



# **Nevada State Public Charter School Authority**

## **Site Evaluation Report Nevada Connections Academy Evaluation Date: 11/10/2021 Report Date: 1/24/2022**

Note: The evaluation was originally scheduled for October 2021 but reset for November 4, 2021, at the request of school leadership. The student and family focus groups were rescheduled due to lack of participation on the original day of the evaluation. Evaluation took place on 11/4/2021 and 11/10/2021.

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# Appendices

## A: Nevada State Performance Framework

<http://www.doe.nv.gov/Accountability/NSPF/>

## B: SPCSA Academic Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-Academic-Performance-Framework-Guidance-Document.pdf>

## C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

<http://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/News/2019/190628-OPF-Att-1-Ratings-Scorecard.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on November 4th and 10th, 2021 at Nevada Connections Academy. The State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all charters within the portfolio during the first, third, and fifth year of operation. This comprehensive analysis addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. Nevada Connections Academy is currently identified as having a one-star rating according to the most recent data from the Nevada School Performance Framework and within Nevada Report Card. However, it is important to note that in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education ESEA waiver to suspend accountability requirements for the school year 2020-21 and in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the following applies.

NSPF school ratings and accountability indicators have been carried over for an additional year from the 2018-2019 reporting year. State and District information that can be reported for the current reporting year such as student enrollment, graduation rates, etc. will be updated into the Nevada Accountability Portal. For the most recent NSPF school rating reports please select the 2018-2019 reporting year. Schools identified as being under a Notice of Concern, Notice of Breach, or Notice of Termination will, like the one and two star rated schools have a differentiated procedure for their site evaluations. This does apply to Nevada Connections Academy for this site evaluation. Schools meeting this criterion will automatically be scheduled for a full site evaluation each year until the rating improves to a three-star status or the Notice is no longer in effect. Schools meeting these criteria will be notified in writing at the beginning of each school year. The purpose of the site evaluation in these instances is to provide follow-up and documented progress toward improvement.

The Site Evaluation Team conducts classroom observations within the areas of classroom environment and instruction. The purpose of these observations is to collect evidence using a rubric which has been normed by our team. All classroom rating outcomes will be displayed within this report so that school leaders have an overall idea of what is happening in general, at any time, in any classroom. The overall numbers will provide information about the school outcomes on this one day.

SPCSA staff will track “best practices”, using a checklist and a summary of best practices observed, and will be contained within the report. Using information from focus groups of students, parents, staff, school leaders and the school’s board, the SPCSA team will conduct focus groups and summarize results for schools within the report. The operational portion of the evaluation will be observed and take-aways recorded using a checklist and observing all aspects of the school’s operational components as outlined in the SPCSA Organizational Framework.

This evaluation has been designed to focus on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students) as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The SPCSA uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

Nevada Connections Academy is in Reno, Nevada in a facility at 555 Double Eagle Court, Suite 2000. The school serves 1,375 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The mission of name of school is: “NCA will produce college/career ready graduates equipped with the social and emotional skills necessary to contribute positively to society. “

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## Nevada School Performance Framework 2019

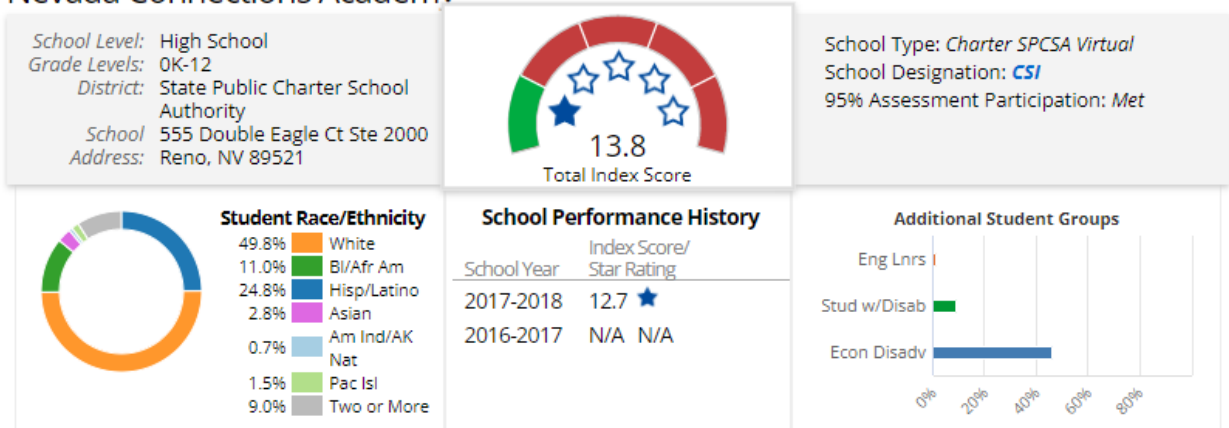
Note: context for data sets where data are incomplete. This information is provided to assist in understanding the data sets impacted by the pandemic.

Nevada Connections Academy serves 1,375 students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

High School

Nevada Connections Academy

School Year 2018-2019 Nevada School Rating



Nevada Connections Academy  
Math and ELA Results  
Nevada School Performance Framework  
2019

*Note: context for data sets where data are incomplete. This information is provided to assist in understanding the data sets impacted by the pandemic.*

Proficiency Rates

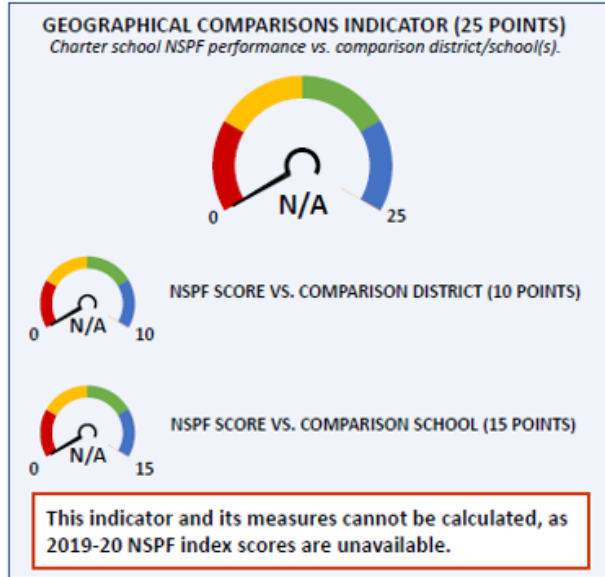
High School

<b>Math Proficient</b>				<b>Math Proficient Points Earned: 1.5/10</b>		
Groups	2019 %	2019 % District	2019 % MIP	2018 %	2018 % District	2018 % MIP
All Students	10.5	25.8	32.83	11.0	23.8	29.29
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	-	23.12	-	16.6	19.07
Asian	-	50.0	50.27	-	54.7	47.65
Black/African American	0.0	7.5	18.42	4.7	6.2	14.12
Hispanic/Latino	18.4	18.5	22.93	4.6	17.5	18.87
Pacific Islander	-	16.0	29.26	-	6.2	25.54
Two or More Races	0.0	26.0	36.96	10.0	26.1	33.64
White/Caucasian	8.9	32.0	44.25	15.8	28.4	41.31
Special Education	8.3	6.1	12.38	0.0	2.2	7.77
English Learners Current + Former	-	5.0	14.52	-	10.9	10.02
English Learners Current	-	0.0	-	-	2.4	6.96
Economically Disadvantaged	2.7	14.6	24	7.3	13.3	20.01

<b>ELA Proficient</b>				<b>ELA Proficient Points Earned: 3.5/10</b>		
Groups	2019 %	2019 % District	2019 % MIP	2018 %	2018 % District	2018 % MIP
All Students	35.8	53.9	48.54	28.7	44.5	45.83
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	-	36.76	-	36.3	33.43
Asian	-	71.0	65.11	-	68.4	63.27
Black/African American	21.4	32.8	31.39	11.9	21.6	27.78
Hispanic/Latino	35.1	47.3	36.5	20.6	39.5	33.15
Pacific Islander	-	52.0	48.75	-	37.5	46.05
Two or More Races	21.4	62.5	58.07	30.0	46.9	55.86
White/Caucasian	39.1	59.7	62.25	34.1	50.0	60.26
Special Education	16.6	18.8	15.71	4.3	9.0	11.27
English Learners Current + Former	-	18.1	17.52	-	21.8	13.18
English Learners Current	-	10.6	-	-	9.7	6.9
Economically Disadvantaged	23.6	41.9	37.66	22.0	31.2	34.37

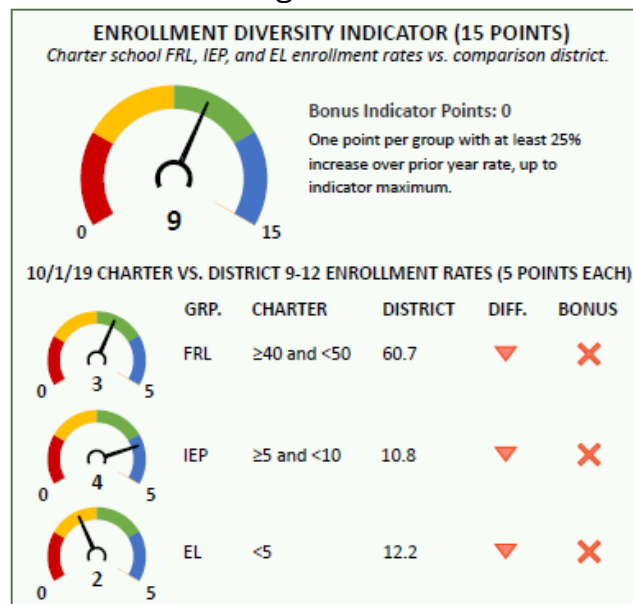
# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Geographic Comparison Report

## High School



# SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Diversity Comparison Results

## High School



# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board <sup>1</sup>	2	30 minutes
Parents/Families	6	30 minutes
Students	8	30 minutes
School Leadership	8	30 minutes
Staff	11	30 minutes

### Governing Board<sup>1</sup>:

1. Board members explained that this school is special because it offers students an alternative way to be educated, without having to attend school in person. They board was highly complementary of the way that the school has improved their ability to reach out and meet the needs of every student. The board is provided an academic update during regularly scheduled board meetings.
2. The board explained that they regularly evaluate the school leader and communicate results to the leader. The board expressed that they are impressed with recent high school graduation data and a definite improvement in the number of students graduating from NCA.
3. The board members said that very seldom are they involved with unhappy family members. They added that the staff and school leaders do a wonderful job of communicating to families, especially if students begin to fall behind in their courses of study. The board members made a point of thanking SPCSA for working so closely with them in a positive manner during the last year.

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<sup>1</sup> Two members of the Seven member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Parents/Families:

1. Family members shared that NCA provides clear instruction for their children in the upper grades. One parent commented, "For 9th grade students, the instruction can be less clear as families learn to adapt to the school models for instruction and communication and that can be difficult for us families to manage." Parents said they would like to see NCA offer different options for file management because the files can be lost in Drop Box at times. All families said their children look forward to attending school every day. The flexibility that NCA allows has increased their children's enthusiasm for attending school. One parent said, "My child found out they were smart, which had not been the case in their previous school." Another parent said, "The flexibility has allowed my child to set their own schedule which has had a positive impact on their school experience." Parents commented that the flexibility has also made their children more accountable because they have a responsibility to maintain a set schedule without someone watching over them.

2. Family members were asked about how they are kept up to date with the progress their high schooler is making. Family members reported that the teachers do a great job communicating with families about the progress of their children's learning. A parent said their child is autistic and NCA has done a wonderful job educating their child and considering their needs. Parents said that NCA allows for families to easily see where their children are at in their learning. Parents can go online and see their children's grades and if a child is falling behind, teachers will reach out to parents to let them know.

3. Family members were asked if they felt able to express concerns at the school. One parent gave an example and said that they had received a truancy alarm when their child was behind. The parent was able to contact the school and discuss the issue quickly. The teachers worked with the parent to find a resolution to the issue that had come up. One parent commented, "NCA staff are quick to get back to family members and they take special care to keep in contact with families of children with special needs." Another family member added that this school year has seen improved communication between the family and the school after the family suffered a terrible loss. Every week, staff at NCA reaches out to the student and their family to see how they are doing. Parents said they appreciate that their children can do participate in dual enrollment program and having that opportunity has been very important to them. Another parent noted they appreciated that NCA had started the Gay Straight Alliance and that their child was able to choose their preferred pronoun. Teachers and staff at the school put their pronouns in their email bodies and having that allows their children to feel more comfortable at the school.



# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### Students:

1. Students shared that they are learning about Algebra this year and Science. Some students who participated in this focus group said that the school has been very helpful. One student is leaving the school because the school does not have the classes she needs and will transfer to another school. Students reported that the school leaders do ask for feedback from the students to determine how the student liked the teacher and the course content, or to see if students have ideas for improvement.

2. Students said that the teachers at the school are helpful, nice, and good communicators. One student said the most important thing a teacher can do is to have patience with their students. Students added that making their own schedule allows them freedom with classes. Students shared that they must be able to manage their time and work independently. One student commented that a person doesn't have to attend a class if they already know the content. One student said, "One big advantage is that if you need to go on vacation, you can go and schedule your classes around this instead of missing the class." Students said their families are involved only by supporting with state testing, and that otherwise, she is on a call with teachers herself and the families are not involved very much. Students did not that sometimes a parent must sign off to allow the student to take a dual enrollment course and that a parent must give permission for students to attend a field trip. One student said she was approached to have her mom attend a PTA, but her mom does not have time for that, and is not involved with school at all.

3. When asked what changes students would make to the school, they spoke about how they would like to see better technical capability at the school. Students said they have had issues with Connexus and that can make it difficult. Students who have attended other online schools did say that despite issues with Connexus, it is still a much better platform than other schools. Other students said they would like to have more opportunities to socialize with their classmates and be able to join more clubs and extracurricular activities. Students also said they would like to see more access to the quick checks. Quick checks are practice quizzes, and some students would like to have access to future ones even if they haven't completed the assignment.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### **Leadership:**

1. School leaders identified several positive at the school. One highlight is in the number of participants taking part in the College and Career Ready classes which has gone from under 5% of students to about 23% according to data for this school year. Graduation rates are up as well with the most recent data (school year ending in 2021) at 86.15% which is an increase from the previous school year which was 80.2%. Additionally, leaders explained that there is more positivity in the culture of the school for staff and students. The school leaders have created a focus on culture and student engagement by adding several clubs as options for students. This was at the request of students. Other important additions include grade level academies, and school assemblies.
2. Leaders shared information about the Renaissance System which was implemented last year. Leaders said that there is a 95% participation rate in this program this fall. School leaders explained that students are tested in ELA, and Math, one on one with a teacher and the test is proctored live. The results are obtained, and homeroom teachers go over the scores with students. The system allows school staff to see the time it took for the student to complete the test. Using this information, students work with teachers to set academic goals. Students are encouraged to self-reflect and consider not only the goal but what steps might need to be taken to achieve it. These conversations happen three times per year for every student. This also helps the school to identify which students may need additional literacy support and instruction.
3. The literacy coach balances her focus between Special Education, literacy, and data. She looks at the results of benchmark testing to identify those students to appear to need remediation and narrows this down to determining a skill set or content area that will need to be stronger for the student to thrive at the high school level. The entire teaching staff is aware that in some cases home challenges, health challenges, and economic challenges are present in the lives of their high school students. Staff takes the time to develop personal relationships with student and reaches out to the students. Together with their teacher, students look at their data and determine the areas where students can raise their grade and performance. Education professionals work on interventions with students keeping the student's goals in mind such as graduation. NCA uses a test prep program, called USA Test Prep to support students in learning test taking strategies to boost scores.

# FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

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## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY continued

### **Staff:**

1. Staff members at NCA said that they are highly committed to the learning of each student at the school. They offer extra tutoring and are available to answer questions for each student. When asked about the school's top two strengths, the staff identified the ability to access education from home and the ability for students to work ahead on assignments with a flexible schedule.
2. The staff shared that they constantly monitor student achievement. They have a detailed method to review student achievement data as students participate in on-line classes. Each teacher has a set of students for whom they track performance and check in with to assure that students are given ample opportunity to ask questions.
3. The staff talked about some of the recent changes made at the school. One example included an extra emphasis by teachers to provide students increased levels of feedback on their work. Teachers said they spend time goal setting with students and make sure they communicate academic updates using the school Padlet. Teachers added that they continue to provide asynchronous instructional recordings to enhance the state standard content and offer a synchronous class to encourage student participation and one on one support through phone calls.

# CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

A total of 9 were observed for approximately 20 minutes on the day of the evaluation.

I. Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Areas 1 &amp; 2</b>  <b>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b>  <b>Establishing a Culture for Learning</b>	Classroom interactions are highly respectful, and the teacher demonstrates a passionate commitment to the subject.	Classroom interactions reflect general warmth and caring and a genuine culture for learning.	Classroom interactions are generally appropriate and free from conflict with a minimal culture for learning.	Classroom interactions between the teacher and students are negative and do not represent a culture for learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>
	Students ensure maintenance of high levels of civility among classmates and assume much of the responsibility for establishing a culture for learning.	Interactions reflect cultural and developmental differences of students. Teacher and students are committed to the subject.	Interactions may be characterized by occasional displays of insensitivity and inconsistent expectations for student achievement.	Interactions are characterized by sarcasm, put-downs, and/or conflict. There is a low teacher commitment to the subject and few instances of students taking pride in their work.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 6</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Areas 3 &amp; 4</b>  <b>Managing Classroom Procedures</b>	Classroom routines and procedures appear seamless and student behavior is entirely appropriate.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established and the teacher ensures smooth functioning with little loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures have been established but function inconsistently, with some loss of instruction time.	Classroom routines and procedures are nonexistent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instruction time.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>
<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	There appears to be no misbehavior during the observation. The teacher monitoring of student behavior is subtle and/or preventative.	Teacher responds to student misbehavior in ways that are appropriate and respectful of the students.	Teacher tries to establish standards of conduct for students and monitor behavior. These efforts are not always successful.	Teacher is unsuccessful in monitoring student behavior.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>

# CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

II. Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Area 5</b> <b>Purpose and Explanation of Content, Lesson, Unit or Classroom Activity</b>	The purpose of the lesson or unit is clear and connects with student's real-life experiences. The explanation of content is imaginative, and students contribute to the lesson by participating and or explaining concepts to their peers.	The purpose for the lesson or learning activity is clear. The teacher's explanation of content is appropriate, and connects with students.	The teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success. The explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	The purpose for the lesson, learning activity is unclear. Teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Area 6</b> <b>A</b> <b>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</b>	Students formulate and ask high-level questions.	Teacher formulates and asks several high-level questions.	Teacher questioning and discussion techniques are uneven with some high-level questions.	Teacher makes poor use of questioning and discussion techniques, with low level questions, limited student participation and little true discussion.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>
<b>B</b>	Students assume responsibility for the participation of most students in the discussion.	Teachers assumes responsibility for the discussion which includes most students.	There is some attempt by the teacher to initiate student discussion and student participation.3	There is little to no student discussion even though the opportunity is there.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>

# CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOTALS

II. Classroom Instruction (continued)					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Area 7</b>  <b>A</b>  <b>Engaging Students in Learning</b>	Students are highly engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson allows high levels of student engagement.	Students appear to be intellectually engaged throughout most of the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is suitable for this group of students.	Students are partially engaged throughout the lesson.	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>
	Students make contributions to the representation of content.	There are appropriate activities, and instructive representations of content.	The representation of content or structure/pacing is uneven.	There are inappropriate activities or materials, poor representations of content, or lack of lesson structure/pacing.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
<b>B</b>					
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
<b>Area 8</b>  <b>A</b>	Students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Most of the students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Some of the students are aware of the learning goals/targets for themselves during this instructional timeframe.	Students are not aware of the learning goals/learning target during this instructional time frame.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 5</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>
<b>Using Formative Assessment in Instruction</b>  <b>B</b>	The teacher purposefully and consistently provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's demonstration/understanding of the learning goal/target. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	Much of the time, the teacher, provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding/ demonstration of learning goal/target. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	At times, the teacher provides clear, descriptive feedback but not in a consistent manner regarding learning goal/target. Observing where the work was meeting and where it was not. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher does not provide clear, descriptive feedback regarding learning goal/target and does not observe where the work is and where it is not meeting. The feedback is not timely and is not in a reasonable amount.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 3</b>

## Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable

The SPCSA Site Evaluation team observed interactions between students and instructors at the school in nine instances. The team observed and took notes in live classroom settings as well as recorded lessons.

Nevada Connections Academy is a full-time virtual school. Their primary means of academic instruction is a web-based platform called Pearson Connexus. This platform currently helps school staff to structure their academics.

Students, teachers, learning coaches, and administrators use Connexus for a variety of purposes including primary lesson scope and sequence, monitoring of student progress, daily schedules, and grades. After the initial day of evaluation, the SPCSA team met again with family members and students to gather a full range of information regarding Nevada Connections Academy.

Two trends were observed across classrooms:

1. A pattern of students joining the class several minutes late was observed.
2. Teachers appear to be carrying a substantial part of the cognitive load. In some cases, it is the teacher appears to be reading, solving math problems, and showing students how to do complex tasks while the students watch the demonstration. Students observe and take a more passive stance.

# ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The SPCSA uses the Organizational Performance Framework to collect evidence of performance and evaluate schools, at least annually, to monitor schools throughout their charter terms, to report to schools and the public annually, to intervene in schools that do not meet expectations and to make high-stakes decisions, including renewal, non-renewal, possible revocation, expansion, or replication. Most of this work is done through routine submissions by the school to the SPCSA.

A limited number of measures within the organizational performance framework may be at least partially evaluated during the site evaluation process. Measures are partially evaluated based upon evidence from school focus groups, school observations, documents reviewed and information from the school presentation portion of the evaluation. SPCSA staff will note the evidence provided by the school and also outline any questions or potential concerns.

Measure	Description	Evidence Collected
1a	<p>The school implements material terms of the education program.</p> <p>Examples of evidence: The scope and sequence of curricular materials have been vetted to align with the Nevada Academic Content Standards and a plan has been mapped by date to ensure the completion of each standard within the grade or content area.</p> <p>The educational program offered by the school is consistent with the program proposed within the charter application. Ex: math science focus, extended day, arts integrated.</p>	<p>Students use a personalized instruction platform as structured lessons blended with self-paced online learning. NCA provides all high school courses required for graduation including Math, Science, English, and Social Studies. NCA offers various electives, Honors and Advanced Placement options, and CTE Pathway courses. Students are offered a focus in Mathematics scope and sequence for standard-level, Honors, and AP courses which includes mastery of conceptual categories including number and quantity, algebra, functions, modeling, geometry, and statistics and probability as set forth by the Nevada Academic Standards. - All curriculum at NCA aligns with the Nevada Academic Content Standards within English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, Fine Arts, Computer Science, and World Language through approval with the Nevada Department of Education.”</p>
1b	<p>The school complies with applicable education requirements.</p> <p>Examples: Completing the submission of required items to</p>	<p>NCA posts open positions on Connection Academy’s career board. Resumes are submitted and reviewed by the hiring manager. If a candidate meets all requirements, the candidate is contacted by phone to discuss the position further. An interview is scheduled and held. School leaders report that career ladder positions are offered to staff when available. Some of the positions include manager, ELL Specialist, RTI Coordinator, Credit Recovery Coordinator and would be in addition to their teacher role.</p>



	<p>epicenter in a complete and timely manner. (Licensing of staff, Special Education and ELL Handbook and all others) Assessments/Data requirements</p>	
1c	<p>The school protects the rights of students with disabilities. Examples: A narrative of processes in place to ensure decisions made by the IEP Team are communicated to all staff who work with the student.</p> <p>A narrative of how the school/campus documents the delivery of service and progress toward achieving the IEP goals.</p>	<p>NCA utilizes a multi-layered approach to create a student's IEP. Special Education students are identified using the flagging process through enrollment. Documentation submitted during enrollment is reviewed and previous schools are contacted for information. Once flagged, the Special Education Manager reviews documentation and places student accordingly. This includes pairing each student to that of an NCA Special Education teacher or "case worker". Prior to the IEP meeting all relevant, student-specific quantitative and qualitative data is collected by the student's assigned case worker. Some of the data may be collected directly from the learning management system (ie. current grades, lesson completion, attendance, participation, and communication metrics). The case manager will conduct the formal agenda consistent with state and federal standards, including an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss concerns, set goals, establish clear lines of ongoing communication, and ultimately, confirm agreement with the terms of the IEP as written. General Education teachers are advised by the school leaders to remain in regular contact with a student's case manager throughout the semester. This collaboration is of particular importance at the end of a given term, prior to completing course grades for the student.</p>
1d	<p>The school protects the rights of ELL students. Examples: A narrative explaining how content teachers are trained in specific methodologies to provide EL students with meaningful access to content.</p> <p>A description of how EL students are acquiring English language skills in all four domains (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing)</p> <p>A description of how EL student progress within the four domains is monitored.</p>	<p>Meaningful access to content for EL learners is provided within the context of a fully online learning platform beginning with the embedded curriculum design itself. It may also be modified or supplemented by the NCA instructional staff to better meet the unique needs of students. NCA content teachers are encouraged to modify or customize the course curriculum in a variety of ways to further support their EL students. Performing this specific task requires creativity and professional expertise, as well as time and resources allocated by NCA school leadership in the areas of staff development and training. Teachers work collaboratively within three areas - whole-school, by grade level, and within their specific content areas - to identify potential gaps and barriers within the curriculum, which may be overcome with teacher-generated resources.</p>

Measure	Description	Evidence Collected
3a	<p>The school complies with governance requirements.</p> <p>Examples:            Board policies, including those related to oversight of an Education Service Provider, state open meeting law, code of ethics, conflicts of interest, board composition, routine meetings.</p>	<p>Governance requirements are monitored by the superintendent, the Board, NCA attorney, as well as the school's management partner to ensure compliance. Examples include 1. Board conducts an annual evaluation of the management partner 2. Board maintains between 5-9 members meeting the qualifications as required by law 3. Board conducts all meetings according to open meeting laws. 4. NCA may not purchase or lease anything from a Board member. 5. The Board has approved Board policies and has adopted and abides by a Code of Ethics Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy. Additionally, every Board member completes a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Statement.</p>
4a	<p>The school protects the rights of all students.</p> <p>Examples:            Admissions, waiting lists, fair and open recruitment, enrollment, due process protections, conduct of discipline- (discipline hearings, suspension and expulsion policies and practices, protects student information.</p>	<p>Admission Policy - Enrollment is open for students in grades 9 &amp; 10. First semester enrollment remains open until 11/15/21. If families would like to enroll after the deadline, they will enroll for 2nd Semester. Waiting Lists - A waiting list is created and monitored by the Enrollment Team if enrollment cap for grades 9 &amp; 10 is reached. Students are removed from the waitlist when spots open based on the date of completion of their enrollment documents.</p>
5b	<p>The school complies with health and safety requirements.</p> <p>Examples:            Timely and accurate submission of epicenter documents: (Crisis/Emergency Response Plan            Emergency Operation Plan            Certificate of Occupancy)            Appropriate nursing services and dispensing of pharmaceuticals, food service, and other health and safety services.</p>	<p>The Crisis/Emergency Response Plan is intended for use by school administration, faculty, staff, students, and emergency responders. It is intended to inform parents and community leaders of the school's planned actions in response to emergencies as a way of preparing families and local officials before an emergency occurs. Students have access to Safe Voice, and other mental health supports at NCA. The Manger of Counseling Services monitors students as needed on a regular basis. School administration is also linked to these reports.</p>

## Measures of Progress from Previous Site Evaluations

The extent to which the school has been successful in maintaining areas of strength, removing challenges, and acting upon the recommended items made by the SPCSA during the school's previous evaluation

School staff ability to address previous recommendations

According to school leaders at NCA the SPCSA previous recommendations were discussed at length. An action committee was created, and items were recommended on the school's Pulse Survey. Possible solutions were shared, and new directives were put in place for the 21-22 SY to improve in the recommended areas

Evidence the school can provide to support the implementation of previous recommendations.

The school leader has reported that teachers create assignments, and the school has placed a higher emphasis on providing feedback to students. Goal setting with students is conducted through weekly communications and sharing on the school Padlet. The school indicates that weekly communications with NCA students and families has improved and contains more direction than before including updates and important information.

The reasons school will require additional time to fully address the recommended items.

The school leader responded, "Yes, any new directives put in place require time to determine its effectiveness. Though this process began right after the last site evaluation, some items were not put in place until the start of this school year."

# SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

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## STRENGTHS

Summary of strengths: Academic, Classroom, Focus Groups, and Organizational Performance Evidence.

1. The school continues to work toward improvements which will most likely elevate the school's overall star rating. Examples of this include methods to improve the graduation rate, providing back to School Meetings with staff to share best practices, and routine School Improvement Plan meetings to work collaboratively on school goals. The school leaders have shared that the staff at the school is aware of each indicator within the NSPF (Nevada School Performance Framework), and they are aware of what is needed to improve. The leaders and staff have explained that they are committed to this focus.
2. The graduation rate at NCA has improved. The school recorded a previous graduation rate of 80.2% and improved this to 86.1%. This is a significant improvement.
3. The school continues to implement a flipped model of instruction which began the previous school year. School leaders shared that they have added a few new instructional methods for the staff to use to support an increase in academic outcomes for students. Most teachers reported that they are finding success with this flipped model and continue to send out instructional recordings. As discussed during the staff focus group, the instructional staff are still offering whole group instructional live lessons for students with an agreed upon emphasis on student involvement and engagement.
4. The school has continued to make improvements within their College and Career Readiness Program and have added a Hospitality/Tourism pathway. There are several more Dual Credit courses offered through TMCC (Truckee Meadows Community College) in Reno.
5. Nevada Connections Academy provides a physical and emotionally safe alternative education program. Students reported that they have direct, meaningful communication with their teachers. In addition, during the classroom observations, the SPCSA team noticed warm personal respectful interactions. Students reported that instructional staff and leadership are highly responsive to student ideas and desired changes for extra-curricular activities.

## CHALLENGES

A summary of challenges as observed through academic achievement indicators, classroom observations, focus group feedback and portions of the Organizational Performance Framework Evidence are described within the body of the report and summarized here.

1. A continued challenge at NCA is the school's previously below average outcomes within the Nevada School Performance Network. Because the Nevada Department of Education obtained a waiver from the United States Department of Education to forgo academic ratings for the 20-21 School Year, the school's efforts to improve outcomes have not yet been determined one way or another. The school team continues to follow the goals set forth in their School

Improvement Plan and have taken steps to increase graduation rates as well as academic proficiency levels. These are positive steps; however, it is important to realize that school wide academic outcomes remain a current challenge.

2. As previously reported, many students at Nevada Connections belong to student groups that are considered “at-risk” for not graduating from high school. This includes students with an IEP, EL students, students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch, as well as those in Foster Care and those experiencing homelessness. Some students embrace the online learning structure at the school because they feel safe and secure learning in this manner. However, a portion of these students may be seeking the online learning environment because they have experienced trauma or barriers in the past to the brick-and-mortar school setting. It is not surprising that the Nevada Connections leaders have identified that engagement of credit deficient students is a challenge. To add to the complexity of this challenge, poor motivation has been identified as a decisive factor in contributing to high drop-out rates (Artino, 2008; Keller, 2008). Therefore, student motivation is considered a crucial factor for success in online learning environments (Artino, 2008; Keller, 2008). The ability to effectively motivate and engage all students including those at risk for dropping out of school and those who are credit deficient is a complex and primary challenge at Nevada Connections Academy.
3. During the classroom observations, the SPCSA team did not observe a strong process of the implementation of formative assessment during the live and recorded lesson formats. As previously noted, the learning target, feedback, and student goal setting to understand the objectives seem to be inconsistently applied; however, the SPCSA Site Evaluation team was not given the opportunity to observe the Pearson portion of the lesson format during this evaluation. The concern continues to be that some highly self -motivated students, will thrive with the self-directed learning, however other students who may at-risk of not graduating from High School, (which is a large percentage of the school’s population) may benefit greatly from the formative assessment methods previously recommended. This challenge and concern were stated in the previous 20-21 Site Evaluation report.

**The SPCSA team did not observe:**

- New and implemented methods the school is using to foster student self-regulation.
- New ways of providing students the opportunity to participate more in depth in their own learning to deeply understand and transfer new learning to long term memory.
- A diversity of instructional approaches. The observations consisted of direct instruction and teacher coaching via direct instruction.
- Well-designed and or any instances of peer learning taking place.
- Evidence of a new routinely and planned practice of feedback to students during the instructional portion of the day.

*Note that the SPCSA team’s observation covered nine classrooms for one day. So, it is possible that these practices are being used in some cases but were not observed. However, these practices do not appear to be commonplace, based on the lack of observational data obtained.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended items are provided so charters may increase their school-wide ratings as well as their overall success. Authorizing Team members will follow up on each listed recommendation.

**STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS:** The following recommendations were issued during the previous site evaluation conducted October 2020. During this site evaluation the team had a very limited opportunity to observe many classrooms, students, or learning formats. While the leadership team spoke to changes the school has made in response to the October 2020 site evaluation, the SPCSA site evaluation team could not clearly gather evidence of the previous recommendations being implemented during the evaluation. It is not clear whether this is due to access to observational data, or that some of these items remain a work in progress. For this reason, the SPCSA team has re-issued some of the same recommendations from the previous evaluation. The SPCSA site evaluation team will work closely with the school leaders to develop, monitor, and obtain evidence of both implementation and follow-through regarding these recommendations.

To improve school performance levels, the SPCSA recommends taking time to build upon the variety of distance learning practices to become more skilled, purposeful, and intentional with this platform. We suggest using what has been learned in both face-to-face and distance learning environments to leverage what works best to impact student achievement. In both settings, research has shown (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2020) that the following best practices apply to both in person and virtual learning platforms.

1. Foster student self-regulation. This is crucial for moving learning to deep and transfer levels. Learning accelerates when the student, not the teacher, is taught to be in control of learning.
2. Employ a diversity of instructional approaches (not just some direct instruction and then some off-line independent work).
3. Add options for students to take part in well-designed peer learning.
4. Offer multiple forms of feedback to students within a high-trust environment. Integrate the feedback throughout the learning cycle. (Fisher et al.,2020)
5. Continue to build “communal” social capital and “relational trust” for students in the school setting. This bonding of youth to classroom teachers, peers, and school activities through trusting and sustained relationships provides protective factors to students from academic failure.
6. Continue to research ways to build or bridge troubled and “at risk” youth to less “at-risk” youth, families and members of the community. This intentional broadening of student perspective, building relationships outside of the school and providing connections to those with necessary resources may foster ownership, autonomy, confidence, and capability for those unengaged, credit deficient students.
7. It is recommended that school leaders and staff strengthen the implementation levels in each of these areas and continue to prioritize as you move forward. To this end, continue to track and improve Nevada Connections chronic absenteeism, and retention rates. The What Works Clearinghouse recommendations include a strong data tracking system, adult advocates, additional academic supports, a personalized learning environment and rigorous/ relevant instruction for students.
8. Guide and support school leaders, teachers, and students to join forces in establishing a clearly defined formative assessment process to generate powerful learning outcomes and change the culture from assessment of learning to assessment for learning. The purpose is to raise standards of achievement, improve teacher quality and control over teaching, and vastly improve students’ ability to learn more and become self-aware learners and raise levels of student resilience. It is recommended that the Nevada Connections team focus on three elements within the formative assessment process. First, establish clear learning targets and criteria for success, second, improve the use and frequency of feedback to students, and third, foster student goal

setting as an integral part of classroom practice.

## **DEFICIENCIES**

There were no deficiencies identified for Nevada Connections Academy during this evaluation.