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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Impact of Weighted Lotteries During the 2022-23 School Year
DATE: June 27, 2022

The SPCSA's Strategic Plan

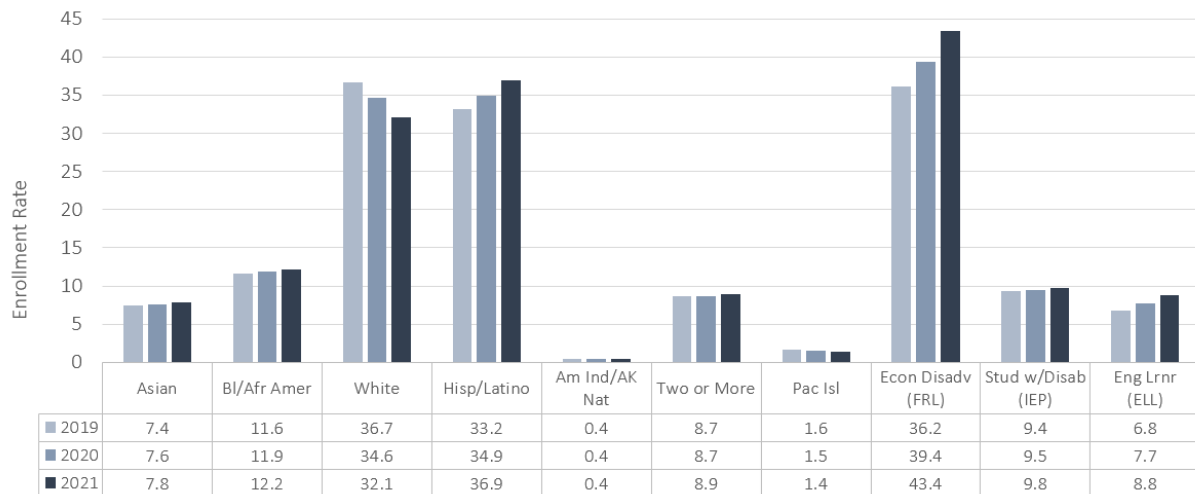
In 2019, the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) adopted a five-year [strategic plan](#) that centered on a vision of *Equitable access to diverse, innovative, and high-quality public charter school for every Nevada student*. As part of the strategic plan, the SPCSA established three goals: 1) Provide families with access to high quality schools; 2) Ensure that every SPCSA student succeeds – including those from historically underserved student groups; and 3) Increase the diversity of students served by SPCSA schools. Over the last two years, the SPCSA has seen progress towards all of these goals. Details regarding progress towards our strategic goals can be found in the annual [State of the SPCSA presentation](#) from February 15, 2022.

With regard to goal three, the SPCSA has adopted several strategies for addressing discrepancies in student populations:

- The Authority established and implemented the Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment;
- The Authority incorporated an Enrollment Diversity Indicator into the SPCSA's Academic Performance Framework;
- SPCSA staff provided each school with annual enrollment reports comparing the school's demographics to the demographics of the local school district and zoned, neighborhood school for the community in which the school is located; and
- SPCSA staff engaged with board chairs of sponsored schools about efforts to elevate equity as a focus and priority.

- The Authority required 14 schools to develop and submit recruitment and enrollment plans aimed at serving a student population that is representative of the school’s local community, particularly with regard to the population of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

Sponsored schools have also implemented a variety of strategies aimed at recruiting and serving a representative population of students. Examples include strategic outreach and marketing, partnerships with local community organizations, expansion of services and programs such as the National School Lunch Program, and implementation of weighted lotteries. Due to the efforts of the Authority and sponsored schools, the SPCSA has seen steady progress in serving a more representative population. Despite this progress, discrepancies remain and the SPCSA continues to work to implement and refine strategies to ensure equitable access to high quality schools for all students.



Weighted Lotteries

Weighted lotteries are designed to give better chances for admission to specific, qualifying groups of educationally disadvantaged students. Over the last three years, several SPCSA-sponsored charter schools have implemented weighted lotteries in accordance with NAC 388A.536 in an effort to serve a more representative population of students. The first two charter school schools, Doral Academy of Northern Nevada and Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada, implemented weighted lotteries for the 2020-21 school year. At the [SPCSA Board Meeting on May 21, 2021](#), these schools provided an overview of the implementation of their weighted lotteries, indicating that for the lotteries conducted to select students for the 2021-22 school year, students who received the additional weight had a higher acceptance rate that those that did not.

This year, several additional charter schools adopted weighted lottery policies for the selection of students for the 2022-23 school year. Given the increase in the use of weighted lotteries, SPCSA staff collected lottery data from these schools and has analyzed the results which are detailed in this memo.

Under NAC 388A.536, a weighted lottery may be used in favor of one of the following student groups which regulations define as “educationally disadvantaged”: a) students who are economically disadvantaged; b) students with disabilities; c) migrant students; d) students with limited English proficiency; e) students who are neglected or delinquent; f) students who are homeless; and g) students who were most recently enrolled in a school rated as 1- or 2-stars. In a standard lottery, each student is assigned a weight of one, which can be thought of as each student receiving one ticket in the lottery. Under a weighted lottery some students effectively receive more tickets. For example, if a school’s lottery policy included a weight of three for students with limited English proficiency, then those students would receive three tickets in the lottery, while all other students would receive one ticket.

In alignment with the SPCSA’s Strategic Plan, particularly our goal to serve a representative population of students, the weighted lottery is a tool that may be used by schools to provide an increased likelihood of enrolling certain student groups. Several of the schools that have implemented weighted lotteries have done so because of a recognition that their student population is under representative of certain student groups, when compared with schools in their community. As referenced above, there are a variety of other strategies that schools can use to recruit and serve a representative population of students and SPCSA staff has encouraged schools to implement multiple approaches simultaneously.

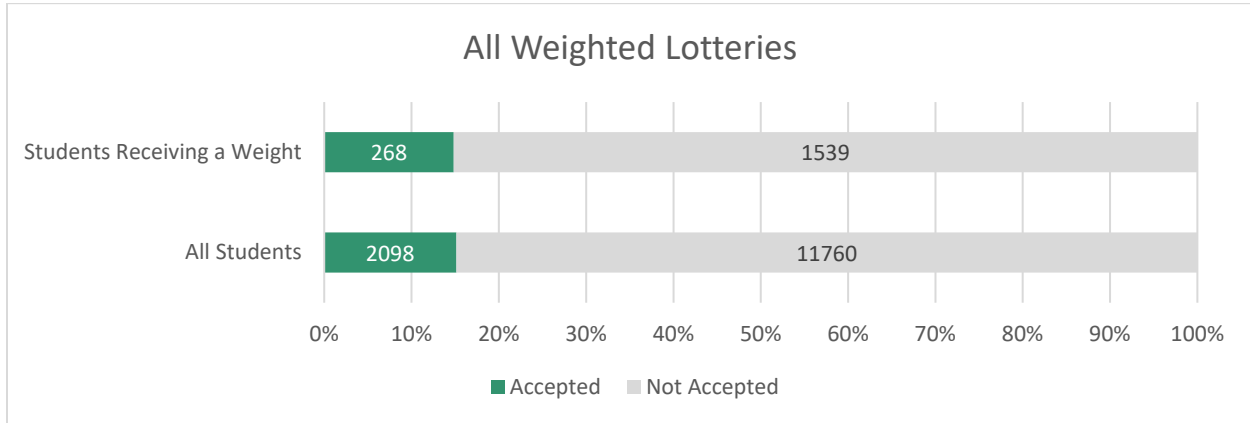
It is important to note that weighted lotteries are not unique to Nevada, the National Policy Index published by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers indicates that charter schools are permitted to use a weighted lottery in 22 states across the country. Additionally, the United State Department of Education recognizes the use of weighted lotteries and permits the use of weighted lotteries under certain conditions for schools that receive Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding.

Impact of Weighted Lotteries on 2022-23 School Year Enrollment

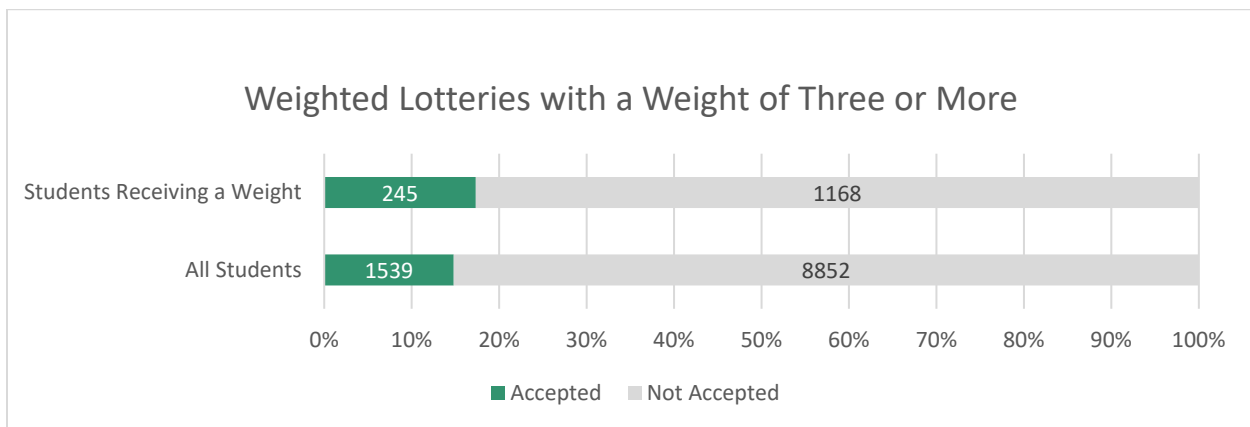
As previously noted, weighted lotteries are intended to provide an increased chance of acceptance into a charter school for students belonging to certain historically underserved student groups. There are currently seven charter holders encompassing a total of 24 charter school campuses that have an approved weighted lottery policy. Of those, 21 campuses had student applications from more students than available seats, meaning that a lottery had to be conducted to determine which students would be accepted¹. Across these 21 campuses, there were 2,098 open seats to be filled through the lottery and a total of 13,858 applicants for these seats resulting in an overall acceptance rate of 15%. A total of 1,807 applicants qualified for additional weight in the lottery, based on the school’s enrollment policy. It is important to note that the lottery policies vary by school in terms of both the eligible population(s) and the value of the additional weight. For example, some schools provide a weight of five for qualifying students, meaning that while a typical student would receive one entry into the lottery, a qualifying student would

¹ In the event that there are fewer applications than seats available at the time of the lottery, all students who have applied are accepted.

receive five entries into the lottery, while other schools provide a weight of as little as two. Overall, 268 students who received an additional weight, or 15% were accepted through the lotteries. When examining this data across all schools that implemented a weighted lottery, students who received additional weight did not appear to have a greater chance at acceptance.



However, when looking at the results at the school-level, data shows that when a weight of three or more was used, the weighted lottery resulted in a higher chance of acceptance for students receiving the weight. For those schools that used a weight of three or higher, the overall acceptance rate remained 15% but the acceptance rate for those students who received a weight was 17%, slightly higher than the overall acceptance rate.



As shown in the school-level data below, in some cases, the acceptance rate for students who received a weight was more than double the overall acceptance rate. For example, in the case of the Coral Academy of Science Las Vegas’s campuses, students receiving the weight had an acceptance rate of 18% while the overall acceptance rate was only 11%. However, in other cases, those students who received a weight were selected through the lottery at a lower rate than the overall acceptance rate. While this reflects the nature of chance events, such as lotteries, there are potentially other factors that have impacted these results. For example, if those students who received a weight applied for a grade level with very few or even no seats available, then the likelihood of acceptance for that student would have been very low, or even zero, despite the additional weight.

Conclusion

The SPCSA is committed to diversifying the populations of students served by sponsored schools and ultimately serving a population that is representative of the state overall. Over the last three years, the SPCSA and sponsored schools have implemented a number of strategies aimed at realizing this goal, including the use of weighted lotteries. For the first time this year, the SPCSA has data from a substantial number of schools regarding the implementation of the weighted lotteries. The information presented within this memo provides a first look at the impact of weighted lotteries at a large scale and provides us with valuable information from which to conduct further research. The takeaways below are based on this initial data and it may take several years before we have a comprehensive understanding of the impact of weighted lotteries on school enrollment and demographics.

- While in aggregate, weighted lotteries did not appear to increase the likelihood of acceptance for students who received a weight in the lotteries conducted to select students for the 2022-23 school year, the data shows that weighted lotteries were more effective at increasing the likelihood of acceptance when the weight was three or higher. This information will be valuable as the SPCSA considers future requests from schools to adopt weighted lotteries.
- While the impact of the weighted lottery varied greatly from school to school, the data generally shows that weighted lotteries alone will not singlehandedly address discrepancies in student demographics. Instead, this analysis reinforces the notion that schools should implement multiple strategies aimed at enrolling and serving a representative population of students. These may include conducting outreach through community partners that serve the intended population, tabling and/or door-to-door outreach, collaborating with the local municipality to raise awareness and visibility of the school, and conduct staff training on diversity and inclusion to ensure the school is a welcoming and supportive environment for all learners.

Additional data regarding the structure and results of the weighted lottery for each of the schools with an approved weighted lottery policy can be found on the following pages.

Alpine Academy

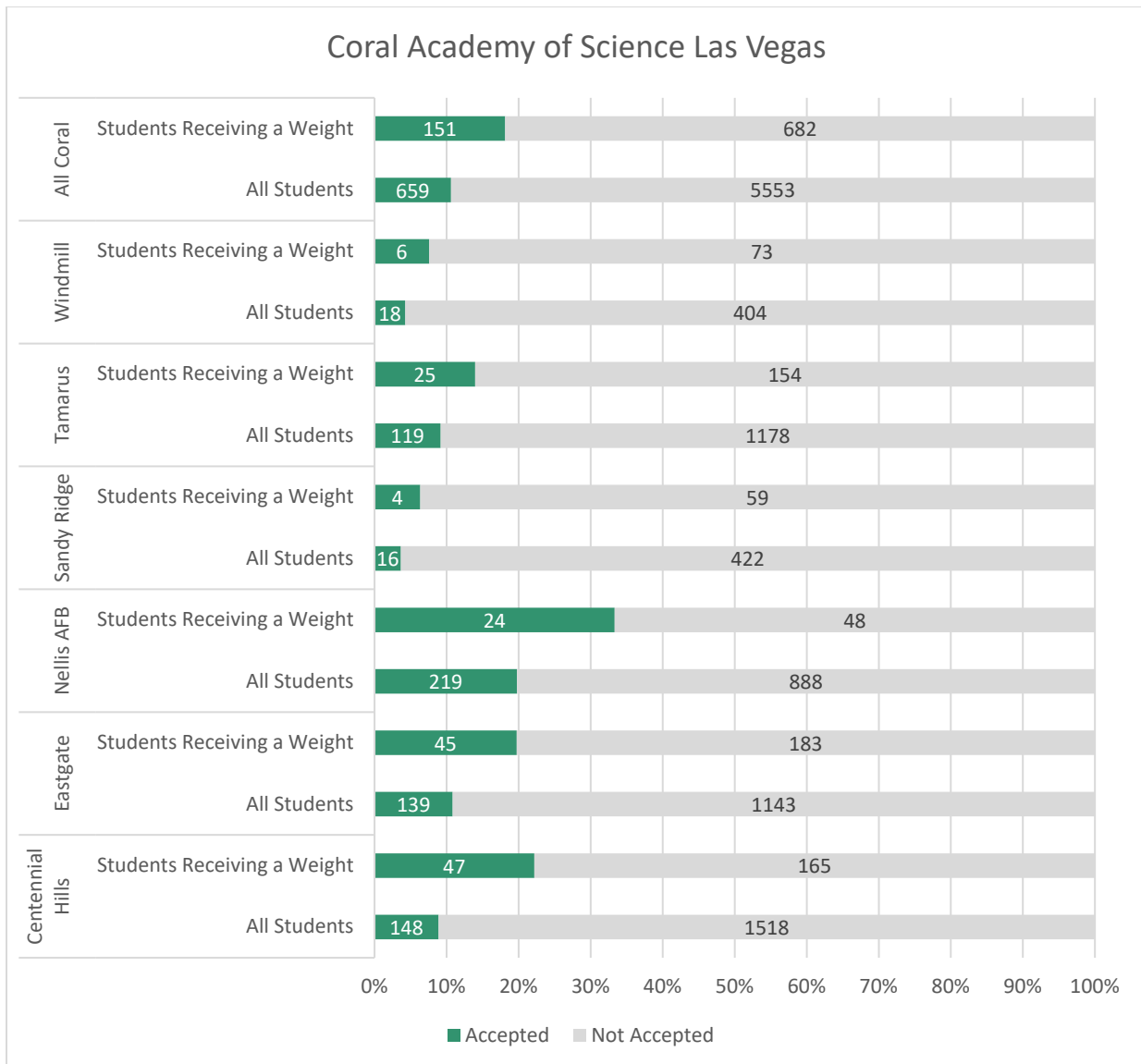
Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	2.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2022 – 23
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	60
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	44

Because the number of student application was less than the number of seats available, no lottery was needed, and all students were accepted.

Coral Academy of Science Las Vegas

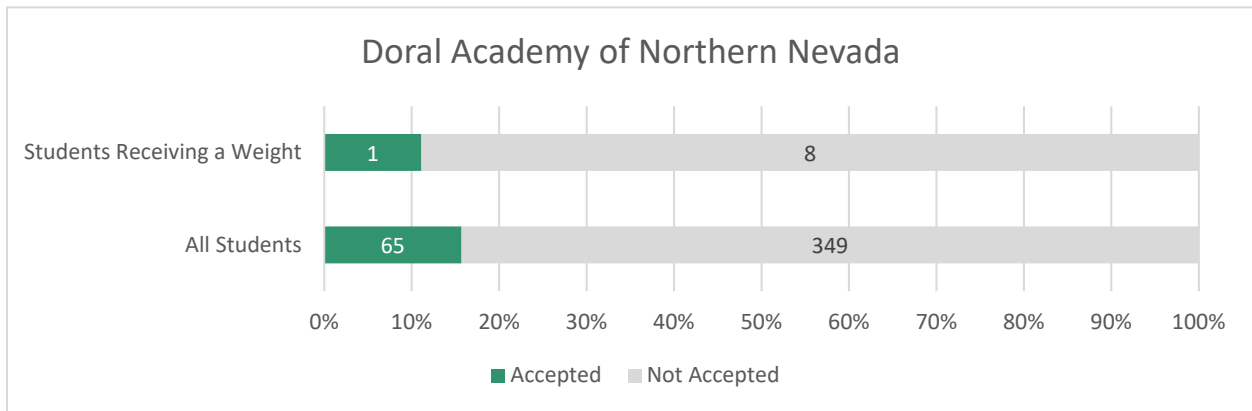
Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	4.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2022 – 23
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	2,509 (659 excluding the Cadence Campus)
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	8,005 (6,212 excluding the Cadence Campus)

At the Cadence Campus the number of student application was less than the number of seats available, so no lottery was needed, and all students were accepted.



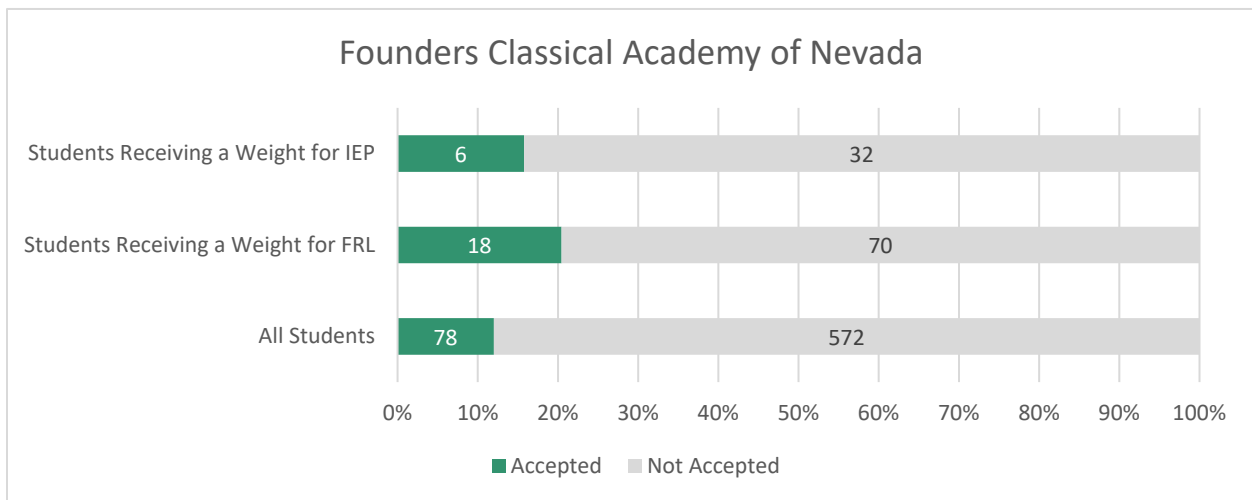
Doral Academy of Northern Nevada

Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	2.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2020 – 21
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	65
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	414



Founders Classical Academy of Nevada

Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch & Students with a disability
Weight provided to qualifying students ² :	3.0 (FRL) 4.0 (IEP)
First year of weighted lottery:	2022 – 23
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	78
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	650

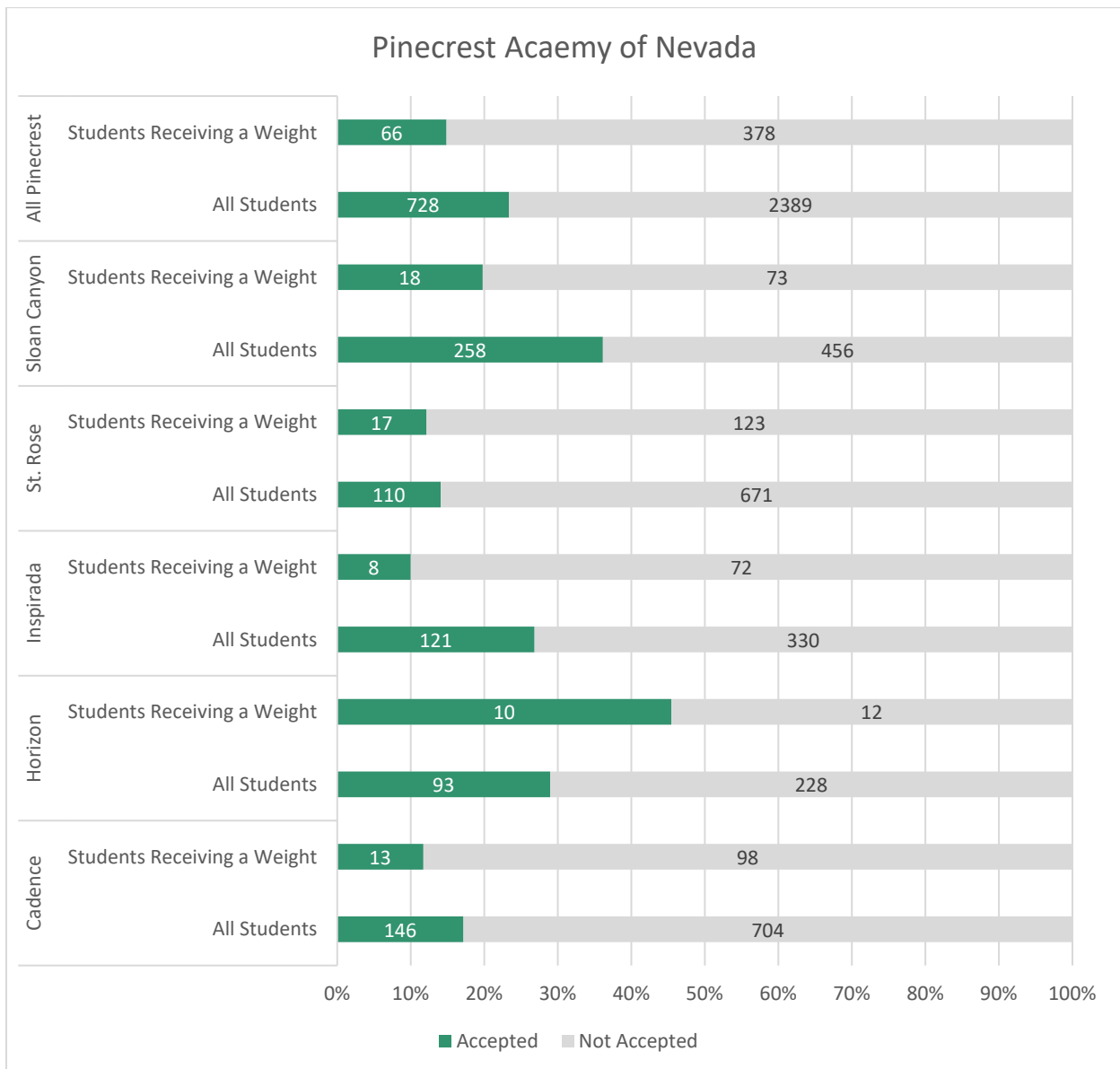


² Students qualifying for both categories do not have a combined weight for the lottery. Rather they receive the higher of the two weights, a 4.0.

Pinecrest Academy of Nevada

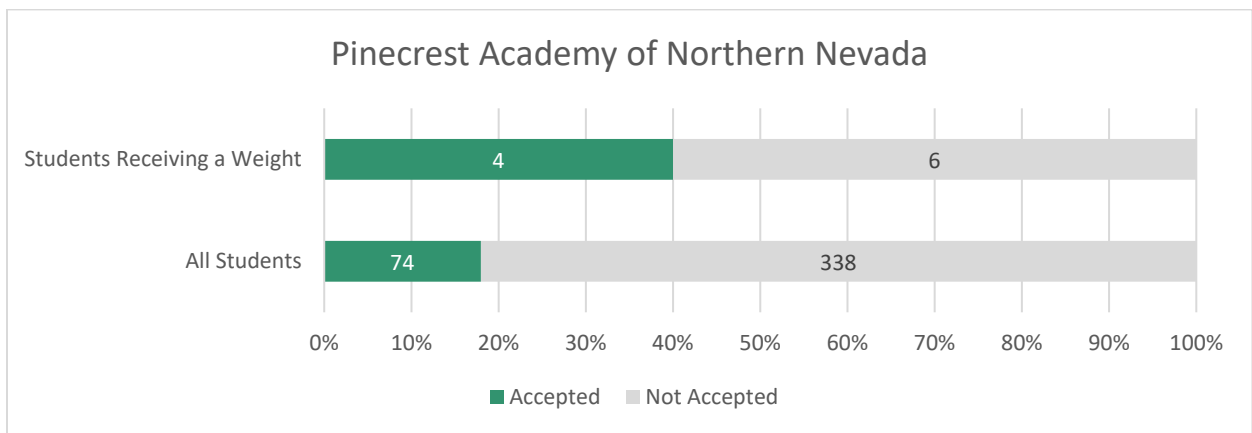
Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	5.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2022 – 23
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	816 (728 excluding the Virtual Campus)
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	3,182 (3,117 excluding the Virtual Campus)

At the Virtual Campus the number of student application was less than the number of seats available, so no lottery was needed, and all students were accepted.



Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada

Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	5.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2020 – 21
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	74
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	412



Somerset Academy of Las Vegas

Student population that qualifies for a weight:	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch
Weight provided to qualifying students:	2.0
First year of weighted lottery:	2022 – 23
Total Seats Available for the Lottery 2022-23 SY	494
Total Applications Received for 2022-23 SY by Lottery Date	3053

