



NCA NSPF Improvement Plan

Submitted to:

State Public Charter School Authority

By:

Nevada Connections Academy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After successfully achieving the performance improvement benchmarks set by the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority (the Authority) for the high school, the Board of Directors of Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) has now also taken steps to improve its performance rating on the Nevada Department of Education School Performance Framework (NSPF). Specifically, the Board has put in place a set of policies, programs, and interventions (detailed in this plan) to improve the school's overall performance on the NSPF. The Nevada State Public Charter School Authority (the Authority) shared its concerns about NCA's performance rating as part of the school's renewal process for the 2020-21 school year.

This plan builds on the school performance initiatives previously adopted by the NCA Board for implementation during the 2017-18 school year, including a new 6-12 interventions and student focused initiatives in English Language Arts (ELA), science and mathematics. Based on strong evidence from independent research and results from other online schools serving similar subsets of students, the NCA Board believes that the new approach, combined with initiatives and programs put forth in this plan, will result in measurable improvement in the overall NSPF rating system.

The plan clearly outlines interim and annual performance and growth goals in each NSPF component in order to achieve a three-star rating overall for the middle school (by 2020) and a two-star rating for the high school (by 2020). NCA will consistently monitor the plan and adjust it as needed for it to remain effective.

The plan detailed herein is not only a response to concerns raised as part of the renewal process, but also an outline of efforts that have been ongoing for over a year as NCA has been making every effort to improve the overall performance of students (as calculated on the NSPF).

The NCA Board thanks the Authority Board and Staff for its collaboration in developing this plan and for its assistance in helping NCA address the need for higher star performance in both middle and high school levels. The NCA Board believes that this plan demonstrates challenging yet achievable goals for improving the performance rating on the NSPF and continuing to serve a highly mobile population.

1. Framework Component Analysis & Initiatives – Middle School

1.1 Academic Achievement

Explanation of Component: For middle school ratings, results from Math, ELA, and Science are combined into the Pooled Proficiency Measure to determine an overall proficiency rate for the school. Points are awarded based upon the combined rate. Pooled Proficiency is worth 25 points for middle schools.

Points Available: 25

Points Awarded 2017-18: 4 (13 points prior to Test Participation Penalty)

Points Awarded 2018-19: 10

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 14

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 15

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Small group/targeted LiveLessons (synchronous instruction)
- Customized curriculum to meet student mastery needs
- Implementation of STMath Intervention Program
- USA Test Prep to improve testing skills and lessen anxiety
- Lexia Rapid Assessment for benchmark testing and formative assessment

1.2 Student Growth

Explanation of Component: The measure used to determine student progress in Nevada is the student growth percentile (SGP). It is a value between 1 and 99 that is determined for each student based upon at least two consecutive years of state test scores. This number indicates how much growth a student has made over the past year compared to their academic peer group. For example, an SGP of 75 means a student has shown more growth than 75% of their academic peer group.

The Growth Indicator is a component of the elementary and middle school rating systems in the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). Schools receive points for growth under the Math and ELA Median Growth Percentile (MGP) and Adequate Growth Percentile (AGP) Measures.

The MGP is the median SGP of the school. All SGPs for a given assessment in a school are ordered from highest to lowest and the middle (median) number is the school's MGP. The Math and ELA MGP Measures are worth up to 10 points each.

The AGP is a growth target to measure. A target is generated for each student and that target is proficiency within 3 years or by the end of 8th grade. As such, the AGP is the minimum SGP a student must earn to be on track for proficiency. The AGP Measure indicates what percentage of students are meeting or exceeding their AGP (growth to target goals). The Math and ELA AGP Measures for middle schools are worth up to 5 points each.

Points Available: 30

Points Awarded 2017-18: 11.5

Points Awarded 2018-19: 10.5

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 12

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 13

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Small group/targeted LiveLessons (synchronous instruction)
- Implementation of STMath Intervention Program
- USA Test Prep to improve testing skills and lessen anxiety
- Lexia Rapid Assessment for benchmark testing and formative assessment

1.3 English Language Proficiency

Explanation of Component: Nevada annually measures English proficiency for ELs using the WIDA ACCESS assessment. A student's initial English proficiency is established based on WIDA results in their first year in an EL program.

WIDA identifies six levels of proficiency; students reaching level 4.5 are considered proficient in the English language and will exit from the EL program.

Schools earn points based upon the progress of ELs. The measure for EL progress is the WIDA Adequate Growth Percentile. EL students must make enough progress in English language proficiency to exit EL status in five years or by the end of grade 12, whichever comes first. Students making enough progress toward proficiency are determined to be on track.

Points Available: Not applicable to NCA due to insufficient students

1.4 Closing Opportunity Gaps

Explanation of Component: The Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator specifically focuses on middle school students who were previously not proficient but are now on track to proficiency. Every year, all 6th-8th grade students in Nevada participate in Math and ELA assessments. Growth, or progress, toward proficiency is measured for each student that has at least two consecutive years of scores. This growth determines whether a student is on track to reach proficiency in three years or by the end of 8th grade.

The Closing Opportunity Gaps Indicator creates an incentive in the school rating system to improve the performance of students who have not been previously successful on the state assessments. The Math and ELA Opportunity Gaps Measures determine what percentage of prior non-proficient students are now on track to pass the state assessments. This rate is determined for students between grades four and eight. Each measure is worth up to 10 points each.

Points Available: 20

Points Awarded 2017-18: 7

Points Awarded 2018-19: 4

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 9

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 11

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Identification of students who have been non-proficient in previous years to receive targeted instruction in areas of deficiency.
- Small group/targeted LiveLessons (synchronous instruction)
- Customized curriculum to meet student mastery needs
- Implementation of STMath Intervention Program
- USA Test Prep to improve testing skills and lessen anxiety
- Lexia Rapid Assessment for benchmark testing and formative assessment

1.5 Student Engagement

Explanation of Component: In the middle school rating system, the Student Engagement Indicator includes the Chronic Absenteeism Measure. A chronically-absent student has missed 10% or more of enrolled school days. As an example, if a student is enrolled at the same school for a whole school year (180 days) and misses 18 or more days, they are chronically absent. Only students enrolled for at least 91 days are included in the calculation.

A school is awarded points based on the percent of chronically-absent students. For this Measure, the lower the rate of chronic absenteeism, the more points the school receives. This Measure is worth up to 10 points in elementary and middle school ratings, and up to 5 points in high school ratings. In the middle school rating system, in addition to Chronic Absenteeism, the Student Engagement Indicator includes the Academic Learning Plans (ALPs) and 8th Grade Credit Requirements Measures.

The ALP Measure was created because Nevada law requires each middle school student to have an ALP to make sure they are on track for high school. A school is awarded up to 2 points based on the percent of students with an ALP. The 8th Grade Credit Requirements Measure is designed to make sure 8th graders have the credits needed to be on track for high school. A school is awarded up to 3 points based on the percent of students meeting those credit requirements.

Points Available: 15

Points Awarded 2017-18: 1

Points Awarded 2018-19: 11.5

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 12

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 13

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Improved truancy process for each grade band
- Multi-tiered, frequent contact to ensure students are engaged or provided with options to meet their best learning environment going forward
- Monitoring of course progression completion
- Increased contact with students who are struggling or not engaged

1.6 Total Points (Star Rating)

Star Rating Scores and Ranges (90 Point Scale – No EL)

90 point scale
1-star = under 26.5
2-star = 26.5 - 44.5
3-star = 45 - 62.5
4-star = 63 - 71.5
5-star = 72 - 90

Points Awarded 2017-18: 23.5 (1-Star)

Points Awarded 2018-19: 36.0 (2-Star)

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 47 (3-Star)

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 52 (3-Star)

2. Framework Component Analysis & Initiatives – High School

2.1 Academic Achievement

Explanation of Component: For middle school ratings, results from Math, ELA, and Science are combined into the Pooled Proficiency Measure to determine an overall proficiency rate for the school. Points are awarded based upon the combined rate. In high school ratings, points are awarded for the Math, ELA, and Science Proficiency Measures.

Unlike elementary and middle schools, these results are not combined for one rate. Math and ELA are worth 10 points each, while Science is worth 5 points.

Points Available: 25

Points Awarded 2017-18: 7.5

Points Awarded 2018-19: 6.5

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 12

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 12.5

2021-2022 Points Award Target: 13

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Small group/targeted LiveLessons (synchronous instruction)
- Stand alone ACT prep course
- ACT Boot Camp
- USA Test Prep to improve testing skills and lessen anxiety

2.2 Graduation

Explanation of Component: Graduation from high school is one of the most significant indicators of student college and career readiness. Because graduation rates are also an important measure of school success, they are part of the system for rating high schools under the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). The rating system includes measures for both 4-year and 5-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGRs).

ACGRs are the percentage of students who graduate in a specific period with a regular high school diploma. From the beginning of 9th grade (or the earliest high school grade), students entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is adjusted by adding any students who subsequently transfer into the cohort and subtracting any students who subsequently transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die.

Nevada's high school rating system includes the Graduation Rates Indicator, which is made up of two Measures. The first is the 4-Year ACGR Measure, which awards up to 25 points to schools based on the percentage of students graduating from high school within 4 years. The second is the 5-year ACGR Measure, which awards up to 5 points to schools based on the percentage of students graduating from high school within 5 years.

These points are added to the points a school may earn for other NSPF Measures and converted into a school star rating.

Students who graduate from a high school within 4 years are counted as graduates in the school's 4-year graduation rate. Nevada also calculates a 5-year graduation rate. Students who graduate from high school within 5 years are counted in the school's 5-year graduation rate.

Only students who graduate with a Standard, Advanced, College and Career Ready, Adult, or Alternative Diploma are considered graduates. Students who receive a General Educational Development (GED) or an adjusted diploma are not considered graduates. Graduation rates are calculated in October, which is past the school ratings deadline of September 15th, so the rating system uses prior year graduation rates. As an example, 2018 rates will count in the 2019 ratings.

Points Available: 30

Points Awarded 2017-18: 0

Points Awarded 2018-19: 0

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 4 (18% point increase in Grad Rate for 2019)

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 11

2021-2022 Points Award Target: 20

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Rainbow List identification system for students severely off-cohort, off-cohort and on-track to graduate
- Stage 5 Support for tracking students who have withdrawn from NCA
- Peer Mentor program

2.3 English Language Proficiency

Explanation of Component: Nevada annually measures English proficiency for ELs using the WIDA ACCESS assessment. A student's initial English proficiency is established based on WIDA results in their first year in an EL program.

WIDA identifies six levels of proficiency; students reaching level 4.5 are considered proficient in the English language and will exit from the EL program.

Schools earn points based upon the progress of ELs. The measure for EL progress is the WIDA Adequate Growth Percentile. EL students must make enough progress in English language proficiency to exit EL status in five years or by the end of grade 12, whichever comes first. Students making enough progress toward proficiency are determined to be on track.

Points Available: Not applicable to NCA due to insufficient students

2.4 College and Career Readiness

Explanation of Component: College and Career Readiness is included in the high school rating system in the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) and reflects the state's commitment to college and career readiness for all high school students. There are many programs of college and career readiness coursework that prepare students for post-secondary life. Some of these programs include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment (DC/DE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Students that participate in these programs may earn a Nevada College and Career Ready (CCR) Diploma. To earn a CCR diploma, a student must meet the criteria for an Advanced Diploma and also take additional classes and assessments.

In the high school rating system, the Post-Secondary Preparation Participation Measure awards up to 10 points to schools based on the percent of students who participate in AP, IB, DC/DE, or CTE. To be an AP, IB, or CTE participant, a student must pass certain courses. To be a DC/DE participant, a student must earn a certain number of college credits.

Another component in the high school rating system is the Post-Secondary Preparation Completion Measure, which awards up to 10 points to schools based on the percent of students who meet completion requirements for AP, IB, DC/DE, or CTE. One common requirement is passing program-associated assessments.

The final CCR measure included in the high school rating system is the Advanced or CCR Diploma Measure, which awards up to 5 points to schools based on the percent of graduates earning an Advanced or CCR diploma.

Graduation rates are determined in October, which is past the school ratings deadline of September 15th, so this Advanced/CCR Diploma rate is based on prior year data. As an example, 2018 rates will count in the 2019 ratings.

Points Available: 25

Points Awarded 2017-18: 2

Points Awarded 2018-19: 2

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 2

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 5

2021-2022 Point Award Target: 7

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Increased focus on dual-enrollment
- Increased CTE programs and coursework
- Military recruitment
- School ASVAB procurement
- Increased counselor college and career planning
- Implemented college and career fairs

2.5 Student Engagement

Explanation of Component: In the high school rating systems, the Student Engagement Indicator includes the Chronic Absenteeism Measure. A chronically-absent student has missed 10% or more of enrolled school days. As an example, if a student is enrolled at the same school for a whole school year (180 days) and misses 18 or more days, they are chronically absent. Only students enrolled for at least 91 days are included in the calculation.

A school is awarded points based on the percent of chronically-absent students. For this Measure, the lower the rate of chronic absenteeism, the more points the school receives.

In the high school rating system, in addition to Chronic Absenteeism, the Student Engagement Indicator includes the 9th Grade Credit Sufficiency Measure. This Measure is designed to make sure students are on track to graduate from high school in 4 years. A school is awarded up to 5 points based on the percent of 9th grade students earning 5 or more credits. Only students that complete the year and are enrolled for at least 91 days are included.

Points Available: 10

Points Awarded 2017-18: 2

Points Awarded 2018-19: 4

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 6.5

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 7

2021-2022 Point Award Target: 7

New Initiatives to Improve Performance:

- Improved truancy process for each grade band
- Multi-tiered, frequent contact to ensure students are engaged or provided with options to meet their best learning environment going forward
- Monitoring of course progression completion
- Increased contact with students who are struggling or not engaged

2.6 Total Points (Star Rating)

Star Rating Scores and Ranges (90 Point Scale – No EL)

90 point scale
1-star = under 24.5
2-star = 24.5 - 44.5
3-star = 45 - 62.5
4-star = 63 - 73.5
5-star = 74 – 90

Points Awarded 2017-18: 11.5 (1-Star)

Points Awarded 2018-19: 12.5 (1-Star)

2019-2020 Points Award Target: 24.5 (2-Star)

2020-2021 Points Award Target: 35.5 (2-Star)

2021-2022 Points Award Target: 47 (3-Star)