed were rated in the approaching proficient category.

3. Engaging students in learning:

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.

On the day of the site evaluation, 13 out of 18 classrooms observed were rated in the approaching proficient category, and one was noted as unsatisfactory.

4. Using assessment in instruction:

The teacher elicits evidence of student understanding. Students are invited to assess their work and make improvements; most of them do so. Feedback includes specific and timely guidance, at least for groups of students.

On the day of the site evaluation, 10 out of 18 classrooms observed were rated in the approaching proficient category.

As teachers become more effective, students become more actively engaged, and they both become intentional learners. (Moss & Brookhart, 2019).

Effect	<p>In the middle school, the most recent Nevada School Rating Report for the 2024-25 school year, as posted by the Nevada Department of Education in September 2025, indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-star rating • An overall index score of 22 out of a possible 100 points • Overall, the pooled proficiency was well below the state's average rate, and the school earned one out of 25 points in the Academic Achievement Indicator section. • Six out of 30 points in the Growth Indicator section • Four out of 20 points in the Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator section <p>In the high school, the most recent Nevada School Rating Report for the 2024-25 school year, as posted by the Nevada Department of Education in September 2025, indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overall index score of 31.5 out of a possible 100 points • Overall, the pooled proficiency was well below the state's average rate, and the school earned four out of 25 points in the Academic Achievement Indicator section. • Three out of ten points on the Student Engagement Indicator <p>The school must include an academic goal in its School Performance Plan. This academic goal should measurably impact middle and high school students' academic performance.</p> <p>It is critical to note that NRS 385A.720 and subsection 6 of NRS 388A.274, the sponsor of a charter school shall terminate the charter contract of the charter school or restart the charter school under a new charter contract if the charter school receives, in any period of 3 consecutive school years, three annual ratings established as the lowest rating possible, indicating underperformance of a public school, as determined by the Department pursuant to the statewide system of accountability for public schools.</p> <p>It is also critical to note that NRS 388A.300 requires the SPCSA to terminate the charter contract of a school that receives a one-star rating three times within five consecutive years. Should the middle school level receive a one-star rating within the next three years, the charter contract must be terminated for the middle school (6-8).</p> <p>Additionally, per NRS 388A.367, any school rated one or two stars is required to mail a written notification to the parent or guardian of each pupil enrolled that includes information on the school's star rating and a list of other public schools to which a pupil may transfer if the charter school closes or adopts changes that a parent or legal guardian finds unacceptable. The school must also post a notification on its website. Finally, NRS 388A.367 requires the governing body of qualifying public charter schools to hold a public hearing within 30 days of sending out the notification necessary to allow stakeholders to discuss actions and solicit feedback for continued academic growth and improvement.</p>
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<p>Deficiency Finding</p>	<p>SPCSA staff recommends continuing to focus on improving Tier one instruction and Tier two targeted interventions.</p> <p>The SPCSA staff recommends continued monitoring and strategic implementation to increase specific student academic skills and growth gains within grade levels and subgroups. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all students are provided with rigorous, high-quality, standards-based Tier one instruction. • Ensure high-quality, data-driven Tier two instruction through regular monitoring of student progress and instructional effectiveness. • Develop strong instructional practices that support differentiated instruction for all students. • Provide robust professional development and individual teacher support in interpreting data for curricular decisions. The school may find it helpful to refer to resources such as <i>Driven by Data 2.0</i> and <i>A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction</i> by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. • Consider supporting novice teachers in enhancing their classroom instruction by offering regularly scheduled coaching cycles with frequent feedback to refine their practices. The leadership team may find it helpful to refer to the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) Teacher Instructional Practice Rubric and the Teacher Professional Responsibilities Rubric when supporting teachers in developing their instructional and professional practices. • Teacher Instructional Practice Rubric • Teacher Professional Responsibilities Rubric • Consider emphasizing the importance of enlisting families to further support their children at home by providing them with tools and practice materials. <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 weeks of the school board and the school leader receiving the site evaluation report. The school may request an extension in writing if needed. The site evaluation team will review the Response Plan, meet with school leadership, and provide feedback to the school. The site evaluation team and school leadership will agree on the action plan, including the documented steps and an accompanying timeline.</p>
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Continued Deficiency

Improve chronic absenteeism rates.

<p>Context</p>	<p>A. Per the Charter School Renewal Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority Board and the Explore Academy Las Vegas Governing Board, which was fully executed on July 26, 2019, the consideration of the legislature in enacting legislation to authorize charter schools is to serve the best interests of all pupils, including pupils who may be at risk. A procedure by which the positive results achieved by charter schools may be replicated, and the negative results may be identified and eliminated.</p> <p>B. Consistent with any oversight practices set out in the Charter School Performance Framework, the Authority shall follow a progressive system of notification and calls for corrective action on the part of the Charter School. (7.5.1)</p> <p>C. The Charter School Contract between the State Public Charter School Authority and Explore Academy Las Vegas, was executed on July 26, 2019. Part 2: School Operations: Student Recruitment, Enrollment, and Attendance: The Charter School shall adopt and adhere to a Truancy and Absence Policy pursuant to NAC 388A.160(5).</p>
<p>Condition</p>	<p>According to the original contract executed on July 26, 2019, Explore Academy Las Vegas has committed to (1) Per truancy law in Nevada, it is required by schools to take responsibility for addressing truancy, (2) per the school’s mission, “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>At this time, the levels of chronically absent students and, in turn, achievement at Explore Academy Las Vegas fall well below expectations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular attendees: miss five or fewer days a year (less than one day per month)• At-risk attendees: miss five percent to nine percent of school (about nine days a year, or one to two days per month)• Chronically absent attendees: miss ten percent or more of school (about 18 days a year; more than two days per month)• Severely chronically absent: miss 20 percent or more days of school (about 36 days a year; more than four days per month).

Causes	<p>Explore Academy Las Vegas students are not attending school regularly. Chronic absenteeism rates must be improved. School leaders and staff are strongly encouraged to improve chronic absenteeism rates because the rates are significantly above the SPCSA average at the middle and high school levels. “Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts a variety of student outcomes, including mathematics and reading achievement, social-emotional development, grade retention and dropout, and student discipline” (e.g. Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018; Gottfried, 2017).</p>																				
Effect	<p>The most recent Nevada School Rating Report for the 2024-25 school year, as posted by the Nevada Department of Education in September 2025, indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle: An overall chronic absenteeism rate of 27.3%. • High: An overall chronic absenteeism rate of 35.2%. <p>Chronic absenteeism rates have been historically high at Explore Academy Las Vegas, as seen in the table below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="329 716 1406 961"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>School Level</th> <th>Chronic Absenteeism %</th> <th>SPCSA Average</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>Middle</td> <td>32.4%</td> <td>18.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>Middle</td> <td>27.2%</td> <td>15.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>High</td> <td>38.2%</td> <td>19.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>High</td> <td>25.2%</td> <td>19.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	School Level	Chronic Absenteeism %	SPCSA Average	2022-23	Middle	32.4%	18.8%	2023-24	Middle	27.2%	15.8%	2022-23	High	38.2%	19.6%	2023-24	High	25.2%	19.9%
Year	School Level	Chronic Absenteeism %	SPCSA Average																		
2022-23	Middle	32.4%	18.8%																		
2023-24	Middle	27.2%	15.8%																		
2022-23	High	38.2%	19.6%																		
2023-24	High	25.2%	19.9%																		
Deficiency Finding	<p>Explore Academy Las Vegas is expected to have interventions and systems in place to decrease chronic absenteeism rates. According to the Policy Achievement Level Descriptors within the Nevada School Performance Framework technical guide, “The Measure for the Student Engagement Indicator for schools is Chronic Absenteeism. Research shows that reducing chronic absenteeism is critical to improving student achievement. A chronically absent student is a student who has missed 10 percent or more of the days they were enrolled for any reason, including excused, unexcused, or disciplinary absences.”</p> <p>As Explore Academy Las Vegas considers ways to immediately decrease chronic absenteeism, the governing board and leadership may want to emphasize the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a schoolwide culture of attendance • Use chronic absence data to determine the need for additional supports • Develop staff capacity to adopt effective attendance practice • Advocate for resources and policies to improve attendance <p>Further suggestions include supporting and engaging in community-wide, cross-sector efforts to eliminate chronic absenteeism among students within the community by addressing its underlying causes. Another suggestion is to communicate regularly with all staff, students, and their families about the importance of daily attendance</p>																				

	<p>and the availability of any support services that can help keep students in school and on track to success.</p> <p>A school with chronic absenteeism rates above 10 percent requires improvement, including an urgent need to address areas significantly below standard. The school must submit an improvement plan that identifies support and strategies tailored to indicators that are below standard within four weeks of the school board and the school leader receiving the site evaluation report. The school may request an extension in writing if needed. The site evaluation team will review the Response Plan, meet with school leadership, and provide feedback to the school. The site evaluation team and the school leadership will agree upon the action plan, including the documented steps and accompanying timeline.</p>
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Focus Group Participation Data

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

Name of Focus Group	Number of Participants
Governing Board ¹¹	2
Family Members, Parents, and Guardians	2
Faculty and Staff	10
School Leadership	2
Students	11

¹¹ Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

Focus Group Summary: Governing Board

Board members at Explore Academy reported that the governing board currently consists of five active members with no open positions. The members bring diverse backgrounds in education, marketing, non-profit, finance, business, and parent representation. The board meets monthly and does not have any sub-committees.

Board members reported several recent celebrations at Explore Academy that reflect steady progress and renewed momentum. They shared that last year's graduation was a meaningful milestone, with nine students earning diplomas in a small, intimate ceremony where the board chair delivered the keynote address. Board members also noted improved financial stability since the current leader began, including getting caught up on the Public Employees' Retirement System¹² (PERS) payments and implementing stronger forecasting practices to support more sustainable operations. Academically, they highlighted that the middle school's NSPF index score increased from 11 to 22. While the school remains at a one-star rating, board members emphasized that this gain reflects the hard work of staff and leadership, particularly given the high number of newly enrolled students who often need time to acclimate. Looking ahead, board members shared that the school is on track to celebrate 27 seniors this year and is hopeful for a larger graduating class.

From the board's perspective, a key strength of Explore Academy is the school leader. Board members described her as highly dedicated, deeply caring, and passionate about her work. They shared that she runs the school efficiently and consistently ensures students have the resources and support needed to succeed. One board member also noted, "She routinely goes above and beyond, and we see that same commitment reflected in teachers who care strongly about students." In addition, the board highlighted the school leader's strengths in engagement and communication, as well as her ability to navigate the political and operational demands of running a school. They emphasized that she has helped create a welcoming, "home-like" environment for the school community, even though she is not originally from the area.

Board members identified several areas of opportunity for continued improvement. They noted that the school's financial position has strengthened but still requires ongoing attention to ensure long-term stability. The board also emphasized a strong desire to improve the school's NSPF star rating and turn around academic outcomes. While they shared confidence in the school leader and teachers and believe key steps are in place, they want to see continued progress reflected in performance results. In addition, board members expressed interest in deepening community involvement and partnerships, noting that stronger connections could support the school and create more opportunities for mutual support.

Board members shared that the board uses an internal assessment process to evaluate the school leader. They reported that the most recent evaluation was completed within the past few months and was administered among board members. The assessment included questions about the school leader's communication, whether meeting agendas and materials are provided in advance, and the extent to which board members feel supported in carrying out their responsibilities. Board members described the process as a positive experience, and one member noted that they had all the information needed to complete the evaluation.

¹² PERS is the State of Nevada Public Employees' Retirement Program. The employee and the employer each make a contribution to PERS. The contribution made by the employee is on an after-tax basis. The employee contribution to PERS under this plan is 17.5%, and the employer contribution is 17.5%.

Focus Group Summary: Family Members, Parents, and Guardians

Parents shared several success stories that reflect meaningful growth and strong support for students at Explore Academy. One parent explained that her son, who has been enrolled since sixth grade and receives special education services, has shown steady academic growth over time. She attributed this progress to smaller class sizes, increased one-on-one attention from teachers, and a learning structure that allows students to change classes approximately every six weeks. She added that her son now wants to come to school, which she described as a significant positive change. Another parent shared that she has had multiple children attend Explore, including an 11th and 12th grader, and now has her third child attending. She emphasized that her children feel safe and happy at school, which is a top priority for her family. She also noted that when she raised concerns about her son's reading, the school assessed him early in the year and developed an Individualized Education Program¹³ (IEP). With these supports in place, he is earning stronger grades.

Parents shared that they feel comfortable raising questions or concerns with school staff and trust that issues will be addressed promptly. One parent described a recent bullying concern and said the school communicated quickly and resolved the situation by the next day, through simple adjustments such as switching seats or changing classrooms. Overall, families reported that administrators respond quickly, address concerns directly, and then follow up with parents once a resolution is in place. As one parent put it, "They deal with the issues and then let us know."

Families also reported that they feel well informed about their child's progress across subjects and are generally satisfied with the school's communication. Parents cited frequent touchpoints, including emails, progress reports, phone calls, and weekly updates, as well as daily notes sent home by teachers. Several parents emphasized that they feel connected to what their child is doing academically and noted that when they request additional information or a meeting, staff respond quickly and are willing to schedule conferences on short notice. One parent shared, "I can ask for meetings at a moment's notice, and the staff creates them."

Parents described the school as highly responsive and personable, noting strong communication and individualized attention for students. Families shared that staff stay in touch and on top of both academics and social concerns, and one parent said communication is "much better than other middle schools and high schools." Parents also appreciated that teachers actively coach students toward college readiness and responsibility, including understanding credits earned, and they highlighted after-school tutoring as a meaningful support. Overall, families characterized the school as organized and safe. For improvement, parents recommended providing additional materials and resources, including more activities for students to do outside and more supplies for teachers.

¹³ An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document that outlines the special education instruction, services, and support that a student with specific types of disabilities needs to receive in a learning environment.

Focus Group Summary: Faculty and Staff

Staff shared that morale at Explore Academy can vary from day to day and is often shaped by student behavior and academic performance. Overall, staff reported that they feel comfortable voicing concerns and noted that leadership is responsive, providing acknowledgement and support when feedback is shared. Staff also emphasized their strong commitment to student success, describing ongoing efforts to motivate students and implement strategies to strengthen academic outcomes.

Staff reported that school leaders consistently invite input through Friday meetings, providing multiple ways for teachers to share ideas both verbally and in writing. Staff shared that leadership thoughtfully considers this feedback and, at times, refines suggestions to align with schoolwide priorities. They also noted that the introduction of committees this year has expanded opportunities for collaboration and is a positive step toward deeper staff voice as the process continues to mature. Finally, staff acknowledged the demands of operating with a small administrative team and shared that additional leadership capacity would further strengthen follow-through and support shared decision-making.

Staff shared that Explore Academy is becoming more intentional in using data to guide instruction, including reviewing state assessment results to target after-school tutoring and using academic monitoring systems, exit tickets, and weekly quizzes to check for understanding and adjust teaching in real time. They noted that the school has not had a consistent curriculum, but leaders and teachers are currently vetting options to establish a unified program with common vocabulary and expectations, which staff believe will improve consistency across classrooms and strengthen vertical alignment, particularly between middle and high school math.

To support struggling students, staff reported offering after-school tutoring and a general study hall, while noting that small-group interventions can be limited, as one staff member explained, “most intervention happens in class as teachers are helping students.” Staff shared that teachers provide students with frequent, timely feedback through a mix of verbal and written strategies. Teachers reported checking notebooks and highlighting key information while giving in-the-moment verbal feedback during class. In addition, teachers described using peer review and strategically paired partners to help students reflect on their work and learn from one another.

Staff recommended some areas for improvement. They noted a need for additional instructional resources, including more class sets of novels, and clearer standards for academic discussions across classrooms. Staff emphasized strengthening discipline systems by establishing more consistent, effective behavior strategies and maintaining high expectations for both academics and conduct. In addition, staff suggested expanding student motivation and recognition efforts by celebrating students who meet high academic and behavioral expectations and developing programs that encourage students to do their best.

Focus Group Summary: School Leadership

During the leadership focus group, leaders shared that Explore Academy is strengthening alignment to a cohesive instructional program by adopting new curriculum resources. They explained that the Nevada Academic Content Standards¹⁴ (NVACS) are now driving instructional planning, and that, as one leader put it, “classes are built around standards now,” reflecting a recent shift in practice. To support consistency, leaders described ongoing alignment work through individual coaching sessions and emphasized that students are being pushed to apply their learning in ways that prepare them for state assessments. Leaders also reported adding targeted after-school tutoring three times per week for students who are on the cusp of increasing their achievement.

To address chronic absenteeism, leaders shared that Explore Academy is using consistent recognition of students for good attendance and proactive outreach to parents to reinforce the importance of daily attendance. The school celebrates perfect attendance every 22 days to make the goal feel achievable for students, recognizing those who meet it with donuts and a certificate. “We are pulling attendance reports every other week to monitor trends and promptly contact families when concerns arise.” In addition, the school is educating families on attendance expectations, including what counts as an absence and the difference between excused and unexcused absences.

Leaders shared that professional learning at Explore Academy is intentionally grounded in what they observe in classrooms and is designed to strengthen Tier one instruction, so all students benefit from high-quality core teaching. As one leader noted, the team is focused on ensuring they do not “Tier two our way out of a Tier one problem,” emphasizing the importance of raising the bar in daily instruction. Leaders described coaching teachers to implement clear lesson structures, such as purposeful “Do Now” activities, engaging learning tasks, and strong exit tickets, while shifting more of the thinking and productive struggle to students. Professional learning also prioritizes student-centered lesson design through strategies like gallery walks and jigsaw, encouraging teachers to take instructional risks and create classrooms where students actively construct knowledge rather than simply receive it. Leaders reported supporting this growth through individualized coaching and teacher development plans aimed at strengthening instructional practice over time.

Leaders discussed that enrollment continues to be a challenge for Explore Academy. The school’s target was 350 students, and current enrollment is 315, with ongoing efforts to backfill seats through April. Leaders reported closely monitoring the budget to ensure the school can meet financial constraints while maintaining program quality. Recruitment efforts include outreach through social media, though leaders noted that some prospective students enroll in charter schools closer to home, and the school does not offer transportation, which can be a barrier for families. Leaders also described a notable decline in enrollment from eighth to ninth grade, as some students transition to specialized high school programs or seeking a more traditional high school experience.

School leaders shared that Explore Academy provides a variety of student leadership and enrichment opportunities that contribute to a positive school experience. Leaders highlighted the student council and

¹⁴ Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) are a set of grade-level standards intended to provide a focus for instruction each year. They are a framework for curriculum and instruction in the state of Nevada.

a peer mediation program as meaningful avenues for student voice and leadership development. While the school is not offering athletics this year due to staffing constraints, leaders noted that students can participate in sports through their zoned schools, and staff actively support students in connecting with those opportunities. Leaders also emphasized the strength of the school's club program, sharing that all students participate in a club and have options such as soccer club, chess club, Disney club, origami club, and life skills.

Focus Group Summary: Students

During the student focus group, students shared that they value Explore Academy’s supportive, close-knit environment. They described the school as smaller and “more like a family,” noting that they receive more individualized support than they experienced in their local district schools and that they feel comfortable expressing themselves. Students also highlighted helpful resources for homework, strong teachers who provide a quality education, and positive comments about the school food. When asked what they are learning, students cited a range of topics, including taxes, World War II, empires, ethics and fairness, and science projects related to sickle cell disease and sound waves.

Students shared that bullying is not common at Explore Academy and attributed this, in part, to the school’s peer mediation process. One student mediator explained that when a conflict arises, students complete a form to summarize the situation and submit it to request a mediation session. Students reported that sessions are designed to be brief, typically about 20 minutes, and include an adult in the room to support the process. During mediation, students review expectations and use the time primarily to talk through the issue in a structured way; mediators do not “force” a resolution but instead create a space for students to listen and be heard. Students shared that most conflicts are resolved through mediation and that many situations stem from misunderstandings, which are often clarified before they escalate. If students cannot reach an agreement, the concern is referred to the school administration for follow-up.

Students shared that they feel comfortable communicating with teachers when learning feels too easy or too difficult. They reported that teachers are attentive and can often tell when students need support, providing help and additional resources when work is challenging. Students also noted that when coursework is not challenging enough, teachers may adjust placement and “move you up a class,” and multiple students agreed this is a common and supportive practice.

Students suggested some ways Explore Academy could be strengthened. They noted that uniforms can be expensive and recommended exploring more affordable options. Students also expressed interest in having more flexibility with phone use during designated free time. In addition, they requested expanded extracurricular opportunities, including more sports and additional after-school activities that are optional, as well as improved outdoor spaces for socializing (e.g., more areas outside, grass, and shade). Academically, students shared a desire for more engaging, hands-on class activities and increased flexibility in course selection, including a wider range of class options.

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 9 middle and 9 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation based on the following criteria.

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>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 2	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>	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 16	TOTAL: 2	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 9 middle and 9 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation based on the following criteria.

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Highly Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Communicating with Students	<p>If asked, students can explain what they are learning and where it fits into the larger curriculum context.</p> <p>The teacher explains content clearly and imaginatively.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to explain the content to their classmates.</p> <p>Students use academic language correctly.</p>	<p>The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.</p> <p>The teacher makes no content errors.</p> <p>Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.</p>	<p>The teacher provides little elaboration or explanation about what students will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.</p> <p>The teacher may make minor content errors.</p> <p>The teacher must clarify the learning task.</p>	<p>At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to students what they will be learning.</p> <p>Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.</p> <p>Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 8	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0
Using Questioning and Discussion Strategies	<p>Students initiate higher-order questions.</p> <p>The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions to deepen student understanding.</p> <p>Students extend the discussion, enriching it.</p> <p>Virtually all students are engaged.</p>	<p>The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.</p> <p>Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher.</p> <p>Many students actively engage in the discussion.</p>	<p>The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but many have a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond.</p> <p>The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number participate.</p>	<p>Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer.</p> <p>The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.</p> <p>Only a few students dominate the discussion.</p>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 7	TOTAL: 11	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 0

Classroom Environment and Instruction Observation Rubric

A total of 9 middle and 9 high school classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the site evaluation based on the following criteria.

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: 5	TOTAL: 13	TOTAL: 0	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>	<p>This criterion was not observed or rated.</p>
	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 5	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 0	TOTAL: 3

Classroom Observations and Additional Comments

Middle school students participated in a brief social-emotional check-in with their teacher. Using a relaxed, age-appropriate approach, the teacher modeled the activity by sharing something positive first and then inviting students to do the same. Students responded readily, offering personal highlights such as a family dinner out, a good night's sleep, and an upcoming move. Overall, students appeared comfortable engaging with the teacher, reflecting a strong rapport and a supportive classroom climate.

In a high school advisory classroom, the teacher greeted students as they entered and promptly established a calm, welcoming tone for the period. Students were directed to log into the Blookle¹⁵ application and begin an interactive activity while the teacher took attendance. Using their personal devices, students accessed the digital platform with minimal redirection and demonstrated familiarity with the expectations for independent work during advisory. The activity served as an effective warm-up, engaging students and allowing the teacher to complete routine administrative tasks. The overall classroom environment was orderly, and students remained focused and appropriately on task throughout the short activity.

During an advisory period, the teacher led a discussion on goal setting using the SMART goal framework¹⁶. The teacher displayed the SMART acronym, provided an example to illustrate the process, and showed a video featuring an additional SMART goal example. Student participation during the discussion was limited.

High school students in a Spanish class learned about the use of conjunctions through a series of multiple-choice questions displayed by the teacher. Students were expected to work independently while the teacher actively circulated throughout the room, providing clarification and individualized support as needed. Students remained focused and engaged, and the classroom environment was orderly and conducive to learning. To further strengthen the lesson, a more purposeful introduction that connected conjunctions to authentic language use or prior learning would have added greater context and meaning to the activity.

Students worked on solving equations involving slopes. The teacher modeled a think-aloud strategy through several examples and then released students to work independently or in small groups while circulating to provide support. Most students remained engaged in the task, though some were intermittently off task. Assigning clear roles within groups could help increase accountability and promote more consistent on-task behavior.

The teacher modeled several examples of middle school math problems involving unknown length. Afterward, students were given 40 seconds to set up their own work using the same process while the teacher observed. The teacher then invited a student to demonstrate the setup for the class, offering candy as an incentive, and several students volunteered. Throughout the lesson, the teacher reinforced a supportive climate by reminding students that school is a place to make mistakes and that the classroom is a safe space for learning.

¹⁵ Blooklet is an interactive educational app designed for schools that has quizzes and game modes to create a gamified learning experience

¹⁶ SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

In a middle school social studies class, the lesson began with the teacher posing an essential question: Should John Brown be considered a hero or a villain? Students engaged in structured small-group discussions, during which they shared their perspectives and recorded their responses in writing. As students worked, the teacher actively circulated throughout the room, asking clarifying questions and prompting students to justify their positions with reasoning and evidence. This approach encouraged critical thinking, student discourse, and thoughtful analysis of historical perspectives.

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
Create strong Tier-two and Tier-three ¹⁷ instruction within the school framework.	Explore Academy leaders report that they have implemented after-school tutoring for general help and additional academic support.	SPCSA staff recommend that Explore Academy continue to work on this recommendation.
Implement professional learning about using data.	Explore Academy leaders report that they have restructured Professional Learning Communities ¹⁸ (PLCs), offered summer professional development sessions on utilizing data effectively, implemented academic monitoring training for staff, and modeled the data analysis process.	SPCSA staff find that Explore Academy has met this recommendation with satisfactory progress.
Deficiency: Improve academic school performance.	Explore Academy leaders report that for the 2025-26 school year, school performance plans are focused on increasing ELA and math proficiency in the middle and high school levels. In addition, they are working on improving teacher credentialing and decreasing chronic absenteeism across the board.	The 2024- 25 NSPF report indicates that Explore Academy middle school earned a one-star rating (22 index points out of 100). The high school is not yet rated, but earned 31.5 out of 100 index points. The deficiency is still in place for Explore Academy.
Deficiency: Improve chronic absenteeism.	Explore Academy leaders report that for the 2025-26 school year, school performance plans are focused on increasing ELA and Math proficiency in the middle and high school levels. In addition, they are working on improving teacher credentialing and decreasing chronic absenteeism across the board.	Chronic absenteeism numbers remained the same in the 2024-25 school year, with 27.4% of middle school students considered chronically absent and 35.2% of high school students. The deficiency is still in place for Explore Academy.

¹⁷ Tier three is the second level of intervention for students who do not show progress in Tier 1. Students are provided with Tier 3 interventions when they need support to meet academic or behavior goals.

¹⁸ A professional learning community (PLC) is a team of educators who share ideas to enhance their teaching practice and create a learning environment where all students can reach their fullest potential.

Operational Compliance Checks

- Fire Extinguisher YES NO
- Nurse's Station YES NO
- McKinney-Vento Poster YES NO
- Evacuation Plan in Classrooms YES NO
- Food Permit YES NO N/A
- Elevator Permit YES NO N/A

Part 2

Explore Academy LVS

Risk Based Monitoring Report

Executive Summary

Per NRS 388A.150, the SPCSA is responsible for providing oversight of the charter schools it sponsors. This includes conducting site evaluations during the first, third, and fifth years of the charter contract and, as needed, to follow up on strong recommendations or identified deficiencies. The SPCSA is committed to ensuring a smooth, meaningful, and timely process using a well-designed, intentional, research-based protocol.

The SPCSA is committed to ensuring a smooth, meaningful, and timely process using a well-designed, intentional, research-based protocol.

Additionally, as a pass-through entity of federal funds, the SPCSA is required to conduct risk assessments of subrecipients in accordance with 2 C.F.R. §200.332(b). These assessments evaluate compliance with program and fiscal requirements but do not measure the quality or determine future eligibility.

Risk Based Monitoring: Visit Objectives

The purpose of the monitoring visit was to assess the capacity, performance, and compliance of a subrecipient charter school. Specific objectives included addressing high-risk issues requiring immediate attention, evaluating the fidelity of program delivery, and ensuring that any subaward of federal funds was used for authorized purposes in compliance with federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the subaward. Additionally, the visit aimed to confirm that subaward performance goals were being met. The review identified areas of strength, recommendations, and issues based on the school's preparation of supporting documentation and presentation of information.

These findings are not exhaustive, and additional concerns may exist beyond those observed. It remains the responsibility of the school to maintain ongoing internal oversight of grants and grant management processes to ensure full compliance with all applicable federal and local statutes, regulations, and policy requirements. As areas for improvement have been identified, a School Support Plan is required to address these concerns.

Risk Based Monitoring: School Overview

Active Subawards:

- FY25 Title IV, Part A
- FY26 Special Education (IDEA, Part B)
- FY26 Title I, Part A
- FY26 Transportation Funding

Allocations (Subaward Pending): N/A

Total Federal Funds Expended (FY25): \$158,906.93

Single Audit Required: No

Current Risk Level: High (Prior Risk Level: Low)

Risk Based Monitoring: Scope of Review/Methodology

Fiscal Administrative Requirements: Internal controls; allowability of costs; financial management & accounting system; procurement; audit resolution; inventory management; records retention; appropriate use of funds aligned to program implementation

Program Review:

- **Special Education:** IEP development/meetings/records; IEP implementation; progress monitoring; parent engagement; file review
- **Title I, Part A:** Needs assessment and community input aligned to SPP; implementation per plan; effective parent/community involvement; data collection & progress monitoring; evidence of progress for CSI/TSI/ATSI (if applicable)

Additional Areas: McKinney-Vento; Foster Care

Risk Based Monitoring: Area of Strength

Fiscal:

- Leadership and fiscal staff demonstrated professionalism, timely responses, and transparency. Work is underway to define roles/responsibilities and refine charter/school business processes. Staff expressed willingness to revise P&Ps and operations to meet federal requirements. Additionally, leadership emphasized leveraging funds to directly support student achievement.

Program – Special Education:

- Strong understanding of special education requirements; designated personnel and spaces for services observed; confidential folders organized; leadership receptive to feedback with commitment to compliance and system strengthening.

Program – Title I, Part A:

- Title I engagement meetings paired with school events to boost participation; Title I funds support IXL, after-school tutoring, and Dean of Students staffing for academic support.

Program – Title II:

- Title II funds used to purchase staff Chromebooks to support professional learning and instructional planning.

Program – Title III:

- Robust EL program with increased identification (48 in SY 2024–25 vs. 31 in SY 2023–24) and continued WIDA growth; monthly collaboration between ELD teacher and Director of EL Programs; successful exits.

Program – Title IV:

- Funds used for calculators, PA system (safety/communication), and staff computers (instruction/admin efficiency).

Additional Areas – McKinney-Vento & Foster Care:

- MKV bus passes effectively remove transportation barriers; clear understanding and systems to ensure foster-care educational stability and access.

Risk Based Monitoring: Area of Improvements/Recommendations

Fiscal (Policies & Procedures):

1. Format: Current P&Ps are fragmented with embedded links; consolidate into a unified manual aligned to SPCSA's RBM checklist and criterion tool/exemplar.
2. Clarity: Procedures should be step-by-step, role-based, and reviewed annually to protect internal controls and support training/efficiency.
3. Internal Controls: Add CFR citations (2 CFR 200.303); document *how* monitoring of internal controls occurs; define segregation of duties and approvals (include staff appendix).
4. Allowability of Costs: Proactively incorporate FY27 Fringe Benefits and Health & Welfare policies (new requirements starting SY 2026–27).
5. Procurement – Conflict of Interest: Include explicit language and definition of “Immediate Family” and prohibition on financial interest during tenure and one year thereafter.
6. Documentation: Tie procedures to policies; specify who/what/when/how for each process; leverage SPCSA templates in Canvas.
7. Reporting: Monitor and submit all grant reports in Epicenter per deadlines; follow authorizing statutes/regulations; see SPCSA Annual Reporting Requirements.
8. Professional Development: Annual training for staff/contractors on Uniform Guidance (e.g., Brustein & Manasevit, NAFEPA, NGMA).

Program – Special Education (Selected Requirements & Best Practices):

- Post and maintain a Records Access List near confidential folder storage; keep names current.
- Ensure file access logs in all confidential folders.
- Avoid “No effect statement needed” in PLAAFPs; always document whether supports/services are or are not needed in each area.
- For LEP parents, discuss interpreter needs and log accept/decline in folder status log.
- For EL students in SpEd, include latest WIDA scores in PLAAFPs; mark Special Factors #3 “Yes”; ensure SAAS includes language-development accommodations aligned to most recent EL data.
- Intent to Implement must identify areas receiving SDI/Related Services.

- Provide first PWN at least 10 days prior to meeting.
- Write measurable IEP goals with mastery rate/level *and* frequency (e.g., 80% accuracy in 4/5 trials).
- Use compliant service logs per SPCSA memo (9/9/2024); regularly complete and file copies (or upload to IC).
- For students 14+, discuss appropriate transition services at next annual review; ensure compliant PWN/PLAAFP/transition sections.
- Provide staff access to SpEd P&P manual; ensure ongoing training and SPCSA participation; track timelines for evals/IEPs/reports (IDEA/NAC/SPCSA).
- Clarify statewide assessment listing (SBAC is the CRT; no need to list separately from CRT). Ensure participant signatures/attendance documented in IEP.

Program – Title III:

- Implement consistent, schoolwide EL supports visible in every classroom (anchor charts, vocabulary, sentence frames, language objectives, visuals, graphic organizers, word walls) and complete NDE Desktop Monitoring tasks in Epicenter when available.

Program – Title I, II, IV; MKV & Foster Care:

- No areas for improvement at this time.

Risk Based Monitoring: Areas of Non-Compliance

Note: The following findings require a Corrective Action Plan. For each item, incorporate detailed procedures, responsible roles, approvals, records to retain, and training plans.

A) Fiscal — Internal Controls

- **Conditions:** Missing/insufficient written P&Ps for internal controls, allowability, accounting/financial systems, procurement, audit resolution, inventory, and records retention.
- **Cause:** Inadequate documentation of *how* program/fiscal/admin staff execute processes aligned to policy; unclear roles/responsibilities.
- **Effect:** Risk of loss/theft/misuse; inefficient controls leading to budget surplus/deficit.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR §200.303; School Self-Eval — Internal Controls #4 (Segregation of Duties), #6 (Authorizations/Approvals), #7 (Cybersecurity).
- **Corrective Action:** Develop compliant written P&Ps and business-process documentation; list all financial positions/segregation of duties; include cybersecurity measures to protect PII/sensitive data.

B) Fiscal — Allowability of Costs

- **Conditions:** Written allowability P&Ps are incomplete; unclear determination points/roles.
- **Cause:** Processes for assessing allowability (who/when/how/records) not adequately documented.
- **Effect:** Potential misuse; non-reasonable/necessary/allocable costs; risk of repayment.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR 200.303(b)(7); Supplement, Not Supplant (e.g., 20 U.S.C. §6321(b)(1)); Selected cost items 2 CFR 200.437 & 200.431; School Self-Eval — Allowability #5 (Time & Effort), #6 (SNS), #7 (Travel).
- **Corrective Action:** Define allowability determinations and approvals; include SNS language; expand Time & Effort guidance (PAR vs. semi-annual certifications, who submits/when); expand Travel policy to include GSA rates, request/approval forms, and cost categories.

C) Fiscal — Accounting & Financial Management Systems

- **Conditions:** P&Ps for fiscal management/accounting do not meet Uniform Guidance; key processes under-documented (grant tracking, reconciliations, procurement, reimbursements, cash management).
- **Cause/Effect:** May result in inadequate internal controls over critical grant/accounting processes.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR §200.302 (including 200.302(b)(1)); §200.328; School Self-Eval — Accounting & FM #3 (7 standards), #5 (Grant Tracking), #6 (Segregation of Duties), #7 (Cash Mgmt), #8 (Checks).
- **Corrective Action:** Include the 7 required components (ALN, FAIN, award year, pass-through, NV COA coding; disclosure of results; records identifying source/amount/expenditures with source docs; controls/accountability; budget-to-actual comparison; payment procedures; allowability procedures). Add a documented grant-tracking system; clarify cash management roles; require **two signatures** on checks.

D) Fiscal — Procurement Systems

- **Conditions:** P&Ps lack complete procedures for **informal, formal, and noncompetitive** methods; cost analysis steps/roles are vague.
- **Effect:** Use of informal methods without proper documentation/justification may lead to compliance risks.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR §200.318–322; School Self-Eval — Procurement #5 (Informal Purchases), #6 (Cost Analysis).
- **Corrective Action:** Document all three procurement methods (micro ≤\$10K; small >\$10K–<\$250K; formal ≥\$250K; plus noncompetitive/sole-source/emergency/SPCSA authorization); retain rationale, contract type, vendor selection/rejection, and price basis; define staff/approvals; detail cost analysis steps and documentation (e.g., three quotes or sole-source justification above thresholds).

E) Fiscal — Audit Resolution

- **Conditions:** Audit-related P&Ps (prep, completion, resolution) are insufficient.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR Subpart F §§200.501, 200.507(c)(1), 200.512; §200.510; School Self-Eval — Audit Resolution #3 (new UG requirement).
- **Corrective Action:** Add P&Ps summarizing audit requirements and submission timelines: threshold ≥\$1M in federal awards; submit to SPCSA by **Feb 28** and to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse by **Mar 31** (or next business day).

F) Fiscal — Inventory Management

- **Conditions:** Inventory records and safeguards incomplete; investigation/disposition practices under-documented.
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR §200.313(d)(1); School Self-Eval — Inventory #5 (procedures/safeguards), #6 (maintenance, physical inventory, fair market value >\$10,000).
- **Corrective Action:** Document detailed inventory steps, roles, and **security measures** (e.g., cameras); conduct physical inventory at least **biennially** with reconciliation; request disposition instructions when **FMV >\$10,000** for equipment no longer needed; define sales procedures; clarify retention for items ≤\$10,000 FMV.

G) Fiscal — Records Retention

- **Conditions:** Records-retention P&Ps are incomplete (accuracy/access, duration, types of records, storage/conversion, restricted access).
- **Criteria:** 2 CFR §§200.334, 200.337–338; §200.303(e); School Self-Eval — Records Retention #4 (Storage/Conversion/Access), #5 (Restricted Access).
- **Corrective Action:** Define retention ≥**3 years** (GEPA/UG); recommend ≥**3 years** for all grant records to account for False Claims Act and ongoing audits/monitoring; specify formats (open/machine-readable), conversion safeguards, storage locations, role-based access, and cybersecurity controls; ensure federal/pass-through/IG/Comptroller/authorized reps have access per law while protecting PII/sensitive data.

H) Program — Special Education (IEP Documentation)

1. **PLAAFP Effects Statements Cross-Referencing:** At least one area said “See IXL Reading effect statement” (similar wording for Math/Writing); each area must include its own effects statement.
 - a. **Criteria:** NAC 388.284; 34 CFR 300.320(a)(1)(i).
 - b. **Corrective Action:** Provide the revised IEP (same student) with full effects statements in each area, plus staff acknowledgement of training.
2. **“No Effect Statement Needed” Usage:** Blanket phrase used in PLAAFP third column for areas not identified as deficient; must still document whether disability affects the area.
 - a. **Criteria:** NAC 388.284; 34 CFR 300.320(a)(1)(i).
 - b. **Corrective Action:** Revise IEP to include appropriate effects statements (e.g., “Student does not require special education services/support in this area to make progress in the general education curriculum.”) and staff acknowledgement of training.
3. **SAAS Locations:** SAAS listed as combined “General Education Class and Special Education Classroom”; locations must be listed separately.
 - a. **Criteria:** NAC 388.284; 34 CFR 300.320(a)(7).
 - b. **Corrective Action:** Revise IEP to list each SAAS location on separate lines; staff acknowledgement of training.

Part 3
Explore Academy LVS
School Response

School Response to Site Evaluation Team Findings

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.

School Response to Risk Based Monitoring Team Findings

The school may choose to submit a response to the SPCSA Risk Based Monitoring 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.