

SUPPLEMENTAL EXHIBIT 3

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In the Matter Of:

State Public Charter School Authority

JOE THOMAS

July 06, 2017

Job Number: 403762C

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BEFORE THE STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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9 In re:

10 NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY.

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ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING

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DEPOSITION OF

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JOE THOMAS

16

JULY 6, 2017

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Carson City, Nevada

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REPORTED BY: DEBORA L. CECERE NV CCR, #324, RPR

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JOB NO.: 403762C

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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5 FOR THE STATE OF NEVADA

6 SENIOR DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

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9

FOR NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

10

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13

14 ALSO PRESENT:

15 PATRICK GAVIN

16 STEVE WERLEIN

17 MINDI DAGERMAN

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E X H I B I T S

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
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Original Exhibits to Original Transcript.

1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Thursday, the 6th day
2 of July, 2017, at the hour of 2:13 p.m. of said day at the
3 Offices of the Attorney General, 100 North Carson Street,
4 Carson City, Nevada, before me, DEBORA L. CECERE, a
5 certified court reporter, personally appeared JOE THOMAS,
6 who was by me first duly sworn, and was examined as a
7 witness in said cause.

8 -oOo-

9
10 (Exhibit Number 1 was marked for
11 identification.)

12
13 MR. OTT: And just to clarify, the earlier
14 objection with regard to scope is still standing. It was
15 given in the Hames deposition, or the cross-examination.

16 Still existing for this one, correct?

17 MS. GRANIER: Correct.

18 THE WITNESS: Correct.

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1 JOE THOMAS,
2 called as a witness in said case,
3 having been first duly sworn, was
4 examined and testified as follows:

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6

CROSS-EXAMINATION

7

8 BY MR. OTT:

9 Q Can you spell your last name for the record?

10 A Yeah, it's Thomas, T-H-O-M-A-S.

11 Q Are you currently employed by Nevada Connections
12 Academy or Connections Education, LLC?

13 A Connections Education.

14 Q Have you ever been employed by Nevada Connections
15 Academy?

16 A Yes, I have.

17 Q When did you change employers?

18 A 2012/2013 school year.

19 Q And what was the purpose of that change?

20 A I applied for the assistant principal position
21 and got the position. So I went from a teacher to an
22 assistant principal.

23 Q So the principals are employed by Connections
24 Education?

25 A Correct.

1 Q And the teachers are employed by Nevada
2 Connections Academy?

3 A Yes.

4 Q So it's just a --

5 A It's a formality, yeah.

6 Q Your declaration states in 2012/2013 you became
7 a secondary assistant principal and testing directory.

8 Can you explain your duties in that position?

9 A Yeah, for, obviously the testing director
10 position, I was managing all of the state standardized
11 tests at the time. So the CRP and the HSPs.

12 And, then for the secondary assistant principal
13 I was overseeing grade 7 through 12th. Managing, you know,
14 supervising the secondary teachers and managing truancy and
15 student engagement.

16 Q So the secondary in that title indicates?

17 A 7th through 12, yeah.

18 Q Okay. And I should remind you that try not to
19 talk over each other, okay.

20 A Oh.

21 Q It makes it impossible for her. If I hear you
22 speak, I'll try to stop, but just so that we try to keep
23 track. She'll hit us if we don't obey.

24 When did you become high school principal?

25 A It was the '15/'16 school year -- or, sorry --

1 this school year, '16/'17. Yeah.

2 Q As high school principal, do you believe that
3 the graduation rate is an important measure of the success
4 of your school?

5 A Absolutely, yeah. One of them.

6 Q Were you aware of any plan to improve the
7 graduate rate of NCA in or around 2013?

8 A The only plan that I'm aware of is the
9 Comprehensive School Improvement Plan which we presented to
10 the board, which graduate rate was a piece of that plan,
11 but that plan was comprehensive over K through 12. So it
12 included elementary, middle school, and high school
13 measures for improvement. It was based more on the Nevada
14 State Performance Framework instead of just the graduation
15 rate piece.

16 Q And this was in 2013?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Okay. And I believe you called that a
19 Comprehensive School Improvement Plan?

20 A Yes.

21 Q The graduation rate was a portion of it?

22 A Yes.

23 Q Did you have any role in formulating or
24 implementing the plan?

25 A That was my first year in administration so I

1 didn't take a role in the plan itself.

2 Q Do you have any opinion on whether that plan was
3 successful?

4 A I think it was successful in a lot of measures,
5 yeah.

6 Q Can you explain a little bit further what makes
7 you think it was successful?

8 A One of the parts of the plan was increase in
9 math performance. Traditionally online schools, math was
10 always a struggle. So that was one of our areas of focus,
11 and our math scores have went up over the last several
12 years. We are right on par with the state average this
13 year.

14 And our graduate rate has went up as well. Each
15 year we graduated more seniors since 2013 -- we've
16 graduated more seniors every year than we had previously.

17 Q So your testimony is that from 2013 to the
18 present, graduating seniors have increased in number each
19 year?

20 A In number, yeah, and in four-year cohort, from
21 what I understand.

22 Q So in number and in percentage?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Okay. So you consider the graduation rate
25 portion of that plan to have been successful as well?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Are you familiar with the Grad Point program?

3 A Yes, I am.

4 Q Do you know when Pearson Education first created
5 it?

6 A I do not.

7 Q When did you first learn about it?

8 A We learned about it, I want to say the '14/'15
9 school year, towards the end of that year.

10 Q How did you learn about it?

11 A Through another Connections school.

12 Q Do you know which one?

13 A Oregon.

14 Q And what was the context of them telling you
15 about it?

16 A We were looking for ways our current credit
17 retrieval program, we wanted to expand that. We just had
18 foundation courses, we didn't have actual true remediation
19 courses. So we were looking for a program to offer
20 remediation courses for credit deficient students. And we
21 had heard through members of Connections that, that Oregon
22 was currently using that model.

23 Q And after you heard about it from Oregon, how
24 long until it was put in place at NCA?

25 A I don't know an exact number, but it was the

1 very next school year we had in place during '15/'16 school
2 year.

3 Q Is there an additional cost for the Grad Point
4 program?

5 A It's about a hundred dollars per seat per school
6 year.

7 Q And that cost is born by the school?

8 A Yes. And that seat can be used by multiple
9 students throughout the year. So we just pay for that one
10 seat, and students can filter in and out of that one seat
11 as they finish courses or catch up on credits.

12 Q With regard to the 2015/'16 school year, your
13 declaration states that there were only a hundred seats
14 available?

15 A Correct.

16 Q Were you involved in the decision to make the
17 program available to a hundred students that first year?

18 A Yes, myself and the rest of the leadership team
19 came up with that number.

20 Q Do you know why it was chosen?

21 A It was the first time we ran through credit
22 recovery. We didn't want to overextend ourselves and put
23 too many students in there that we weren't able to serve.

24 So we thought that a hundred would be a good
25 number. We knew that we had served more than a hundred

1 students over the course of this school year. We just had
2 a hundred seats. But we thought that was a good number to
3 pilot the program with, to work out the kinks, and learn
4 the best strategies to go forward.

5 Q Do you know how many students were served by
6 those 120 seats?

7 A I believe it was around 120.

8 Q Your declaration further states:

9 The program has been extended to over
10 500 students at the high school
11 level.

12 Is that the number that was participating in
13 '16/'17?

14 A Yes.

15 Q Were you involved in the determination of
16 whether to increase the program size?

17 A Yes.

18 Q How was it determined how many seats you have?

19 A We looked at the number of credit deficient
20 students we had, and at the time it was around, I want to
21 say 450 students that were going to be enrolled in our
22 Every Student Succeeds program. And that's how we
23 determined that number.

24 But it was kind of open-ended at that point. We
25 felt like we had a good understanding of the credit

1 recovery and wanted to make sure that we were providing
2 remediation for all students that needed it in the school.

3 Q Is it your understanding the intent was to
4 provide a seat for every student that was credit deficient?

5 A Yes, that would have benefited from the credit
6 recovery program. So everybody that was maybe not on track
7 to graduate the four-year cohort.

8 Q Are there students who were credit deficient who
9 would not benefit from the, the credit recovery program?

10 A It depends on how credit deficient -- no, I
11 guess. I mean, a student that failed a course, a core
12 subject course could benefit from the credit recovery
13 program.

14 But there might be a student that is only a
15 credit or two behind that still could make up that credit
16 by their four-year cohort, taking the traditional courses.

17 Q So was the analysis whether the Grad Point
18 Recovery program was necessary to get them back on track to
19 graduate?

20 A Yes.

21 Q With regard to the '17/'18 school year have
22 there been any determinations as to the number of students
23 in Grad Point for that year?

24 A We're still determining that number based off of
25 enrollment needs and things like that. So as students are

1 coming in, we're reviewing transcripts and seeing which
2 kids are going to need the Grad Point program. And then
3 some of that will determine how many students we start the
4 school year with.

5 Q You have testified that in '16/'17 the analysis
6 was anybody who would benefit from it, from the Grad Point
7 program to get to graduation would be included, correct?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Is that same analysis going to be used for
10 '17/'18?

11 A Yes. So anybody that has failed a core subject
12 course that we offer in Grad Point should be placed in the
13 credit recovery program.

14 Q So there's no person or student at NCA who would
15 benefit from Grad Point who you anticipate not having a
16 seat in the upcoming year, is that correct?

17 A Correct.

18 Q Do you have any opinion regarding whether the
19 Grad Point program will increase the schools four- or
20 five-year graduation rate?

21 A Yeah. I think it already has.

22 Q What gives you that opinion?

23 A By the increase in our four-year cohort rate and
24 plus meeting our benchmarks.

25 Q When you say benchmarks, what do you mean?

1 A The benchmarks that we set for graduation rate.

2 Q Who set?

3 A The NCA board.

4 Q So when you say the benchmarks that the NCA
5 board set, are you referring to benchmarks that were
6 adopted at a board meeting?

7 A Correct.

8 Q Do you know what those benchmarks were?

9 A I want to say 45, 52, and 60.

10 MR. OTT: Can I have this marked as 2?

11 (Exhibit Number 2 was marked for
12 identification.)

13 BY MR. OTT:

14 Q I'll represent to you that that is Exhibit 7
15 from our exhibits, which is the minutes from the Nevada
16 Connections Academy board meeting from January 25, 2017.

17 If you turn to the second page there, there are
18 some benchmarks.

19 I just want to clarify that those are the
20 benchmarks that you're referring to.

21 A Yes. I believe they are.

22 Q Are you aware of any other benchmarks other than
23 the ones established or adopted by the board, by the NCA
24 board?

25 A No.

1 Q Okay. So going back to my other question, you
2 said that you believed it was successful because it had met
3 the benchmark, and there was another reason?

4 A It increased our four-year cohort rate.

5 Q Okay. Did you set any benchmark other than the
6 one established by the board?

7 A We do a school improvement plan every year, so
8 we set other benchmarks. Last year our goals were to
9 increase student contacts.

10 And graduation, to increase graduation rate and
11 successful course completion, and to increase our math
12 scores.

13 Q When you said --

14 A And --

15 Q Sorry.

16 A I was going to say those are internal goals that
17 we set with the staff, our high school staff.

18 Q When you say "we," is that the executive team?

19 A Yeah, the leadership team.

20 Q Okay. When you say increase the graduation
21 rate, was there a numerical benchmark set, or was it just
22 we want to get higher than where we're at?

23 A I'm trying to remember. There's been a lot of
24 benchmarks thrown at me the last few days.

25 I believe that it was just a, yeah, we want to

1 improve it at the time. It was '15/'16. It was before we
2 had the notice of closure. So we were trying to increase
3 our graduation rate before that came, and I honestly cannot
4 remember what the benchmark was set at at that point.

5 Q Do you have an opinion regarding how much of
6 this increased graduation rate from the last two years has
7 been attributable to Grad Point?

8 A That's something we could definitely find out if
9 the charter board would want to see that information. We
10 do have that data on hand. But I don't have the exact
11 number as to what the percentage of increase was just based
12 off, solely off of Grad Point. But we can find that
13 information out.

14 Q Are you aware of a recently adopted Graduation
15 Rate Improvement Plan in 2016?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you believe it was necessary to adopt a plan
18 to increase the graduation rate?

19 A Can you repeat that question?

20 Q Sure. Do you believe it was necessary to adopt
21 a plan to increase the graduation rate?

22 A I, I think so at the time, given what was going
23 on. But we had already measures in place to increase the
24 graduation rate prior to the plan.

25 Q When you say what was going on, what do you mean

1 by that?

2 A Getting the notice of closure from the Charter
3 Authority.

4 Q Other than being reactive to the notice of
5 closure that was issued, is there any other reason that you
6 think it was necessary to adopt a Graduation Rate
7 Improvement Plan in '16?

8 A Absolutely.

9 Q What would that be?

10 A To increase our graduation rate. And I think as
11 a school you owe it to your students to always look for
12 ways to improve, and that's something we've always done
13 ever since I've been here.

14 Q Were you involved in the development or
15 implementation of the 2016 plan?

16 A Yes.

17 Q How was it developed?

18 A Through a collaborative effort from the
19 leadership team of Nevada Connections and Connections
20 Education.

21 Q Who took the lead?

22 A Steve Werlein.

23 Q Do you know where he got his ideas for, to
24 incorporate into that?

25 A Just through collaboration of meetings, from

1 what I understand.

2 Q Do you know who was at those meetings?

3 A All members of the leadership team, our
4 management of Catholic League Services, members of
5 Connections Education, which I don't know the names of
6 them.

7 Q Do you have an understanding of how the 2016
8 plan differs from the 2013 comprehensive school plan,
9 school improvement plan that you referenced earlier?

10 A Yeah, the 2016 plan is solely based on increment
11 of the four-year cohort rate, whereas the 2013 plan was a
12 number of measures to improve on school-wide K through 12.
13 Not just -- and graduation was a single piece of that plan,
14 but not the whole plan.

15 Q So are there things in the 2016 plan that
16 weren't in the 2013 plan?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Can you --

19 A Right. Grad Point for one. The -- our Every
20 Student Succeeds Academy, which is, represents our off
21 cohort students.

22 So every student who is off cohort, we enroll in
23 Every Student Succeeds Academy. And they are given a
24 designated success coach, and those success coaches are
25 constantly monitoring their progress within the program,

1 and they call them every other week to check in on them.
2 They provide additional support from what they get from
3 their content teachers.

4 Q Do you believe that this plan will effectively
5 increase the graduation rate?

6 A Yes.

7 Q We talked about these benchmarks earlier.
8 Referencing Exhibit 2, page 2, do you believe those
9 benchmarks are achievable?

10 A Yes, I do, given the student population we're
11 serving.

12 Q Explain that.

13 A The number of credit deficient students have
14 increased every single year since I've been assistant
15 principal. So given the number of credit deficient
16 students, you know, if that stays on par to where it is, I
17 would say that is definitely achievable.

18 If that keeps increasing, it definitely puts a
19 strain on our ability to meet certain benchmarks.

20 Q Can you explain a little bit how an increase in
21 credit deficient students would make it more difficult for
22 you to meet those benchmarks?

23 A Say this year we have 25 percent of our 11th
24 graders enrolled -- and this is all hypothetical, they're
25 not representative of our population at all -- but say 25

1 of our 11th graders come in to us credit deficient one
2 year, and the next year that increases to -- or we'll go to
3 12th grade so we don't have to track two years, but 12th
4 grade increases to 45 percent. Obviously getting 45
5 percent of the 12th grade students that are in that
6 graduating cohort back on track is a, is a lot more
7 difficult than getting only 25 percent of that class back
8 on cohort to graduate.

9 So the higher number of credit deficient
10 students for a particular cohort grade means the more
11 credits that need to be remediated, and puts them at a
12 disadvantage to graduate with their class.

13 Q So when you said those benchmarks are achievable
14 given your population, does that mean that the rates of new
15 credit deficient students enrolling in 11th and 12th grade
16 would remain similar to what they have been currently?

17 A I don't know if I could predict that for an
18 upcoming enrollment.

19 Q Right. My question is I asked you whether those
20 are achievable. And you said "yes", given, considering the
21 demographics, correct?

22 A Right.

23 Q So what I'm trying to understand, when you said
24 considering the demographics, does that mean if the
25 demographics stayed to what they have, they would be

1 achievable?

2 A Yes, I would say so, yes.

3 Q Okay. So you do not believe that the school
4 would need to change the students enrolling to meet those
5 targets?

6 A Students enrolling as far as -- what do you
7 mean?

8 Q Yeah, thank you.

9 Currently the school has a certain mix of
10 students who enroll credit deficient over time, correct,
11 that's one of the things that has influenced the graduation
12 rate, correct?

13 A Correct.

14 Q Assuming that relative pattern stays the same,
15 you believe those graduation rate benchmarks are
16 achievable.

17 Is that a correct statement?

18 A Yes, it is.

19 Q Okay. I should mention one other thing about
20 those benchmarks that I keep referring to.

21 Do you understand the way that graduation rate
22 is calculated by the Department of Education?

23 A Yes, I do.

24 Q Do you understand those benchmarks to be using
25 the same calculation used by the Department of Education or

1 a different calculation?

2 A Those are, from my understanding, those are the
3 same calculation.

4 Q So it's your testimony that those benchmarks
5 using the calculation as used by the Department of
6 Education are achievable with the demographics staying
7 approximately the same as to what they have been?

8 MS. GRANIER: Objection, you're misstating. The
9 document doesn't say that. So I think you're assuming
10 facts not in evidence. I think it's improper.

11 MR. OTT: Okay. I was just asking for his
12 understanding.

13 BY MR. OTT:

14 Q Why don't you take a second and read that whole
15 portion regarding benchmarks, so you can familiarize
16 yourself with it.

17 A Okay.

18 Q So now that you've read that, does that conflict
19 with the graduation rate as calculated by the Department of
20 Education, to the best of your knowledge?

21 A Those -- these measures here? I'm sorry. I'm
22 just not understanding what exactly you're asking.

23 Q Yeah, so the bottom part here says:

24 With the removal of GED and adult
25 education students from the

1 calculation.

2 MS. GRANIER: As in accordance with Nevada law
3 as discussed as hereby approved, just so we have the full
4 statement on the record.

5 BY MR. OTT:

6 Q Sure. So that's what the document says.

7 Is your understanding that that is consistent
8 with the way the Department of Education calculates the
9 graduation rate?

10 A I believe so, yes.

11 Q Okay. I will represent to you that there has
12 been testimony from the Department of Education that has
13 not been calculated.

14 So with that representation, and knowing that
15 these were adopted with that proviso, does that change your
16 opinion as to whether these are achievable under the
17 department's calculation?

18 MS. GRANIER: Objection, vague.

19 BY MR. OTT:

20 Q Do you understand the question?

21 MS. GRANIER: If you understand you can answer.

22 THE WITNESS: So, if this is not how the
23 Department of Ed calculates it, I would need to know
24 exactly now it's calculated to be able to understand that
25 and to be able to answer that question.

1 BY MR. OTT:

2 Q Okay. Okay. Do you have -- do you still
3 believe that these are achievable using this calculation?

4 A Yes.

5 Q Do you know what your graduation rate was using
6 this calculation for the past year?

7 A Using the calculation that I saw, we hit the
8 benchmark.

9 Q The calculation that you saw from?

10 A From Connection.

11 Q Do you know who calculated it?

12 A I believe it was internal.

13 Q Do you know what it was?

14 A Not offhand.

15 Q Do you believe that there's anything that could
16 be done to increase NCA's graduation rate that is not
17 currently being done?

18 A No, not that comes to mind. We can always
19 improve at the school, but I believe we're exploring all
20 avenues at this point.

21 Q Do you have any opinion on when NCA will be able
22 to achieve a graduation rate of 60 percent as calculated by
23 the Department of Education?

24 MS. GRANIER: Calls for speculation. Lacks
25 foundation. He just said that he doesn't know how to

1 calculate it.

2 BY MR. OTT:

3 Q Do you have any idea now the department
4 calculates the graduation rate?

5 A I thought I did. But not according to, to this.

6 Q Okay.

7 A And that would all depend on our demographics in
8 the future. So I couldn't, I couldn't give an answer.

9 Q Your declaration also discusses your interaction
10 with the NCA board over the last several years. That's on
11 page 3, line 3 of your declaration.

12 When did your interactions with the board
13 commence?

14 A Immediately upon becoming assistant principal
15 during board meetings.

16 Q Your declaration appears to state that you have
17 a positive opinion of the NCA board.

18 Is that an accurate summary?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Is there anything you feel this board could be
21 doing better to increase student performance?

22 A No.

23 Q Do you believe a change in the board would have
24 a positive impact on school performance?

25 A No, I do not.

1 Q Your declaration states that:

2 The board is providing support in
3 order to hold us accountable for our
4 efforts.

5 That's on page 3, line 9 of your declaration.

6 Can you give an example of a time the board has
7 held us -- I am assuming that is your leadership team --
8 accountable for your efforts?

9 A During our school report sessions in the board
10 meeting where we kind of give a general overview of how the
11 school is performing on various performance metrics, they
12 ask a lot of questions, ask follow-up questions, dig deeper
13 into the data.

14 There's a lot of time that there wasn't data
15 provided that they want to follow up on, and they hold us
16 accountable to provide that information, and they follow up
17 on those things to make sure that their concerns were being
18 addressed in the metrics that were presented.

19 Q Anything else?

20 A Nothing coming to mind.

21 Q That's all I have.

22 ///

23 ///

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25 ///

1 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

2

3 BY MS. GRANIER:

4 Q Now I get a few.

5 Mr. Ott asked you about your opinion as to the
6 success of the 2013 plan?

7 Do you recall that?

8 A Yes.

9 Q And also with respect to the 2016 graduation
10 improvement.

11 Do you recall that?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Other than the graduation rate, the four-year
14 cohort graduation rate, do you believe there are other ways
15 to measure effectiveness and success of those plans?

16 A Absolutely, yeah. We've had juniors and seniors
17 come to us where, you know, with less than six credits -- a
18 lot of them actually, which would mean that they were
19 virtually still a freshman, considered a freshman by
20 credit.

21 Those students are nearly impossible to get to
22 graduate within their four-year cohort, but we have very
23 many successful cases where students have graduated in the
24 fifth and sixth-year cohort. So the success of that
25 program could be looked well beyond just that four-year

1 cohort rate.

2 It's been a goal of us to make sure that the
3 students get a diploma more than anything else.

4 Q And do you turn students away when they come to
5 you credit deficient, knowing that it will bring the
6 school's four-year cohort graduation rate down?

7 A Absolutely not.

8 Q Why not?

9 A We want to serve those type of students. We
10 feel they deserve as much chance to get their high school
11 diploma as any other student does.

12 The reasons that they were not successful at
13 another program aren't really important to us. We just
14 want to give them an opportunity to earn a high school
15 diploma. Every student should have the opportunity to do
16 so.

17 Q And based on your experience at the school as a
18 teacher and now in leadership, have you -- do you have any
19 opinion or understanding of what would happen to these
20 students if NCA were not an option for them?

21 MR. OTT: Objection, calls for speculation. You
22 can answer.

23 MS. GRANIER: If you know.

24 THE WITNESS: Based off of conversations I've
25 had with many families, they often state that this is the

1 last resort for them. They've tried the district school,
2 they've tried other charter schools, and this is absolutely
3 the last resort to get their students a high school
4 diploma.

5 BY MS. GRANIER:

6 Q And are those some of the students that NCA has
7 effectively reengaged and are now --

8 A Absolutely.

9 Q -- currently reenrolled?

10 A Sorry. I spoke over you.

11 Q That's all I have. Thank you.

12 MR. OTT: All right.

13 Let's go off the record.

14

15 (Whereupon the deposition was

16 concluded at 2:41 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF NEVADA)
2 WASHOE COUNTY) ss.
3)

4 I, DEBORA L. CECERE, a Certified Court Reporter, State
5 of Nevada, do hereby certify:

6 That on Thursday, the 6th day of July, 2017, at the
7 hour of 2:13 p.m. of said day, at 100 North Carson Street,
8 Reno, Nevada, personally appeared JOE THOMAS, who was duly
9 sworn by me to testify the truth, the whole truth, and
10 nothing but the truth, and thereupon was deposed in the
11 matter entitled herein;

12 That I am not a relative, employee or independent
13 contractor of counsel to any of the parties; or a relative,
14 employee or independent contractor of the parties involved
15 in the proceeding, or a person financially interested in
16 the proceeding;

17 That I am not related to any of the parties to this
18 action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way
19 interested in the outcome of this matter;

20 That the foregoing transcript, consisting of pages 1
21 through 32 is a full, true and correct transcription of my
22 stenotype notes of said deposition.

23 DATED: At Reno, Nevada this 17th day of July,
24 2017.



25 DEBORA L. CECERE, NV CCR #324, CA CSR #8821

ERRATA SHEET

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5 I declare under penalty of perjury that I have read the
 6 foregoing 30 pages of my testimony, taken
 7 on July 6, 2017 (date) at
 8 Carson City (city), Nevada (state),

9

10 and that the same is a true record of the testimony given
 11 by me at the time and place herein
 12 above set forth, with the following exceptions:

13

14 Page Line Should read: Reason for Change:

15

16 7 11 Change "CRP" to "CRT" Misspelling

17 Change "HSPs" to "HSPEs" Misspelling

18 10 16 Insert "to improve" after Clarification
 19 "Ways"

20 12 6 Change "120" to "100" Correction

21

22 13 7 Insert "in" after "graduate" Clarification

23

24 19 4 Change "Catholic League" Correction
 25 to "Counseling."

ERRATA SHEET

1				
2	Page	Line	Should read:	Reason for Change:
3				
4	19	10	Change "increment" to	Correction
5			"Increasing"	
6	19	11	Remove "of"	Correction
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23	Date:	7-26-17	<u>Joe Thomas</u>	Signature of Witness
24			<u>Joe Thomas</u>	Name Typed or Printed
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BEFORE THE STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY
STATE OF NEVADA

In Re:

Nevada Connections Academy Notice of
Closure or Possible Board Reconstitution

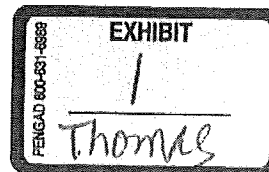
DECLARATION OF JOE THOMAS

I, Joe Thomas, hereby declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

1. I am a Nevada Connections Academy ("NCA") employee. I make this declaration in support of NCA relative to closure proceedings before the State Public Charter School Authority held on May 25, 26, and 27, 2017, and continued to an unspecified date in 2017.

2. The matters set forth in this declaration are based on my own personal knowledge. If called upon to testify, I am competent to testify to the matters set forth herein.

3. I currently serve as NCA high school principal. I've been employed at NCA for 9 years and have worked in a variety of roles. I started out as a social studies teacher. After 3 years, I took over the social studies department and became a teacher manager. During my 5th year (2012-2013) at NCA, I became the secondary assistant principal and testing director. During my time in administration, we immediately started to look at a number of metrics. Graduation rate, credit accrual by our students (when they entered and while they were at NCA) and successful course completion results by every single high school course offered at NCA. We discussed ways to improve these metrics over a series of policy changes, staffing needs and additional positions within the high school level to provide more support to our students and staff.



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1 4. We introduced the Grad Point program during the 2015-2016 school year to help
2 support the vast number of credit-deficient students enrolling at NCA. During the first year of
3 Grad Point implementation, we only had 100 seats available to allow us to develop a working
4 program for credit recovery. We wanted to make sure we had a working system before we rolled
5 out our credit recovery program on the full scale. We have since expanded that program to over
6 500 students at the high school level. We are continuing to expand the Grad Point program and
7 now have two full-time, highly qualified teachers, one for English and one for math dedicated
8 solely to credit recovery. We aim to do the same for science and social studies as our numbers
9 increase. Right now, the science and social studies credit recovery courses are managed by full-
10 time teachers, but they are also teaching sections of standard science and social studies courses.

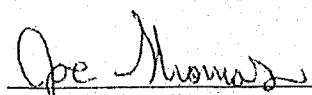
11
12 5. To further add support for our credit-deficient students, we created what we call
13 the Every Student Succeeds Academy. In order to do this, we have changed our advisory
14 program by adding success coaches. A success coach's main job is to work with off-cohort
15 students to ensure they are staying on track, redeeming failed credits, and graduating. Success
16 coaches monitor their students' performance daily through gradebook checks and bi-weekly
17 calls. In my capacity as principal, I send student performance reports to each student's success
18 coach and to their teachers. The reports include attendance and participation metrics, overall
19 number of contacts with each student, and the student's standing in each of their courses. Our
20 teachers and success coaches work together in their professional learning communities (PLCs) to
21 ensure that each student has an individual plan moving forward that will help ensure their
22 success. In addition, NCA counselors complete two transcript checks a year with every student
23 to make any necessary changes to course placements and ensure students are staying on track to
24 graduate. We have seen significant success with this program thus far and have developed
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changes to be implemented in the 2017-2018 school year to make it an even more valuable asset for our students and to further improve our graduation rate.

6. Over the course of the last several years, I have worked directly with the NCA board. I have presented high school metrics to our board on several occasions during board meetings. During my presentations, the board is constantly asking follow-up questions regarding our student metrics to ensure we have a plan in place to provide necessary support. They are constantly asking the leadership team questions and providing suggestions and support in order to hold us accountable for our efforts. I have found our board to be very knowledgeable about our school's metrics and have been pleasantly surprised by the board's thorough understanding of NCA's day-to-day operations.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Nevada that the foregoing is true and correct and was executed this 12 day of June, 2017, in Beno, Nevada.



JOE THOMAS



APPROVED 2/21/2017
NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (NCA)
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Wednesday, January 25, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. PT

Held at the following location and via teleconference:
Nevada Connections Academy
555 Double Eagle Court, Suite 2000
Reno, NV 89521

I. Call to Order

Dr. Harrington called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. when all participants were present and able to hear each other. The school was open for the public to attend the meeting.

II. Roll Call

Board Members Present: Scott Harrington, Kelly McGlynn, Marisa Delgado, Mindi Dagerman and Tessa Rivera (all via phone);

Board Members Absent: Jafeth Sanchez and Gene Stewart;

Guests Present: Steve Werlein, Principal (In person); Laura Gralner, Board Counsel; Brian Rosta, Josh Daniels, Shon Hocker and Laura Coleman, Connections staff (via phone).

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

IV. Routine Business

a. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Harrington asked the Board to review the Agenda distributed prior to the meeting. There being no changes, Ms. Dagerman made the following motion and it was seconded by Ms. Delgado as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Agenda for the January 25, 2017 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Nevada Connections Academy, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

V. Closed Session with Board Counsel Relating to State Public Charter School Authority's (SPSCA) Issuance of Notice of Closure

The Board entered into a Closed Meeting with Board Counsel at 7:05 p.m. as protected by NRS 241.015(3)(b)(2) upon a motion being made by Ms. Dagerman, seconded by Ms. Delgado and confirmed via roll call vote of all Board members present for the purposes of discussion of legal options relating to State Public School Charter School Authority (SPSCA) Issuance of Notice of Closure. Board members in

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attendance were Scott Harrington, Kelly McGlynn, Marisa Delgado, Mindi Dagerman and Tessa Rivera. Guests present were: Laura Grainer and Steve Werlein. All others left the meeting at this time.

The Board ended the Closed Meeting and resumed the Open Meeting upon a motion made by Ms. Delgado, seconded by Ms. Rivera and confirmed via roll call vote of all Board members present at 7:28 p.m. No action was taken during the Closed Meeting.

[Ms. Coleman and Mr. Rosta rejoined the meeting at 7:28 p.m.]

VI. Approval of Action(s) Necessary Based on Closed Meeting with Board Counsel

I. Elements of Proposed Cure Submitted by NCA to SPCSA

Dr. Harrington reviewed the elements of proposed cure submitted by NCA to SPCSA as discussed during the Closed Meeting with Board Counsel.

Voluntary Board Reconstitution

The Board discussed the proposed voluntary Board reconstitution cure in detail, including the challenges involved with recruiting qualified Board members and benefits to maintaining continuity on the Board during the school year for the benefit of the students. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Dagerman and seconded by Ms. Rivera as follows:

[Mr. Hocker rejoined the meeting at 7:33 p.m.]

RESOLVED, that the Board will propose a voluntary board reconstitution cure to the SPCSA for one Board member a year with a provision that existing Board members will serve until a qualified replacement can be found and that the NCA Board agrees to work with the SPCSA to identify potential Board members, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

Graduation Rate Improvement Plan Benchmarks

The Board discussed the proposed graduation rate improvement plan benchmarks in detail. Mr. Werlein reviewed the proposed benchmarks and the school's predicted ability to meet those benchmarks with the General Education Development (GED) and Adult Education students removed from the equation in accordance with Nevada law. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Dr. Harrington and seconded by Ms. Rivera as follows:

[Mr. Daniels rejoined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.]

RESOLVED, that the Board will propose the Benchmarks for the Graduation Rate Improvement Plan cure to the SPCSA as follows:

- 45% Graduating 2016 Cohorts;
- 50% Graduating 2017 Cohorts; and
- 60% Graduating 2018 Cohorts;

with the removal of GED and Adult Education students from the calculations as in accordance with Nevada law, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

Sever High School Charter from Elementary and Middle Schools

The Board discussed the proposed cure of separating the High School Charter from the Elementary and Middle Schools in detail, as well as establishing an Every Student Succeeds Academy for all credit deficient students entering NCA High School to have a separate graduation rate requirement as approved by the SPCSA. There being no further discussion, Ms. Dagerman made the following motion and it was seconded by Ms. McGlynn as follows:

RESOLVED, the Board will propose severing the High School Charter from the K-8 Charter as well as establishing an Every Student Succeeds Academy for credit deficient High School students, therefore, having a separate graduation rate from the remaining NCA High School, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Consent Agenda

Dr. Harrington asked the Board members whether there were any additional items from the Consent Agenda that they wished to have moved to Action Items for discussion, or tabled. There being no changes, Ms. Dagerman made the following motion and it was seconded by Ms. Rivera as follows:

RESOLVED, the Consent Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes from the January 17, 2017 Board Meeting; are hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Public Comment (as detailed previously in agenda)

There were no public comments.

IX. Adjournment and Confirmation of Next Meeting – Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. PT

Dr. Harrington noted that the Board was at the end of its agenda and that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. A motion was made by Dr. Harrington, seconded by Ms. McGlynn and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.



APPROVED 2/21/2017
 NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (NCA)
 MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 Wednesday, January 25, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. PT

Held at the following location and via teleconference:
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I. Call to Order

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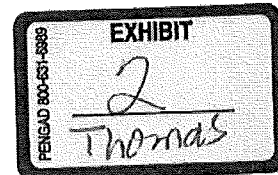
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