



Nevada State Public Charter School Authority

Site Evaluation Report: Nevada Connections Academy

Evaluation Date: 1/16/2024

State Public Charter School Authority
775-687-9174
1749 North Stewart Street Suite 40
Carson City, Nevada 89706
2080 East Flamingo Road, Suite 230
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Contents

Introduction and School Background	3
Academic Performance	4
Focus Group Summaries	7
Classroom Observation Totals	11
Organizational Performance.....	15
Site Evaluation Findings	17

Appendices

A: Nevada School Performance Framework

<https://doe.nv.gov/accountability/nspf/>

B: SPCSA Academic Framework

https://charterschools.nv.gov/Performance_Reports/2020-2021_Academic_Reports/

C: SPCSA Organizational Framework

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

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This Site Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school evaluation that took place on 1/16/24 at Nevada Connections Academy (NCA). 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.

An analysis of the school's academic and operational success is undertaken by reviewing the most current versions of the Nevada State Performance Framework (Appendix A) and the State Public Charter School Authority Academic Framework (Appendix B) as well as the Organizational Framework (Appendix C).

In addition, 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 that 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.

Members of the SPCSA staff will note additional information regarding the classroom observations on one page of this report. This page will be located on the page immediately following the classroom rubric readings. Using information from 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 regularly to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND



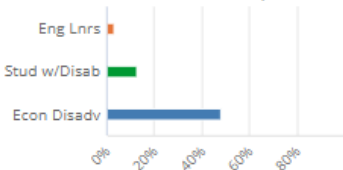
NCA is located in Reno, Nevada in a facility at 555 Double Eagle Court, Ste. 1000. The school serves 770 students (as of the most recent Validation Day) in 9th through 12th grade. The mission of Nevada Connections Academy is: "NCA will produce college/career-ready graduates equipped with the social and emotional skills necessary to contribute positively to society."

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Nevada School Performance Framework 2023

High School

Nevada Connections Academy School Year 2022-2023 Nevada School Rating

<p><i>School Level:</i> High School <i>Grade:</i> 09-12 <i>Levels:</i> <i>District:</i> State Public Charter School Authority <i>School:</i> 555 Double Eagle Court <i>Address:</i> Suite 2000 Reno, NV 89521</p>	 <p>56.0 Total Index Score</p>	<p><i>School Type:</i> SPCSA <i>School Designation:</i> No Designation 95% Assessment Participation: Met</p>														
 <p>Student Race/Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 42.2% White 11.2% Bl/Afr Am 30.5% Hisp/Latino 2.9% Asian 0.6% Am Ind/AK Nat 1.3% Pac Isl 11.3% Two or More 	<p>School Performance History</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>School Year</th> <th>Index Score/Star Rating</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021-2022</td> <td>70.0 NR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-2021</td> <td>13.8 ★</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	School Year	Index Score/Star Rating	2021-2022	70.0 NR	2020-2021	13.8 ★	<p>Additional Student Groups</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Eng Lnrs</td> <td>~5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stud w/Disab</td> <td>~15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Econ Disadv</td> <td>~55%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Percentage	Eng Lnrs	~5%	Stud w/Disab	~15%	Econ Disadv	~55%
School Year	Index Score/Star Rating															
2021-2022	70.0 NR															
2020-2021	13.8 ★															
Group	Percentage															
Eng Lnrs	~5%															
Stud w/Disab	~15%															
Econ Disadv	~55%															

Math and ELA Results

Nevada School Performance Framework

2023

Proficiency Rates

High School

Math Proficient

Math Proficient Points Earned: 1.5/10

Groups	2023 %	2023 % District	2023 % MIP	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP
All Students	8.3	25.7	39.38	11.3	25.2	36.19
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	20.0	30.62	-	-	26.96
Asian	10.0	50.2	55.12	-	55.1	52.76
Black/African American	<5	11.0	26.37	9.3	10.2	22.5
Hispanic/Latino	8.3	16.0	30.44	7.1	14.2	26.78
Pacific Islander	-	28.0	36.16	-	23.0	32.8
Two or More Races	10.8	35.5	43.1	23.5	31.9	40.11
White/Caucasian	8.9	33.6	49.68	12.3	33.8	47.04
Special Education	<5	6.2	20.93	8.0	6.6	16.76
English Learners Current + Former	<5	<5	22.86	-	<5	18.8
English Learners Current	-	<5	20.23	-	<5	16.04
Economically Disadvantaged	5.1	14.5	31.41	8.1	14.6	27.8

ELA Proficient

ELA Proficient Points Earned: 4.5/10

Groups	2023 %	2023 % District	2023 % MIP	2022 %	2022 % District	2022 % MIP
All Students	43.5	54.0	53.55	49.3	54.3	51.11
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	70.0	42.92	-	-	39.92
Asian	50.0	75.2	68.51	-	78.7	66.85
Black/African American	21.8	34.6	38.08	43.7	40.6	34.82
Hispanic/Latino	46.9	43.8	42.69	47.8	42.3	39.67
Pacific Islander	-	56.1	53.74	-	35.8	51.31
Two or More Races	37.8	65.5	62.16	41.1	60.5	60.16
White/Caucasian	47.8	64.6	65.93	52.9	65.7	64.14
Special Education	17.5	19.2	23.93	12.5	16.5	19.92
English Learners Current + Former	20.0	10.9	25.56	-	12.5	21.64
English Learners Current	-	6.0	20.18	-	9.2	15.98
Economically Disadvantaged	35.5	41.8	43.73	45.4	43.4	40.77

SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Geographic Comparison Report

High School

GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS INDICATOR (25 POINTS)
SPCSA school NSPF performance vs. comparison district/school(s).

0/25 0 automatic points in indicator.
A 4- or 5-star equivalent NSPF score earns 15 or 25 automatic points.

NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (10 POINTS)

0/10 NSPF score difference of -5.1 between school (56 points) and comparison district (61.1 points).

NSPF SCORE VS. COMPARISON SCHOOL (15 POINTS)

0/15 NSPF score difference of -5.1 between school (56 points) and comparison school (61.1 points).

SPCSA Academic Performance Framework Diversity Comparison Results

High School

ENROLLMENT DIVERSITY INDICATOR (15 POINTS)
SPCSA school FRL, IEP, and EL enrollment rates vs. comparison district.

12/15 Indicator bonus points for: EL.
One bonus point per group with 25%+ increase over prior year.

ENROLLMENT RATES VS. COMPARISON DISTRICT (5 POINTS EACH)

3/5 School FRL rate of ≥ 40 to $< 50\%$ compared to district Gr9-12 FRL rate of 80.5%.

5/5 School IEP rate of ≥ 10 to $< 15\%$ compared to district Gr9-12 IEP rate of 10.9%.

3/5 School EL rate of $< 5\%$ compared to district Gr9-12 EL rate of 11.7%.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	Number of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board	2	45 minutes
Parents/Families	4	45 minutes
Students	2	45 minutes
School Leadership	7	45 minutes
Staff	5	45 minutes

Governing Board¹:

- Two of five board members participated in the focus group on the day of the site evaluation. Participants explained there are five members on the Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) governing board and the board meets once per month. Members of the governing board have several areas of expertise within their backgrounds. Board member expertise includes a parent of a student at the school, a certified teacher, an accountant, and another person with a background in the health and wellness field.
- Participants were asked to comment on training provided to new board members. One person said, “When I joined the board, training was provided. I watched videos, and every three years I receive additional training. We are informed if we are behind on training. We receive emails with links to attend various subject matter materials.” A different person added, “ We go to the National Charter School Convention and are invited to attend the Pearson Board Academy.” Participation includes topics such as open meeting law, and board member roles and responsibilities. The Pearson training provides board members the opportunity to view the Learning Management System, which the board purchased from Pearson so that they can see how students can learn on the virtual platform.
- Board members stated they believe that all students attending NCA can succeed. One person said, “We meet to go over the financial and academic data of the school. Our Executive Director is good at sharing detailed information about the school such as the graduation rates, and student achievement levels.” Board members reported having an agenda with routine items such as public comment and consent on the previous agenda.

Families:

- Four family members met to talk about their experiences at NCA. Family members described the principal, counselor, teachers, and superintendent as very responsive. One parent said, “I love the school. The teachers have been very helpful.” Another parent added, “The flexibility that NCA provides is unmatched. All things considered; the school is very responsive. It is very easy to monitor my child’s grades.”

¹ Two members of the five member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES CONTINUED

- One parent expressed concern over his son's educational experience. He remarked, "I don't think this school is the right fit for a child like mine with an Individual Education Plan, (IEP). If this was my child's last year I would not be back." Another parent remarked, "My child has an IEP, and we have not had a good experience because the modifications and accommodations have not helped. It is still too hard." The parent described having to constantly change the Pearson independent program for their high schooler with special needs. "I am finding it difficult to provide changes to the curriculum my child uses on a daily basis. If I don't make the time to attend the virtual classes with my child, the program will be much too difficult, and my child will fail to graduate from high school."
- Parents seemed to disagree about the levels of rigor within the curriculum. Some parents said the program is much too difficult while others remarked that their child is doing well and finding success. One family member stated, "It is nice to see my high school student able to work at their own pace." The family member stated, "We can work on school in the morning or in the afternoon, as long as we finish assignments by the deadline." Another parent shared, "The World History course is too hard." A third parent added, "I am an adult, and I found the World History curriculum much too difficult. I spoke to a teacher about this concern, and the teacher said that they know the curriculum is not ideal. I feel like I've shared my concerns about the curriculum with the school but nothing has changed." Some of the other family members spoke about their children having trouble signing on to the Pearson online program. A parent remarked, "It is difficult for my student to get into the class. It seems to be an issue with the program."

Students:

- Two students participated in the focus group on the day of the evaluation. Students shared that they like the flexibility of the NCA online program. Both students commented on what they are learning. One student said, "There's an 11th grade college preparation class about careers and what to expect after that." Another student added, "I'm learning quite a bit. I'm a senior and my favorite class is Psychology. We are learning to identify mental problems and ways to work around them."
- Students spoke about the difference between live lessons and online lessons. One student said, "With the individual classes, we students participate by ourselves. The live lessons are optional zoom calls, and I personally don't participate in those live lesson options." The other student within the focus group said, "I don't participate in the live lessons either. I text my teachers for help directly if I need it. For example, if I'm taking Economics, I text that teacher with questions."
- Students were asked to describe how often they speak with peers or lead a discussion. One student responded, "Honestly, I don't do that, and I think this is the biggest problem with online schools. I have to actively seek out ways to interact with others." The other student responded, "The school has clubs and activities, but this is not something I participate in. I don't usually go to live lessons or physical events. I don't get out a lot and have to seek out peer groups." Another student added, "I recently got a job, and this is the only way I see people my own age. Making friends is a barrier to online school. There is another online school that has class once per week at a physical location. Maybe something like that could be a possibility for meetups outside of curricular areas." The other student agreed with this suggestion.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES CONTINUED

Leadership:

- Seven school leaders participated in the focus group. Leaders were asked to describe what budgetary accommodations and supports have been made for specialized student populations at NCA such as English Language learners and students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). One leader said, “The one that jumps out is the secondary EL person. We monitor our Special Education population carefully. Many of these students enroll late. We budgeted early on for one number of Special Education teachers and then expanded the budget a little. We did this earlier, so that we could get the Special Education teacher in place instead of waiting.” Another leader said, “We added a Special Education Manager so that we have another manager to support the teachers. We added a second 504² person and a Learning Support specialist. We no longer have an Assistant Principal.”
- Leaders spoke about meeting the needs of their Special Education and English Language Learners. Leaders described having both pull-out and push-in options to monitor IEP growth or lack thereof. One leader said, “Accommodations are met using the grade book which is available to all students and teachers, staff, and parents. Everyone can look at the grades of an individual student and see how much time they spend on different subjects and assignments. Our Special Education homerooms are smaller than our Regular Education homerooms.” Another leader said, “Our Special Education team meets regularly. Our English Language Coordinator did a training on what teachers can do to support students, such as using an audio book.” School leaders spoke about how they work collaboratively to monitor and see how students are doing to meet the goals within their Individual Education Plans. “We have a case manager, and this person communicates with the classroom teacher. We are able to have open conversations with students regarding the goals contained within the IEP.”
- Family responsiveness is one thing that school leaders said remains challenging. One leader reported, “We have students who find themselves here because they have had eight or nine years of academic challenges. For this reason, we make efforts to speak to them in ways that invoke a partnership concept and we try to remove barriers.” Another leader explained, “It is important we connect with family members, and some parents suggest we talk directly to the students. Other family members work full-time and are not available for calls during school hours. We have added Saturday and evening calls to our protocol for this reason. We want to keep caretakers involved.”

Staff:

- There were five members of the staff who participated in the focus group. Staff reported information about morale at NCA. One staff member said, “Everyone here puts forth a great deal of effort. We started off the school year with a new motto, raising the bar.” Another staff member reported, “I feel like we are doing more and it has been positive. The follow through with this new motto from leadership has been incredible.” A third staff member added, “I think overall staff morale has been great; you can tell during staff meetings” A different person said, “The high fives and the raffle for those nominated for positive contributions can receive four hours comp. time.” Another person pointed out, “The Washoe County School District teachers got a raise, and we are told there isn’t money for those types of raises at NCA. This has not been addressed.”

² A 504 plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an school receive accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES CONTINUED

- Some of the staff spoke about monitoring and checking on the progress of academic goals and objectives for students with an Individual Education Plan. A person on staff commented, “One method I use is to go into our Power BI platform and view the student performance of each individual student. I can view what a student’s current achievement levels are and get a good idea about how the student is performing in our online classes.” A different staff member said, “If I want to look at the IEP goals, I can look at the data showing the goals and how the student is progressing toward mastery.” A different educator commented, “I think keeping our finger on the pulse of the student is critical. We make calls to our homeroom students weekly. We look to see where improvement might be needed and encourage the student to reach out to a particular teacher to follow up.” One teacher commented, “As far as our ninth graders, credit sufficiency is really important. We have open office hours and put the times into the ninth-grade students planners.”
- Staff spoke about feedback offered to students at NCA. A member of the teaching staff said, “One big recent change that I appreciate is incorporating the homeroom into our communication protocol with students. This group of homeroom students to teacher allows us the time and space to communicate with students and find out if they need some extra support. Once we know, we can provide it. These homeroom meetings are student-led and very positive in nature.” A different teacher commented, “I do have a homeroom, and when I meet with a student, I go through their gradebook with them. We look at what they have done well and where information or confusion exists. Then I follow up with each student, I guide them to prioritize what to complete first and so on. I think this helps teach students how to become much stronger students and learn to take ownership for their efforts.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION RUBRIC

A total of 4 classrooms were observed for approximately 15 minutes on the day of the evaluation.

Classroom Environment					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Classroom Learning Environment is Conducive to Learning	Students create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Students take ownership in explaining, modeling, and reinforcing classroom routines. Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher creates and maintains a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; maximizing learning time.	The teacher attempts to create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers attempt to explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences make an effort to guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is sometimes maximized.	The teacher does not create and maintain a learning environment where students feel free to share their ideas and take risks in learning. Teachers do not explain, model, and reinforce classroom routines. Learning experiences do not guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate. Learning time is seldom maximized.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 2	Total: 2	Total: 0	Total: 0
Establishing a Culture for Learning	Students and teachers respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher responds appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher attempts to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	Teacher does not attempt to respond appropriately when conflicts arise and does not demonstrate respect for and affirm their own and others' differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 2	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 1

Classroom Instruction					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Purpose and Explanation of Content, Lesson, Unit or Classroom Activity	The purpose of the lesson or unit is clear and connects with student's 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 of the lesson and learning activity is unclear. The teacher's explanation of the content is unclear, confusing, or uses inappropriate language.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 3	Total: 0	Total: 0	Total: 1
Students' Cognitive Awareness of Learning Goals/Targets	Students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Most of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Some of the students can explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional timeframe.	Students cannot explain/demonstrate the goals/targets of the lesson, content, unit, or classroom activity during this instructional time frame.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 2	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 1
Quality and purpose of questions	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.
	Total: 0	Total: 0	Total: 3	Total: 0	Total: 1
Opportunities for student discourse and student use of academic language	Students use academic language while participating in discourse. Students demonstrate mastery through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	Teachers encourage the use of academic language and provide students opportunities for discourse. Students are encouraged to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage the use of academic language. Students are provided with limited opportunities for discourse. There is some attempt by the teacher to encourage students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher order thinking.	There is little to no opportunity for student discourse. There is little to no opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge through reasoning and higher-order thinking.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 2

Classroom Instruction (continued)					
	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Not Observed
Intellectual Engagement in Learning	Students are intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is differentiated and 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 differentiated and adequate.	Students are partially intellectually engaged throughout the lesson. The pacing and structure of the lesson is somewhat differentiated and inconsistent.	Students are not at all intellectually engaged in significant learning. The pacing and structure of the lesson is not differentiated and inadequate.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 2	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 1
Using Formative Assessment in Instruction	The teacher purposefully and consistently provides clear, descriptive feedback in regard to student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	Most of the time, the teacher, provides clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher provides clear, descriptive feedback inconsistently regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is seldom timely and is in a reasonable amount.	The teacher does not provide clear, descriptive feedback regarding student's understanding of the learning goals/targets. The feedback is not timely and is not in a reasonable amount.	This criterion was not observed or rated.
	Total: 0	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 2

Additional information about the classroom observations shared here when applicable

It is worth mentioning that NCA's primary mode of instruction is through an independent online curriculum offered by Pearson. However, NCA also offers students the option to attend additional live online classes as volunteers. These classes are designed to provide students with supplementary guidance and support for their independent online coursework.

The SPCSA observed low attendance and minimal student participation in most classes during the site evaluation.

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, visual inspection 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.

Indicator	Measure Description	Evidence Collected
Indicator 1: Education Program	<p>Measures 1a and 1b: The school implements the material terms of the education program. Ex: SPCSA site evaluations will confirm that the school is staying true to its approved application and programming, as well as review curricular materials and their alignment to Nevada Academic Content Standards.</p> <p>Measures 1c and 1d: The school protects the rights of students with disabilities and EL students. Ex: For example, classroom observations include examples of students with an IEP or those learning English as a language. Student support is provided within small groups or teachers using interventions and supports to provide students with special needs and EL learners with meaningful access to grade-level content and standards.</p>	<p>Evidence gathered during focus groups indicated NCA is implementing the material terms of their educational program as stated in the charter. Students with an IEP received individualized instruction. Members of the school leadership team reported that teachers, parents, the case manager, SPED teacher meet to review IEP goals and to create new goals to best support each learner. The EL teacher provided training for strategies to implement within classrooms to advance the use of the English language. *It is important to note that a few of the parents in the family focus group had concerns about the independent nature of the curriculum for their students with an IEP. It was noted that the curriculum in the World History class may need adjustment as several family members expressed concern that the curriculum for this class is very difficult, even for them.</p>
Indicator 3: Governance and Reporting	<p>Measure 3a: The school complies with governance requirements Ex: Board policies and oversight of Education Service Provider</p>	<p>Members of the NCA board comply with government requirements and spoke to meeting on a monthly basis. The board members reported being comprised of people with a vast range of experience in several fields.</p>
Indicator 4: Students and Employees	<p>Measure 4a: Student records under lock and key/stored appropriately Measure 4d: Personnel files are under lock and key/stored appropriately</p>	<p>Student records were observed to be housed electronically, in a safe and secure setting. Personnel files are secured in the same manner.</p>
Indicator 5: School Environment	<p>Measure 5b:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuation plans for classrooms are posted • The school has fire extinguishers on all floors which are tagged • Active permit for food service (if applicable) • Nurse requirements are met through visual check of health office, disposal of sharps, cot, refrigeration 	<p>Classrooms operate online. Students do not attend classes at the executive offices and the remaining items are not applicable in this case.</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.

<p>Prior recommendations by SPCSA staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase student voice in classrooms and during other non-academic settings. • Build bridges to troubled youth via the counseling team and through outside resources. • Improve chronic absenteeism and retention rates for students enrolled. • Improve formative assessment processes. • Increase the number of board members.
<p>School Assessment of progress made against recommendations and evidence provided, or reasons school believes additional time may be necessary to fully address past recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student voice has been increased at the school in a variety of ways: students lead the student council. Students have options in how they demonstrate mastery of essential standards. Counseling programming is offered based on student survey results. • In building bridges to troubled and “at-risk” youth, the counseling team regularly provides information regarding outside resources that families may benefit from. CTE courses host guest speakers. Additional resources have been put into family onboarding. Overall, this is an area of continued needed focus. • NCA has a strong data tracking and communication system in place for improving chronic absenteeism and retention rates. We have also increased phone calls with parents/caretakers. • Formative assessment processes include benchmark testing twice per year in math and ELA for grades 9 and 10. Additionally, teachers formatively assess students with custom assignments for data-based essential standards with student choice in all courses. • The Board has added an additional member and is awaiting a background check.
<p>SPCSA staff assessment based upon findings during site evaluation</p>	<p>The NCA leadership team believes the recommendations from the previous site evaluation have been addressed by leadership, the governing board, and staff. SPCSA staff agrees with this assessment, and concluded the leadership team, and staff continue to make changes to better address the academic and social-emotional needs of students.</p>

SITE EVALUATION FINDINGS

STRENGTHS

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

Communication and individualized instruction

Communication and individualized instruction continue to be strengths at Nevada Connections Academy. Leadership reported, “Our Special Education team meets on a regular basis. Our English Language Coordinator did a training on what teachers can do to support our students in mastery of English. We work collaboratively to monitor and see how students are doing to meet the goals within their Individual Education Plans (IEP). “We have a case manager, and this person communicates with the classroom teacher. We are able to have open conversations with students regarding the goals contained within the IEP.” NCA has systems build into place to ensure that students are able to communicate with their instructors through e-mail, text message, attending live class sessions, and through individual phone calls between teachers, leaders, and students and their families. It is important to note that Nevada Connections Academy is an on-line school with classes conducted through Pearson. These classes are attended by students in an independent self-regulated manner. Nevada Connections Academy leaders have created a set of live lessons taking place online for students willing to attend these supplementary classes. These classes are conducted on a voluntary basis.

Numbers of Advanced Diplomas and College and Career Readiness Participation

Within the area of earning an advanced diploma, NCA has 25% of students within this category. In addition, the CCR, or College and Career Ready completion rate, is 79% with a College and Career Ready participation rate of 94.7%. These are areas of strength at NCA to be celebrated as they are well above the Washoe County School District averages and Nevada state averages.

Strong Leadership

The site evaluation team observed strong leadership. The school leader developed a clear and shared focus for Nevada Connections Academy and included a new motto, “Raising the Bar” at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Staff reported a positive climate and several positive incentives for members of the staff having provided strong contributions to the school. Another staff member reported, “I feel like we are doing more to meet the needs of our students and it has been positive.”

NCA’s College and Career Readiness Program

The site evaluation team continues to recognize NCA’s College and Career Readiness Program to be a strength. The program continues to improve each year. NCA continues to develop and secure partnerships with colleges in the state of Nevada.

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.

Motivation of at-risk students

School leaders reported that the motivation of at-risk students is an ongoing challenge at NCA. The school leaders and staff have continually worked to improve levels of student self-reliance and self-sufficiency as students navigate the virtual online program at NCA.

Overall achievement levels

Members of the leadership team communicated that they are continuing to work to improve overall achievement levels for students and subgroups at NCA. This continues to be a challenge at NCA.

Improve family engagement

Members of leadership continue to communicate challenges with family unresponsiveness. As the school continues to improve, this challenge must continue to be a focus of improvement at NCA.

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.

Establish a strong and consistent pattern of index score

It is recommended that NCA work to establish a more consistently strong pattern of performance history as measured by the Nevada Report Card. The history is somewhat inconsistent year after year at this time. As indicated on page four of this report, the school has the following index scores over the previous three school years:

2020-2021 index score 13.8

2021-2022 index score 70.0

2022-2023 index score 56.0

This may be established by continuing to develop ways to monitor and provide all students, especially those students below grade level, ways to remediate and fill in gaps from previous learning experiences. As has been stated in previous reports, the NCA virtual online program appears to fully meet the needs of those students who are independent learners with strong levels of motivation. NCA must continue to find ways to meet the needs of all students enrolled, including those with at-risk and problematic life situations.

Build bridges to troubled youth and their families

The students within the student focus group during this site evaluation spoke of isolation and concerns with having the opportunity to engage with other students. It is recommended that NCA continue to research ways to build connections between those students who may be troubled and “at-risk” to others who may provide support, mentoring, or a strong model of what an independent motivated learner must do to succeed in a school like NCA. This intentional broadening of the 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.

Continue to discover ways to engage students in both online and voluntary classes

It is recommended that NCA continue to discover ways to engage students in the learning process. This applies to both the independent lessons provided by Pearson and the live lessons created and conducted by NCA staff. On the day of the site evaluation, the majority of the classrooms observed by the SPCSA team were not well attended. For example, there were generally two students attending the voluntary classes which were observed. During the family focus group, several family members spoke of the World History curriculum provided by Pearson as being unreasonably difficult. When family members spoke to the teacher about the difficulty, they were told the online portion was out of the teacher’s control.

Improve interventions and supports for specialized populations/students

It is recommended NCA improve and expand current support for both the students and families with an IEP. A few family members in the family focus group spoke about the difficulty of the independent portion of the Pearson curriculum and the family's challenges at having to make adjustments and accommodations for their child to have the child succeed. The school team may want to consider a method to provide specific one-to-one support to those students needing this type of academic accommodation.

STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no strong recommendations identified for Nevada Connections Academy during this site evaluation.

DEFICIENCIES

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