

**EXHIBIT A**

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## NCA's Amendment to Proposed Cure for Alleged Deficiency in Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate

In accordance with the permission of the Authority during the August 23, 2017, hearing, NCA submits the following additional proposal to cure the alleged deficiency in the high school's four year adjusted cohort graduation rate.

### ***1. Judicial and Agency Review Waiver***

Based on Chair Guinasso's statements at the May 2017 hearing that any acceptable cure should include some judicial review waiver, NCA proposes that both Staff and NCA waive any right to judicial review and further agency action for any actions or failures to act and any school performance related issues raised in this proceeding or that occurred any time prior to the date the cure is accepted by the board.

### ***2. Enrollment Cap***

Based on feedback from Authority Board members during the August 23, 2017, hearing, NCA has revised its proposed enrollment cap, an element which NCA included in previous cure proposals pursuant to Staff's suggestion. During the August 23 hearing, Chair Guinasso and Member Mackedon expressed concern that NCA's enrollment cap as proposed should be decreased. Accordingly, NCA proposes a detailed, incremental enrollment cap focused on reducing current enrollment while also accommodating current and projected returning student needs.

- NCA's high school enrollment as of 9/30/2017 was 1,712 students according to the monthly school report (MSR). The breakdown was as follows:
- Currently 1,373 students are enrolled in grades 9-11. NCA ended SY 16-17 with approximately 59% new students versus 41% returning students. However, SY 17-18 so far shows 44% new students and 56% returning students. Assuming that the 56% returning and 44% new student percentage holds true, of the 1,373 students currently enrolled in grades 9-11, 759 of them would return for grades 10-12 in SY 18-19. Assuming further that NCA enrolls 455 new 9th grade students in SY 18-19, there would be a high school program of 1,214 students (759 returning students in grades 10-12 and 455 9th grade students).
- Proportionate with this enrollment and projected enrollment for coming years, NCA proposes the following:
  - NCA's high school program will not grow beyond 1500 for SY 18-19. This is a decrease of 200 students from current levels. This will still accommodate returning students.
  - NCA's high school program will not grow beyond 1300 for SY 19-10. This is an additional decrease of 200 students. This will still accommodate returning students.
  - **A cap of 1300 students in NCA's high school is a 24% reduction in capacity.**

### **3. Annual Reporting, Benchmarks & Consequences**

Both NCA and its academy to serve credit deficient students (currently the Every Student Succeeds Academy, ES2) will submit annual (by January 30 following the close of the preceding Academic Year) reports to the Authority tracking school performance (all data will be validated by a third party mutually agreed upon with the Authority and the school) in the following areas:

- a. for each credit deficient student (using only a Connexus ID not name, to avoid PII issues), the grade student entered the high school, credits deficient at time of enrollment, credits earned during year under review, total credits earned to date, expected graduation date if student remains at that school
- b. school state required test scores compared to state averages; ACT and other college prep scores compared to state average—track improvement of ACT scores based on cohort
- c. students who transfer out (ID's by Connexus ID); where that student transferred to or entered GED or Alternative ED program; NCA students being accepted into college or career tech. school
- d. grad rate - students all 4 years at NCA or Alternative School; of those continuing in school after 4th year, numbers graduated (or %) at conclusion of 5th year (measured as of 9/30 in year following close of 5th academic year); at conclusion of 6th year (measured as of 9/30 in year following close of 6th academic year)

Clear benchmarks for improvement and consequences if those benchmarks are not met: certain Authority board members suggested at the August hearing that the school needed to provide benchmarks and consequences if those benchmarks were not met. The school did so in the propose charter contract included as part of the cure and hereby incorporates those provisions which require a 49% graduation rate for 2017-18 and a 60% graduation rate for 2018-19 and that if the benchmark to hit 60% is not met the school will be eligible for board reconstitution. In addition, NCA has never requested that the Authority limit its accountability measure options and, therefore, would also be open to all statutory accountability measures being evaluated if that benchmark in 2018-19 is not met.

### **4. Implement Best Practices for Tracking Mobile Students**

NCA's graduation rate is impacted significantly by students who transfer out to pursue other educational programs without informing the school of their plans. As students withdraw, some are coded by default as drop-outs due to lack of data about where those students end up. In conferring with other charter schools in Nevada, some schools have developed best-practices and processes to track these students in ways that yield significant increases in graduation rates. Accordingly, NCA proposes to implement best practices for tracking these students:

- NCA is actively collecting information on these approaches and will continue to implement improvements to how they track and counsel students during the withdrawal process.

- As part of NCA’s ongoing efforts to improve graduation rates, the school will continue to provide training to all staff emphasizing the importance of asking for next school or program information when a caretaker initiates withdrawal. Unfortunately, many of the caretakers still do not provide this information. When a withdrawal is initiated without next school information, an NCA homeroom teacher and an administrative assistant both contact the family through phone calls and emails in order to obtain information. If the information is still not provided, the student's name is placed on a list and a team from Connections Academy works to contact the family and obtain a verification of enrollment.
- Multiple strategies are used to obtain next school information including searching for students in Bighorn and Infinite Campus, searching social media, reaching out to caretakers via personal email addresses, multiple phone call and text attempts, and the use of a people finder tool online. When information is acquired, a Verification of Enrollment form is sent to the new school or program in order to obtain proof of enrollment. If no information is found and the area in which the student moved to or is currently living is known, a Verification of Enrollment form is sent to possible schools the student is zoned for in that area. Attempts to verify enrollment are continued until verification is received, or the end of the validation period for the cohort.

## 5. Quarterly Metrics

Every quarter in the school year, NCA and the Board will review the Quarterly Metrics to see where the school is doing well and where the school can improve.

The Quarterly Metrics are a useful starting point for school improvement planning and any needed action plans and ensure that school performance is being monitored on a regular basis against key metrics that have been shown to contribute to school and student success. The Figures below show the name of the metric and the Quarters in which that metric will be reported. The School Leader will be given access to ongoing calculations for these metrics in order to "progress monitor" the metrics.

**Figure 1. Personalize & Monitor Student Learning**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester “core” courses successfully completed for ELA, Math, Science & SS	Q1 - Reported as % on track for successful completion (earning a passing score) Q2 – Reported as % successfully completing course (earning a passing score)
% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester “core” courses successfully completed for ELA, Math, Science & SS	Q3 - Reported as % on track for successful completion (earning a passing score) Q4 – Reported as % successfully completing course (earning a passing score)
% of High School Students with cohort status “graduate on time”	Q1, Q3
% of High School Students within 1.5 credits of cohort status “graduate on time”	Q2, Q4
% completing Scantron Formative Assessment Pre, Mid and Post Test	Q1 – Pre-test Q3 – Mid-Test Q4 – Post-Test

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% of students assigned by RTI Tier	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % assigned Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3
% students with Compliant IEPs	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as average of annual and triennial required reviews.

**Figure 2. Ensure High Levels of Student Engagement**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% on-time Welcome Calls	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of welcome calls completed within 7 days of enrollment
% completed Welcome Calls	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of welcome calls complete
% Start Up Tasks completed on-time	Q1, 3 – Reported as % start up tasks completed within 21 days of enrollment
% Curriculum Based Assessments (CBA) Target Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4
% Student Contacts Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students with status “contacts met” indicating a successful synchronous contact
% Learning Coach Contacts Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % receiving at least: -1 successful call by Q1 -2 successful calls by Q2 -3 successful calls by Q4
% completed notification of Preliminary Retention status	Q3 – Reported as % of students marked “retain or unsure” with a successful retention contact during the Preliminary Promotion/Retention period
% completed End of Year contact	Q4 – Reported as % of students successfully receiving an End of Year call
% “On Track” escalation status	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students meeting school-determined participation thresholds to demonstrate active engagement in a virtual school.
% During School Year Withdrawals	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students who withdraw during the school year (after meeting “engagement” criteria)

**Figure 3. Develop and Collaborate Professionally**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% of Teachers in a Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Q1 – Reported as % of teachers reporting a PLC IA number in their Staff Profile data view
% of PLCs in a school with a SMART goal	Q2 – Reported as % of PLCs with a school leader approved SMART goal for the 2017-2018 school year
% of PLCs in a school making progress towards SMART goal	Q3 – Reported as % of PLCs within a school with documented progress towards attaining SMART goal, as acknowledged by school leader
% of PLCs in a school with end of year SMART goal attainment	Q4 - Reported as % of PLCs within a school with documented attainment of SMART goal, as acknowledged by school leader
% of teachers completing Connections-led Professional Learning sessions (100, 200, 300-level)	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of teachers with a participation date listed for each monthly session that falls within a reporting quarter

**Figure 4. School Operations**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Quarter(s) Reported</b>
% of open teaching positions filled by the student first day of school	Q1
% of teachers with Teacher Orientation course complete	Q1
% of Students Enrolled “On Time”	Q1 – Reported as % of students enrolled on or before the first student day of school
% of eligible “Returning” students enrolled	Q1 – Reported as % of students eligible to return the following school year who enrolled by 9/25
% of open teaching positions filled by June	Q4
% Teachers Returning	Q4 – Reported as % of teachers not indicating they wouldn’t not returning via the Teacher Intent to Return process
% eligible Students Returning	Q4 – Reported as % of students indicating they would returning via the Student Intent to Return process

**6. Adult Advocates for students at-risk for dropping out**

As recommended by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences’ (ICS) Dropout Prevention Practice Guide<sup>1</sup>, the school will assign adult advocates to serve students at-risk of dropping out to serve as mentors/advisors. As noted in the Practice Guide, “research suggests that students who have ongoing relationships with adults feel a greater sense of school membership, attachment, and involvement” and that additional benefits of these relationships include “reduced risky behaviors, reduced absentee rates, improved grades, and improved communication and social skills. Recognizing that these are all areas that are key indicators of school success, the school’s adult advocates will mentor, build relationships, and engage with students in the following ways:

- Small group LiveLesson Advisory Sessions
- Advisory Teachers/Designated Counselors
- Student Engagement Team (SET)
- Teacher and staff Professional Development (guidance and training on support to at-risk students and dropout prevention)
- Learning Coach Support

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**SMALL GROUP LIVELESSON ADVISORY SESSIONS**

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The ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide provides specific suggestions regarding the types of responsibilities adult advocates should undertake, including that regular time in the school day or week should be established for students to meet with the adult. This will be accomplished through weekly small group LiveLesson advisory sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

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## ADVISORY TEACHERS/DESIGNATED COUNSELORS

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The Advisory Teacher/Counselor will be the key person within the high school team who is responsible for keeping a comprehensive view on all students they are assigned. These will be synchronous small group (15 students or fewer) advisory sessions conducted 1-2x per week with the Advisory Teacher/Counselor to support student engagement, academic success, and career readiness.

The advisory teacher/counselor will watch for gaps in learning as well as the most likely gaps in positive learning habits in order to support student success in the online environment. They will use the data systems outlined in section 2.1 to support the identification and support of students at-risk for dropping out.

### *COUNSELING PROGRAM*

The counseling program will offer individual and group counseling, as needed, and will focus on academic development, personal and social growth, and college and career readiness activities through a variety of communication tools (LiveLesson sessions, phone calls, message boards, Virtual Library, newsletters, and face-to-face field trips and events that will take place throughout the state).

The counseling team will have an established system for early identification of students who are behind in earning high school credits, or those who are off track for graduation. Once identified, counselors will work with these students to identify support needed to be successful in earning credits, and a plan to get back on track to graduate with his/her cohort. Specifically, school counselors will be working directly with students to identify a course of study that works to get the student back to graduating with his or her cohort. Potential options include credit recovery courses, additional credits each semester, block scheduling, and summer school. Counselors will work with students and families individually to identify what is best for the needs of each student. Further, counselors will work with students individually and in groups to instruct students on the mindsets and behaviors necessary to be a successful virtual school student. Students will learn about organizational and time management skills, assertiveness in working with teachers, and the skills necessary to become a self-regulated learner. Finally, school counselors will also collaborate with special educators to support students with IEPs transition plans.

The technology available in Connexus will allow for teachers and counselors to monitor students' participation and performance in course work to identify students who are behind in lessons or performing poorly in current courses. Teachers and counselors will assist these students in successfully completing courses through frequent calls and access to additional resources, as needed.

Counselors will help monitor students' performance against drop out and on-track indicators and prepare students for college, career, and/or employability with

- College and career readiness data view focusing on steps needed to meet post-graduation goals;

- Interactive LiveLesson sessions connecting families with real-time information on financial aid and scholarships, college application processes, entrance requirements, and more;
- College test preparation courses for the SAT/ACT;
- Early identification of students who may be off track for graduating on time; and
- 1-to-1 counseling with students as needed to provide resources and assistance with post-secondary planning, including career options, vocational training, and selecting the right college.

In addition, there will be additional supports and activities available to support a student's college and career goals including the following:

- Counseling LiveLesson sessions each Friday for high school students (including Career Fireside Chats on the fourth Friday of each month);
- College admissions LiveLesson sessions;
- Career and vocational options LiveLesson sessions;
- College newsletters sent to high school students each month;
- Chat-with-a-Grad sessions; and
- Connexus tools such as the Progression Plan Manager.

Students will have access to the national counseling LiveLesson session program, which delivers weekly guidance curriculum lessons and national college admissions sessions throughout the school year. The sessions include the Career Fireside Chats on the fourth Friday of each month. Previous sessions have covered such topics as Teen Dating Violence Awareness, Educational/Training Opportunities After High School, Why School Matters: Navigating Your Educational Development Plan, How to Develop a Growth Mindset, Aligning Individual Goals & Abilities, and ACT & SAT Overview. A college newsletter is sent to high school students each month.

Students will be encouraged to enroll in College and Career Focused clubs. Each club includes regular LiveLesson sessions with a career and college counselor. There are several clubs focused on post-secondary planning including: College Planning Club, First Generation Club, High School Career Club, and Middle School Career Club.

The counselors will also plan additional LiveLesson sessions, and small group advisory sessions, for students which will address specific student needs. The counselor will be a resource to students, families, and staff in ensuring that all students are safe.



## 7. Targeted Professional Development and Changes

### TEACHERS

Teachers and Staff at NCA will participate in additional training, and have access to on-demand resources, to support them with:

- motivating and engaging at-risk students;
- recognizing potential drop-outs and implementing strategies for dropout prevention;
- recognizing and supporting students in distress;
- determining appropriate instructional and behavioral supports;
- identifying on-track indicators for high school graduation;
- creating a college-going culture; and
- providing guidance and support to students who may choose to go to work after graduation.

### NCA BOARD MEMBERS

In addition to the professional development for the teachers and staff, the Board will also receive training throughout the year. A sample of a training schedule is included in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Board Professional Development

Month	Training	Description
August	<i>What is the Monthly School Report? What does it mean?</i>	The monthly school report is provided to the board at each month's board meeting. This report contains enrollment data (by grade band), student demographics (including FARM eligibility and Special Population numbers), contacts between teachers and students, and performance metrics (attendance, participation and overall performance). After the training, the board should be able to interpret the data on the monthly school report and see trends and issues at the school.
September	<i>What are the Quarterly Metrics and what do they mean for the School?</i>	At the end of each Quarter (October, January, April, and July) Connections Academy will report to the Board on operational metrics related to the School Focus Goals, Core Model & Standards and School Year Cycle. These are metrics that Connections expects will help drive Efficacy as measured by the School Focus Goals. These metrics are either in addition to those shared on the Monthly School Report, or are sharing comparative results across the schools for what is shared on the Monthly School Report.  The training will explain each metric that will be used, what it means, how it is calculated.
October	<i>What are our school goals and how are they calculated?</i>	This training will go over the school goals (as the School Leader goes over his state of the school report). The school goals will be discussed/explained in terms of how they will be measured, monitored, and what actions the school will be taking to meet them.
November	<i>What were the key takeaways of the Leadership team from the 2017 National</i>	The conference is to be held October 22-25, 2017 and is put on by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University. Key members of the leadership team plan to attend the conference. Conference strands include credit and recovery opportunities, parent and family engagement, alternative educational contexts, strategies for

Month	Training	Description
	<i>Dropout Prevention Network Conference?</i>	specific populations, civic/community engagement, leadership and administration issues, and chronic absenteeism. The attendees at the conference will be prepared to share their takeaways with the board.
January	<i>How is NCA doing on Quarter 2 Metrics?</i>	This session would highlight the outcomes of the metrics that are reported in Quarter 2. The board should be able to gauge how successful the school is on implementing the school improvement plan and whether at the half-way point in the school year, the school is on track to make its goals.
February	<i>How is NCA preparing for state assessments?</i>	Throughout the school year NCA has been preparing its students to take the state assessments. This month the school leader (or designee) will explain all the work that has been done to prepare students academically to succeed on these important assessments. The school leader (or designee) will also talk about the logistics/planning that went into finding test sites and scheduling students – this is an important part of reaching that 95% attendance threshold.
April	<i>How is NCA doing on Quarter 3 metrics?</i>	This session would highlight the outcomes of the metrics that are reported in Quarter 3. The board should be able to gauge how successful the school is on implementing the school improvement plan and whether with three quarters of the school year completed, the school is on track to make its goals.
May/June	<i>What have we learned? Strategic Planning for next year?</i>	This session would be more of a discussion of the board and school leader. It would be a reflection on the school year as a whole – what they learned, what worked, and where the school is now. The board may consider going through a strategic planning process as they prepare for the 18-19 school year. This planning could be facilitated by an outside consultant who would help the board set new goals for the school for the coming school year.

## **NCA LEADERSHIP**

NCA has implemented promising leadership changes. NCA’s new school leader as of November 1, 2017, Dr. Chris McBride, has an impressive track record in terms of raising student achievement throughout various public schools in Washoe County School District and beyond. For example, as the director of Mariposa Academy Charter School in Reno, Mr. McBride had extensive experience managing school budgets, ensuring academic success of students, and successfully overseeing school operations, both academic and financial. Likewise, as Dean of Smithridge S.T.E.M. Academy, he successfully implemented improved student achievement measures and led implementation of several committees and programs dedicated to that success and he also served an important role in building the school improvement plan as Associate Dean of Students (alternative education) at Pine Middle School.

### **8. Academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance**

As indicated by the ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide, “research shows that low academic performance, absenteeism, and grade retention are related to dropping out” and that the provision of appropriate academic supports that helps address skills gaps, can offset a cycle of frustration, and can enrich the academic experience for students who may be disengaged.<sup>2</sup> In support of this recommendation and to improve student academic performance, NCA will continue to provide

<sup>2</sup> Page 22, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

and add further academic supports beyond the standard high school course offerings and instructional supports:

- GradPoint Credit Recovery Courses (already being provided as part of Grad Rate Improvement Plan)
- Success Academy Courses - Freshman and Senior Success courses (already part of Grad Rate Improvement Plan)
- Supplemental Instructional Support Programs (e.g., Reading Plus, Imagine Math, Math XL)
- Career Technical Education (CTE) course offerings and college, career, employability supports
- Summer School (already offered and expanded through Grad Rate Improvement Plan)

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### **CREDIT RECOVERY/GRADPOINT**

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To support high school students on their path to graduation and college and career, NCA is providing credit recovery course offerings during the summer and school year as a resource to help students recover credits and achieve and maintain on track status.

GradPoint credit recovery courses offer a diagnostic-prescriptive virtual learning solution. The student-centered philosophy behind GradPoint's courses includes the necessary support features to facilitate and guide customized credit recovery:

1. Prescriptive-diagnostic assessment and instructional sequencing tools that automatically tailor and deliver personalized learning for every student.
2. Engaging content and interactive, collaborative learning elements to re-engage at-risk students.
3. Instruction, activities, and assessments that address diverse learning modalities and enable students to demonstrate content mastery in a variety of ways.
4. Robust progress monitoring tools.

GradPoint's prescriptive courses provide a personalized pathway through the course based on needs, saving valuable learning time and increasing student motivation. Unlike other programs, GradPoint automatically diagnoses and prescribes content for a truly personalized learning experience. Students take a pre-test and a post-test with every module. Based on their results, they are assigned lessons in areas in which they did not demonstrate mastery and are exempted from other lessons they have already mastered.

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### **SUCCESS ACADEMY COURSES**

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To further support students' success and engagement in school, NCA has been offering and will expand on two Success Academy courses: Freshman Focus and Senior Success.

The Freshman Focus course will orient students to resources available to them, introduce strategies for success in high school course-level work, emphasize the importance of academic integrity and producing authentic work, and build college, work, and career readiness.

Based on the positive results of the Freshman Focus Course, NCA will also offer a course that

addresses needs specific to seniors, Senior Success. The Senior Success course exposes students to tools and resources designed to best prepare them for life after high school. Students will gain exposure to information about financial aid, the college application process, résumé writing, graduation information, and post-secondary options. This course also provides students the opportunity to reflect on their high school experience.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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Supplemental instructional support programs (SISPs) are assigned to students who need additional practice and/or support with the foundational skills required to be successful with grade level standards. Teachers are trained in the implementation of these programs, including analyzing and evaluating student progress using the data provided by each program. As a standard part of the SISP review process, the Connections Academy Curriculum and Instruction team evaluates programs for:

- Evidence of research
- Alignment to standards
- Ability to customize
- Feedback to students
- Direct instruction
- Teacher/Student user experience
- Diagnostic/prescriptive component
- Motivation feature
- Data and reporting, including data on discrete skills

Some of the additional SISP resources that the school will provide students will include Imagine Math,<sup>3</sup> Math XL,<sup>4</sup> and Reading Plus.

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## CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

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As indicated in the ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide, students at risk for dropping out should be provided relevant instruction to better engage them in learning and to better serve them after they complete school, with a specific focus on helping students discover the purpose for completing school by incorporating career-related curricula.<sup>5</sup> NCA fully supports this recommendation and will offer CTE courses that provide students the opportunity to take courses in many of the 16 nationally recognized career clusters. The courses expose students to a wide variety of career areas and help prepare them for career and college success by giving them a solid academic foundation, technical knowledge, and skills training in a wide variety of fields. The courses include interactive presentations, real-world activities and assignments, career connections, and an online study guide to help students obtain the skills and competencies of their chosen career pathway. NCA will explore adding additional CTE courses and certifications associated with the selected career pathways.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thinkthroughmath.com/resources/case-studies/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product\[\]=MyStatLab&hpd](http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product[]=MyStatLab&hpd)

<sup>5</sup> Page 34, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

In addition, students will be encouraged to enroll in College and Career Focused clubs. Each club includes regular LiveLesson sessions with a career and college counselor. There are several clubs focused on post-secondary planning including: College Planning Club, First Generation Club, and High School Career Club.

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## **SUMMER SCHOOL**

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Summer school provides an opportunity for many students to “catch up” and be on track for graduation. In addition, research has shown that by enrolling in academic courses in the summer months, “summer slide” is reduced and can help students achieve academically. In support of this research finding, GradPoint and targeted Connections Academy courses will continue to be offered to NCA students during the summer.

As part of students’ PLP, students in NCA’s summer school program will be closely monitored by certified teachers and counselors who will provide targeted, supplemental instruction and maintain regular contact to keep them focused on their goal of graduation. Teachers will work to ensure that students complete pre- and post-tests, progress at a pace that enables successful course completion, and participate in daily instructional and intervention activities. Students who are credit deficient will take GradPoint courses.

Summer school staff will be chosen based on their familiarity with effective instructional and motivational strategies. They will be focused on student success and already have relationships with many of the students, a foundation on which to build academic success. When students know that there is an adult that cares about their success, then they are more motivated to be successful.<sup>6</sup>

Every student who is behind as indicated by the On Track Indicator and Progression Plan will be encouraged and provided support to continue their school year into the summer, whether it is realistic for them to move up a grade by the end of summer or not.

### ***9. Request for an amendment or Application to form a “School Within a School” and designate the same as an Alternative High School***

If the Authority accepts this cure, NCA will seek either a charter amendment or application to form a new charter school (in collaboration with the Authority to determine the most appropriate process) to transition its Every Student Succeeds Academy to an alternative performance framework high school. Given concerns raised by Staff relative to timing and process, as part of this cure proposal, NCA outlines the process through which it will accomplish this goal on a step-by-step basis. Pursuant to Authority Staff’s representations that two years would be an appropriate window for a transition for a school working toward an alternative performance framework designation,<sup>7</sup> NCA projects that its population for its “school within a school,” once the charter is amended to accommodate for it so that NCA may begin enrolling accordingly, will meet the threshold for a school within a school by the 2019-2020 school year, and perhaps earlier given the innovative nature of NCA’s request. The program for the alternative school will be the Nevada Vision Academy as explained in detail in **Attachment 1**.

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<sup>6</sup> Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge: New York, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> See May 2017 Hearing Transcript, Vol III, at 239.

a. Procedure

- 1) NCA submits to the Authority as soon as possible upon the Board's approval of its cure proposal a two-part request to amend its written charter to allow the following:
  - i. NCA to bifurcate its charter to serve a "school within a school" as previously proposed in NCA's March 2017 cure letter, along with the greater population of students as NCA is currently serving them pursuant to its renewed written charter; and
  - ii. NCA's "school within a school" to apply for approval to transition to the alternative performance framework pursuant to NRS 385A.740, which states that "a charter school . . . that wishes to be rated using the alternative performance framework prescribed by the State Board pursuant to NRS 385A.730 must request the . . . sponsor of the charter school . . . to apply to the State Board on behalf of the school for approval to be rated using the alternative performance framework by submitting a form prescribed by the Department." Pursuant to NCA's first request that would bifurcate NCA's charter, NCA would continue to serve its remaining students separate from the alternative performance framework.

NCA's two-part request to amend its written charter as described herein is pursuant to NAC 386.3269, which provides for the amendment of written charter or charter contract, where the request for amendment is not otherwise described in NAC 386.326 to 386.3268, inclusive, which is the case for NCA's two-part request as described herein. In response to a request for amendment under NAC 386.3269, "the governing body must submit a written request to the sponsor of the charter school for a determination of whether the proposed amendment" is material or non-material, the sponsor then makes a determination regarding the same, and, if material, "the governing body must obtain approval from the sponsor before the amendment becomes effective." NCA will submit this written request for a determination of materiality in conjunction with its request for amendment.

iii. Amendment Timeline

1. NCA will request this two-part amendment, along with a request for the SPCSA's determination regarding materiality, as soon as possible following approval of its cure proposal (if it is approved. NRS 388A.276 outlines requirements for amendments to a written charter, providing in subsection (2) that "[a] written charter or charter contract may not be amended in any manner described in subsection 1 unless the amendment is approved by the State Public Charter School Authority," but does not require a timeline for the same. Under NRS 388A.168(3), the SPCSA is required to adopt

regulations that prescribe the submission of an amendment to a written charter or charter contract, which the SPCSA has done for limited amendment requests. Of the forms that the Application SPCSA has adopted on its website, several require an October 15 deadline, as Director Gavin suggests, but NCA's requested amendment does not fit within any of the categories for which the SPCSA has created deadlines. See discussion in NCA's closing argument regarding same. Instead, the amendment contemplated would fall under NAC 386.3269's provision for the amendment of written charter or charter contract, where the request for amendment is not otherwise described in NAC 386.326 to 386.3268, inclusive—permissible amendments for which the SPCSA has not adopted rigid timeline. Therefore, NCA may request this amendment to its charter before October 15, 2017, contrary to representations made by Authority Staff.

2. NCA is unaware of an SPCSA policy or procedure adopting a rigid timeline for its approval and consideration of requests for amendment submitted pursuant to NAC 386.3269, and would respectfully request that the SPCSA conduct an expeditious review of its request pursuant to the high stakes nature of the proceedings against NCA, such that NCA may begin enrolling students in its school within a school as early as the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year.
- 2) In the alternative, should the Authority deem it the more procedurally appropriate avenue, NCA will submit an application to form a new charter school—the “school within a school” as described herein and in the March 2017 cure letter. NCA will submit this application to comply with all relevant requirements under NAC 386.140 to NAC 386.180, inclusive, and will, of course comply with the enrollment restrictions outlined in NAC 386.135.

i. Timeline:

1. NCA will submit a letter of intent to form a charter school pursuant to NAC 386.125 as soon as possible upon approval of NCA's cure proposal.
2. NCA will submit its application in August 2018. See NAC 386.130(3) (“Applications may only be submitted on the last 3 business days of August of the fiscal year immediately preceding the fiscal year in which the proposed charter school will begin operation.”).
3. NCA is unaware of a statute or regulation adopting a rigid timeline for the SPCSA's consideration and resolution of an application to

form a charter school, and would respectfully request that the SPCSA conduct an expeditious review of its request pursuant to the high stakes nature of the proceedings against NCA, such that NCA may begin enrolling students in its school within a school sometime during the 2018-2019 school year.

- 3) Assuming the timeline regarding either a charter amendment or application as outlined here remains on track, NCA will begin enrolling students as part of its “school within a school” starting at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year assuming the charter amendment route is proper, and beginning during the 2018-2019 school year assuming the application route is proper. Namely, immediately upon a student’s enrollment with NCA, NCA will discern whether the student falls into the categories outlined in NRS 385A.740(3),<sup>8</sup> and, if so, enroll that student as part of the “school within a school.”
- 4) Once NCA’s “school within a school” has reached a critical mass of 75 percent of students who meet the criteria outlined in NRS 385A.740(3), NCA will submit its application for approval to be rated using the alternative performance framework. In anticipation of quickly meeting this designation given its current student population and the nature of its cure—if not immediately upon the “school within a school’s” opening, then by the start of the 2019-2020 school year. This timeline comports with Staff’s previous representations regarding a school’s transition toward an alternative performance framework.

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<sup>8</sup> **NRS 385A.740 Application for approval to be rated using alternative performance framework; eligibility.**

1. A public school, including, without limitation, a charter school, that wishes to be rated using the alternative performance framework prescribed by the State Board pursuant to [NRS 385A.730](#) must request the board of trustees of the school district or sponsor of the charter school, as applicable, to apply to the State Board on behalf of the school for approval to be rated using the alternative performance framework.

2. The board of trustees of a school district or the sponsor of a charter school, as applicable, may apply to the State Board on behalf of a school for the school to be rated using the alternative performance framework by submitting a form prescribed by the Department.

3. A school is eligible to be rated using the alternative performance framework if:

(a) The school specifies that the mission of the school is to serve pupils who:

(1) Have been expelled or suspended from a public school, including, without limitation, a charter school;

(2) Have been deemed to be a habitual disciplinary problem pursuant to [NRS 392.4655](#);

(3) Are academically disadvantaged;

(4) Have been adjudicated delinquent;

(5) Have been adjudicated to be in need of supervision for a reason set forth in [NRS 62B.320](#); or

(6) Have an individualized education program; and

(b) At least 75 percent of the pupils enrolled at the school fall within one or more of the categories listed in paragraph (a).

4. As used in this section, “academically disadvantaged” includes, without limitation, being retained in the same grade level two or more times or having a deficiency in the credits required to graduate on time.



b. Lessons geared toward Student Engagement in School and Life

- 1) LiveLessons: As part of early implementation NCA's graduation rate improvement plan, the school has been analyzing the results of certain initiatives, and adapting previous measures to maximize success going forward. One of the challenges the school has faced as part of previous LiveLesson directed instruction initiatives has been compelling students who have become accustomed to virtual lessons to attend mandatory live lessons. As an adaptive measure, NCA has modified its live lesson plans for 2017-2018 to resemble the more non-threatening "open office hours" model, in which teachers set a "directed goal" for each scheduled office hour block, encourage socialization and engagement with peers, and involve students in natural brain-based learning lessons. In this way, the "open office hours" are geared toward life successes beyond just those attainable in the classroom setting
- 2) Small group counseling: In 2017-2018, NCA's Counseling team is implementing small group academic study skills sessions, along with small group counseling and breathing therapy sessions. NCA has identified the need for small group support systems in many NCA students, especially hoping to reach out to students who are parents themselves and students with alternative schedules, such as those who hold one or more jobs during high school.

**Academic Interventions**

**a. ACT Exams**

- i. As an intervention initiative, the school would implement mandatory placement in an ACT course, and track each students' successes in the course.
- ii. Implement ACT WorkKeys® Assessments to test for foundational skills required for success in the workplace. Schools across the country have begun administering this test to measure skills associated with workplace readiness, job performance, and problem solving.

**b. Progress towards individual graduation plan goals**

- i. The school will track each student's progress toward graduation plan goals in a custom report. This qualitative piece of information will be used to supplement the quantitative and serve as a tangible method for keeping students on track for graduation.

**c. Every School Succeeds Academy (ES2)**

- i. In its March 2017 cure proposal, NCA proposed this program, through which students who enroll in NCA off-cohort are automatically placed into the ES2 academy and are provided with increased adult interaction, enhanced learning opportunities, and clear guidelines to govern expectations. As a continuation to

the this measure, NCA seeks to expand the ES2 academy to bolster the intervention and programming initiatives to ultimately further the goals of the program: (1) encouraging goal-setting and (2) providing students with contacts with whom they may develop a rapport—providing students with a support system to lead them through to graduation that they might otherwise lack. Specifically:

1. As a new strategy within the ES2 academy, NCA has increased the means for entrance to the program, reassessing students after one semester and placing students into ES2 if they fall off cohort by three or more classes.

**d. Early college readiness program to help students develop skills they will need throughout life**

- i. **Avid Program:** Implementation of the Avid Program is part of a larger effort on NCA's part to attempt early intervention, as NCA has noticed a greater drive to graduate with one's cohort when students remain on- or near-cohort in the lower high school grades, whereas intervention attempts in the later high school grades can come at a time when students no longer have on-cohort graduation in mind as a viable goal. The program instills in younger students fundamental skills such as notetaking, time management, and proper communication. The program would target students in the eighth or ninth grades—just prior to or upon entrance to high school—with the goal of intervening with any potential problems that might impact a student's graduation track early on. NCA is considering implementing the program on a preliminary basis, beginning with small pilot group and slowly expanding. Connections Education has implemented the same model pilot program in a California school, and while the results of that program have yet to come out, the feedback has been promising. NCA believes that proactive measures such as implementation of the avid program demonstrate its attention to long-term results.<sup>9</sup>

NCA believes it will continue to see significant improvements in the graduation rate as it has already (5 percentage points in one year); however, as all parties and experts have recognized, to be legitimate increases takes time, particularly given NCA's large population of students who enroll at the school credit deficient and late in their high school career. NCA will focus on student growth, severity of the student's deficiency and amount of time with NCA and work on meaningful measures of school performance along with an increased graduation rate. Accordingly, NCA requests that the Authority work with the school to identify the measurable benchmarks acceptable and realistic – noting that acceptance of the request to transition the high school to the Alternative Performance Framework could result in an expedited increase in the graduation rate to well over 60%.

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<sup>9</sup> Through this amended cure NCA continues to demonstrate its commitment to all of its students, families, and working with the Authority to try to address concerns. NCA requests that to the extent Staff asserts this amended cure is inadequate, NCA be provided the opportunity to address any concerns – prior to the August 23 hearing preferably.

# **Nevada Vision Academy**

## **An Alternative High School**

### **Draft Proposal**

*Submitted to:*

Nevada State Public Charter School Authority  
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40  
Carson City, Nevada 89706

*Submitted by:*

Board of Directors  
Nevada Connections Academy

**August 14, 2017**



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nevada Vision Academy will provide Nevada students in grades 9-12 at-risk of academic failure with an alternative educational option. Nevada Vision Academy will be a fully online school providing students with the necessary supports to succeed academically and meet their post-secondary goals, including diagnostic processes for identifying at-risk students, targeted supports and interventions, and schoolwide programming designed to enhance student engagement and high school completion. Nevada Vision Academy will help each student maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program, flexible pacing, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning with additional supports to help students succeed. Nevada Vision Academy will be supported by Connections Academy.

Nevada Vision Academy has been designed specifically to support at-risk secondary students in grades 9-12. Nevada Vision Academy will provide course offerings, instructional supports and resources, staffing, and a professional learning program unique to successfully serving its student population.

Nevada Vision Academy will serve students that:

- (1) Have been expelled or suspended from a public school, including, without limitation, a charter school;
- (2) Have been deemed to be a habitual disciplinary problem pursuant to NRS 392.4655;
- (3) Are academically disadvantaged;
- (4) Have been adjudicated delinquent;
- (5) Have been adjudicated to be in need of supervision for a reason set forth in NRS 62B.320; and/or
- (6) Have an individualized education program.

The core of the school will consist of a targeted dropout prevention program and related initiatives, such as the following: data systems to support the identification and support of students at-risk for dropping out; a variety of adult advocates for students at-risk of dropping out; academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance; programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills; a personalized learning environment and instructional process; and rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and serve them after they leave school. Nevada Vision Academy programming will:

- Be designed to enhance student engagement, high school completion, and post-secondary success;
- Offer coursework that supports academic, occupational, and college and career readiness competencies; and
- Provide at-risk students with necessary supports to succeed academically and meet their post-secondary goals.

Nevada Vision Academy will provide a balanced, challenging high school experience focused on students pursuing paths that lead to success, whether via college or an immediate career choice. The student's personalized path will be monitored along the way by the student, parents/guardians, teachers, and their school counselor. The alternative high school will include a host of services and procedures to address credits, transcripts, and counseling. Recognizing how important it is for students to start early on planning for graduation, post-secondary education, or the world of work/military, the school will provide early and ongoing college, career, and employability planning and support. Without early planning, students run the risk of missing crucial courses that might thwart their plans or aspirations.

Additionally, the school will develop the whole child by emphasizing important soft skills that build student confidence and increase student agency in their learning, thus preparing them for college and careers.

We believe that all students can learn and must learn at relatively high levels of achievement. Through Nevada Vision Academy, we will create an environment in our classrooms that results in this high level of performance. We are confident that with our support and help, students can master challenging academic material, and we expect them to do so. We are prepared to work collaboratively with colleagues, students, and parents to achieve this shared educational purpose.

## 2. CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

Nevada Vision Academy will be a fully online school providing all enrolled students with the necessary supports to succeed academically and meet their post-secondary goals, including diagnostic processes for identifying at-risk students, targeted supports and interventions, and schoolwide programming designed to enhance student engagement and high school completion. Nevada Vision Academy’s instructional methods, educational philosophy, and program will include unique elements from our educational partner, Connections Academy. Connections Academy will provide specific educational products and services according to the Statement of Agreement with the Board of Directors.

Nevada Vision Academy will implement the Connections Academy alternative high school model. Connections Academy evolves their systems and techniques to incorporate best practices and lessons learned to best serve students and families. Connections Academy will continually improve its offering to ensure the needs of students and families will be met. Nevada Vision Academy and Nevada Connections Academy will have shared staff and shared operations through a shared services agreement. Through this partnership, Nevada Vision Academy will provide support services to Nevada Connections Academy’s at-risk populations who do not meet Nevada Vision Academy eligibility requirements or who otherwise choose to enroll in Nevada Connections Academy’s instead of Nevada Vision Academy.

Colleges and universities continue to grow their virtual learning programs. A recent report by Babson (2014) documented there are approximately 3.75 million students enrolled in full-time virtual learning in public higher education institutions and that over 95% of public higher education institutions with 5,000 or more total students offer distance education programs.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 70.8% of higher education chief academic leaders report that virtual learning is critical to their long-term strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Virtual learning is critical in higher education and students who graduate from full-time virtual schools are accepted to colleges throughout the country. In addition, students who graduate from a virtual school program may be better prepared for online college coursework since their experience in virtual learning prepared them for setting goals, being independent, and implementing organizational techniques.

Students who have graduated from virtual schools supported by Connections Academy have performed well academically, have been accepted into colleges and universities across the country, and have received scholarships. Preparing a student for life after high school is an important goal for Nevada Vision Academy.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/report/2014SurveyInfo.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/survey-reports-2014/>



The core of the school will consist of a targeted dropout prevention program and related initiatives based on evidenced based recommendations<sup>3</sup>, including the following: data systems to support the identification and support of students at-risk for dropping out; adult advocates for students at-risk of dropping out; academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance; programs to improve students’ classroom behavior and social skills; a personalized learning environment and instructional process; and rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and serve them after they leave school.

We include a detailed description of the overall educational program in Appendix A and the research base in Appendix B.

## **2.1 DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AT-RISK OF DROPPING OUT**

Research has shown that early indicator and intervention tools and systems can effectively help students stay on track for graduation and be successful in high school.<sup>4</sup> “The Early Warning Indicator and Interventions Systems can become powerful tools in school systems and states across America to keep students on track to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. It also shows that effective supports exist and that the challenge is organizing these supports in the most impactful and efficient means possible. Although these systems are still in their early stages of development and testing, this period of rapid growth and innovation provides a laboratory for learning and gives schools, districts, and states the opportunity to accelerate their progress in providing meaningful data to educators. As a result, we can more effectively mobilize the supports students need to succeed in school and in life. The stakes are high for our children, school improvement efforts, states, and nation. In an increasingly competitive global workforce, we need all the tools available— including Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems—to keep students on track for success.”

In alignment with the Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems (EWS) research that the best early warning and intervention systems are characterized by rapid identification of students who are in trouble, rapid targeted intervention, frequent monitoring, and rapid modification of interventions when needed<sup>5</sup>, Nevada Vision Academy will leverage early and continuous data to identify and support at-risk students and provide a personalized learning approach that includes targeted and intensive intervention resources, paired with passionate and supportive teaching staff, as part of its schoolwide programming designed to help each at-risk student be successful.

Further research indicates that attendance, behavior, and course performance are highly predictive indicators of school success.<sup>6</sup> Nevada Vision Academy will use data and data systems to monitor student performance against these indicators and support the identification and support of students at-risk for dropping out. This approach includes the following:

- Personalized Learning Plan (Plus) = Personalized Learning Plan + Intervention Plan + On-Track Indicator (Connections Academy proprietary tool incorporating the research findings of Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) + Progression Plan

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on\\_track\\_for\\_success.pdf](http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on_track_for_success.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Page 11, [http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on\\_track\\_for\\_success.pdf](http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on_track_for_success.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Page 13, [http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on\\_track\\_for\\_success.pdf](http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/on_track_for_success.pdf)

- Scantron Performance Series
- Quarterly Metrics

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## PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLAN (PLUS)

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Recognizing that students enrolled in Nevada Vision Academy will be at risk of academic failure and that each has unique needs and circumstances, each student will have a **Personalized Learning Plan (Plus)** that provides additional targeted support to this student population. The PLP (Plus) includes a Personalized Learning Plan, an Intervention Plan, the use of an On-Track Indicator (Connections Academy proprietary tool incorporating the research findings of Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR), and a Progression Plan.<sup>7</sup>

Students will have individual learning plans that outline the interventions, programs, and services needed for each student to be successful. The PLP (Plus) and Intervention Plan are developed collaboratively by the teacher, Learning Coach, and student to maximize achievement and to tailor curriculum and instruction.

The PLP (Plus) tool will place at each teacher's fingertips all of the assessment data available for students, e.g. state test scores, Scantron pre-, mid-, and post-test assessment data, participation and performance metrics, and any IEP information (as appropriate to protect student privacy).

Each student deserves an instructional program that maximizes his or her potential. This is the purpose of the **Personalized Performance Learning** process—an academic road map for each student that provides differentiated instruction in a unique, tailored way. Personalizing a student's program will be an ongoing process based on performance against indicators of school success. Students, Learning Coaches, and teachers will meet regularly throughout the year to review progress, modify the student's program, and adjust goals as needed. Examples of differentiation include small group targeted sessions, one-on-one instruction, tiered intervention activities, practice items, tutoring including peer tutoring and on-demand math support, and additional activities using instructional resources such as Teachlet tutorials, manipulatives, virtual labs and/or graphic organizers, and supplemental instructional resources. Key components of the Personalized Performance Learning process include:

- **Placement and Course Selection.** Starting at the time of placement and course assignment, information given and obtained during the enrollment process will be used to select courses based on a student's individual learning needs and goals.
- **Regular Communication.** At the start of school, Learning Coaches and teachers will establish a regular communication schedule, at least once every two weeks with students. Teachers review progress daily and will communicate with students and Learning Coaches frequently. Students will be encouraged to contact their teachers as often as they wish or find necessary.
- **Review of Student Background and Interests.** Teachers, Learning Coaches, and students will discuss student strengths, interests, learning styles, and previous school performance during Welcome Calls held at the beginning of the school year.
- **Performance Testing.** Students will take the Scantron Performance Series assessment to identify areas of strength and need in mathematics and reading.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/p78.pdf>

- **Set Goals.** Goal setting will be based on all of the information gathered in the initial process and some initial student work samples. Teachers and Learning Coaches will work together to set goals for the student and to accomplish these during the school year.
- **Schedule Modifications and Electives.** Once the school year gets started, teachers will help personalize the learning schedule. They will inquire about the student's daily routines and make adjustments to the student's online learning schedule as needed throughout the school year, including implementing a six-week add/drop period.
- **Differentiated Leveled Courses and Tiered Interventions.** As part of a student's PLP (Plus) and the monitoring of students against the EWS indicators, teachers or Academic Placement Advisors will create an **Intervention Plan** and recommend placement into credit recovery, foundations, and/or standard level courses, as well as tiered interventions as appropriate. These courses and interventions will provide students with scaffolded course content and instructional support resources to meet their academic needs and their PLP (Plus) goals.

Throughout the year, teachers will monitor students' progress using the **On-Track Indicator**. This Connections Academy proprietary tool incorporates the research findings of CCSR and will adjust students learning programs to focus on areas where students need to improve and areas in which they can build on their strengths. After continual analysis of multiple data points, including credits earned and the number of Fs in core courses, teachers may create lesson modifications, custom assignments, and custom assessments to address students' learning deficiencies and/or provide additional supports and interventions focused on keeping students on track to succeed.

As a component of a student PLP (Plus), Nevada Vision Academy will use a tool in Connexus (Connections Academy's proprietary EMS) called a Progression Plan to help families and school staff keep track of high school students' progress towards meeting graduation requirements. The Principal, Counselor, and other staff will review each senior's records to ensure that these students have completed all graduation requirements prior to "graduating them" in Connexus. The Principal will then initiate the "withdrawal for graduation" process in Connexus for those students who have completed all requirements.

Following the recommendations outlined in the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Dropout Prevention Practice Guide,<sup>8</sup> students' PLP (Plus) will be constantly monitored and modified by designated school teams that will be assigned to individual students. These teams will include an administrator, advisory teachers/counselors, additional assigned teachers, staff, professionals, and adult advocates who are committed to students' personal and academic success.

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## SCANTRON PERFORMANCE SERIES

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Students will be assessed with the Scantron Performance Series. The Scantron assessment is a valid, reliable, adaptive assessment that measures student proficiency in reading and mathematics and provides a scaled score that can be used to measure academic growth. Nevada Vision Academy will use a version aligned with the Nevada Standards and will provide teachers with reports on student performance, areas of strength and need, and information to address individual student needs.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice\\_guides/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

Scantron assessments are administered in the fall, mid-year, and again at the end of the year. At the beginning of the year, they are used to determine a student’s ability level. Data from Scantron assessments is used when creating a student’s PLP (Plus). After each test administration, teachers can access the Suggested Learning Objectives Report which provides the objectives that the student successfully attained, or mastered, and the objectives that the student still needs to master. Training is available to support teachers in using this report to make instructional decisions and identify appropriate interventions for students, if needed. The data from the tests at the end of the year are used to measure yearly academic gains.

### QUARTERLY METRICS

Every quarter in the school year, Nevada Vision Academy and the Board will review the Quarterly Metrics to see where the school is doing well and where the school can improve.

The Quarterly Metrics are a useful starting point for school improvement planning and any needed action plans and ensure that school performance is being monitored on a regular basis against key metrics that have been shown to contribute to school and student success. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 show the name of the metric and the Quarters in which that metric will be reported. The School Leader will be given access to ongoing calculations for these metrics in order to "progress monitor" the metrics. There will also be weekly data review sessions with the Partner School Leadership Team (PSLT) member and/or Program Manager assigned to the school so the school leader can ask questions and clarify data as needed.

**Figure 1. Personalize & Monitor Student Learning**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester “core” courses successfully completed for ELA, Math, Science & SS	Q1 - Reported as % on track for successful completion (earning a passing score) Q2 – Reported as % successfully completing course (earning a passing score)
% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester “core” courses successfully completed for ELA, Math, Science & SS	Q3 - Reported as % on track for successful completion (earning a passing score) Q4 – Reported as % successfully completing course (earning a passing score)
% of High School Students with cohort status “graduate on time”	Q1, Q3
% of High School Students within 1.5 credits of cohort status “graduate on time”	Q2, Q4
% completing Scantron Formative Assessment Pre, Mid and Post Test	Q1 – Pre-test Q3 – Mid-Test Q4 – Post-Test
% of students assigned by RTI Tier	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % assigned Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3
% students with Compliant IEPs	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as average of annual and triennial required reviews.

**Figure 2. Ensure High Levels of Student Engagement**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% on-time Welcome Calls	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of welcome calls completed within 7 days of enrollment
% completed Welcome Calls	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of welcome calls complete
% Start Up Tasks completed on-time	Q1, 3 – Reported as % start up tasks completed within 21 days of enrollment
% Curriculum Based Assessments (CBA) Target Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4
% Student Contacts Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students with status “contacts met” indicating a successful synchronous contact
% Learning Coach Contacts Met	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % receiving at least: -1 successful call by Q1 -2 successful calls by Q2 -3 successful calls by Q4
% completed notification of Preliminary Retention status	Q3 – Reported as % of students marked “retain or unsure” with a successful retention contact during the Preliminary Promotion/Retention period
% completed End of Year contact	Q4 – Reported as % of students successfully receiving an End of Year call
% “On Track” escalation status	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students meeting school-determined participation thresholds to demonstrate active engagement in a virtual school.
% During School Year Withdrawals	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of students who withdraw during the school year (after meeting “engagement” criteria)

**Figure 3. Develop and Collaborate Professionally**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% of Teachers in a Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Q1 – Reported as % of teachers reporting a PLC IA number in their Staff Profile data view
% of PLCs in a school with a SMART goal	Q2 – Reported as % of PLCs with a school leader approved SMART goal for the 2017-2018 school year
% of PLCs in a school making progress towards SMART goal	Q3 – Reported as % of PLCs within a school with documented progress towards attaining SMART goal, as acknowledged by school leader
% of PLCs in a school with end of year SMART goal attainment	Q4 - Reported as % of PLCs within a school with documented attainment of SMART goal, as acknowledged by school leader
% of teachers completing Connections-led Professional Learning sessions (100, 200, 300-level)	Q1, 2, 3, 4 – Reported as % of teachers with a participation date listed for each monthly session that falls within a reporting quarter

**Figure 4. School Operations**

Metric	Quarter(s) Reported
% of open teaching positions filled by the student first day of school	Q1
% of teachers with Teacher Orientation course complete	Q1
% of Students Enrolled “On Time”	Q1 – Reported as % of students enrolled on or before the first student day of school
% of eligible “Returning” students enrolled	Q1 – Reported as % of students eligible to return the following school year who enrolled by 9/25
% of open teaching positions filled by June	Q4
% Teachers Returning	Q4 – Reported as % of teachers not indicating they wouldn’t not returning via the Teacher Intent to Return process
% eligible Students Returning	Q4 – Reported as % of students indicating they would returning via the Student Intent to Return process

## **2.2 ADULT ADVOCATES FOR STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR DROPPING OUT**

As recommended by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences’ (ICS) Dropout Prevention Practice Guide<sup>9</sup>, the school will assign adult advocates to serve students at-risk of dropping out to serve as mentors/advisors. As noted in the Practice Guide, “research suggests that students who have ongoing relationships with adults feel a greater sense of school membership, attachment, and involvement” and that additional benefits of these relationships include “reduced risky behaviors, reduced absentee rates, improved grades, and improved communication and social skills. Recognizing that these are all areas that are key indicators of school success, the school’s adult advocates will mentor, build relationships, and engage with students in the following ways:

- Small group LiveLesson Advisory Sessions
- Advisory Teachers/Designated Counselors
- Student Engagement Team (SET)
- Teacher and staff Professional Development (guidance and training on support to at-risk students and dropout prevention)
- Learning Coach Support

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### **SMALL GROUP LIVELESSON ADVISORY SESSIONS**

The ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide provides specific suggestions regarding the types of responsibilities adult advocates should undertake, including that regular time in the school day or week should be established for students to meet with the adult. At Nevada Vision Academy this will be accomplished through weekly small group LiveLesson advisory sessions.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

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## **ADVISORY TEACHERS/DESIGNATED COUNSELORS**

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The Advisory Teacher/Counselor will be the key person within the high school team who is responsible for keeping a comprehensive view on all students they are assigned. These will be synchronous small group (15 students or fewer) advisory sessions conducted 1-2x per week with the Advisory Teacher/Counselor to support student engagement, academic success, and career readiness.

The advisory teacher/counselor will watch for gaps in learning as well as the most likely gaps in positive learning habits in order to support student success in the online environment. They will use the data systems outlined in section 2.1 to support the identification and support of students at-risk for dropping out.

### ***COUNSELING PROGRAM***

The counseling team at Nevada Vision Academy will fulfill key roles in the implementation of the schools targeted dropout prevention program and related initiatives. The counseling program will offer individual and group counseling, as needed, and will focus on academic development, personal and social growth, and college and career readiness activities through a variety of communication tools (LiveLesson sessions, phone calls, message boards, Virtual Library, newsletters, and face-to-face field trips and events that will take place throughout the state). School counselors play a key role in reviewing transcripts of enrolling students, assisting students in identifying a course of study, and in using the Intervention and Progression Plans to help families, students, and advisors keep track of the students' progress towards meeting graduation requirements.

The counseling team will implement an established system for early identification of students who are behind in earning high school credits, or those who are off track for graduation. School counselors will utilize the components of the PLP (Plus) to monitor and support students at risk for dropping out. Once identified, counselors will work with these students to identify support needed to be successful in earning credits, and a plan to get back on track to graduate with his/her cohort. Specifically, school counselors will be working directly with students to identify a course of study that works to get the student back to graduating with his or her cohort. Potential options include credit recovery courses, additional credits each semester, block scheduling, and summer school. Counselors will work with students and families individually to identify what is best for the needs of each student. Further, counselors will work with students individually, in groups, and during Advisory sessions to instruct students on the mindsets and behaviors necessary to be a successful virtual school student. Students will learn about organizational and time management skills, assertiveness in working with teachers, and the skills necessary to become a self-regulated learner. Finally, school counselors will also collaborate with special educators to support students with IEPs transition plans.

The technology available in Connexus will allow for teachers and counselors to monitor students' participation and performance in course work to identify students who are behind in lessons or performing poorly in current courses. Consistent with the Intervention Plan, interventions will be rapid, with frequent monitoring and include rapid modification of interventions, as needed. Adult advocates (advisors) including teachers and counselors will assist students in successfully completing courses through frequent (one or two times per week) engagement in small group LiveLesson advisory sessions.

Counselors will help monitor students' performance against drop out and on-track indicators and prepare students for college, career, and/or employability with:

- Collaboration with peers and other school adult advocates (advisors) in planning weekly or biweekly LiveLesson sessions;
- Fostering ongoing relationships with advisees;
- Early identification, monitoring and intervening for students who are off track for graduating on time;
- Active participation in the Student Engagement Team (SET);
- College and career readiness assistance focusing on steps needed to meet post-graduation goals;
- Interactive LiveLesson sessions connecting families with real-time information on financial aid and scholarships, college application processes, entrance requirements, and more; and
- 1-to-1 counseling with students as needed to provide resources and assistance with post-secondary planning, including career options, vocational training, and selecting the right college.

Additionally, the social worker (described herein) can deliver emotional support to the students, consult with teachers/administration on behavioral issues of students (such as truancy or lack of engagement), conduct diagnostic assessments of students and their needs, work directly with families/students and assist with the development of a program to help at-risk youth succeed.

Students will have access to the national counseling LiveLesson session program, which delivers weekly guidance curriculum lessons and national college admissions sessions throughout the school year. The sessions include the Career Fireside Chats on the fourth Friday of each month. Previous sessions have covered such topics as Teen Dating Violence Awareness, Educational/Training Opportunities After High School, Why School Matters: Navigating Your Educational Development Plan, How to Develop a Growth Mindset, Aligning Individual Goals & Abilities, and ACT & SAT Overview. A college newsletter is sent to high school students each month.

Students may be encouraged to enroll in College and Career Focused clubs. Each club includes regular LiveLesson sessions with a career and college counselor. There are several clubs focused on post-secondary planning including: College Planning Club, First Generation Club, High School Career Club, and Middle School Career Club.

The counselors will also plan additional LiveLesson sessions, and small group advisory sessions, for students which will address specific student needs. The counselor will be a resource to students, families, and staff in ensuring that all students are safe.

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## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

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Nevada Vision Academy will provide a comprehensive wraparound program to support not only students' academic needs but also their emotional needs. Best practice with at-risk students demonstrates that when students' fundamental needs are met, academic achievement becomes more attainable and students are more likely to engage with curriculum and instruction.



To address these needs, Nevada Vision Academy will establish a Student Engagement Team (SET) based on the best practices of urban districts around the nation, including the work in Washoe County by D’Lisa Crain.<sup>10</sup> The SET will consist of the SET Coordinator with a role similar to a pupil personnel worker, at least one full-time social worker, school counselor, an intervention specialist, and a school administrator. Parents will also be included in any meetings and planning for each student.

Responsibilities of each SET member:

- **SET Coordinator:** This team member will coordinate services at the school level as well as in the community for identified students.
- **Licensed Clinical Social Worker – Counselor:** The Nevada Vision Academy social worker will provide direct support services to identified students. These services will address students’ mental health needs.
- **School Counselor:** The Nevada Vision Academy school counselor will provide students with progression plan support and monitor progression toward graduation.
- **Intervention Specialist:** This team member will serve as the SET liaison to students’ content area teachers and provide data to the team about academic interventions in place through Nevada Vision Academy’s Multitiered System of Supports/Response to Intervention Team.
- **School Administrator:** The Nevada Vision Academy administrator on the SET team will ensure the team is compliant with all school policies.
- **Parent:** The parent will always be invited in discussions related to students’ services and requirements for graduation.

The SET will collaborate to provide wraparound services to at-risk students. These services will include:

- In-person social work services to address identified and not-yet-identified students with emotional disabilities. (Students do not need to be identified with an emotional disability to receive the services of the SET.) Frequency will depend on the needs of each student and level of engagement.
- Home visits to ensure the physical safety of each student, particularly those with whom school personnel have had no contact for ten school days. These home visits may occur in cooperation with local law enforcement. Nevada Vision Academy may request welfare/well-being checks from law enforcement agencies.
- Collaboration and connection with local community services to address the physical needs of students. This may include direct cooperation with Family and Social Service Departments and Ombudsmen when needed.
- Cooperation with the Nevada Vision Academy special education team to follow the Manifestation Determination process for students with IEPs, Section 504 Plans, those in the Child Find process, or English learners. The SET will also follow the Nevada Vision Academy Special Education procedures related to Child Find so students needing a special education evaluation are identified and served.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://leaders.edweek.org/profile/dlisa-crain-family-school-partnerships-administrator-family-engagement/>

In addition to these direct services to students, parents are a critical part of the SET. Some parents may have difficulty understanding how to navigate systems to support their families because they need their own assistance; or they may have language barriers. Nevada Vision Academy will provide translation services so families can receive information in a language they understand to the greatest extent possible.

Services from the SET and individual services with the full-time social worker will be measured for effectiveness based on increased student engagement and academic performance. Students may begin school immediately with these services or be referred to the SET at any time. Students do not need to be identified with an emotional disability to receive the services of the SET. The ultimate goal of the SET is to eliminate barriers to school graduation.

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## TEACHER AND STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Nevada Vision Academy will provide, through its contract with Connections Academy, training and professional learning for teachers. Training is integrated into the Connections Academy program and aligned with the student curriculum, student pedagogy, student information system, data, evaluation systems, and other services.

Teacher professional learning is critically important in ensuring that the staff is optimally effective at teaching in a virtual environment and addressing the Nevada Academic Content Standards in their daily instructional practice. The school will use the *National Standards for Quality Online Teaching* published by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)<sup>11</sup> Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning<sup>12</sup> and the Connections *Core Standards for Facilitating Student Learning*, as guides for pinpointing necessary teacher skills and professional development requirements.

Nevada Vision Academy will provide its teachers with a continuum of training and professional learning to equip teachers with the following:

- A working knowledge of the curriculum and Nevada Academic Content Standards;
- Strategies and best practices for virtual teaching and learning;
- The ability to utilize and navigate the tools of Connexus;
- The ability to develop PLP (Plus); and
- Knowledge on how to use assessment and performance data to guide instruction and monitor student progress.

Further, teachers at Nevada Vision Academy will participate in additional training, and have access to on-demand resources, to support them with:

- motivating and engaging at-risk students;
- recognizing potential drop-outs and implementing strategies for dropout prevention;
- recognizing and supporting students in distress;
- determining appropriate instructional and behavioral supports;

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<sup>11</sup> National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, iNACOL, [www.inacol.org](http://www.inacol.org), <http://www.inacol.org/resources/nationalstandards/NACOL%20Standards%20Quality%20Online%20Teaching.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning>

- identifying on-track indicators for high school graduation;
- creating a college-going culture; and
- providing guidance and support to students who may choose to go to work after graduation.

Nevada Vision Academy will work with the Connections Academy Professional Development team to coordinate, plan, deliver, and continuously support professional learning initiatives through a systematic and comprehensive multi-year professional development plan (Please see Appendix C for detailed description). The Professional Development team provides educators with professional growth opportunities designed to increase student engagement and achievement, personalize learning for students preparing for college, careers, work, or the military, and increase teaching effectiveness.

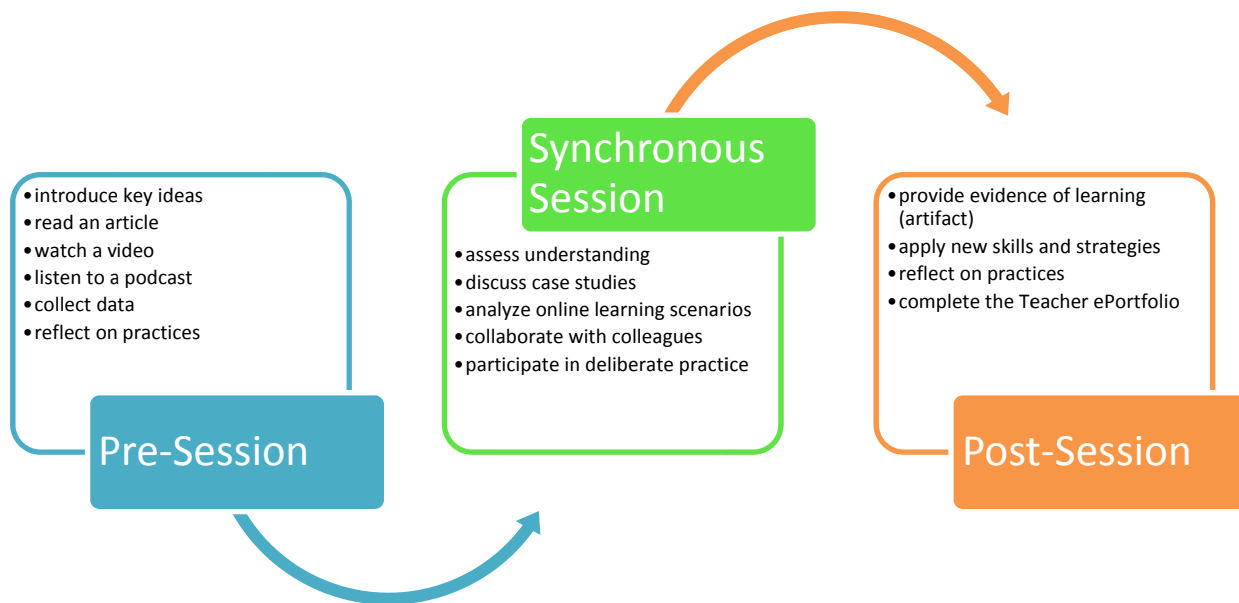
In addition, Nevada Vision Academy will focus its professional development efforts on engaging faculty in discussions directly related supporting students who may be at-risk and ensuring student success. Efforts will include training on student engagement and mindset as part of a targeted focus on a positive and supportive school culture and student perceptions related to learning. A learning environment that promotes student engagement is characterized by connectedness between students, their teachers, and the school community, as well as a growth mindset, personalization, relevance, and the provision of a physically and psychologically safe environment.

Focusing professional development efforts on student engagement, mindset, and culture will make a positive impact on credit deficient students who have had many years of failure in their previous educational environment.

Professional development provided by Connections Academy utilizes a flipped learning approach. Prior to each professional learning session, teachers watch a short video, read an article, or reflect on current instructional practices in order to prepare for the session. The pre-session activity is designed to build background knowledge and experiences which allows the synchronous session to focus on collaboration and application. After each professional learning session, teachers participate in follow-up activities designed to demonstrate their learning. Each teacher maintains a professional learning ePortfolio in Connexus to track attendance in professional learning sessions, add their reflections, and complete their post-session application activity. The ePortfolio, which can be reviewed by school administrators at any time, adds a level of accountability to professional learning by requiring teachers to reflect on, and demonstrate application of their learning.

Figure 5 shows the flipped learning approach to Connections Academy professional development.

Figure 5. Flipped Learning Approach



### BOARD DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the professional development for the teachers and staff, the Board will also receive training throughout the year. A sample of a training schedule is included in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Board Professional Development

Month	Training	Description
August	<i>What is the Monthly School Report? What does it mean?</i>	The monthly school report is provided to the board at each month’s board meeting. This report contains enrollment data (by grade band), student demographics (including FARM eligibility and Special Population numbers), contacts between teachers and students, and performance metrics (attendance, participation and overall performance). After the training, the board should be able to interpret the data on the monthly school report and see trends and issues at the school.
September	<i>What are the Quarterly Metrics and what do they mean for the School?</i>	At the end of each Quarter (October, January, April, and July) Connections Academy will report to the Board on operational metrics related to the School Focus Goals, Core Model & Standards and School Year Cycle. These are metrics that Connections expects will help drive Efficacy as measured by the School Focus Goals. These metrics are either in addition to those shared on the Monthly School Report, or are sharing comparative results across the schools for what is shared on the Monthly School Report.  The training will explain each metric that will be used, what it means, how it is calculated.
October	<i>What are our school goals and how are they calculated?</i>	This training will go over the school goals (as the School Leader goes over his state of the school report). The school goals will be discussed/explained in terms of how they will be measured, monitored, and what actions the school will be taking to meet them.

Month	Training	Description
November	<i>What were the key takeaways of the Leadership team from the 2017 National Dropout Prevention Network Conference?</i>	The conference is to be held October 22-25, 2017 and is put on by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University. Key members of the leadership team plan to attend the conference. Conference strands include credit and recovery opportunities, parent and family engagement, alternative educational contexts, strategies for specific populations, civic/community engagement, leadership and administration issues, and chronic absenteeism. The attendees at the conference will be prepared to share their takeaways with the board.
January	<i>How is Nevada Vision Academy doing on Quarter 2 Metrics?</i>	This session would highlight the outcomes of the metrics that are reported in Quarter 2. The board should be able to gauge how successful the school is on implementing the school improvement plan and whether at the half-way point in the school year, the school is on track to make its goals.
February	<i>How is Nevada Vision Academy preparing for state assessments?</i>	Throughout the school year Nevada Vision Academy has been preparing it students to take the state assessments. This month the school leader (or designee) will explain all the work that has been done to prepare students academically to succeed on these important assessments. The school leader (or designee) will also talk about the logistics/planning that went into finding test sites and scheduling students – this is an important part of reaching that 95% attendance threshold.
April	<i>How is Nevada Vision Academy doing on Quarter 3 metrics?</i>	This session would highlight the outcomes of the metrics that are reported in Quarter 3. The board should be able to gauge how successful the school is on implementing the school improvement plan and whether with three quarters of the school year completed, the school is on track to make its goals.
May/June	<i>What have we learned? Strategic Planning for next year?</i>	This session would be more of a discussion of the board and school leader. It would be a reflection on the school year as a whole – what they learned, what worked, and where the school is now. The board may consider going through a strategic planning process as they gear up for the 18-19 school year. This planning could be facilitated by an outside consultant who would help the board set new goals for the school for the coming school year.

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## LEARNING COACH SUPPORT

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As part of a commitment to the entire family and subsequent research, a three-part family support program was designed to make the learning experience more engaging and rewarding for students, parents, and Learning Coaches. Each part of the program focuses on one key factor in online school success. **Get Started!** helps families start strong and adjust smoothly to the online academic environment. **Get Coaching!** supports adults in learning how to be effective Learning Coaches. **Get Connected!** assists families in connecting with each other and the school community.

### *GET STARTED!*

Connections **Get Started!** program offers both assistance and reassurance by providing extensive information about online education. The program helps families prepare for a successful school year through the Prepare for Success website, teacher welcome calls, orientation courses for Learning Coaches, in-person orientation gatherings, and Learning Coach Success Series, a series of live webinar-style sessions that start before the beginning of each school year, and are led by currently-enrolled parents who help families prepare for their first days of school. In addition to open Q&A sessions each week, five different topics are addressed: Virtual School Basics, Roles and What to Expect, Schedules and Routines, Getting Acquainted with Connexus, and Tips and Tricks for Success.

### *GET COACHING!*

The **Get Coaching!** program is dedicated to helping Learning Coaches understand their role, providing them with easy access to resources, and ensuring that they are equipped with the tools and strategies needed to motivate and assist their students. Also, Connections provides additional training and support for parents.

Learning Coaches will complete an online orientation designed to familiarize them with the important role they play in supporting their student as a learner. Learning Coaches are also supported through:

- **Learning Coach Central** – An award-winning website accessed from the Learning Coach Home Page in Connexus that includes links to FAQs, social networking opportunities, and resources to assist Learning Coaches in their role and providing instructional support to their student.
- **Learning Coach Link** – An online monthly communication sent to Learning Coaches with articles on instructional best practices, Connexus updates, tips and strategies for motivating reluctant learners, and information about upcoming Learning Coach Resource sessions.
- **National Learning Coach Resource sessions** – These virtual sessions are designed to assist Learning Coaches with an understanding of their role and responsibilities, and provide strategies for working with and supporting their student. Sample session topics for Learning Coaches of high school students include: Overcoming Underachievement & Academic Disengagement, College Financial Aid 101, Helping Your High School Student Prepare for Assessments, Coaching Your High School Student for Success and Nurturing Student Motivation.
- **Parent-to-Parent Orientation** – Before the start of each school year, national Parent-to-Parent Orientations led by currently-enrolled parents help families prepare for their first days of school. In addition to open Q&A sessions each week, four different topics are addressed: Virtual School Basics, Understanding Roles and Routines, Getting Acquainted with Connexus, and Tips and Tricks for Success.

### *GET CONNECTED!*

The **Get Connected!** program was developed to assist students and parents who are interested in finding opportunities to connect with other school families. In addition to in-person field trips and online clubs and activities, this program offers socialization tips for online school families, increased opportunities for students to interact online with classmates and teachers, and in some areas, private Facebook groups where parents and Learning Coaches can “meet” to arrange study groups and other informal gatherings.

### **2.3 ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND ENRICHMENT TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

As indicated by the ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide, “research shows that low academic performance, absenteeism, and grade retention are related to dropping out” and that the provision of appropriate academic supports that helps address skills gaps, can offset a cycle of frustration, and can enrich the academic experience for students who may be disengaged<sup>13</sup>. In support this recommendation and to improve student academic performance, Nevada Vision Academy will provide the following academic supports beyond the standard high school course offerings and instructional supports:

- GradPoint Credit Recovery Courses
- Success Academy Courses - Freshman and Senior Success courses
- Supplemental Instructional Support Programs (e.g., Reading Plus, Imagine Math, Math XL)
- Career Technical Education (CTE) course offerings and college, career, employability supports
- Summer School

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#### **CREDIT RECOVERY/GRADPOINT**

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To support high school students on their path to graduation and college and career, Nevada Vision Academy will provide credit recovery course offerings during the summer and school year as a resource to help students recover credits and achieve and maintain on track status.

GradPoint credit recovery courses offer a diagnostic-prescriptive virtual learning solution. The student-centered philosophy behind GradPoint’s courses includes the necessary support features to facilitate and guide customized credit recovery:

1. Prescriptive-diagnostic assessment and instructional sequencing tools that automatically tailor and deliver personalized learning for every student.
2. Engaging content and interactive, collaborative learning elements to re-engage at-risk students.
3. Instruction, activities, and assessments that address diverse learning modalities and enable students to demonstrate content mastery in a variety of ways.
4. Robust progress monitoring tools.

GradPoint’s prescriptive courses provide a personalized pathway through the course based on needs, saving valuable learning time and increasing student motivation. Unlike other programs, GradPoint automatically diagnoses and prescribes content for a truly personalized learning experience. Students take a pre-test and a post-test with every module. Based on their results, they are assigned lessons in areas in which they did not demonstrate mastery and are exempted from other lessons they have already mastered.

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<sup>13</sup> Page 22, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

## **SUCCESS ACADEMY COURSES**

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To further support students' success and engagement in school, Nevada Vision Academy will provide two Success Academy courses: Freshman Focus and Senior Success.

The use of a freshman specific initiative was piloted in other schools supported by Connections Academy during the 2015-16 school year and resulted in a positive difference in 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rates between schools. Schools that implemented targeted freshman initiatives, specifically a freshman-specific class, set freshman coursework, and a dedicated counselor, had promotion rates that exceeded other schools by 3 percentage points. As a result, Nevada Vision Academy will provide a Freshman Focus course for its freshman students.

The Freshman Focus course will orient students to resources available to them, introduce strategies for success in high school course-level work, emphasize the importance of academic integrity and producing authentic work, and build college, work, and career readiness.

Based on the positive results of the Freshman Focus Course, the Nevada Vision Academy will also offer a course that addresses needs specific to seniors, Senior Success. The Senior Success course exposes students to tools and resources designed to best prepare them for life after high school. Students will gain exposure to information about financial aid, the college application process, résumé writing, graduation information, and post-secondary options. This course also provides students the opportunity to reflect on their high school experience.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

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Supplemental instructional support programs (SISPs) are assigned to students who need additional practice and/or support with the foundational skills required to be successful with grade level standards. Teachers are trained in the implementation of these programs, including analyzing and evaluating student progress using the data provided by each program. As a standard part of the SISP review process, the Connections Academy Curriculum and Instruction team evaluates programs for:

- Evidence of research
- Alignment to standards
- Ability to customize
- Feedback to students
- Direct instruction
- Teacher/Student user experience
- Diagnostic/prescriptive component
- Motivation feature
- Data and reporting, including data on discrete skills

Some of the additional SISP resources that the school will provide students will include Imagine Math,<sup>14</sup> Math XL,<sup>15</sup> and Reading Plus.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.thinkthroughmath.com/resources/case-studies/>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product\[\]=MyStatLab&hpd](http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product[]=MyStatLab&hpd)



## CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

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As indicated in the ICS Dropout Prevention Practice Guide, students at risk for dropping out should be provided relevant instruction to better engage them in learning and to better serve them after they complete school, with a specific focus on helping students discover the purpose for completing school by incorporating career-related curricula.<sup>16</sup> Nevada Vision Academy fully supports this recommendation and will offer CTE courses that provide students the opportunity to take courses in many of the 16 nationally recognized career clusters. The courses expose students to a wide variety of career areas and help prepare them for career and college success by giving them a solid academic foundation, technical knowledge, and skills training in a wide variety of fields. The courses include interactive presentations, real-world activities and assignments, career connections, and an online study guide to help students obtain the skills and competencies of their chosen career pathway. Nevada Vision Academy will explore adding additional CTE courses and certifications associated with the selected career pathways.

In addition, students will be encouraged to enroll in College and Career Focused clubs. Each club includes regular LiveLesson sessions with a career and college counselor. There are several clubs focused on post-secondary planning including: College Planning Club, First Generation Club, and High School Career Club.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

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Summer school provides an opportunity for many students to “catch up” and be on track for graduation. In addition, research has shown that by enrolling in academic courses in the summer months, “summer slide” is reduced and can help students achieve academically. In support of this research finding, GradPoint and targeted Connections Academy courses will be offered to Nevada Vision Academy students during the summer.

As part of students’ PLP (Plus), students in Nevada Vision Academy’s summer school program will be closely monitored by certified teachers and counselors who will provide targeted, supplemental instruction and maintain regular contact to keep them focused on their goal of graduation. Teachers will work to ensure that students complete pre- and post-tests, progress at a pace that enables successful course completion, and participate in daily instructional and intervention activities. Students who are credit deficient will take GradPoint courses.

Summer school staff will be chosen based on their familiarity with effective instructional and motivational strategies. They will be focused on student success and already have relationships with many of the students, a foundation on which to build academic success. When students know that there is an adult that cares about their success, then they are more motivated to be successful.<sup>17</sup>

Every student who is behind as indicated by the On Track Indicator and Progression Plan will be encouraged and provided support to continue their school year into the summer, whether it is realistic for them to move up a grade by the end of summer or not.

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<sup>16</sup> Page 34, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge: New York, p. 72.

## **2.4 PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

Nevada Vision Academy, while focusing on academics, also will focus on classroom behavior and social skills. As research indicates, disruptive behavior is correlated with dropping out and effective drop out prevention programs help students behave positively during school and increase their sense of school affiliation and engagement. Through the following components, Nevada Vision Academy will seek to improve the behavior of students, helping them become students who are motivated to learn, have an increased sense of self- efficacy and persistence.<sup>18</sup>

The components are as follows:

- Success Academy Courses - Freshman and Senior Success courses
- PLP (Plus) = Personalized Learning Plan + intervention plan + On-Track Indicator (Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) or Connections Academy proprietary) + Progression Plan
- Advisory Teachers/Designated Counselors
- Teacher and staff Professional Development (guidance and training on support to at-risk students and dropout prevention)
- Student Engagement Team (SET)

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### **SUCCESS ACADEMY COURSES**

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As stated previously, Nevada Vision Academy students will participate in the Success Academy courses (Freshman Focus and Senior Success) designed to support student success in their high school coursework and as they engage in college and career planning. These courses consist of 30- 35 lessons, complete with graded assessments (quick checks, quizzes, portfolios, and assessments), and units of study such Resources, Integrity, Grade Check # 1, High School 101, Strategies for Success, Grade Check # 2, College and Career Readiness, and Grade Check # 3, all focused on the needs of students at different grade levels and at different points in their high school program and college and career planning

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### **PLP PLUS**

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As stated previously, every student enrolled at Nevada Vision Academy will receive a PLP (Plus) that consists of a Personalized Learning Plan, an Intervention Plan, the use of an On-Track Indicator (Connections Academy proprietary incorporating the research findings of CCSR, and a Progression Plan.<sup>19</sup> Students will have individual learning plans that outline the interventions, programs, and services needed for each student to be successful. Each student deserves an instructional program that maximizes his or her potential. This is the purpose of the Personalized Performance Learning process— an academic road map for each student that provides differentiated instruction in a unique, tailored way.

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<sup>18</sup> Page 26, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/p78.pdf>

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## **SCHOOL COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE PROGRAM**

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As describe previously, the guidance program will serve all students and will be delivered by certified school counselors with the support of the Connections Academy's Director of Counseling. Recognizing that school engagement includes a component of behavior and a component of identification with the school. The counseling team will work to engage students and support both their academic and emotional growth. The counseling team will engage with students and parents to build positive relationships with the school staff and fellow students, to engage meaningfully in academic and extracurricular school activities, and to avoid potentially harmful behaviors outside of school.

With master's degrees and specialized training, counselors will be skilled at helping students address the non-academic barriers in school and life. Counselors will have appropriate Nevada certification. The counseling program will be built on relationships, so counselors will be readily accessible to students and families online, in person, and by phone. Counselors are at the heart of fostering students' engagement, safety, and wellness. As they become aware of issues concerning students' school participation, mental and emotional health, or overall well-being, the counselor will collaborate with school staff to ensure the student is supported by teachers and the family is connected with resources, as needed. With the additional support from Connections Academy and its collaborative network of school counselors, Nevada Vision Academy will bring both individual attention and national expertise to students and families.

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## **TEACHER AND STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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As stated previously, Nevada Vision Academy will provide, through its contract with Connections Academy, training and professional learning for teachers. Training is integrated into the Connections Academy program and aligned with the student curriculum, student pedagogy, student information system, data, evaluation systems, and other services. The training received by Nevada Vision Academy teachers and staff will be specific to the needs of at-risk students.

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## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM (SET)**

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As stated, Nevada Vision Academy will establish a Student Engagement Team (SET) based on the best practices of urban districts around the nation, including the work in Washoe County by D'Lisa Crain.<sup>20</sup> The SET will consist of the SET Coordinator with a role similar to a pupil personnel worker, at least one full-time social worker, school counselor, an intervention specialist, and a school administrator. Parents will also be included in any meetings and planning for each student.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://leaders.edweek.org/profile/dlisa-crain-family-school-partnerships-administrator-family-engagement/>

## **2.5 PERSONALIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS**

Research indicates that students who receive personalized learning “may be more engaged in learning because their teachers know what motivates individual students” and “a high degree of personalization allows schools to focus intently on why students are having difficulty, and actively work to address the sources of difficulty.”<sup>21</sup> Personalized learning is at the core of the Nevada Vision Academy’s mission and is exemplified in their belief about student learning.

We believe that all students can learn and must learn at relatively high levels of achievement. Through Nevada Vision Academy, we will create an environment in our classrooms that results in this high level of performance. We are confident that with our support and help, students can master challenging academic material, and we expect them to do so. We are prepared to work collaboratively with colleagues, students, and parents to achieve this shared educational purpose.

By providing students with a personalized learning environment and instructional process and a tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) program, Nevada Vision Academy is setting the stage for success in college and career. Through the following components, Nevada Vision Academy will serve at-risk students in a personalized manner:

- PLP (Plus) = Personalized Learning Plan + Intervention Plan + On-Track Indicator (Connections Academy proprietary incorporating the research findings of Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) + Progression Plan
- Response to Intervention

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### **PLP (PLUS)**

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As noted in Section 2.1, students enrolled in Nevada Vision Academy will be students who are at risk of academic failure and who have unique needs and circumstances. To effectively support this student population, each student will have a PLP (Plus) that provides them with additional targeted support. The PLP (Plus) includes a Personalized Learning Plan, an Intervention Plan, the use of an On-Track Indicator, and a Progression Plan. These supports will foster the school’s mission and belief in student learning and a school climate where individual students’ needs are identified and supported.

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### **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION**

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Additionally, Nevada Vision Academy will implement a systematic Response to Intervention (RTI) program to ensure all students are receiving timely and effective instructional support and that their performance is being actively monitored. Students who struggle with the core curriculum will be assigned appropriate instructional interventions targeted to their greatest area of need. Nevada Vision Academy will utilize a multitiered intervention approach to curriculum and instruction, which will ensure individual students receive the support they need. Data will be used throughout the school year to implement a Response to Intervention (RTI) model for all students. Students who may not be successful in the core model, Tier I with differentiation, will receive additional support via the supplemental and alternative programs in Tier II and Tier III. Students’ responses to interventions are monitored, and adjustments to the type and intensity of support are made as needed.

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<sup>21</sup> Page 31, [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp\\_pg\\_090308.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dp_pg_090308.pdf)

This process will be facilitated by data from Connexus, the schools education management system, to help identify any student instructional or behavioral needs that may require intervention. A teacher's Home Page shows an icon for each student indicating that interventions may be necessary and have been identified and provided. The teacher can use his or her professional judgment to override these indicators and log the decision and rationale within Connexus. Also, Nevada Vision Academy will have a Student Support Team (SST) and an on-going process of identifying student intervention needs; assigning those interventions; tracking their success; and escalating, if necessary, from Tier I to Tier II to ultimately Tier III. Data is collected as a part of the RTI process.

### *TIER I*

Tier I is the first level of a multitiered approach to a system of instructional and behavioral supports. Tier I includes Connections' research-based core curriculum aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards.<sup>22</sup> In addition to core coursework, the core curriculum includes teachers' use of differentiated instruction that meets the needs of all students throughout the school year. All students will have access to the core curriculum; work through their lessons; engage with interactive content such as Teachlet tutorials, videos, virtual labs, and manipulatives; and demonstrate their understanding through formative assessments such as quizzes, curriculum-based assessments (CBAs), portfolios, quick checks, and unit tests. Teachers will use a variety of instructional and engagement resources and strategies to enhance and extend learning through differentiated and personalized instruction. These tools will also allow teachers to fill in skill gaps and extend learning while providing additional evaluative data on student achievement.

Differentiation involves thoughtful planning for the following: instructional design used to deliver content to students; lesson content used to support and extend concepts and skills; instructional practice used to provide targeted instruction and actively engage students; assessment used to evaluate student learning; and instructional activities, including co-teaching and synchronous instruction to meet the academic and behavioral needs of individual and small groups of students.

Teachers have access to multiple data points to monitor student performance and mastery of standards. These include the Grade Book, formative assessment results, standardized test scores, student engagement metrics, and the Assessment Objective Performance Report (AOPR). The AOPR provides real-time student performance on each of the essential skills and standards based upon individual assessment items. Data can be sorted to identify students who have, or have not, mastered specific objectives. Teachers can run this real-time report as frequently as they like to see how students are progressing with regard to each of the skills and standards for that subject and grade.

When data indicate that a student may need a more intensive level of support, the teacher will make a recommendation to the Student Support Team (SST). The SST will evaluate the strategies that have been used to support the student, along with student performance data, to determine whether the student should receive Tier II level intervention(s). Some of the additional resources provided as Tier II intervention include Imagine Math,<sup>23</sup> Math XL,<sup>24</sup> and Reading Plus.

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.doe.nv.gov/Standards\\_Instructional\\_Support/Nevada\\_Academic\\_Content\\_Standards/](http://www.doe.nv.gov/Standards_Instructional_Support/Nevada_Academic_Content_Standards/)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.thinkthroughmath.com/resources/case-studies/>

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product\[\]=MyStatLab&hpd](http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mathxl/educators/results/results-library.php?product[]=MyStatLab&hpd)

### *TIER II*

Tier II intervention can use many of the same instructional strategies and/or research-based programs that were used for differentiation as part of Tier I; however, it is the increase in the frequency and intensity of their use that defines the intervention as Tier II. Tier II intervention is explicit, systematic, and targeted to the greatest area of student learning/behavioral needs. Frequent and formal logged progress monitoring noting student performance in Connexus is a critical part of the implementation of this tier. As part of Tier II intervention, teachers may elect to assign students a supplemental support program. These programs provide students with additional instruction and practice in the foundational skills needed to be successful with grade level work. Supplemental programs provide teachers with reports for progress monitoring that can be uploaded to Connexus to ensure all student performance data is in one place. In addition to the performance data captured through the use of supplemental instructional programs, teachers continually review the data points available for all students (Grade Book, formative assessment results, standardized test scores, student engagement metrics, AOPR) to ensure students are making adequate progress with the additional supports.

Connections Academy recommends that Tier II instructional support is provided two to three times a week for 20–30 minutes per session. Teachers monitor and document student progress in Connexus every two weeks.

### *TIER III*

Tier III includes the most intensive and frequent level of instructional support and is the next step in the multitiered approach for students who have not experienced success in the core curriculum that includes differentiation activities and Tier II supplemental interventions. Tier III interventions will be facilitated and monitored by the general education teacher and teacher teams who increase the occurrence of synchronous contact through the use of LiveLesson sessions as well as implement other instructional strategies and research-based programs that are explicit, systematic, and targeted to specific student learning needs. When the SST team reviews data for students who need additional instructional or behavioral supports they may recommend Tier III intervention immediately, in order to provide the student with the most intensive level of intervention and support available.

As with Tier II interventions, teachers continually review the data points available for all students (Grade Book, formative assessment results, standardized test scores, student engagement metrics, AOPR) to ensure students are making adequate progress with the additional supports. Through Tier III interventions, students may be assigned a personalized course of study that allows for increased learning time in their areas of academic need. This course of study may include differentiated coursework, such as GradPoint coursework, to further personalize instruction and support students in the recovery of high school credits.

Connections Academy recommends that students participating in the Tier III level of intervention receive targeted instruction for 20–30 minutes four to five days a week in order to focus more intensively on skill deficits and areas of concern. Teachers monitor and document student progress in Connexus every week.

Figure 7 illustrates the recommended frequency of intervention and progress monitoring based on the intervention tier.

**Figure 7. Frequency of Intervention and Progress Monitoring**

Tier	Recommended Student Participation	Progress Monitoring Frequency
I	differentiation as needed	as assigned
II	20-30 minutes a session; 2-3 times a week	every two weeks
III	20-30 minutes a session; 4-5 times a week	weekly

## **2.6 RIGOROUS AND RELEVANT INSTRUCTION**

Through the curriculum and educational program described in Appendix A, Nevada Vision Academy will provide a rigorous, and relevant, instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and serve them after they leave school. As a component of students’ PLP (Plus) programs, the school will provide a comprehensive catalog of courses and instructional supports focused on students who are at-risk, such as foundation and standard level courses, a standard sequence of courses by grade level focused on graduation requirements, credit recovery courses, CTE courses, supplemental instructional support programs(SISPs), and multi-tiered interventions.

Nevada Vision Academy will provide a comprehensive program with multiple levels of academic coursework. While all levels are designed to meet standards and provide students a rigorous curriculum, the levels will enable differentiation based on student needs and college and career goals. Students will work with their school counselor and Connections Academy’s Academic Placement Advisors to determine appropriate course level placement.

The alternative high school will include substantial teacher-directed instruction, feedback, and support through asynchronous and synchronous e-learning tools. The high school curriculum integrates digital versions of textbooks from major publishers with enhanced multimedia, interactive materials and resources, discussions, and communication/conferencing tools. In addition, students will have offline assignments, projects, novels, and practice work.

High school courses will include use of Teachlet tutorials, the highly interactive, asynchronous tutorials that incorporate graphics, video, and audio to engage students with the concepts and ideas they will need to complete the lessons. Along with the use of LiveLesson sessions, Teachlet tutorials increase the effectiveness of the secondary school instructional model. In addition, the high school courses will incorporate graded asynchronous online discussions, which are required for all students. This assessment creates important opportunities for collaboration and interaction among students, increases writing skills, and provides opportunities for a “real-world” audience.

## 3. EVALUATION PLAN

### 3.1 GOALS

#### MISSION-SPECIFIC GOALS

In addition to reporting on the State Public Charter School Authority’s (SPCSA) performance standards, Nevada Vision Academy also presents the following mission-specific goals to complement those frameworks. Figure 8 below details the goal and the evaluation tool and frequency. If Nevada Vision Academy is approved to start operating, we will work with SPCSA to define the percentages, baselines, and benchmarks the school will strive to meet on these goals.

Unless otherwise noted, the outcomes of the measures that will be provided are based on students that will be enrolled for a Full Academic Year, defined as a student continuously enrolled from October 1 to the first testing period.

Figure 8. Mission-Specific Goals

Goal	Evaluation Tool and Frequency
<b>State Test Scores</b> All official published state test proficiency rates for the school will be compared to the state average. The calculation is a ratio of the school’s result to the state average for each tested subject-grade level in reading and math.	State-reported data from End of Course (Yearly)
<b>Test Score Growth</b> % of returning students’ (full academic year students enrolled for state testing last school year and this school year) state test scores that indicate proficiency or better or show improvement of at least one category in Reading and Math (e.g., from “Below Basic” to “Basic”).	State-reported data from End of Course (Yearly)
<b>High School Successful Course Completion</b> % of completed courses in Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies that result in a passing grade or credit.	End of year course performance data from school
<b>4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate</b> % of students graduating within four years	State reported graduation data
<b>5-Year Graduation</b> Of students staying enrolled beyond the 4th year, % graduating within 5 years.	State reported graduation data
<b>6-Year Graduation</b>	State reported graduation data



Goal	Evaluation Tool and Frequency
Of students staying enrolled beyond the 4th year, % graduating within 6 years.	
<b>Parent Satisfaction</b> % of positive responses on the 21 Parent Satisfaction Survey questions that are most directly affected by schools.	End of year total Parent Satisfaction Survey data

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Additionally, Nevada Visions Academy has provided professional development goals that are focusing on building a foundation for their teachers to serve the at-risk students that will encompass Nevada Vision Academy. The professional development will focus on building the capacity to improve student achievement. Again, once the school is approved to operate, these goals will be discussed, updated, and refined with input from SPCSA.

**Figure 9. Professional Development Goals**

Goal/Objective	Action/Activity	Outcome/Evaluation
% of Teachers in a PLC	Teachers enter Issue Aware number of PLC in staff profile dataview.	Reviewed during the 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Metrics.
% of PLCs reporting SMART goal and regular meetings.	School Leader confirms SMART goals in each Issue Ticket and verifies active participation.	Reviewed during the 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter Metrics
% of teachers completing Connections-led Professional Learning sessions (100, 200, 300-level)	Teachers are assigned to Professional Learning sessions based on years of service (PL 100, 1 year/PL 200/2 years, etc).	Reviewed during the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter Metrics

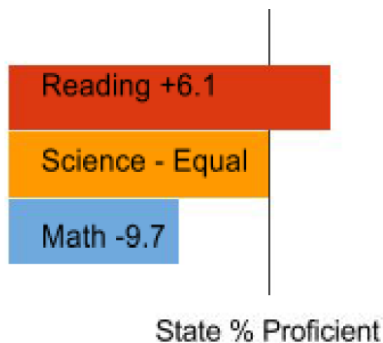
## 4. EXPERIENCE

Nevada Vision Academy will be supported by Connections Academy, an organization with experience in multiple states working with at-risk populations.

### 4.1 EXPERIENCE WITH AT-RISK POPULATIONS

The performance of students in Connections Academy schools on average exceeded or was equal to students from the same states in Reading and Science (see Figure 10). In Math, students from Connections Academy schools performed on average 9.7 percentage points below students from the same state. This math gap decreases to 6.4 in middle school.

Figure 10. Weighted Average Differences Between the Percent Scoring Proficient/Advanced at Each Connections Academy School and the State



Additionally, while it typically takes more than one year to realize gains on state tests, half of Connections Academy schools moved 20% or more of their lowest performing students up at least one proficiency, as shown in Figure 11.

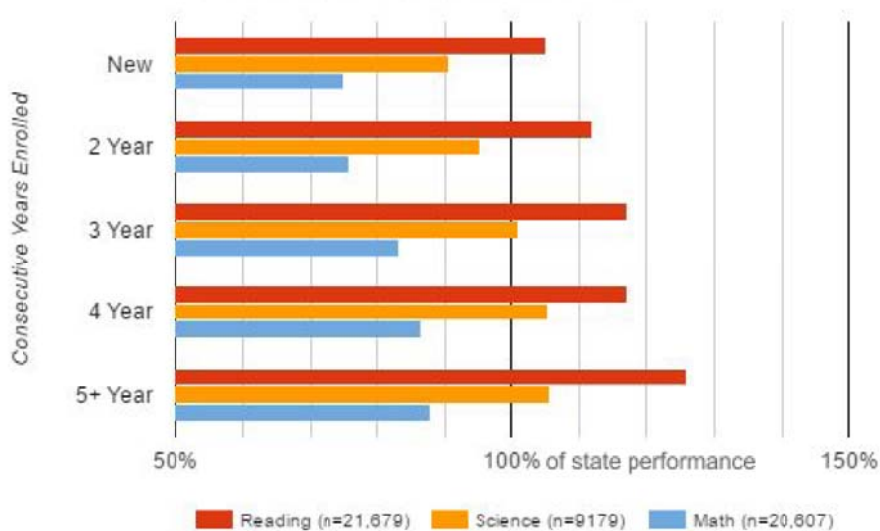
Figure 11. Percentage of Students who Move Up One or More Levels

Math 2015-2016	Below Basic who moved up one or more levels	Below Proficient who moved to Proficient
All Students	25%	11%
Returners	28%	14%

## CONNECTIONS PERFORMANCE BY YEARS OF ENROLLMENT

Connections supports schools throughout the country. Since these schools are located in different states, state test results reflect different state standards, scales, and proficiency cut scores. In order to understand how students perform across all schools supported by Connections, it is first necessary to create a ratio for each school that reflects how it performed relative to its state using the following formula: (% of students proficient at the school supported by Connections)/(% of students proficient statewide), as illustrated in Figure 12. In general, performance on reading exceeds state averages (even for first year students), while performance on science is on par with state performance, and performance on math falls below state performance. It is also important to note the growth that students enrolled in schools supported by Connections demonstrate over time, as the performance improved the longer a student was enrolled at a school supported by Connections in all three subject areas.

Figure 12. Connections Performance vs. State Performance after Years of Enrollment



**Findings?** After three years of enrollment, the gap between the state and math closes significantly, and students far exceed the state in reading and science.

This pattern is consistent with research on the *negative transition effect* students experience in the first year at a virtual school followed by significant progress with three or more years of enrollment (Leuken, Ritter, & Beck, 2016).

## SUCCESS OF FARM STUDENTS

Connections Academy reviewed data from 13 schools regarding free and reduced lunch students and their achievement in schools supported by Connections Academy.

### READING

The FARM eligible students from schools supported by Connections Academy met or exceeded state performance of FARM eligible students in the state 90.8% of the time (57.9% exceeded, 32.9% met).

In half (50.0%) of the state tests administered at schools supported by Connections Academy, the performance of FARM eligible students met or exceeded the performance of all students in the school (2.6% exceeded, 47.4% met). Thus in half of the cases, there is no performance gap to close with FARM eligible students.

## MATH

For math in these same schools, schools supported by Connections Academy met or exceeded the state average 24.7% of the time (7.8% exceeded, 16.9% met).

The FARM eligible students from these schools do much better compared to state performance of FARM eligible students with schools supported by Connections Academy meeting or exceeding state averages 40.3% of the time (exceeded 13.0%, met 27.3%). In 27.3% of the tests, FARM eligible students at Connections supported schools meet or exceeded the performance of all students at the school (5.2% exceeded, 22.1% met).

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## CREDIT RECOVERY/GRADPOINT

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By providing both core instruction and supplemental intervention, GradPoint has helped thousands of schools improve their on-time graduation rate and increase student motivation. Many schools have conducted their own independent studies of the program's effectiveness, demonstrating how the program increases student success, improves graduation rates, and provides cost-effective intervention.

As an example of GradPoint's positive effect on learning, in the Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina, which uses GradPoint's online curriculum solution, the graduation rate rose from 64% to 91%, second out of 115 districts in the state. Since the beginning of the district's digital conversion, the dropout rate has decreased by 48 students per year. Nevada Vision Academy plans to use GradPoint to help students retrieve credits and graduate on time.

Additionally, this success story regarding Native American students in New Mexico details using GradPoint: <http://www.pearsoned.com/education-blog/credit-recovery-program-helps-native-american-students-graduate/>.

In addition, the success of the use of GradPoint credit recovery courses with at-risk students in full time virtual schools was recently studied. A 2017 efficacy study, Pearson's GradPoint Impact Study, assessed the effect of taking a GradPoint credit recovery course on learner outcomes. The goal of this study was to draw causal conclusions about the impact of GradPoint credit recovery courses on learner outcomes, relative to repeating a failed base course, as a strategy for students to recover failed credit. The study focused on two overarching research questions:

- *Did students who took a GradPoint credit recovery course earn more credits than students who repeated the failed course?*
- *Are the following outcomes affected by GradPoint vs. Repeat the Course strategy? Course completion rates, GPA, and Scantron performance (Fall to Spring growth)*

This study used a quasi-experimental design to assess whether students enrolled in GradPoint credit recovery courses in Connections Education supported full time virtual schools were more likely to earn a passing grade than students who repeated a failed base course, after controlling for student-level factors that affect academic achievement, including prior achievement, demographic background and course enrollment. Specifically, propensity score matching was used to identify a sample of students who opted to repeat a failed base course but who were otherwise comparable to GradPoint students. This study resulted in two causal conclusions and several findings.

- Causal Conclusions
  - The GradPoint strategy led to higher pass rates and credit recovery rates relative to repeating a base course, even after accounting for differences across student samples in terms of prior achievement, demographic background, and course enrollment.
  - Predicted pass rates were 1.5x higher overall (82% for GradPoint vs. 55% for repeated base course).
  - GradPoint credit recovery strategy recovery rates were 1.6x higher overall.
- Observational Findings
  - For math, GradPoint strategy pass rates were 2x higher (~55% vs. 25%), independent of enrollment in additional supplements (i.e., SISPs)
  - For math, objective test performance (Scantron post-test) was comparable between the GradPoint credit recovery and a) repeated course and b) base course first attempt.

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## SUCCESS ACADEMY COURSES

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The use of a freshman specific initiative was piloted in other schools supported by Connections Academy during the 2015-16 school year. Connections Academy implemented Freshman Academy initiatives at seven of the schools it supports. In those seven schools, six increased their promotion rates the year of inception, which resulted in a positive difference in 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rates between schools. Schools that implemented targeted freshman initiatives, specifically a freshman-specific class, set freshman coursework, and a dedicated counselor, had promotion rates that exceeded other schools by three percentage points. The Freshman Academy research and reflection reinforced the importance of implementing several connected freshman initiatives that include a dedicated course, a dedicated counselor or administrator, and set freshman coursework.

Due to the success of these Freshman Academy initiatives, Connections Academy developed the Freshman Focus course and the Senior Success course. Both of these courses will be offered at Nevada Vision Academy.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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Connections Academy's Curriculum and Instruction department regularly reviews third-party instructional programs to identify and evaluate online programs that could be used to supplement the core curriculum provided by the courses in Connexus. These supplemental instructional support programs (SISPs) are assigned to students who need additional practice with the foundational skills required to be successful with grade level standards. Teachers are trained in the implementation of these programs, including analyzing and evaluating student progress using the data provided by each program. As a standard part of the SISP review process, the Curriculum and Instruction team evaluates programs for:

- Evidence of research
- Alignment to standards
- Ability to customize
- Feedback to students
- Direct instruction

- Teacher/Student user experience
- Diagnostic/prescriptive component
- Motivation feature
- Data and reporting, including data on discrete skills

As a result of the 2015-16 school year SISP review, the decision was made to discontinue the use of a current Math SISP and replace it with Imagine Math (previously titled Think Through Math) in the 2016-17 school year. While the previously used program had been used for several years, the direct instruction component was not proving robust enough to support students who were already struggling, and was lacking a motivational component within the program. Further, the Connections Academy research team did not find any conclusive evidence that this program was positively impacting student performance. Imagine Math is a research-based program that includes a robust direct instruction component, customizable pathways aligned to standards, and the opportunity for students to earn points, customize avatars, enter contests and donate points to a charity of their choice. Imagine Math was piloted in a subset of schools supported by Connections Academy during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. Feedback from students, teachers and parents where Imagine Math was used has been very positive. Feedback from teachers at schools supported by Connections Academy includes:

*“I love that Think Through Math takes students through the process of solving problems rather than just focusing on the solution.”*

*“It is by far the best SISP I have worked with for math. The Live tutors, teaching tools, and adaptability of the program is extremely beneficial for teachers and students.”*

*“Because it is a dynamic program, it really addresses the needs of the students and it is very user-friendly for teachers to pull reports and analyze data.”*

*“Teachers are able to modify, manage, and monitor students’ pathway which promote individualized learning and meets the needs of the students using the program.”*

## **4.2 DATA COLLECTED AND ANALYZED**

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### **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS SUPPORTED BY CONNECTIONS ACADEMY**

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We include the specific performance in the 2015-16 school year for South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA), Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) and Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) in Figures 13, 14, and 15.

Figure 13. Performance of SCCA versus State Performance (2015-16 SY Cohort)

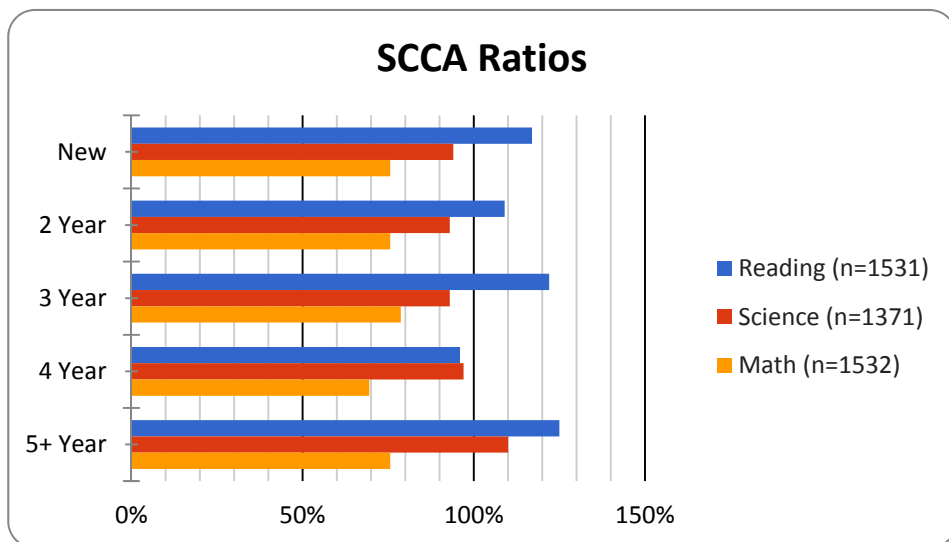


Figure 14. Performance TCAH versus State Performance (2015-16 SY Cohort)

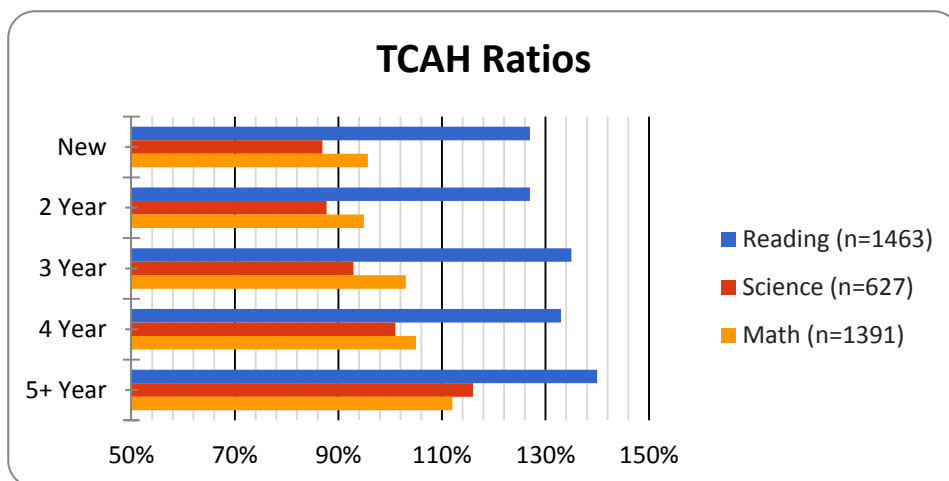


Figure 15. NCA Math Proficiency vs State for 2015-16

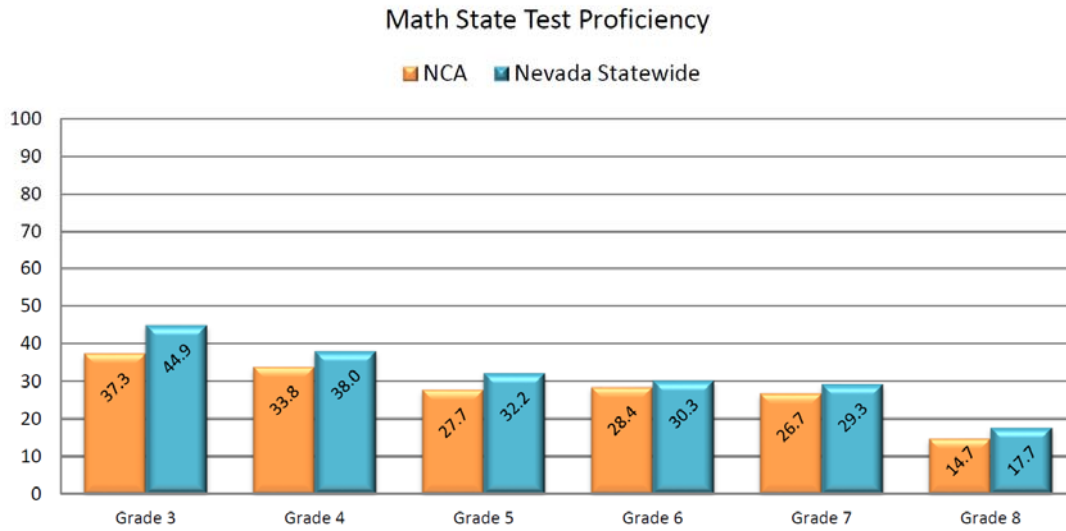
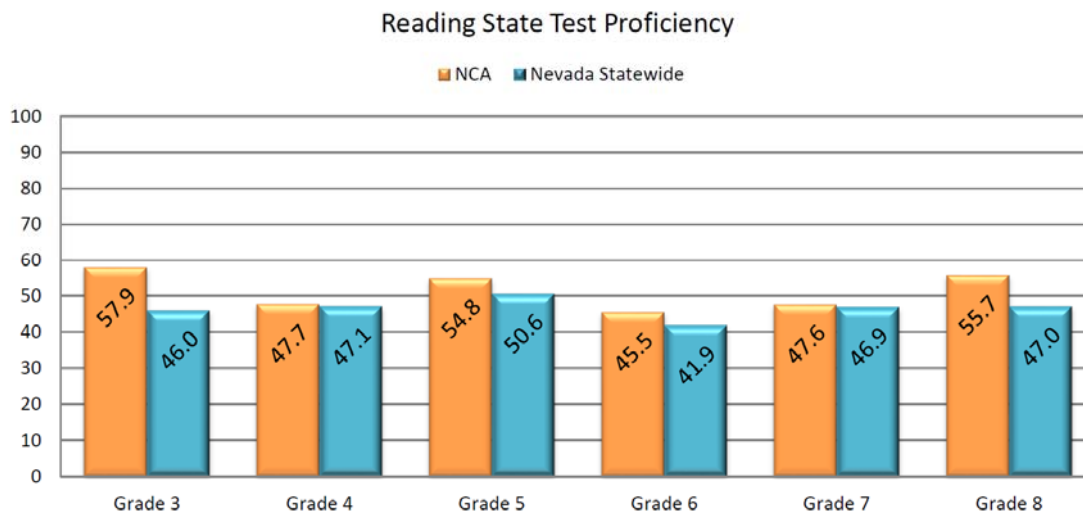


Figure 16. NCA Reading Proficiency vs State for 2015-16



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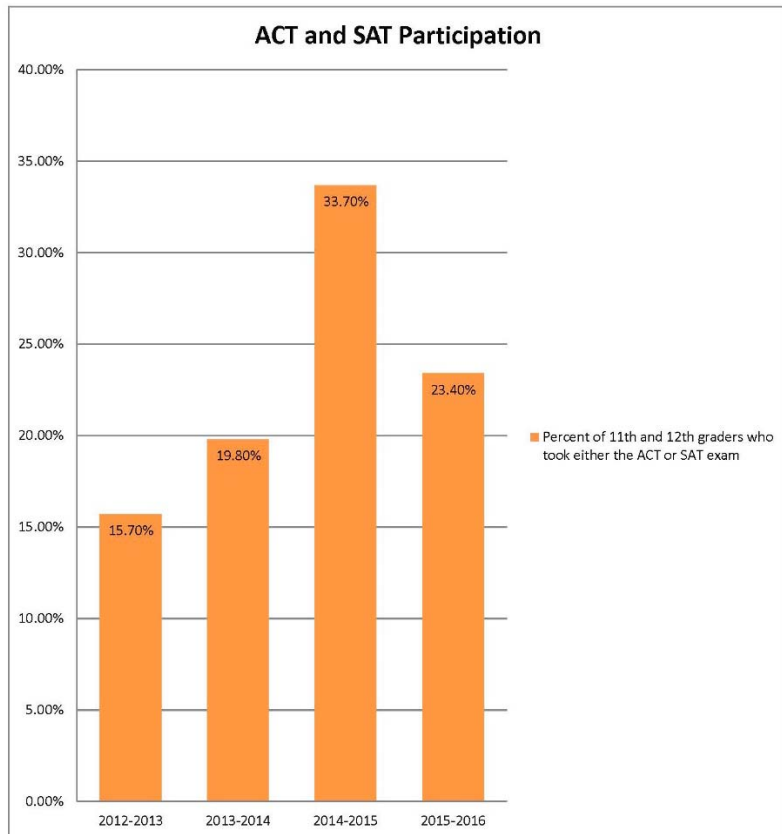
### SCHOLASTIC ASSESSMENT TEST (SAT®) AND AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING (ACT®) PERFORMANCE

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Figure 17 examines ACT and SAT participation of students in schools supported by Connections in the 2015-16 school year, with 23.4% of students in grades 11 and 12 having taken one or both of the exams.



**Figure 17. Participation Percentage of Students in Schools Supported by Connections in the SAT and ACT Exams**



## SAT PERFORMANCE

The College Board released a redesigned SAT exam during March 2016, which included a transition from a 2,400 point scale to a 1,600 point scale. However, in their annual reporting the College Board included only old scores which used the 2400 scale. Therefore, in order to provide an accurate comparison to national data, Figure 18 provides scores for students in grades 11 and 12 enrolled at schools supported by Connections who took the old SAT over the course of the 2015-16 school year. A total of 487 students are included in this data set.

**Figure 18. SAT Performance of Students in Schools Supported by Connections**

Average SAT Score by School – Old Test (Total Out of 2400 pts)				
	Writing	Critical Reading	Math	Total
<b>CalCA</b>	544	558	542	1644
<b>GACA</b>	489	522	498	1509
<b>INCA</b>	485	529	477	1491
<b>INSPIRE</b>	474	502	459	1435
<b>OCA</b>	501	527	459	1487
<b>ORCA</b>	501	548	475	1523
<b>SCCA</b>	484	536	484	1504
<b>TCAH</b>	486	528	498	1512

Average SAT Score by School – Old Test (Total Out of 2400 pts)				
	Writing	Critical Reading	Math	Total
<b>iNaCA</b>	515	550	528	1593
<b>CA Overall</b>	498	535	497	1530
<b>National Average</b>	482	494	508	1484

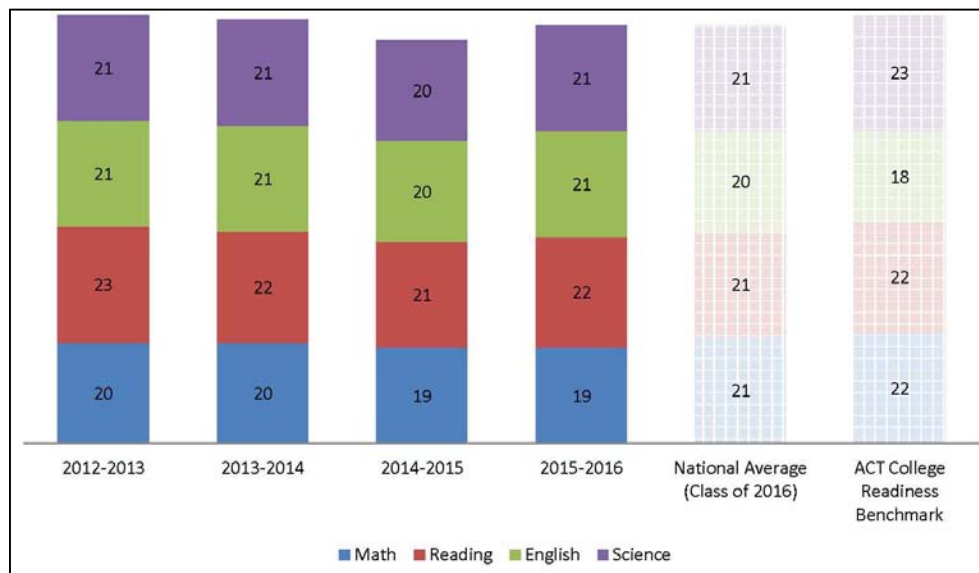
### ACT PERFORMANCE

Figure 19 examines student performance on the ACT exam. Students exceeded the ACT National Average in Reading and English while performing below the national average in Math. Students met the national average in Science. In 2015-16 the average ACT Score overall for schools supported by Connections was 21 out of 36 and the national average was also 21.

In addition, students attending iNaCA demonstrated an ACT Composite Score of 25, scoring 4 points higher than the national average.

“The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are scores on the ACT subject tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses. Based on a nationally stratified sample, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and represent a typical set of expectations.”<sup>25</sup>

Figure 19. ACT Performance of Students in Schools Supported by Connections (36 Points Possible Per Subject)



<sup>25</sup> [http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/CCCR\\_National\\_2016.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/CCCR_National_2016.pdf)

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT PERFORMANCE

Students attending schools supported by Connections have a strong Advanced Placement® (AP) success record and are on par with the national average. In 2015-16, 52.8% of students attending schools supported by Connections who took Advanced Placement exams scored 3 or higher. The national AP average is 57.4 percent.<sup>26</sup>

In 2015-16, the number of students in grades 11 and 12 in schools supported by Connections participating in AP courses increased by 1.4 percentage points, for a total of 10.5%.

Figure 20 shows a sampling of performance on AP exams among students taking our AP courses in comparison to state averages.

**Figure 20. AP Scores for the 2015-16 School Year**

State	Connections Average Score	Connections % of Scores 3 or Above	Statewide Average Score*	Statewide % of Scores 3 or Above
Arizona	3.15	69.2%	2.85	57.1%
California	2.94	61.1%	2.88	57.8%
Colorado	3.20	72.0%	2.93	60.6%
Indiana	3.14	65.3%	2.64	50.4%
Texas	2.69	52.2%	2.51	46.1%

\*Scores as reported in most recent College Board National & State Reports

## PERFORMANCE DATA FROM SCHOOLS SUPPORTED BY CONNECTIONS

Schools supported by Connections are committed to quality and high levels of student learning. The 2015-16 state standardized performance show numerous examples where schools supported by Connections met or exceeded statewide levels of performance on statewide tests. The most frequently tested subjects across states is reading and math (tested grades 3-8 and at least once in high school). Science testing also occurs across all states, but not as frequently (tested at least once in elementary, middle, and high schools). Social studies is the least tested subject and statewide assessments are not conducted in all states. Highlights from the 2015-16 results are listed herein.

### State Tests – Achievement Highlights

- **Reading**
  - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at 8 out of 9 tested grade levels. In addition, ACA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 7 and 10-11 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels. In addition, CalCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 6-8 and 11 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - Florida Virtual School Full-Time K-8 (FLVSFT K-8) - Exceeded statewide performance at all tested grade levels

<sup>26</sup> The College Board, National and State Summary Reports <https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/participation/ap-2016>

- Georgia Connections Academy (GACA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels. In addition, GACA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 6, 8-9, and American Literature for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- Michigan Connections Academy (MICA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels. In addition, MICA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 7-8 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- MTS Minnesota Connections Academy (MTSMCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
- **Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels**
- North Carolina Connections Academy (NCCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at 5 out of 6 tested grade levels
- Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at 8 out of 9 tested grade levels. In addition, OCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 8-9 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels
- South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels. In addition, SCCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 6-8 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) - Exceeded or was equivalent to public school students statewide at all tested grade levels. In addition, TCAH exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 6-7 for 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16.
- Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels. In addition, WCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 3-4 and 6-8 for 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16
- **Math**
  - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II
  - Florida Virtual School Full-Time K-8 (FLVSFT K-8) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance in all middle school grade levels
  - Kansas Connections Academy (KCA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance in Grades 5-8
  - Maine Connections Academy (MCA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance in 2 out of 3 tested grade levels
  - Michigan Connections Academy (MICA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance in Grades 5-6 and grade 8
  - **Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance at 5 out of 6 tested grade levels**
  - New Mexico Connections Academy (NMCA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance in all middle school grade levels
  - Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance in all three high school tests. In addition, OCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Algebra I for 2014-15 and 2015-16.

- Texas Connections Academy at Houston (TCAH) - Exceeded or was equivalent to public school students statewide in Grades 5-8
- Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at 6 out of 7 tested grade levels
- **Science**
  - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
  - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - Was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
  - Florida Virtual School Full-Time K-8 (FLVSFT K-8) - Exceeded statewide performance in all tested grade levels. In addition, FLVSFT K-8 exceeded statewide in Grades 5 and 8 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - INSPIRE Connections Academy (INSPIRE) - Exceeded statewide proficiency in Grade 5 for 2014-15 and 2015-16
  - Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
  - Michigan Connections Academy (MICA) - Exceeded statewide proficiency in Grade 7 for 2014-15 and 2015-16
  - New Mexico Connections Academy (NMCA) - Exceeded statewide performance at all tested elementary and middle school grade levels. In addition, NMCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 4 and 7 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) - Exceeded statewide performance in all tested grade levels. In addition, WCA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grades 4 and 8 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - Wyoming Connections Academy (WYCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
- **Social Studies**
  - Michigan Connections Academy (MICA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested elementary and middle school grade levels. In addition, MICA exceeded statewide proficiency in Grade 5 for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
  - Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) - Exceeded or was equivalent to statewide performance at all tested grade levels
  - Wisconsin Connections Academy (WCA) - Was equivalent to public school students statewide at all tested grade levels

**Performance on National Tests - ACT®, SAT®, and Advanced Placement®**

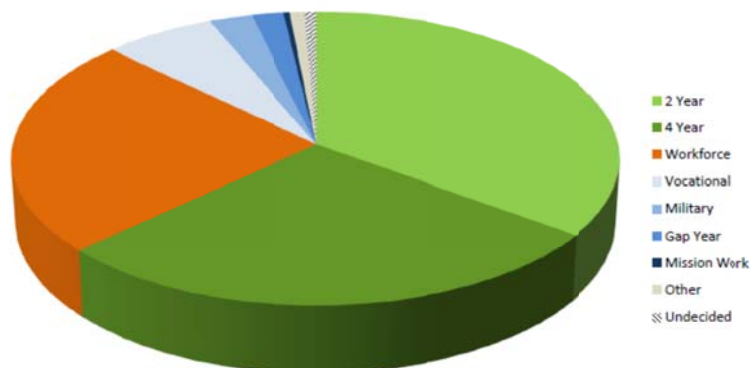
- **ACT® - National Average Composite was 21 - Schools supported by Connections that exceeded the National Average and their Scores:**
  - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - Average Composite was 26
  - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - Average Composite was 24
  - Georgia Connections Academy (GACA) - Average Composite was 22
  - Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) - Average Composite was 23
  - Iowa Connections Academy (IACA) - Average Composite was 22
  - Kansas Connections Academy (KCA) - Average Composite was 22

- New Mexico Connections Academy (NMCA) - Average Composite was 23
  - Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) - Average Composite was 22
  - Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA) - Average Composite was 23
  - South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA) - Average Composite was 22
  - Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) - Average Composite was 24
- **SAT® – Juniors and Seniors taking the SAT® enrolled at schools supported by Connections on average scored 1,530 which exceeded the National Average of 1,484- Schools supported by Connections that Exceeded the National Average and their Scores:**
    - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - Average Student Score was 1,644
    - Georgia Connections Academy (GACA) - Average Student Score was 1,509
    - Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) - Average Student Score was 1,491
    - Ohio Connections Academy (OCA) - Average Student Score was 1,487
    - Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA) - Average Student Score was 1,523
    - South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA) - Average Student Score was 1,504
    - Texas Connections Academy @ Houston (TCAH) - Average Student Score was 1,512
  - **AP® - National Average of Scoring 3 or Higher was 57.5%. Schools supported by Connections that Exceeded the National Average and their Scores:**
    - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - 69.2% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - 61.1% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - Colorado Connections Academy (ColoCA) - 72.0% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) – 65.3% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
  - **AP® - National Average of Scoring 3 or Higher was 57.5%. Schools supported by Connections that Exceeded the National Average and their Scores:**
    - Arizona Connections Academy (ACA) - 69.2% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - California Connections Academy (CalCA) - 61.1% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - Colorado Connections Academy (ColoCA) - 72.0% of Students Scored 3 or Higher
    - Indiana Connections Academy (INCA) – 65.3% of Students Scored 3 or Higher

## POST-GRADUATION PLANS

Many students enter high school with a variety of college and career pathways. Figure 21 examines the post-graduation plans of graduates of schools supported by Connections Academy as reported by students through a survey administered in the fall of 2015. The majority of students have plans to enter into two- or four-year colleges but many also have plans for a career, vocational training, or the military.

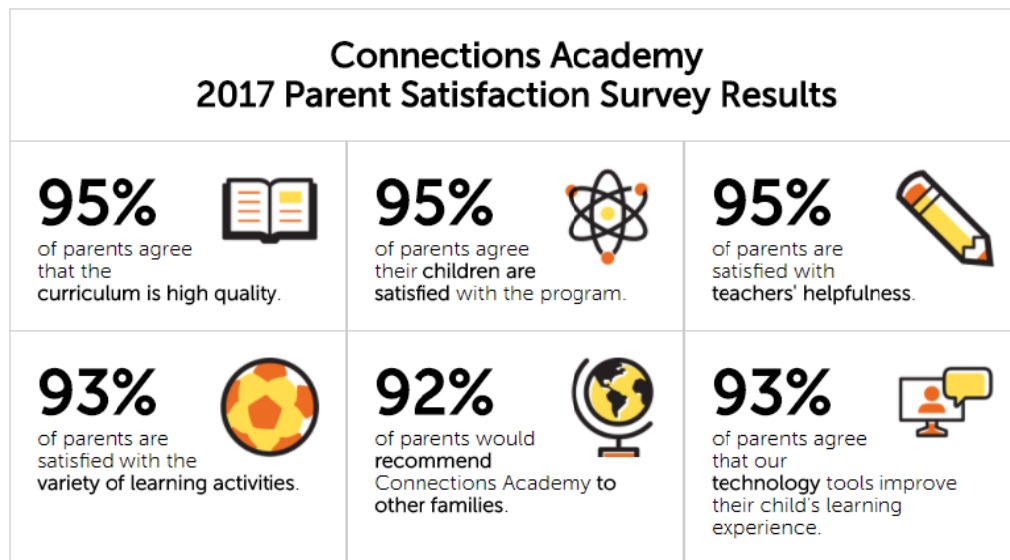
Figure 21. 2015-16 Post Graduation Plans of Students enrolled in Schools Supported by Connections Academy



## SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT OF NON-ACADEMIC SCHOOL FUNCTIONS

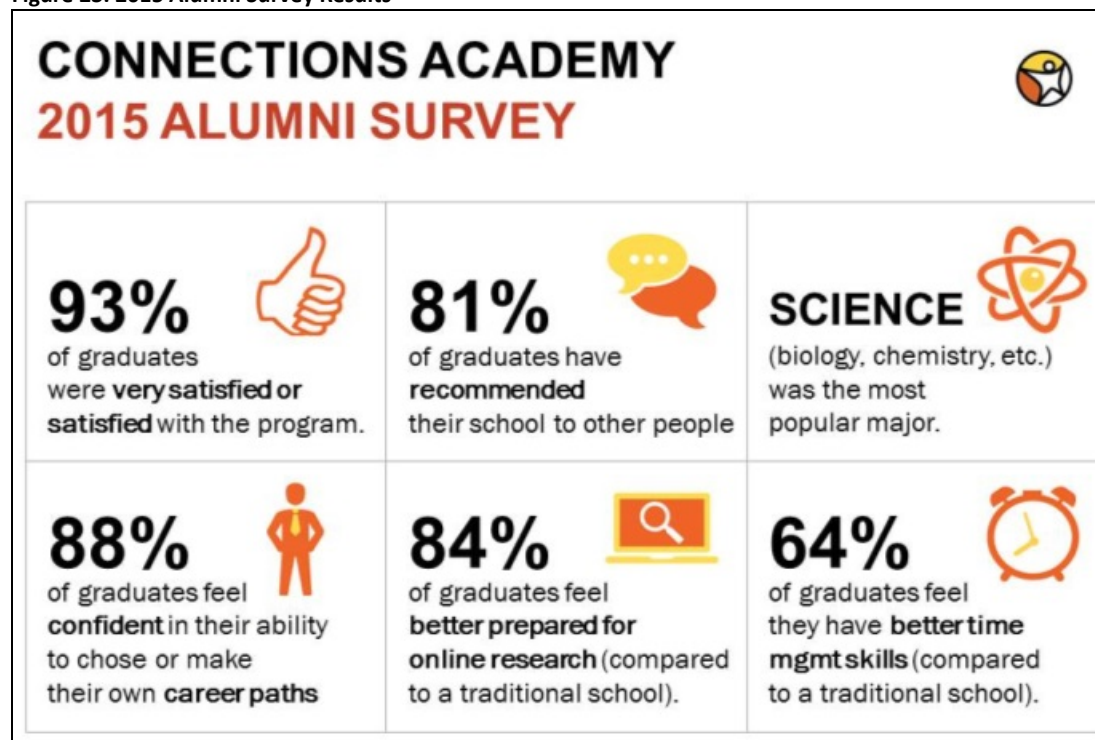
Figure 22 shows the results of an independent survey conducted in January 2016 of families in schools supported by Connections. Figure 23 shows results from a survey of graduates. This survey validates the rigor and the preparedness that graduates feel for their schools, colleges, and their future careers.

Figure 22. 2017 Parent Satisfaction Survey Results



Based on a survey of Connections Academy families conducted in January 2017 by Shapiro+Raj.

Figure 23. 2015 Alumni Survey Results



### ADVANCED ACCREDITED

Connections was the first virtual school provider to receive accreditation from the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA), now a part of AdvancED™. AdvancED is a non-profit organization operating three regional accrediting agencies and trusted partner to 32,000 school and school systems across the United States and 70 countries.<sup>27</sup> The provider was first granted accreditation in 2005 and in June 2015 was re-accredited for another five-year term. Connections Education’s AdvancED accreditation scores significantly exceeded AdvancEd’s average scores for the 32,000+ schools and corporations they accredit. AdvancED awarded Connections extremely high “Index of Educational Quality (IEQ)” scores that are significantly above the AdvancED network average. Connections’ Teaching and Learning Impact score was 341.18 (AdvancED Network Average score = 274.14), only surpassed by its Leadership Capacity score of 347.50 (AdvancED Network Average score = 296.08).

Connections Education received many commendations from the review committee. The following quotes are from the visiting team’s exit report:

- *“A culture and commitment focused on student learning permeates throughout the Connections Education organization.”*
- *“The corporation embodies a culture of collaboration that exists throughout all aspects of the corporation and schools.”*

<sup>27</sup> Accreditation agency serving 32,000 public and private schools and districts <http://www.advanc-ed.org/>



- *“Connections Education’s quality assurance processes and data-driven culture leads to systemic, systematic, and sustainable continuous improvement.”*

Connections is proud of the recognition of its focus on student learning and collaboration, and that the AdvancED team found that Connections truly embodies a culture of continual improvement.

Many Connections high school courses are also approved by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center through a rigorous, approval process to meet requirements for initial-eligibility for college athletes, as shown at the following URL:

<http://www.connectionsacademy.com/Portals/4/ca/documents/pdfs/NCAA-Approved-Course-List.pdf>

## APPENDIX A – GENERAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Nevada Vision Academy will be a fully online school providing all enrolled students with the necessary supports to succeed academically and meet their post-secondary goals, including diagnostic processes for identifying at-risk students, targeted supports and interventions, and schoolwide programming designed to enhance student engagement and high school completion. Nevada Vision Academy’s instructional methods, educational philosophy, and program will include unique elements from our educational partner, Connections Academy. Connections Academy will provide specific educational products and services according to the Statement of Agreement with the Board of Directors.

Nevada Vision Academy has been designed specifically to support at-risk secondary students in grades 9-12. Nevada Vision Academy will provide course offerings, instructional supports and resources, staffing, and a professional learning program unique to successfully serving its student population as detailed in Figure 24.

**Figure 24. Offerings for Nevada Vision Academy**

Course Offerings	Instructional Supports	Staffing	Professional Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation and Standard level courses</li> <li>• GradPoint Credit Recovery Courses</li> <li>• Standard recommended sequence of courses by grade level</li> <li>• Freshman Focus and Senior Success Academy courses</li> <li>• Targeted college and career readiness clubs, activities, and career technical education (CTE) offerings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scantron Performance Series formative assessment system</li> <li>• PLP (Plus) –including intervention plans, on-track indicators, and progression plans</li> <li>• Small group synchronous LiveLesson Advisory Sessions</li> <li>• Targeted Supplemental Instructional Support Programs (e.g., ReadingPlus, Imagine Math with live on-demand teacher support, Math XL)</li> <li>• Summer school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group advisors to support the vision and mission of the school and student needs</li> <li>• Advisory teachers/ counselors with experience in serving at-risk secondary students</li> <li>• Special Education Case Managers</li> <li>• School Engagement Team Coordinator</li> <li>• School Social Worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher and staff guidance, training, and Professional Learning geared to how best to support at-risk students and drop-out prevention</li> <li>• Learning Coach Support</li> </ul>

Nevada Vision Academy will implement the Connections Academy alternative high school model. Connections Academy evolves their systems and techniques to incorporate best practices and lessons learned to best serve students and families. Connections Academy will continually improve its offering to ensure the needs of students and families will be met. The following is a list of common terms, tools, and resources used in the virtual schools currently supported by Connections Academy.

- **Assessment Objective Performance Reports (AOPR):** These reports will provide real-time student performance data on essential skills and standards based upon individual math, language arts, and science assessment items. They will identify the objectives students should master by the end of that grade level based upon the Nevada Academic Content Standards; and will display students’ performance against the objectives. Data can be sorted to identify students who have or have not mastered specific objectives.

- **Connexus® Education Management System (EMS):** Connexus will be the platform for organizing and supporting the school's entire educational environment. This proprietary, web-based software will deliver every assignment and track every activity (whether conducted online or offline) while monitoring the completion of individual lessons as well as mastery of discrete skills and knowledge, all under the watchful eye of administrators, teachers, and Learning Coaches. Connexus operates within a secure, robust technology infrastructure protecting data from loss and intrusion while maintaining a safe environment. Students and Learning Coaches will access Connexus to organize, document, and interact, ensuring an unprecedented level of time-on-task documentation. All new releases and updates of Connexus will be automatically provided.
- **Curriculum-Based Assessments:** Teachers will use curriculum-based assessments (CBAs), via telephone conversation or LiveLesson session, as a quick and effective way to gather information on students' understanding of concepts. Diagnostic curriculum-based assessments (DCBA) will pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student mastery of concepts. Verification curriculum-based assessments (VCBA) will gauge authentic student learning of concepts previously graded as successfully completed with scores of B or higher.
- **Grade Book and Data Tools:** Both Learning Coaches and teachers will have access to an electronic grade book that will track all results and serve as the basis of changes in the student's learning plan. A key aspect of student success will be the detailed feedback provided by the teachers beyond the simple right/wrong grading of many traditional assessment vehicles. Nevada Vision Academy will also use a variety of advanced data visualization tools that will provide students, parents, teachers, school administrators, institutional education partners, regulators and researchers with views of how students are performing.
- **GradPoint Credit Recovery:** A standards-based curriculum, assessment, data, and reporting system that helps students re-engage and recover credits at their own pace. Each course offering delivers a prescriptive pathway based on students' mastery of course skills and concepts to support students' development of the skills needed to succeed in high school and beyond. The instructional design includes video, interactive activities, feedback, and assessments to support student learning and standards achievement.
- **Interactive Reviews:** Interactive reviews are additional practice opportunities that are embedded in the curriculum and serve to give students targeted practice and feedback on concepts and skills.
- **Intervention Indicators:** Intervention Indicators will be displayed on the teacher home page in Connexus to facilitate teachers' ability to identify which of their students may be in need of an instructional intervention in math, reading, or both. These indicators are data-driven codes and are the first step of multi-tiered instruction. These indicators facilitate teachers' abilities to ensure that all students learn at high levels of achievement. These codes will be used to identify academically at-risk students, determine and implement appropriate instructional interventions, and monitor the effectiveness of interventions.
- **Learning Coach:** A parent, extended family member, or similarly qualified adult designated by the parent/guardian will work in person with the student as a Learning Coach, under the guidance of the certified teacher. The Learning Coach and student will interact with the teacher via telephone, WebMail message, LiveLesson sessions, and in-person meetings. The school will provide a unique login and ongoing training, support, and resources to help the Learning Coach carry out this important role while making optimal use of the available technology tools and professional teacher support.

- **LiveLesson® Session:** A real-time, interactive web conferencing tool, LiveLesson sessions, allow teachers to work synchronously and directly with individual or groups of students using voice-over IP, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing based on Adobe® Connect™.
- **Message Boards:** Message Boards are designed to facilitate the secure exchange of ideas and information among students, teachers, staff, and Learning Coaches who are active in schools supported by Connections Academy. Message Boards provide:
  - Answers to parents’ most frequently asked questions;
  - Tips for success in math, science, and social studies;
  - Advice for helping students excel in reading, writing, and spelling;
  - Answers to enrollment questions;
  - Information about technical issues;
  - Links to external educational resources for families; and
  - School news and events.
- **Multi-tiered Instruction:** Nevada Vision Academy will employ a multi-tiered instruction model so that every student has access to the resources they need to be successful: Tier I Core Curriculum with Differentiation, Tier II Supplemental Instructional Supports (two to three times per week), and Tier III Supplemental Instructional Supports (four to five times per week). Student Support and IEP teams will meet regularly to develop an intervention plan and strategies for improvement for students who are struggling.
- **Personalized Performance Learning™ (PPL):** This instructional process will create a unique learning experience for each student. During enrollment, academic placement advisors and School Counselors will review students’ past records and performance to properly place them in the school. A PLP (Plus) will be developed collaboratively by the teacher, Learning Coach, and student to maximize achievement and to tailor curriculum and instruction. Throughout the year, teachers will monitor students’ progress and will adjust their learning programs to focus on areas where students need to improve and areas in which they can build on their strengths.
- **Progression Plan:** Counselors will use Progression Plans for students. A Progression Plan, automated in Connexus, will define and track requirements that must be accomplished to meet a goal. Teachers and counselors will use four-year academic progression plans for students to ensure they are on target for graduation and for meeting their college and career goals.
- **Scantron® Performance Series:** Students may be assessed with the Scantron Performance Series. The Scantron Performance Series assessment is a valid, reliable, current test that measures student proficiency in reading and mathematics, and provides a scaled score that can be used to measure academic growth, and therefore serves as a useful tool in assessing student curricular needs. The online test is a computer-adaptive assessment which automatically adjusts to each student’s ability level, generating more difficult questions if the student is answering correctly and easier ones if the student is answering incorrectly. It provides a valid and reliable scale score in math and reading so that student learning growth can be tracked over time. The version that Nevada Vision Academy may use is aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards and provides teachers with reports and information to address individual student needs. The Scantron Performance Series has a pre-, mid- and post-testing schedule to support progress monitoring and student learning.

- **SSTAIR™:** The Skills, Standards, Assessment, Intervention, and Response (SSTAIR) instructional model deeply links curriculum, standards, assessments, and interventions that have a direct impact on student mastery and resulting standardized test performance. The SSTAIR program targets Essential Skills/Standards by subject/grade level, uses specified assessments within the curriculum to measure student mastery of these skills and standards, provides tiered interventions for non-mastered skills and standards, and then tracks students' response to the implemented interventions by skill/standard.
- **StarTrack™:** This integrated rating system will allow every student, Learning Coach, and teacher to rate each lesson in which they engage from a low of one star to a high of five stars and give detailed feedback. Ratings and comments will be used by the curriculum staff to ensure continuous feedback and to identify areas of needed improvement as well as curriculum approaches that work especially well. Learning Coaches will be able to rate their overall school experience using a similar system.
- **Student Status/Escalation Process:** The school will track and report ongoing student progress based on the objective quantitative data generated by Connexus. Staff members will analyze attendance, participation, performance, assessment submissions, and teacher contact. The student status will be displayed on the home page for instant identification of potential problem areas. The Escalation Process will go into effect when students are in statuses other than "On-Track" to ensure students continue to gain the full benefits of this educational option and are being educated appropriately through this unique school choice.
- **Supplemental Instructional Support Programs (SISPs):** Supplemental instructional support programs (SISPs) are research-based instructional programs (e.g., Math XL, Imagine Math, Reading Plus) that teachers assign to students in order to provide them with additional practice with the foundational math and/or reading skills that are needed to support their success with grade level standards. Teachers regularly monitor student performance in SISPs as part of a multitiered approach to instruction and intervention.
- **Synchronous Contact:** In a virtual school setting, synchronous contact is defined as a live interaction occurring in real time between teachers and students which allows for real communication and helps to build a relationship between teachers and students. Teachers schedule LiveLesson sessions, in addition to other synchronous interaction, for students. Teachers log attendance of all LiveLesson sessions with a student in Connexus, as well as other forms of synchronous contact (e.g., phone conversations, face-to-face interactions on field trips or at events located throughout the state).
- **Teacher:** The school will employ Nevada-certified teachers, as required by law, specially trained in virtual delivery and personalized instruction. The majority of the teachers will work remotely delivering instruction to a virtual classroom of students and working one-on-one with students through highly interactive, technology-facilitated communication tools. Teachers will maintain a one-on-one relationship with each student.
- **Teacher Feedback Notification:** A feature in Connexus® will send auto-generated WebMail notifications to students and their Learning Coaches when teachers enter feedback in all assessments. Automatic WebMail notifications will direct students and Learning Coaches to the specific assessments for which the feedback is provided creating a continuous loop of communication on student learning.

- **Teachlet® Tutorials:** Teachlet tutorials are proprietary, interactive, asynchronous graphic/video/audio tutorials and will be incorporated into lessons to provide students a dynamic, fun, and engaging way to learn the concepts they need to master learning objectives and standards.
- **WebMail:** This proprietary email system is securely located within Connexus. Students, Learning Coaches, and teachers may only use it to communicate with each other, protecting them from spam, contact from strangers, and other mainstream email issues.

The research-based<sup>28</sup> curriculum uses the following proven instructional principles:

- Curriculum fosters breadth and depth of understanding in subject area.
- Content is aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards.
- Curriculum is supported by quality, reputable, recently published textbooks, and/or proven instructional resources and materials.
- Content and assessments are accurate and unbiased.
- Content is current, relevant, and provides real-world applications.
- Content is appropriate for the learner (age, ability, background, reading level, style).
- Instructional design is adaptable and flexible to meet individual needs.
- Instructional design provides students opportunities to improve learning skills using technology (virtual labs and instruments, Teachlet tutorials, business software, online calculator).
- Navigation is intuitive and age-appropriate.
- Scope of course is appropriate with regard to amount of content, length of course and lessons, and course requirements.
- Lesson introduction is effective, presents lesson objectives, accesses prior knowledge, sets expectations, and motivates students.
- Background information prepares students to access new content, skills, and strategies.
- Curriculum includes opportunities for developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills, real-world applications, collaboration and independent study, and developing oral and written communication skills.
- Curriculum incorporates ongoing formative assessment and provides timely and appropriate feedback to students and teachers.
- Curriculum promotes active learning through interactive elements in each course (including online and/or offline interaction) that address diverse learning styles and preferences, including textual, visual, auditory, and/or hands-on.

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<sup>28</sup> American Psychological Association's Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Reform and Redesign  
<http://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/learner-centered.pdf>

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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To be eligible to receive a diploma from Nevada Vision Academy, a student must meet all of the following requirements:<sup>29</sup>

- Complete the 22.5 credits required by the Nevada Department of Education in specific area and subject;
- Be enrolled during the semester immediately prior to graduation, and not be full-time enrolled in any other school;
- Earn at least 1.5 credits (or 3 courses) in the semester immediately prior to graduation;
- Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state.

Nevada Vision Academy uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units). Students must earn the 22.5 required credits in the designated areas and subjects in order to graduate. Students will be required to meet all state requirements for graduation.

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/High\\_School\\_Graduation/Documents/NVHSGradReq16\\_17final.pdf](http://www.doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/High_School_Graduation/Documents/NVHSGradReq16_17final.pdf)

## APPENDIX B – RESEARCH BASE

Students learn best in a safe, positive environment in which they are respected, accepted, valued, and nurtured as unique individuals and are challenged to achieve their full potential. From this, it follows that students learn best when the instruction is tailored to their unique needs and when they are supported by adults who are committed to their success.

Education research has shown that the touchstones of the Personalized Performance Learning (PPL) instructional model — high quality teaching, timely and actionable feedback, personalized, data-driven instruction, and parental involvement — have been directly correlated to top student achievement.

In 2009 (revised in 2010), the U.S. Department of Education published a meta-analysis of evidence-based studies of K-12 and postsecondary online learning programs. The study reported that, “Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.”<sup>30</sup> Online education improves learning opportunities for students by increased access to high-quality teachers, large-scale customization and optimization, increased flexibility, improved flexibility for teachers, improved productivity and efficiency, and innovation.<sup>31</sup>

Additional support for the need to expose students to online learning is evident in the 2015 article, *The Effectiveness of Online Learning: Beyond No Significant Difference and Future Horizons*, when Tuan Nguyen states “.... about 92% of all distance and online education studies find that distance and online education is at least as effective, if not better, than traditional education.”<sup>32</sup>

**High-quality teaching:** At Nevada Vision Academy, we will strive to ensure each teacher is equipped with the skills and technology needed to maximize student learning.

Recent research, focusing specifically on online learning, echoes the critical importance of teacher quality. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are one component in developing teacher effectiveness. According to Dr. Rick DuFour, “The Professional Learning Community at Work (PLC) model offers a systems approach to school improvement. Teachers are organized into grade level, course specific, or interdisciplinary collaborative teams in which educators work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable. A process is put in place to ensure teams clarify the essential learnings for each course, grade level, and unit of instruction; establish consistent pacing; create frequent common assessments to monitor student learning, and agree on the criteria they will use to judge the quality of student work. Each team then uses the evidence of student learning to identify individual students who need additional time and support, to discover problematic areas of the curriculum that require the attention of the team, and to help each member become aware of his or

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Means, Yukie Toyama, Robert Murphy, Marianne Bakia, and Karla Jones, “Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practice in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies,” U.S. Department of Education, May 2009, at <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf> (November 16, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Lips, D. “How Online Learning is Revolutionizing K-12 Education and Benefiting Students.” Backgrounder, The Heritage Foundation, January 12, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Nguyen, Tuan (2015). “The Effectiveness of Online Learning: Beyond No Significant Difference and Future Horizons,” MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 11(2). [http://jolt.merlot.org/Vol11no2/Nguyen\\_0615.pdf](http://jolt.merlot.org/Vol11no2/Nguyen_0615.pdf)



her instructional strengths and weaknesses.”<sup>33</sup> The commitment to develop and collaborate professionally will be one of the four core standards for facilitating student learning at Nevada Vision Academy and will be evident in each of the professional learning sessions.

In April 2009, John Watson and Butch Gemin, on behalf of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), published the *Management and Operations of Online Programs* as part of the series Promising Practices in Online Learning. The authors noted, “Most programs agree that new online teachers must 1) put their role as a facilitator of student learning above other aspects of teaching, 2) have the ability to adapt and manage change, 3) have a high level of content mastery, and 4) be ready to make the shift to online instruction.”<sup>34</sup>

At Nevada Vision Academy, teachers will address each of these qualities in unique ways. The award winning Professional Learning model implemented by Connections Academy offers teachers an opportunity to gain an understanding of their role as facilitator, to distinguish changes to the online environment and its impact on student learning, and adapting to those changes while transitioning to their role as an online instructor at Nevada Vision Academy. Throughout each level of professional learning, teachers engage in reflection opportunities and share their reflections with colleagues and school leaders.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) describes online teachers further, “Expert teachers adjust their thinking to accommodate the level of reflection a situation calls for. Their teaching is characterized by an intentional competence that enables them to identify and replicate best practice, refine serendipitous practice, and avoid inferior practice. Because of their ability to reflect, great teachers know not only what to do, but also why.”<sup>35</sup>

Prior to each of the professional learning sessions, teachers will engage in a pre-session activity that requires them to reflect on their current practices, watch a video of a new strategy or teaching model, read an article focusing on a research-based instructional practice, or identify tools and strategies that have the greatest impact on learning. Following each of the sessions, the post-session activity will provide teachers with an opportunity to reflect on what they learned and describe, or share an example, of how they will implement a strategy or best practice as they work with and support their students.

**Timely and Actionable Feedback:** The unique ability of an online teacher to communicate one-on-one with students and offer timely and actionable feedback, as teachers will at Nevada Vision Academy, is key to student success in an online learning environment. According to a 2014 study,<sup>36</sup> 77% of students view face-to-face comments as “very” or “extremely effective.” Whether the teaching is online or face-to-face, as described in this study, feedback is a critical element in supporting student learning. Professional learning topics will delve deeply into ways that teachers can reach students individually at Nevada Vision Academy, so that they are receiving timely and actionable feedback. Teachers at Nevada Vision Academy will use collaboration in professional learning to discuss topics such as “...the main purpose of feedback is to improve the student's ability to perform tasks he or she has not yet

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<sup>33</sup> DuFour, Rick. Professional Learning Communities: The Key to Improved Teaching and Learning (April 2009): <http://www.advanced.org/source/professional-learning-communities-key-improved-teaching-and-learning>

<sup>34</sup> Watson, J. and Gemin, B., (April 2009) Promising Practices in Online Learning: Management and Operations of Online Programs: Ensuring Quality and Accountability. Evergreen Consulting Associates, iNACOL  
[http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/iNACOL\\_PP\\_MgmtOp\\_042309.pdf](http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/iNACOL_PP_MgmtOp_042309.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> William, Dylan. The Secret of Effective Feedback (April 2016): <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb09/vol66/num05/Fostering-Reflection.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> Turnitin.com (2014). Instructor Feedback Writ Large: Student Perceptions on Effective Feedback

attempted...In other words, we need to start from where the learner is, not where we would like the learner to be. We need to use the information we obtain from looking at the student's work—even though that information may be less than perfect—and give feedback that will move the student's learning forward.”<sup>37</sup> In his 2012 article, “Seven Keys to Effective Feedback,” Grant Wiggins notes, helpful feedback is goal-referenced; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalized); timely; ongoing; and consistent.”<sup>38</sup>

**Personalized Instruction:** Students clearly benefit from instruction that is personalized in terms of pace, content, sequence, and style.

In their 2010 article, “Learning Styles in the Age of Differentiated Instruction,” authors Timothy Landrum and Kimberly McDuffie note, “Matching the skills and strengths children bring to bear with their life, vocational, and independent living goals provides a framework for planning an instructional program... To summarize, instruction is individualized when (a) it is planned in a way that builds on what individual students currently know and can do and targets meaningful goals regarding what they need to learn next; and (b) accommodations and modifications to teaching and testing routines are made in order to provide students with full and meaningful access to the content they need to learn.”<sup>39</sup>

Dorraine Fenner, Sueha Kayyal Mansour and Natalie Sydor noted in their 2010 *Action Research Project* submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education at Saint Xavier University in Chicago that, “Applying differentiation to leveled learners allowed students to grow academically... Using modified activities according to their own learning style allowed students to progress. Differentiation provided students with different options, which allowed students to improve. Students enjoyed the amount of control they were given pertaining to the assignment... Differentiated assignments allowed students to grow academically according to their ability level.”<sup>40</sup>

In a study published in 2016,<sup>41</sup> students in a developmental math class experienced between a 13% and 27% increase in course completion using personalized learning in a digital platform. Robert Marzano and Michael D. Toth explain that “Within classrooms, there should be ample evidence of students wrestling with new content as they build the stamina required to reach higher levels of thinking. Without the opportunity to struggle with a problem or decision, for instance, students may attain surface-level knowledge of a concept, but be unable to utilize that knowledge in meaningful ways.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Secret of Effective Feedback (April 2016) - <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr16/vol73/num07/The-Secret-of-Effective-Feedback.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> Seven Keys to Effective Feedback (September 2012) <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> Timothy J. Landrum & Kimberly A. McDuffie (2010): Learning Styles in the Age of Differentiated Instruction, *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal*, 18:1, 6-17 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09362830903462441>

<sup>40</sup> Fenner, D., Mansour, S., and Sydor, N. (2010). The Effects of Differentiation and Motivation on Students Performance. School of Education at Saint Xavier University, Chicago IL

<sup>41</sup> “Using personalized learning, a developmental math professor increases her course passing rate”. Website blog. Pearson Education Blog. Pearson Education, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Teaching for Rigor: A Call for a Critical Instructional Shift, Robert Marzano and Michael Toth (March 2014) - [www.marzano-center.com/files/Teaching-for-Rigor-20140318.pdf](http://www.marzano-center.com/files/Teaching-for-Rigor-20140318.pdf)

A goal of personalization via online instruction is for the student to demonstrate increased content knowledge and critical thinking. At Nevada Vision Academy, instruction will be personalized for every student, every day and professional learning will support teachers in implementing instructional practices that maximize student performance.

**Data-Driven Instruction:** Teachers at Nevada Vision Academy will rely on data to ensure they make instructional decisions that will best support student learning and achievement. Monitoring data through a variety of sources ensures teachers have a clear picture of what the student comprehends and where needs lie. To guide teachers and their instructional decisions, Nevada Vision Academy will use a multitiered system of supports with explicit criteria for each of the three tiers, clearly defined roles and responsibilities for teachers and school leaders, and a variety of research-based supplemental programs designed to target each student’s individual needs. As explained by Sharon Bianco “The RTI model moves students to progressively higher tiers of intervention, if they are not successful in the general education classroom using research-based or Tier I instruction. If Tier I in the general education classroom is not producing sufficient enough success, students are moved to subsequently higher tiers until progress is achieved at a rate sufficient enough to show progress toward a predetermined goal. This is called Tier II. Finally they are moved in order to receive more intense intervention or to determine if they are eligible for specialized services. This final level is called Tier III.”<sup>43</sup>

RAND researchers summarized four studies on the use of data. In their article “Making Sense of Data-Driven Decision Making in Education”<sup>44</sup> the following conclusion was drawn: “Finally, policymakers seeking to promote educators’ data use might also consider giving teachers sufficient flexibility to alter instruction based on data analyses. As noted, teachers often receive dual messages from district leaders to follow mandated curriculum pacing schedules and to use data to inform their practice. Without the discretion to veer from district policies such as pacing schedules, teachers will be limited in their ability to respond to data, particularly when analyses reveal problem areas that require time for re-teaching or remediation.”

Nevada Vision Academy teachers will be provided tools and clear guidance on how to analyze and use student performance data to provide targeted instruction, intervention, lesson modifications, remediation and enrichment. Research on data-driven decision making states “...educators should consult and factor in multiple sources and types of student data to get a more complete view of student progress or achievement. These additional sources of data may be formal (e.g., chapter tests, class projects, or performance assessments) or informal (e.g., class discussions, homework assignments, or formative assessments). Looking at a broader array of data can help teachers avoid putting too much weight on a single measure of student performance and, therefore, reduce the risk of making inaccurate and invalid decisions about student learning and teaching effectiveness.”<sup>45</sup> Connections Academy training and professional development guides teachers through this process and continuously seeks ways to ensure teachers are comfortable with the importance of using data to personalize instruction.

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<sup>43</sup> Bianco, Sharon Davis. Improving Student Outcomes: Data-driven Instruction and Fidelity of Implementation in a Response to Intervention (RTI) Model (June 2010). <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ907036.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Marsh, Julie A., John F. Pane, and Laura S. Hamilton (2006). Making Sense of Data-Driven Decision Making in Education. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2006/RAND\\_OP170.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2006/RAND_OP170.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Mertler, Craig A. Introduction to Data-Driven Educational Decision Making (2014). [http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/sf114082/chapters/Introduction\\_to\\_Data-Driven\\_Educational\\_Decision\\_Making.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/sf114082/chapters/Introduction_to_Data-Driven_Educational_Decision_Making.aspx)

**Parent involvement:** Decades of research show that parent participation in education correlates with student achievement. In an article published in 2010, titled “Parent Involvement and Student Academic Performance: A Multiple Mediation Analysis,” in the *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, authors David R. Topor, Susan P. Keane, Terri L. Shelton, and Susan D. Calkins noted that, “Parent involvement in a child’s education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child’s academic performance. Results indicated a statistically significant association between parent involvement and a child’s academic performance, over and above the impact of the child’s intelligence.”<sup>46</sup>

Carrie A. Semke and Susan M. Sheridan researched the effects of parental involvement on student academic achievement in their working paper published in 2011, *Family-School Connections in Rural Educational Settings: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature*, and found, “Parental participation and cooperation in their child’s educational affairs is related to several outcomes deemed important in educational arenas: increased student achievement and academic performance, stronger self-regulatory skills, fewer discipline problems, better study habits, more positive attitudes toward school, improved homework habits and work orientation, and higher educational aspirations...”<sup>47</sup>

There are multiple ways for parents to be involved in education. In the virtual learning model, parents often act as the Learning Coach and are therefore directly involved in their child’s education. Connections Academy will support Learning Coaches in becoming involved in their child’s education through an online orientation course, monthly synchronous webinars with topics designed to assist Learning Coaches in supporting and motivating their student, and Learning Coach Central – an award-winning website designed specifically for Learning Coaches.

Additionally, the article *The Adolescent Community of Engagement: A Framework for Research on Adolescent Online Learning*<sup>48</sup> stated “Likewise, Borup, et al., (2013) measured learner-parent interaction between high school-aged students enrolled in an online charter school and their parents and discovered that students in fact viewed interactions with their parents more motivational than their parents indicated.” Parent interaction motivates students and encourages them to succeed, even if parents do not think they are having an impact.

At Nevada Vision Academy, parents will be closely involved in their child’s education in partnership with their child’s teacher. Connections Academy’s robust, multi-faceted, Get Coaching! Program provides parents with access to a variety of resources to assist them in working with and supporting their child’s learning.

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<sup>46</sup> Topor, David R., Keane, Susan P., Shelton, Terri L., & Calkins, Susan D. (2010). Parent Involvement and Student Academic Performance: A Multiple Mediation Analysis, *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 38:3, 183-197  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2010.486297>

<sup>47</sup> Semke C. A., & Sheridan, S. M. (2011). *Family-School Connections in Rural Educational Settings: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature* (R2Ed Working Paper No. 2011-1). Retrieved from the National Center for Research on Rural Education website:  
<http://r2ed.unl.edu>

<sup>48</sup> Borup, J., West, R. E., Graham, C. R., & Davies, R. S. (2014). The Adolescent Community of Engagement: A framework for research on adolescent online learning. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 22(1), 107–129.

According to the 2015 study “Parent and Student Perceptions of Parent Engagement at a Cyber Charter High School”, Borup and Stevens identify five primary types of parental engagement: nurturing relationships and interactions (with both their students and the teachers); advising and mentoring; organizing; monitoring and motivating; and instructing. The study also provides several examples of how parent engagement can be enhanced in a virtual school setting, especially when parents are given the additional tools to help reinforce the engagement (pp. 75-83). Connections provides Learning Coaches and Caretakers with tools (e.g., orientations, tutorials, synchronous webinar-type sessions, recordings, and more) to better engage with their students. Based on the intimate knowledge parents have of their students, they are better able to offer their students a continuum of assistance, as needed in varying degrees, and be more strategic in how to help and engage with them (page 83).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Borup, J. & Stevens, M.A. (2015). Parent and Student Perceptions of Parent Engagement at a Cyber Charter High School, *Online Learning*, Volume 19, Issue 5

## APPENDIX C - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### *C.1 FOUNDATIONS FOR TEACHING AT A SCHOOL SUPPORTED BY CONNECTIONS*

Research on effective professional development indicates that professional development must be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. Teachers need to try out new ideas and strategies with their students and to reflect on the results of these strategies. Intensive professional development, especially when it includes application of knowledge to planning and instruction, has a greater chance of influencing teaching practices, and in turn, leading to gains in student learning. Nevada Vision Academy staff will be enrolled in Connections' Foundations of Instruction course to transition from teaching in a brick-and-mortar school to teaching in a virtual school. Teachers will learn about the school year cycle and associated tasks, and become familiar with instructional tools, reports, and resources in Connexus that are used to engage and support learners.

Professional learning sessions will include an evaluation survey to elicit teacher and administrator feedback. Audits, evaluations, and site-visits will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the training and to ensure initiatives are implemented with high fidelity.

Professional Learning will be:

- **Intensive** – Participants will identify the purpose of educational practices and examine how they can be implemented in the virtual environment. Participants will collaboratively discuss strategies that can be implemented with students.
- **Ongoing** – New instructional strategies and the latest learning science research will be connected to topics presented and discussed in prior sessions to demonstrate how specific educational practices form the “big picture” of effective instruction. Further discussion and exploration at the school level will strengthen these connections.
- **Connected to Practice** – Following each session, participants will apply what they have learned to their professional practice. They will integrate precise, targeted strategies into their planning and instruction, and reflect on the outcomes through the Teacher ePortfolio data view, a virtual portfolio which allows them to document their attendance and upload resources related to their professional learning.

Teaching in a virtual environment offers flexibility and allows for a greater level of professional learning throughout the school year. Although designated professional development days will have a specific focus, additional professional learning support will be available on a daily basis. Teachers will have multiple opportunities for seeking assistance and support with instructional strategies for engaging students and families, making decisions based on data, and completing school year cycle tasks in a timely and efficient manner. Nevada Vision Academy will receive multiple levels of support from the Connections' Academic Training and Support Services team, including the School Support Teacher Help Desk. Connections will provide a team of specialists dedicated to meeting the needs of the school.

After completion of the foundational topics covered during the first year, teachers will participate in Connection’s systematic multi-year professional development plan. Connections takes a “flipped learning” approach to professional development which requires teachers to view a video and/or read an article or complete a pre-session activity prior to attending the synchronous professional learning session. This “flipped model” approach provides teachers with background on the session topic so that the actual session can focus on practice and application of new skills and concepts. After each session, teachers will upload an “artifact” to their professional learning e-portfolio demonstrating how they are using their professional learning to personalize instruction, implement new instructional strategies, make data-driven decisions, and reflect on their teaching practices. The e-portfolio requires teachers to provide evidence of their learning, based on the objectives of the professional development session. School leaders provide teachers with feedback on their artifacts following the sessions.

### ***C.2 DESCRIPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS (PL 100, PL 200 AND PL 300)***

Second year teachers and new school staff will participate in Connections’ Professional Learning (PL) 100 series which focuses on:

- Making data-driven instructional decisions;
- Identifying risk factors that may require more intensive instructional interventions;
- Monitoring student performance based on data available at different points in the school year; and
- Providing teachers with strategies for giving effective feedback to students and evaluating evidence of learning.

Training emphasizes the “instructional shifts” required to support the level of rigor demanded by the Nevada Standards, next generation assessments, and college and career readiness expectations. During these professional learning sessions, teachers will be placed into virtual groups (e.g., chat pods, breakout rooms) for discussion and application activities with grade level/subject area teachers, when possible.

Third-year teachers and school-based staff will participate in the Professional Learning (PL) 200 series. The PL 200 series focuses on the learning sciences—deliberate practice, meaningful feedback, student engagement and motivation, multi-tiered intervention, and the role of mastery and transfer. PL 200 sessions engage teachers in thinking more critically about the topics presenting during the PL 100 sessions and provide additional opportunities for application of skills and strategies that impact student achievement across all grade levels and subject areas.

Nevada Vision Academy will also provide time during the PL 300 sessions to focus on specific content areas. The facilitator will be able to guide discussions by asking targeted questions for content areas such as math and science. Teachers will discuss research and strategies for topics such as: providing feedback, engagement, developing grit, and motivating students

In addition to these required professional learning sessions, Connections will also offer a number of “Optional Professional Learning sessions.” These sessions are available to all teachers who seek to expand their professional knowledge. Each topic will be designed for specific content area teachers and grade level teams and will include strategies for effectively and actively engaging students in the learning process. These sessions are delivered synchronously but are recorded and available to any teachers that are not able to attend the session during the scheduled time.

Professional development sessions use evaluation surveys and collaborative tools to elicit teacher and administrator feedback.

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### **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCS)**

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As a continuation of synchronous online professional development sessions, teachers will be expected to continue the conversation within their vertical and horizontal Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This allows for true application of new strategies and resources as teachers strive to personalize instruction and make data-driven decisions.

Nevada Visions Academy will implement school-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In addition, Nevada Visions Academy will have a virtual, robust Professional Learning Community Resources (PLCr) portal in Connexus which will list professional development opportunities as well as message boards, recorded LiveLesson sessions, shared resources, and more. The portal will be dedicated to shared values and vision, collaboration, shared decision-making, collective creativity, and supportive and shared leadership. Teachers will connect to the latest educational conferences, webinars, online courses, professional organizations, and research/education updates. Teachers will follow pertinent school news and announcements through weekly issues from Connections' Human Resources' Communications team.



**CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT**

**between**

**State Public Charter School Authority**

**and**

**Nevada Connections Academy**

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SIGNATURE PAGE

EXHIBIT #1

Charter School Performance Framework

EXHIBIT #2

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Pre-Opening Conditions

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Nevada Connections Academy

4

## **CHARTER CONTRACT**

This agreement constitutes a Charter Contract (the “Charter Contract”) executed between the State Public Charter School Authority (the “Authority”), and Nevada Connections Academy (“NCA”) (collectively, the “Parties”) to continue operations of the Nevada Connections Academy (the “Charter School”), an independent and autonomous public school authorized to operate in the State of Nevada.

### **RECITALS**

"WHEREAS, The primary 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; and

WHEREAS, The intention of the legislature is to provide:

1. The board of trustees of school districts with a method to experiment with providing a variety of independent public schools to the pupils of this state;
2. A framework for such experimentation;
3. A mechanism by which the results achieved by charter schools may be measured and analyzed; and
4. A procedure by which the positive results achieved by charter schools may be replicated and the negative results may be identified and eliminated; and

WHEREAS, It is further the intention of the legislature to provide teachers and other educational personnel, parents, legal guardians and other persons who are interested in the system of public education in this state the opportunity to:

1. Improve the learning of pupils and, by extension, improve the system of public education;
2. Increase the opportunities for learning and access to quality education by pupils;
3. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;

4. Establish appropriate measures for and assessments of the learning achieved by pupils who are enrolled in charter schools;
5. Provide a more thorough and efficient system of accountability of the results achieved in public education in this state; and
6. Create new professional opportunities for teachers and other educational personnel, including, without limitation, the opportunity to increase the accessibility and responsibility of teachers and other educational personnel for the program of learning offered;"

WHEREAS, The Authority is authorized by the Legislature to sponsor charter schools pursuant to NRS 386.509; and

WHEREAS, on April 25, 2014, the Authority approved the application for a charter contract pursuant to Assembly Bill 205; and

WHEREAS, the Parties intend that this Charter Contract serve as a performance contract that governs the operation of the Charter School and sets forth benchmarks for NCA's implementation of its Graduation Rate Improvement Plan;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants, representations, warranties, and agreements contained herein and for other good and lawful consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the Authority and Charter School agree as follows:

## Part I: Operation of the School

### 1.1 Establishment

- 1.1.1 As authorized by the Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 388A.150, the Authority hereby authorizes the operation of the Charter School with the aforementioned conditions, and in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in this Charter Contract.
- 1.1.2 This Charter Contract is entered into between the Charter School, its governing body (the “Charter Board”) and the Authority.

### 1.2 Parties

- 1.2.1 The person authorized to sign the Charter Contract on behalf of the Charter School is the President of the Charter Board (“Charter School Representative”).
- 1.2.2 The person authorized to sign on behalf of the Authority is the Chair of the Authority or, in the absence of the Chair, the Acting Chair.
- 1.2.3 The Charter School Representative affirms as a condition of this Charter Contract, that he/she is the above-described representative of the Charter School and has authority to sign this Charter Contract on behalf of the Charter School.

### 1.3 Term of Charter Contract

- 1.3.1 The Term of this Charter Contract shall be six (6) years.
- 1.3.2 This Charter Contract is effective upon execution, and the term of the Charter Contract began as a written charter on May 6, 2013 and will terminate **on the last day of the school year** six years from that date of execution, unless earlier terminated as provided herein.

### 1.4 General

- 1.4.1 The Charter School shall not operate for profit and may be incorporated as a nonprofit corporation pursuant to the provision of chapter 82 of NRS.
- 1.4.2 The Charter School believes that all contracts obligating the Charter School have been and will be undertaken by the Charter School in accordance with statute and regulation. By December 1, 2017, the Charter School shall certify that all contracts obligating the Charter School have been undertaken in accordance with statute and regulation or notify the Authority of any contract that are not in accordance with statute or regulations and the efforts in plans to undertake to bring those contracts into conformance. If after the Charter School undertakes good faith efforts to comply with this section, the Charter School needs additional time to comply, it shall be able to request no more than two separate thirty day extensions.
- 1.4.3 The Charter School and its Charter Board shall operate at all times in accordance with all federal and state laws, local ordinances, regulations and Authority policies adopted as required by law applicable to charter schools.
- 1.4.4 The Charter School shall be deemed a public school subject to all applicable provisions of local, state and federal law and regulation, specifically including

**Comment [LG1]:** Greg - this is to avoid terminating the charter on May 6, 2019 -- before the end of the school year.

but not limited to health and safety, civil rights, student assessment and assessment administration, data collection, reporting, grading, and remediation requirements, except to the extent such provisions are inapplicable to charter schools.

1.4.5 Pursuant to NRS 388A.159, the Local Education Agency of the Charter School is the Authority.

### **1.5 Charter School Governing Body**

1.5.1 The Charter School shall be governed by the Charter Board, which Board is deemed a public body, in a manner that is consistent with the terms of this Charter Contract so long as such provisions are in accordance with applicable state, federal, and local law and regulation. (NRS 388A.320)

1.5.2 The Charter Board shall have final authority and responsibility for the academic, financial, and organizational performance of the Charter School, and the fulfillment of the Charter Contract.

1.5.3 The Charter Board shall be the final authority in matters affecting the Charter School, including but not limited to staffing, job titles, employee salary and benefits, financial accountability and curriculum.

1.5.4 The Charter Board shall act in accordance with and is subject to the Nevada Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, and Nevada Local Government Purchasing laws (NRS 332.039-.148) |

1.5.5 The Charter Board shall have authority for and be responsible for policy, oversight, and ultimate accountability for operational decisions of the Charter School. The Charter Board shall govern the Charter School pursuant to Nevada law and also the following terms and conditions:

Comment [GDO2]: See new section 12.14

1.5.5.1 Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The articles of incorporation, if applicable, and bylaws of the Charter Board shall provide for governance of the operation of the Charter School as a public charter school and shall at all times be consistent with all applicable law, regulation and this Charter Contract. The articles of incorporation, if applicable, are set forth in Exhibit #2 (initially or as amended, the “Articles of Incorporation”) and incorporated herein by reference. The Charter School shall notify the sponsor of changes to the bylaws or Articles of Incorporation.

1.5.5.2 Composition. The composition of the Charter Board shall at all times be determined by and consistent with the articles of incorporation, if applicable, and bylaws and all applicable law and regulation. The complete roster of the Charter Board and each member’s affidavit, resume, and Request for Information shall be maintained in the Authority’s established document library (AOIS). The Charter Board shall notify the Authority of any changes to the Board Roster and submit an amended Board Roster to the documents library within ten (10) business days of their taking effect.

1.5.5.3 Affiliation. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in the Charter



Contract, the Articles of Incorporation, if applicable, or the bylaws, in no event shall the Charter Board, at any time, include more than two directors, officers, employees, agents or other affiliates of any single entity, with the exception of the Charter School itself, regardless of whether said entity is affiliated or otherwise partnered with the Charter School. (NAC 386.345(3))

- 1.5.5.4 Conflicts of Interest. The Charter Board shall adopt a Conflicts of Interest Policy (the “Conflicts of Interest Policy”), including provisions related to nepotism and consistent with this section and applicable law by January 1 of the Charter School’s first year of operation . The Charter Board shall, at all times, comply with the provisions of the Conflicts of Interest Policy. The adopted and approved Conflicts of Interest Policy shall be maintained in the Authority’s established document library (AOIS). Any modification of the Conflicts of Interest Policy must be submitted to the Authority within five (5) days of approval by the Charter Board.
- 1.5.5.5 Non-Commingling. Assets, funds, liabilities and financial records of the Charter School shall be kept separate from assets, funds, liabilities, and financial records of any other person, entity, or organization unless approved in writing by the Authority.

**1.6 Location**

- 1.6.1 The Charter School shall operate and provide educational services, including, without limitation, delivery of instruction or conduct operations at the following location(s):

555 Double Eagle Ct #2000, Reno, NV 89521

Additionally, the Charter School may employ personnel who work remotely to provide the above described services.

**1.7 Facilities**

- 1.7.1 The building(s) in which the Charter School is to be located shall be known as the Charter School Facilities (the “Facilities”).
- 1.7.2 The Authority or its designee may, at the Authority’s discretion, conduct health and safety inspections of the Facilities.
- 1.7.3 The Facilities shall meet all applicable health, safety and fire code requirements and shall conform with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and any other federal or state requirements applicable to public charter schools.
- 1.7.4 The Charter School’s relocation to different Facilities shall constitute a material amendment of this Charter Contract and shall not become effective and the

Charter School shall not take action or implement the change requested in the amendment until the amendment is approved, in writing, by the Authority.

- 1.7.5 In the event that legally viable Facilities and/or necessary certificates and permits are not in place for such a relocation, the Charter School may not provide instruction at the new Facilities or otherwise admit pupils into the new Facilities. In such event, the Authority reserves the right to enforce any of the consequences for failure to act in accordance with the material terms and conditions of this Charter Contract.

### **1.8 Charter School Independence**

- 1.8.1 Neither the Authority nor the board of trustees of the local school district in which the Charter School is located may assign any pupil who is enrolled in a public school or any employee who is employed in a public school to the Charter School. Neither the Authority nor the local school district in which the Charter School is located may interfere with the operation and management of the Charter School except as authorized by NRS 386.490-.610, inclusive, and any other statute or regulation applicable to the Charter School or its officers or employees.
- 1.8.2 The Charter School will be subject to review of its operations and finances by the Authority, including related records, when the Authority, in its sole discretion, deems such review necessary.

## **Part 2: School Operations**

### **2.1 Open Meetings and Public Records**

- 2.1.1 The Charter School shall maintain and implement policies and procedures to ensure that it complies with all applicable laws and regulations relating to public meetings and records.

### **2.2 Mission Statement**

- 2.2.1 The Charter School's mission statement (initially or as amended, the "Mission Statement") shall be as presented in the approved Charter Application appearing in Exhibit #3 and incorporated by reference herein. Any change to the Mission Statement shall be a material amendment to this Charter Contract and shall not become effective and the Charter School shall not take action or implement the change requested in the amendment until the amendment is approved, in writing, by the Authority.

### **2.3 Age; Grade Range; Number of Students**

- 2.3.1 The Charter School shall provide instruction to pupils in such grades and numbers in each year of operation under the Charter Contract as it did during the 2015-2016 academic year.
- 2.3.2 The Charter School may modify the number of students in any particular grade,

and number of students within a class, to accommodate staffing exigencies and attrition patterns provided such modifications are consistent with this Charter Contract.

- 2.3.3 Elimination of a grade level that the Charter School was scheduled to serve; expansion to serve grade levels not identified in 2.3.1; or an annual increase or decrease in total enrollment by more than 10% from the enrollment of October 1 of preceding year shall be a material amendment of this Charter Contract and shall not become effective and the Charter School shall not take action or implement the change requested in the amendment until the amendment is approved, in writing, by the Authority. Authorization to expand may require the Charter School to demonstrate satisfactory academic and financial performance, and organizational compliance. Regardless what enrollment projections are contained in the charter school application approved by the Authority, the first year enrollment on October 1, 2016 for the Charter School shall serve as the basis for the 10% annual enrollment increase or decrease for the school's second year; similarly, subsequent years' enrollment on October 1 shall serve as the basis for the following years' enrollment. Each year's enrollment shall be limited to 10% more pupils than the previous year's October 1 enrollment unless the school's request for a material amendment is approved by the Authority. For example, a school enrolling 100 pupils any given year may enroll no more than 110 pupils the following year without Authority approval of a material amendment. It is the responsibility of the Charter School to request the material amendment required by this section 2.3.3 in a timely manner so as to manage the school's enrollment to comply with 2.3.3.

2.4 **Non-discrimination**

- 2.4.1 The Charter School shall not discriminate against any student, employee or other person on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, gender, marital status, religion, ancestry, disability, need for special education services, income level, athletic ability, proficiency in the English language or any other grounds that would be unlawful if done by any other public school. It shall take all steps necessary to ensure that discrimination does not occur, as required by federal civil rights law.

2.5 **Student Recruitment, Enrollment and Attendance**

- 2.5.1 The Charter School shall make student recruitment, admissions, enrollment and retention decisions in a nondiscriminatory manner and without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, marital status, religion, ancestry, disability, need for special education services or status as credit-deficient. In no event may the Charter School limit admission based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, income level, athletic ability, status as credit-deficient or proficiency in the English language, except as authorized by NRS 386.580(8).
- 2.5.2 The Charter School shall adopt and adhere to a Truancy and Absence Policy

pursuant to NAC 386.180(5).

- 2.5.3 If there are more applications to enroll in the charter school than there are spaces available, the charter school shall select students to attend using a random selection process that shall be publicly noticed and open to the public.
- 2.5.4 Pursuant to NRS 386.580, Charter School may give enrollment preference based upon criteria established in law and regulation. Should state laws or regulations be amended to alter the nature or application of enrollment preferences, Charter School shall comply therewith upon the effective date of the changes. Before the Charter School enrolls pupils who are eligible for enrollment, the Charter School may enroll a child who:
  - 2.5.4.1 Is a sibling of a pupil currently enrolled;
  - 2.5.4.2 Was enrolled in a tuition-free prekindergarten program at the Charter School or affiliated program with the Charter School;
  - 2.5.4.3 Is a child of a person who is:
    - 2.5.4.3.1 Employed by the Charter School;
    - 2.5.4.3.2 A member of the Committee to Form the Charter School; or
    - 2.5.4.3.3 A member of the Charter Board;
  - 2.5.4.4 Is in a particular category of at-risk and the child meets the eligibility requirements prescribed by the Charter School for that particular category; or
  - 2.5.4.5 Resides within the school district and within two (2) miles of the Charter School if the Charter School is located in an area that the Authority determines includes a high percentage of children who are at-risk.

## 2.6 **Tuition, Fees and Volunteer Requirements**

- 2.6.1 The Charter School shall not charge tuition or fees of any kind as a condition of enrollment. The Charter School may not impose any fees that a school district would be prohibited by applicable law or regulation from imposing.
- 2.6.2 Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to prohibit the Charter School from imposing fees that a school district would be permitted to impose.
- 2.6.3 Any requirement that a parent commit a number of volunteer hours shall be prohibited unless such a requirement considers individual family circumstances and allows for a waiver of volunteer hours.

## 2.7 **School Calendar; Hours of Operation**

- 2.7.1 The Charter School shall adopt a school calendar with an instructional program to provide annually at least as many days of instruction as are required of other public schools located in the same school district as the Charter School is located, unless written approval from the Superintendent of Public Instruction provides for a waiver of this requirement. (NRS 386.550)

## 2.8 **Student Conduct and Discipline**

- 2.8.1 The Charter School shall adopt and adhere to a student discipline policy (the "Discipline Policy") pursuant to NRS 386.585 and regulation. The Charter

School may not remove, withdraw, suspend or expel a pupil against a parent's wishes for reasons other than the reasons for suspension or expulsion stated in NRS 392.4655 – 392.4675 or other applicable statute or regulation. Nothing in this provision precludes the Charter School from withdrawing a pupil from the Charter School consistent with applicable law and regulation.

**2.9 Service Agreements, Contracts, Facility Lease or Purchase**

2.9.1 Nothing in this Charter shall be interpreted to prevent the Charter School from entering into a contract or other agreement related to the operation of the school. The Charter School shall include in any agreement or contract entered into that the provisions of any such agreement are enforceable only to the extent they are compliant with applicable law and regulation. The Charter Board is responsible for ensuring that all contracts or other agreements are compliant with existing law and regulation.

2.9.2 The Charter School shall clearly indicate to vendors and other entities and individuals with which or with whom the Charter School enters into an agreement or contract for goods or services that the obligations of the Charter School under such agreement or contract are solely the responsibility of the Charter School and are not the responsibility of the State of Nevada, the Authority, or the Department of Education.

**2.10 Contracts with an Educational Management Organization (EMO)**

2.10.1 The provisions appearing under 2.9 apply to contracts with an EMO.

2.10.2 Should the Charter School intend to enter into an agreement with an EMO as defined by NRS 386.562, the following provisions shall apply:

2.10.2.1 The Charter School shall comply with all Authority requests for information about the EMO that are reasonably related to the Authority's duty to ensure that the Charter School is in compliance with all provisions of this Charter Contract and NRS 386.562; and NAC 386.400, 386.405, 386.407, 386.180, and 386.204 or other applicable statute and regulation. For the purposes of this section, the Charter School's good faith prosecution of a claim for breach of contract against an EMO shall constitute compliance.

2.10.2.2 In no event shall the Charter Board delegate or assign its responsibility for fulfilling the terms of this Charter Contract.

2.10.2.3 Any management contract entered into by Charter School shall include an indemnification provision for the Charter School as follows: "The management company shall indemnify, save and hold harmless against any and all claims, demands, suits, actions, proceedings, losses, costs, judgments, damages, or other forms of liability to third parties, of every kind and description, actual or claimed, including but not limited to attorneys' fees and/or litigation expenses, including but not limited to injury to property or persons (including but not limited to civil rights violations), occurring or allegedly occurring, in connection with the operation of the

management company, or from conduct committed or alleged to have been committed by the management company on the premises of the Charter School, or from conduct committed by the management company's employees, officers, directors, subcontractors, or agents, during the term of this Charter Contract or any renewal thereof. Additionally, the management company shall defend the Authority in any such action or proceedings brought thereon. This provision shall survive the termination of this contract."

- 2.10.2.4 Should the Charter School propose to enter into a contract with an EMO, the Charter School agrees to submit all information requested by Authority regarding the management arrangement, including a copy of the proposed contract and a description of the EMO, with identification of its principals and their backgrounds. Entering into a contract with an EMO when an EMO was not previously engaged, terminating a contract with an existing EMO, or replacing an existing EMO with another EMO is considered a material amendment of the Charter Contract and the Charter School shall not enter into or terminate such contracts without written Authority approval.
- 2.10.2.5 Renewal or renegotiation of an existing contract with an EMO requires the Charter School to notify the sponsor, only, and is not considered a material amendment.

## 2.11 **Employment Matters**

- 2.11.1 All employees of the Charter School shall be deemed public employees.
- 2.11.2 The Charter School agrees to comply with the provisions of NRS 386.595 regarding employment status and NRS 386.590 regarding teacher licensure.
- 2.11.3 Neither the Charter School, nor its employees, agents, nor contractors are employees or agents of the Authority; nor are either the Authority or its employees, agents, or contractors employees or agents of the Charter School. None of the provisions of this Charter Contract will be construed to create a relationship of agency, representation, joint venture, ownership, or control of employment between the Parties other than that of independent Parties contracting solely for the purpose of effectuating this Charter Contract.
- 2.11.4 The Charter School shall have ultimate responsibility for employment, management, dismissal and discipline of its employees, including key personnel employed by an EMO. The Charter School will establish and implement its own dispute resolution process for employment matters.
- 2.11.5 The Charter School may not employ instructional personnel whose certificate or license to teach has been revoked or is currently suspended by the state board of education in this state or another state. (NRS 386.590(a))
- 2.11.6 An employee of a charter school is eligible for all benefits for which the employee would be eligible for employment in a public school, including, without limitation, participation in the Public Employees Retirement System in a

manner consistent with NRS 386.595.

- 2.11.7 The Charter School shall conduct criminal background checks and act in accordance with NRS 386.588.
  - 2.11.8 The Charter School shall maintain employee files as identified in the Operations Manual, which are subject to audit by the Authority or other appropriate entity.
  - 2.11.9 If the Charter School receives Title I funding, it must ensure that 100% of teachers in core academic subjects are Highly Qualified (as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) or are working pursuant to a plan to achieve Highly Qualified status.
- 2.12 Student Health, Welfare and Safety**
- 2.12.1 The Charter School shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations concerning student health, welfare, and safety, including but not limited to state laws regarding the reporting of child abuse, accident prevention and disaster response, and any applicable state and local regulations governing the operation of school facilities.
- 2.13 Transportation**
- 2.13.1 If applicable, the Charter School shall be responsible for providing students transportation consistent with the plan proposed in the approved Charter Application appearing in Exhibit #3 and incorporated herein.
  - 2.13.2 The termination or change of transportation shall constitute a material amendment of this Charter Contract and shall not become effective and the Charter School shall not take action or implement the change requested in the amendment until the amendment is approved, in writing, by the Authority.

### Part 3: Educational Program

**3.1 Design Elements**

- 3.1.1 The Charter School shall have control over and responsibility for delivery of the educational program and for attainment of the performance standards as set forth in the charter school performance framework (the “Charter School Performance Framework”) Exhibit #1, as amended by Exhibit #1.1, incorporated herein. The Charter School shall have discretion to modify, amend, adapt, and otherwise change the educational program as it deems necessary to achieve the performance standards so long as such changes are consistent with the Charter Application and the Charter Contract.
- 3.1.2 In determining whether or not the Charter School complies with the essential terms of the educational program, the Authority will use the Charter Application (initial or as amended) as the basis to assess fidelity.

**3.2 Curriculum**

- 3.2.1 The Charter School’s educational program shall meet or exceed Nevada’s content standards.

**3.3 Student Assessment**

- 3.3.1 The Charter School shall be subject to and comply with all requirements related to the state assessment and accountability system for public schools.
- 3.3.2 Nothing in this section prohibits the Charter School or the Authority from assessing student learning outside of and in addition to the state's testing program.
- 3.3.3 Educational program matters not specifically identified in this Charter Contract shall remain within the Charter School's authority and discretion.

3.4 **Special Education**

- 3.4.1 The Authority is the "local education agency" ("LEA") for purposes of compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA").
- 3.4.2 The Charter School shall provide services and accommodations to students with disabilities as set forth in the Charter Application and in accordance with any relevant policies thereafter adopted, as well as with all applicable provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.) (the "IDEA"), the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.) (the "ADA"), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794) ("Section 504"), and all applicable regulations promulgated pursuant to such federal laws. This includes providing services to enrolled students with disabilities in accordance with the individualized education program ("IEP") prescribed by a student's IEP team. The Charter School shall comply with all applicable requirements of state law and regulation concerning the provision of services to students with disabilities.
- 3.4.3 An annual Memorandum of Understanding which defines the rights and responsibilities of the Charter School acting as a school of the LEA and the Authority acting as LEA for the purposes of Special Education, distribution of federal funds, and other LEA responsibilities will be annually updated and disseminated by the Authority and signed by the Parties.
- 3.4.4 The Charter School shall maintain a special education reserve as a financial reserve or demonstrate, to the Authority's satisfaction, that the Charter School carries an insurance policy with sufficient coverage to ensure compliance with the indemnification and financial obligations of the Charter School. Such reserve or insurance product shall not in any way limit the Charter School's obligation in the event the special education reserve or insurance product is insufficient to fully pay costs incurred in connection with any claim or claims, and the Charter School shall remain fully responsible for any and all costs incurred in connection with such claim or claims. The Charter School shall keep any special education reserve separate from and not utilize it to satisfy any other requirements applicable to the Charter School. Any special education reserve shall be maintained in a separate bank account and shall be equal to \$25,000 plus the interest that has been earned in this account to date. The Charter School shall fully fund any reserve account by the end of its fifth



year of operation and contribute to it in a manner that can reasonably be expected to reach this goal. If money is withdrawn from the reserve account, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Authority, the Charter School shall be required to replace all sums withdrawn by the end of the subsequent fiscal year.

**3.5 English Language Learners**

- 3.5.1 The Charter School shall provide resources and support to English language learners to enable them to acquire sufficient English language proficiency to participate in the mainstream English language instructional program. The Charter School shall adhere to policies and procedures for identifying, assessing and exiting English language learners, consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. The Authority and the Charter School will work to assure compliance with any and all requirements of the state and federal law regarding services to English language learners.

**Part 4: Charter School Finance**

**4.1 Financial Management**

- 4.1.1 The Charter School shall control and be responsible for financial management and performance of the Charter School including budgeting and expenditures. The Charter School shall operate on a fiscal year that begins July 1 and ends June 30.
- 4.1.2 At all times, the Charter School shall maintain appropriate governance and managerial procedures and financial controls, including without limitation: (1) commonly accepted accounting practices and the capacity to implement them; (2) a bank account maintained within this State; (3) adequate payroll procedures; (4) an organizational chart; (5) procedures for the creation and review of monthly and quarterly financial reports, including identification of the individual who will be responsible for preparing such financial reports in the following fiscal year; (6) internal control procedures for cash receipts, cash disbursements and purchases; and (7) maintenance of asset registers and financial procedures for grants in accordance with applicable federal and state law.
- 4.1.3 The Charter School shall undergo an independent financial audit conducted in accordance with governmental accounting standards and GASB #34 performed by a certified public accountant each fiscal year. The results of the audit will be provided to the Authority in written form in accordance with the date established by law and regulation and identified in the Reporting Requirements Manual. The Charter School shall pay for the audit.
- 4.1.4 The Charter School shall prepare quarterly financial reports for the Authority

in compliance with this Charter Contract. Such reports shall be submitted to the Authority no later than fifteen (15) days following the end of each quarter, as defined in the Reporting Requirements Manual.

- 4.1.5 The Charter School agrees to maintain financial records in accordance with the governmental accounting method required by the Nevada Department of Education (the “Department”) and/or Authority and to make such records available upon request.
- 4.1.6 The Charter School shall use and follow the chart of accounts and any grant codes as defined by the Department in the Nevada Common Elements for Accounting and Reporting K-12 Educational Finances.
- 4.1.7 The Charter School shall assure that all financial records for the school are maintained, posted and reconciled at least monthly, and are open for public inspection during reasonable business hours.
- 4.1.8 The Charter School shall establish procedures for ensuring that funds are disbursed for approved expenditures consistent with the Charter School’s budget.
- 4.1.9 Pursuant to NAC 387.770, the Charter School shall maintain a complete and current inventory of all school property and shall perform a physical inventory annually. Any asset acquired by the Charter School is the property of the Charter School for the duration of the Charter Contract and any subsequent renewals. The Charter School shall take reasonable precautions to safeguard assets acquired with public funds. The Charter School shall manage all assets consistent with the requirements of applicable law and regulation, including without limitation NAC 387.335, 387.342 and 387.360; and NRS 386.536.
- 4.1.10 If the Charter School’s records fail to establish clearly whether an asset was acquired with the use of public funds, the assets shall be deemed to be public assets.
- 4.1.11 Except as may be expressly provided in this Charter Contract, as set forth in any subsequent written agreement between the Charter School and the Authority pursuant to NRS 386.561, or as may be required by law, neither the Charter School nor the Authority shall be entitled to the use of or access to the services, supplies, or facilities of the other. Any service agreements between the Authority and the Charter School shall be subject to all terms and conditions of this Charter Contract, except as may be otherwise agreed in writing. The purchase of any services not expressly required under this contract or set forth in any subsequent written agreement between the Charter School and the Authority or required by law, shall not be a condition of the approval or continuation of this contract.
- 4.1.12 The Charter School shall comply with other requirements as may be imposed through state law or regulation, from time to time, on charter school finances, budgeting, accounting, and expenditures, provided that the Authority shall

provide technical assistance regarding material changes to state law and regulation, and the Parties will collaborate to assure that they each remain reasonably current on the impact of any modifications on charter schools. The Parties agree that the Charter School retains primary responsibility for compliance with state law and regulation.

- 4.1.13 The Charter School is solely responsible for all debt it incurs, and the Authority shall not be contractually bound on the Charter School's account to any third party. A statement to this effect shall be a provision of any and all contracts entered into by the Charter School.

#### 4.2 **Budget**

- 4.2.1 In accordance with law and regulation and as identified in the Reporting Requirements Manual, the Charter School shall submit to the Department and the Authority the school's tentative budget for the upcoming fiscal year and the Charter School shall submit to the Department and the Authority the school's final budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget shall:

- 4.2.1.1 Be presented on forms prescribed by the Nevada Department of Taxation; and
- 4.2.1.2 Not provide for expenditures, inter-fund transfers, or reserves in excess of available revenues plus beginning fund balances.

#### 4.3 **Charter School Funding**

- 4.3.1 Charter School shall receive, directly from the Department, state and local aid in an amount equal to its weighted count of enrollment multiplied by the per pupil Distributive School Account amount for the county of residence of each student plus the per pupil Outside Revenue amount for that county. The count of pupils for calculating the basic support for distribution to a charter school is the "Average daily enrollment" as defined by NRS 387.1211.
- 4.3.2 The Charter School shall maintain and transmit all necessary student information in the format prescribed by the Department to evidence enrollment and attendance of students for purposes of receiving state aid. The Charter School will receive state payment from the Distributive School Account directly from the Department, based on "Average daily enrollment" as defined by NRS 387.1211.
- 4.3.3 The Charter School shall receive state aid payments quarterly unless the quarterly payments exceed \$500,000 at which time the Department will pay state aid in monthly installments directly to the Charter School.
- 4.3.4 All state aid payments to the Charter School are subject to correction pending the outcome of the Department's annual Pupil Enrollment and Attendance Audit.

#### 4.4 **Authority Funding**

- 4.4.1 The yearly sponsorship fee to be paid by the Charter School to the Authority must be in an amount of money not to exceed two (2) percent but at least one

(1) percent of the total amount of money apportioned to the Charter School during the school year pursuant to NRS 387.124. (NRS 386.570)

- 4.4.2 The Authority shall notify the Charter School in February of the fee anticipated to be charged pursuant to NRS 386.570 in the following fiscal year.

## Part 5: Insurance and Legal Liabilities

### 5.1 Insurance

- 5.1.1 The Charter School shall provide and maintain, at its sole expense without reimbursement, adequate insurance, pursuant to NAC 386.215, necessary for the operation of the school, including but not limited to, property insurance, general liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance, unemployment compensation insurance, motor vehicle insurance, and errors and omissions insurance covering the Charter School and its employees. Should the State legislature or State Board of Education change the amount and/or type of insurance coverage required, the Charter School shall take necessary steps to ensure compliance with the law or regulation within thirty (30) days of receiving notice by the Authority of such change. The Authority shall be named as additional insured under all insurance policies identified under NAC 386.215.

### 5.2 Liability

- 5.2.1 As required by NRS 388A.366, the Charter School agrees that the Authority is not liable for the acts or omissions of the Charter School, its officers, agents, or employees. The Charter School agrees to hold harmless, indemnify and defend the Authority against any claim or liability arising from an act or omission by the governing body of the charter school or an employee or officer of the charter school. An action at law may not be maintained against the sponsor of a charter school for any cause of action for which the charter school has obtained liability insurance and shall provide such indemnification as required by NRS 388A.366..
- 5.2.2 If the Charter School files a voluntary petition for bankruptcy or is declared bankrupt during a school year, neither the State of Nevada nor the Authority may be held liable for any claims resulting from the bankruptcy pursuant to NRS 386.575.

Comment [GDO3]: Inserted from NRS 388A.366.

## Part 6: Transparency and Accountability

### 6.1 Charter School Reporting

- 6.1.1 The Authority shall provide the Charter School with a Reporting Requirements Manual on or before the commencement of the contract year and updated at least annually. The Authority shall endeavor to make the Reporting Requirements Manual as complete as possible. The Charter School shall be

responsible for submitting timely and complete reports in accordance with the Reporting Requirements Manual.

6.1.2 The Authority shall provide the Charter School with an Operations Manual on or before the commencement of the contract year and updated at least annually.

6.2 **Additional Reporting**

6.2.1 The Charter School shall be responsible for additional reporting as required for compliance with state law and regulation, federal requirements, and other applicable external reporting requirements.

6.3 **Authority Reporting**

6.3.1 The Authority shall produce and make available reports to the Charter School in a manner consistent with the Reporting Requirements Manual.

**Part 7: Oversight**

7.1 **Authority**

7.1.1 Pursuant to NRS 386.509, the Authority shall have broad oversight authority over the Charter School and may take all reasonable steps necessary to confirm that the Charter School is and remains in material compliance with this Charter Contract, the Charter Application, and applicable law and regulation. The Authority's oversight of the Charter School shall include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

- 7.1.1.1 Oversight, intervention, termination, renewal, and closure processes and procedures for the Charter School as set forth in this Contract and Nevada law;
- 7.1.1.2 Reviewing the performance and compliance of the Charter School within the terms of this Charter Contract and applicable laws, policies and regulations;
- 7.1.1.3 Ensuring the Charter School's compliance with reporting requirements;
- 7.1.1.4 Monitoring the educational, legal, fiscal, and organizational condition of the Charter School; and
- 7.1.1.5 Providing guidance to the Charter School on compliance and other operational matters.

7.2 **Inspection**

7.2.1 All records established and maintained in accordance with the provisions of this Charter Contract, applicable policies and/or regulations, and federal and state law shall be open to inspection by the Authority and other applicable agencies, entities, or individuals within a reasonable period of time after request is made.

7.3 **Site Visits**

7.3.1 The Authority shall visit the Charter School at least once as a component of the Mid-Term evaluation as defined in the Charter School Performance

Framework. Authority may, at its discretion, conduct formal, targeted school visits. Such site visits may include any activities reasonably related to fulfillment of its oversight responsibilities including, but not limited to, inspection of the facilities; inspection of records maintained by the Charter School; and interviews of school and other stakeholders.

**7.4 Notification**

- 7.4.1 The Charter School shall notify the Authority immediately of any conditions that it knows are likely to cause it to violate the terms of this Charter Contract or the Charter Application. Such notification shall not be construed as relief from the Charter School's responsibility to correct such conditions.
- 7.4.2 The Charter School shall notify the Authority immediately of any circumstances requiring the closure of the Charter School, including but not limited to natural disaster, other extraordinary emergency, or destruction of or damage to the school facility.
- 7.4.3 The Charter School shall immediately notify the Authority of the arrest or charge of any members of the Charter Board or any Charter School employee for a crime punishable as a felony, any crime related to the misappropriation of funds or theft, any crime or misdemeanor constituting an act against a minor child or student, or of the investigation of a member of the Charter Board or any Charter School employee for child abuse.
- 7.4.4 The Charter School shall notify the Authority immediately of any change to its corporate legal status.
- 7.4.5 The Charter School shall notify the Authority immediately of any default on any obligation, which shall include debts for which payments are past due by sixty (60) days or more.
- 7.4.6 The Charter School shall notify the Authority immediately if at any time the Charter School receives notice or is informed that the Charter School or the Authority are parties to a legal suit.

**7.5 Intervention**

- 7.5.1 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.
- 7.5.2 Any complaints or concerns received by the Authority about the Charter School or its operation including but not limited to complaints filed with the Office for Civil Rights, the Nevada Attorney General's Office, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, shall be forwarded promptly by the Authority to the Charter School.
- 7.5.3 The Charter School shall promptly forward to the Authority any formal complaints or concerns received by the Charter School filed with or from the Office for Civil Rights, the Nevada Attorney General's Office, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and/or formal grievances filed by any

party with the Charter Board. Such forwarding of complaints or concerns shall not relieve Charter School of the responsibility of resolving the complaints or concerns.

- 7.5.4 The Charter School shall indemnify the Authority for any costs, attorney fees, and/or financial penalties imposed on the Authority by state and/or federal authorities due to actions or omissions of the Charter School relative to regulatory compliance.
- 7.5.5 To the extent that concerns or complaints received by the Authority about the Charter School may trigger Authority intervention, including termination or non-renewal of the Charter Contract under this Contract or Nevada law, the Authority may monitor the Charter School's handling of such concerns or complaints. In such cases, the Authority may request and the Charter School shall provide information regarding the Charter School's actions in responding to those concerns or complaints.

## Part 8: Termination and Default Termination

### 8.1 Termination

- 8.1.1 As provided by NRS 388A.300, this Charter Contract may at any time be terminated by the Authority before its expiration upon determination and majority vote of the Authority that the Charter School, its officers or its employees:
  - 8.1.1.1 Committed a material breach of the terms and conditions of the Charter Contract;
  - 8.1.1.2 Failed to comply with generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
  - 8.1.1.3 Failed to comply with the provisions of NRS 386.490 to 386.610, inclusive, or any other statute or lawful regulation applicable to charter schools; or
  - 8.1.1.4 Persistently underperformed, as measured by the performance indicators, measures and metrics set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework for the Charter School.
  - 8.1.1.5
- 8.1.2 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Charter School has filed for a voluntary petition of bankruptcy, is adjudicated bankrupt or insolvent, or is otherwise financially impaired such that the Charter School cannot continue to operate.
- 8.1.3 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Authority determines that termination is necessary to protect the health and safety of the pupils who are enrolled in the Charter School or persons who are employed by the Charter School from jeopardy, or to prevent damage to or loss of property of the school district or the community in which the Charter School is located.

8.1.4 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Authority determines that the committee to form the charter school or charter management organization, as applicable, or any member of the committee to form the charter school or charter management organization, as applicable, or the governing body of the charter school has at any time made a material misrepresentation or omission concerning any information disclosed to the Authority

8.1.5 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Authority determines that the charter school operates a high school that has a graduation rate for the immediately preceding school year that is less than 60 percent;

8.1.5.1 For the graduating cohorts, as defined by NAC 389.0246, of 2016-2017 academic year, 2017-2018 academic year, and 2018-2019 academic year the Charter School's Charter Contract shall not be eligible for termination based on a graduation rate, as calculated by the Nevada Department of Education, below 60%. However, the Charter School shall be eligible for reconstitution of its governing board if its graduation rate is below the 2018-19 benchmark established by this section. Graduation rate benchmarks: the Charter School Performance Framework for the Charter School.

Academic Year Cohort 2017-18: 49%  
Academic Year Cohort 2018-19: 60%

8.1.6 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Authority determines that the charter school operates an elementary or middle school or junior high school that is rated in the lowest 5 percent of elementary schools, middle schools or junior high schools in the State in pupil achievement and school performance, as determined by the Department pursuant to the statewide system of accountability for public schools; or

8.1.7 Pursuant to NRS 388A.330, the Charter Contract may be terminated by the Authority if the Authority determines that pupil achievement and school performance at the charter school is unsatisfactory as determined by the Department pursuant to criteria prescribed by regulation by the Department to measure the performance of any public school.

8.1.8 Except as otherwise provided in section 8.1.5.1 of this contract, in any instance of termination, reconstitution, the Authority shall provide to the Charter School written notice of termination, which notice shall include its findings and reasons for such action, and adhere to the process outlined in NRS

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Comment [GDO4]: NO AGREEMENT

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Deleted: If the Charter School fails to meet the 2017-18 benchmark, a financial accountability penalty shall be applied as follows:¶

¶ The School will be required to demonstrate year over year improvement in its graduation rate, as measured by the following targets:¶

¶ 2017 graduation rate -- 49%¶

2018 graduation rate -- 60+%¶

NCA will continue to be funded in accordance with applicable Nevada and federal law. However, in any given year identified above where the school's graduation rate (as measured in accordance with then applicable federal and state law) falls below the target graduation rate set forth above, the school would be subject to a reimbursement penalty calculated as follows:¶

¶ 1. Identifying the student population used to determine penalty¶

- Exclude all K-8 students.¶
- Exclude all high school students on track to graduate on time (defined as all first-year 9th graders, 10th graders who began the school year with at least 5 credits, 11th graders who began with at least 11 credits, or 12th graders who began with at least 17 credits). ¶
- Exclude all high school students with 504 plans and IEPs.¶
- Exclude all high school students who enrolled part-time (if there are any it is a handful), or who are not enrolled for the full semester (Start Date > 1st day of semester (either first or second semester)).¶
- Exclude all high school students who withdraw from NCA and transfer to another high school (or its recognized equivalent) located within Nevada or elsewhere within the United States or abroad. ¶

¶ 2. Calculating the penalty based on the remaining students (high school students not on track and without 504s & IEPs)¶

- Assume full funding for a full year student is \$7,000 per year, roughly 1/7th supports "administrative costs" (administration, counseling services, etc.) and the remaining can be allocated per course - approximately \$1000 per full credit and \$500 per 1/2 credit.¶

... [1]



388A.330.

**8.2 Default Termination**

8.2.1 The Authority shall terminate the Charter Contract if the school receives in any period of 5 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. The charter school's annual rating pursuant to the statewide system of accountability based upon the performance of the charter school for any school year before the 2016-2017 school year must not be included in the count of annual ratings for the purposes of this subsection.

**8.3 Other Remedies**

8.3.1 The Authority may impose other appropriate remedies for breach including, but not limited to, a required corrective action plan. Remedies available under this section shall not include termination, reconstitution, or receivership.

**Part 9: Closure**

**9.1 Closure**

9.1.1 In the event that the Charter School is required to cease operation for any reason, including but not limited to non-renewal, termination, or voluntary surrender of the Charter Contract, the Charter School shall cooperate fully with the Authority to ensure the orderly closure of the Charter School in a manner consistent with state law and regulation (NRS 386.536), including, but not limited to:

9.1.1.1 Securing student records; assisting students with their enrollment in other schools; financial responsibilities and preserving financial records.

9.1.2 Nothing in this Part shall constitute a waiver of any right the Charter School has to seek judicial relief of an action resulting in the cessation of operation,

**Part 10: Dispute Resolution**

INTENTIONALLY OMITTED

**Part 11: School Performance Standards and Review**

**11.1 Performance Standards**

11.1.1 The Charter School Performance Framework is composed of indicators, measures, metrics, targets, and ratings to measure the academic, financial, organizational and mission specific, if applicable, performance of the Charter School. Pursuant to NRS 386.527, the performance framework is incorporated into this Charter Contract as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework in Exhibit #1.

11.1.1.1 The Authority may, upon request for a material amendment from the Charter Board, include additional rigorous, valid and reliable

performance indicators that are specific to the Mission of the Charter School and complementary to the existing measures.

11.1.1.2 The Charter School Performance Framework shall supersede and replace any and all assessment measures, educational goals and objectives, financial operations metrics, and organizational performance metrics set forth in the approved Charter Application and not explicitly incorporated into the Charter School Performance Framework. The specific terms, form and requirements of the Charter School Performance Framework, including any required indicators, measures, metrics, and targets, are determined by the Authority and will be binding on the Charter School.

11.1.2 According to the Charter School Performance Framework, the Charter School shall annually:

11.1.2.1 Meet or exceed standards on the academic indicators;

11.1.2.2 Demonstrate financial sustainability through meeting standards on the financial indicators;

11.1.2.3 Operate in compliance with the terms and conditions of this Charter Contract; and

11.1.2.4 If applicable, demonstrate sound performance on mission specific indicators.

## 11.2 **Review**

11.2.1 The Authority shall monitor and periodically report on the Charter School's progress in relation to the indicators, measures, metrics and targets set out in the Charter School Performance Framework. Such reporting shall take place at least annually.

11.2.2 The Charter School's performance in relation to the indicators, measures, metrics and targets set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework shall provide the basis upon which the Authority will decide whether to renew the Charter Contract at the end of the term pursuant to NRS 388A.285.

11.2.3 The Parties intend that, where this Charter Contract and the Charter School Performance Framework references or is contingent upon state or federal accountability laws, that they be bound by any applicable modification or amendments to such laws upon the effective date of said modifications or amendments. The specific terms, form and requirements of the Charter School Performance Framework may be modified or amended to the extent required to align with changes to applicable state or federal accountability requirements, as set forth in law. In the event that any such modifications or amendments are required, the Authority will use best efforts to apply expectations for school performance in a manner consistent with those set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework as initially established in the Charter Contract.

Comment [GD05]: See Section 12.14

11.2.4 While both parties acknowledge the importance of the Charter School Performance Framework, and the Authority's obligation to consider the Charter School's performance under the Charter School Performance Framework in any decision that results in reconstitution, revocation, or termination of a charter contract, the parties also acknowledge that the Authority may reconstitute the board, revoke the charter, or terminate the charter contract prior to its expiration of a school with acceptable performance under the Charter School Performance Framework if allowed by NRS 386.535.

## Part 12: Contract Construction

### 12.1 **Entire Charter Contract**

12.1.1 The Parties intend this Charter Contract, including all exhibits hereto, to represent a final and complete expression of their agreement, which shall be considered the Charter Contract. All prior representations, understandings and discussions are merged herein, and no course of prior dealings between Parties shall supplement or explain any terms used in this document. The Parties recognize that amendments to this Charter Contract may be approved from time to time hereafter.

### 12.2 **Authority**

12.2.1 The individual officers, agents and employees of the Parties do hereby individually represent and warrant that they have full power and lawful authority to execute this Charter Contract.

### 12.3 **Notice**

12.3.1 Any notice required, or permitted, under this Charter Contract shall be in writing and shall be effective upon personal delivery, subject to verification of service or acknowledgment of receipt, or three (3) days after mailing when sent by certified mail, postage prepaid to the following:

In the case of State Public Charter School Authority:

Director

1749 N. Stewart St, Suite 40

Carson City, NV 89706

In the case of Charter School:

Nevada Connections Academy

555 Double Eagle Ct #2000, Reno, NV 89521

### 12.4 **Waiver**

12.4.1 The Parties agree that no assent, express or implied, to any breach by either of them of any one or more of the covenants and agreements expressed herein

shall be deemed or taken to constitute a waiver of any succeeding or other breach.

**12.5 Non-Assignment**

12.5.1 Neither party to this Charter Contract shall assign or attempt to assign any rights, benefits, or obligations accruing to the party under this Charter Contract unless the other party agrees in writing to any such assignment.

**12.6 Applicable Law**

12.6.1 This Charter Contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Nevada, including all requirements imposed by regulation and Authority policy adopted as required by law, and all applicable federal laws of the United States.

Comment [GDO6]: Mirrors 1.4.3

12.6.2 The Parties intend that, where this Charter Contract references federal or state laws, they be bound by any amendments to such laws upon the effective date of such amendments.

**12.7 Material Amendments**

12.7.1 Material amendments require Authority approval. Pursuant to NRS 386.527 any material amendment to this Charter Contract will be effective only if approved in writing by the Authority. The proposed amendment must be submitted in a manner consistent with applicable law and regulation and defined in the Operations Manual. A material amendment shall not become effective and the Charter School shall not take action or implement the change requested in the amendment until the amendment is approved, in writing, by the Authority. Changes in operation that are considered material and require the Charter School to obtain an amendment to this Charter Contract include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 12.7.1.1 ;
- 12.7.1.2 Change in the Charter School's location (change of site and/or adding or deleting sites) (see 1.7.4);
- 12.7.1.3 Changes to the Mission Statement (see 2.2.1);
- 12.7.1.4 Elimination of a grade level served or expansion to serve a grade level not served (see 2.3.3);
- 12.7.1.5 More than 10% annual increase or decrease in total enrollment pursuant to 2.3.3 of this Charter Contract;
- 12.7.1.6 Changes to the name of the Charter School;
- 12.7.1.7 Entering into a contract with an Educational Management Organization or terminating a contract with an Educational Management Organization pursuant to 2.10.2.4 of this Charter Contract;
- 12.7.1.8 Changes to the Mission Specific indicators (see 11.1.1.1);
- 12.7.1.9 Changes to pupil transportation plans (see 2.13.2).

**12.8 Non-Material Change - Notification Required**

12.8.1 Changes to this Charter Contract listed below do not require amendment as

described in NRS 386.527; rather, such changes shall be accomplished through written notification. Changes requiring notification include, but are not limited to:

- 12.8.1.1 Mailing address, phone and fax number of the Charter School;
- 12.8.1.2 Changes in the lead administrator of the Charter School;
- 12.8.1.3 Changes in the composition of the Charter Board (see 1.5.5.2);
- 12.8.1.4 Changes to the Bylaws and/or Articles of Incorporation (see 1.5.5.1); and

12.9 **Other Changes – Determination as Material or Non-Material, Requiring Notification or Not.**

12.9.1 The Charter School may, from time to time, contemplate a change to the Charter School that is not identified within this Charter Contract as a Material Amendment or as a Non-Material Change that requires notification. In such an event, the Charter School is obligated to request, in writing, the determination of the Authority as to whether or not such a change requires a Material Amendment (12.7) or Notification (12.8).

12.10 **Severability**

12.10.1 The provisions of this Charter Contract are severable. Any term or condition deemed illegal or invalid shall not affect any other term or condition, and the remainder of the Charter Contract shall remain in effect unless otherwise terminated by one or both of the Parties.

12.11 **Third Parties**

12.11.1 This Charter Contract shall not create any rights in any third parties who have not entered into this Charter Contract; nor shall any third party be entitled to enforce any rights or obligations that may be possessed by either party to this Charter Contract.

12.12 **Counterparts; Signatures**

12.12.1 The Charter Contract may be signed in counterparts, which shall together constitute the original Charter Contract. Signatures received by facsimile or email by either of the Parties shall have the same effect as original signatures.

12.13 **Material Breach**

12.13.1 A material breach is defined as a violation of this Charter Contract which is substantial and significant as determined by the Authority. A Charter School may petition a court for a review of the Authority's determination of materiality under this section.

12.14 **Contract Does Not Affect Rights Under NRS 233B.**

This Charter Contract shall not waive any rights or obligations of the Parties under NRS 233B, nor shall it grant any new rights or expand any existing rights or obligations under that section.

**12.15 Incorporation**

**12.15.1 This Charter Contract hereby incorporates by reference the provisions contained in the cure proposal NCA submitted to the Authority on August 14, 2017, and all attachments thereto.**

**12.15.2 This Charter Contract hereby incorporates by reference the attachment hereto entitled Exhibit 1.**

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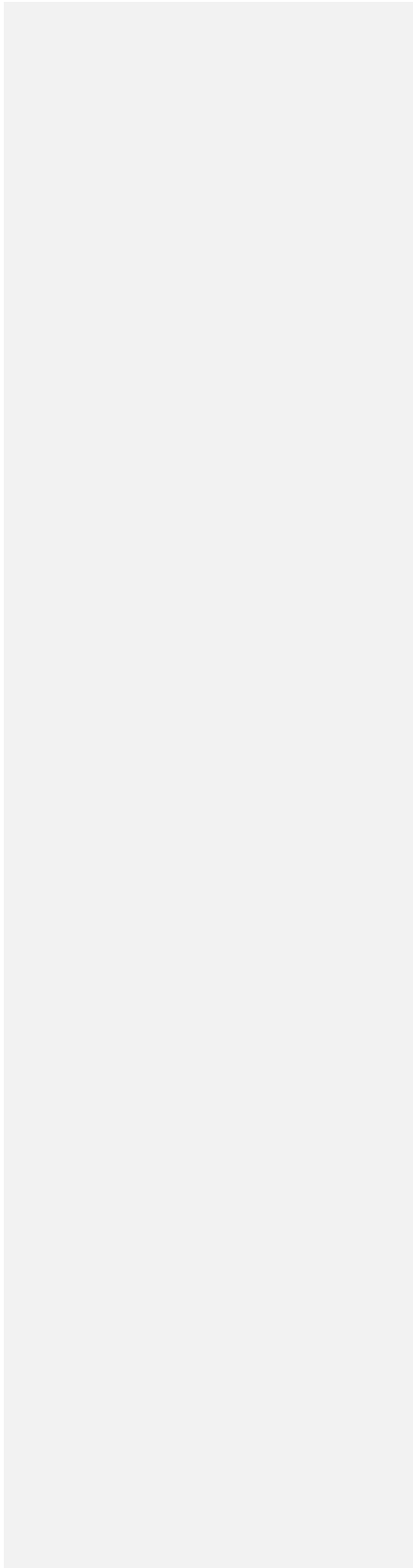
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## Signature Page

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have executed this Charter Contract:

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Charter School Governing Body

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, State Public Charter School Authority

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# **EXHIBIT #1**

## **Charter School Performance Framework**

## **EXHIBIT #2**

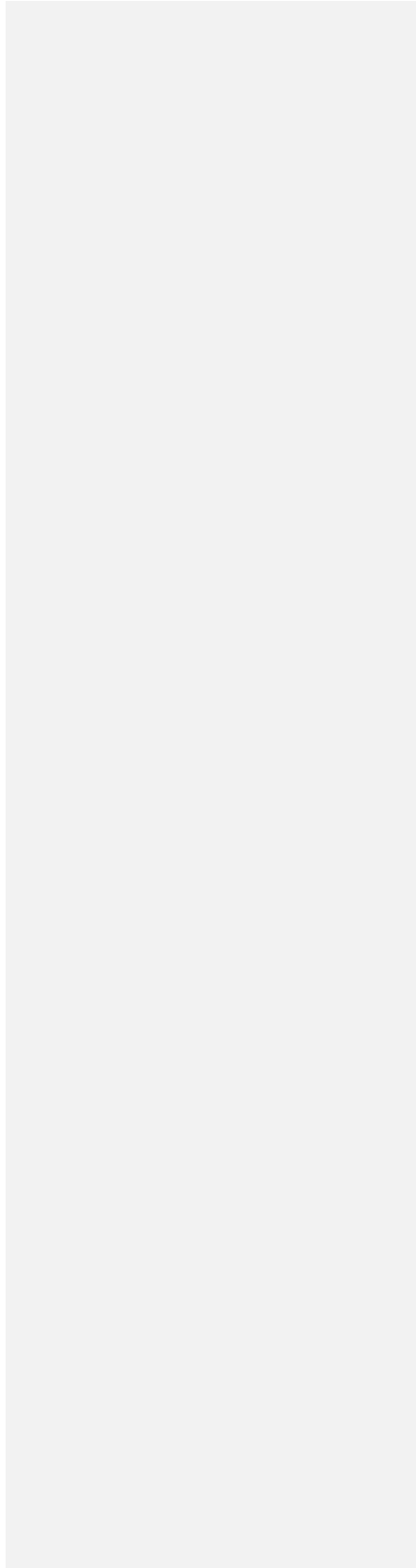
### **Articles of Incorporation, if applicable**

Not Applicable

**EXHIBIT #3**

**Charter Application**

On File at SPCSA



# **EXHIBIT #4**

## **Pre-Opening Conditions**

Not Applicable

If the Charter School fails to meet the 2017-18 benchmark, a financial accountability penalty shall be applied as follows:

The School will be required to demonstrate year over year improvement in its graduation rate, as measured by the following targets:

2017 graduation rate - - 49%

2018 graduation rate - - 60+%

NCA will continue to be funded in accordance with applicable Nevada and federal law. However, in any given year identified above where the school's graduation rate (as measured in accordance with then applicable federal and state law) falls below the target graduation rate set forth above, the school would be subject to a reimbursement penalty calculated as follows:

1. Identifying the student population used to determine penalty

- Exclude all K-8 students.
- Exclude all high school students on track to graduate on time (defined as all first-year 9th graders, 10th graders who began the school year with at least 5 credits, 11th graders who began with at least 11 credits, or 12th graders who began with at least 17 credits).
- Exclude all high school students with 504 plans and IEPs.
- Exclude all high school students who enrolled part-time (if there are any it is a handful), or who are not enrolled for the full semester (Start Date > 1st day of semester (either first or second semester)).
- Exclude all high school students who withdraw from NCA and transfer to another high school (or its recognized equivalent) located within Nevada or elsewhere within the United States or abroad.

2. Calculating the penalty based on the remaining students (high school students not on track and without 504s & IEPs)

- Assume full funding for a full year student is \$7,000 per year, roughly 1/7th supports "administrative costs" (administration, counseling services, etc.) and the remaining can be allocated per course - approximately \$1000 per full credit and \$500 per 1/2 credit.

- 6 credits (12 1/2 credits) is full funding for a full school year, 3 credits (6 1/2 credits) is full funding for a 1/2 school year (e.g., a student who is only enrolled for a full semester, perhaps with a start date 11/1 but who stays through the end of the year).

- Students are evaluated only for those semesters during which they are fully enrolled - students can be full year students or 1/2 year students.

- Penalty is lost funding per half-credit: 1/14th of the funding earned by a full-time student enrolled for the entire school year or 1/7th of the funding earned by a 1/2-year student (assumed \$500 in this example) for every 0.5 credit below the target of six during the academic year in question for a full-year student or below the target of three for a 1/2-year student.