



# CONNECTIONS ACADEMY INTRODUCTION

## Jay W. Ragley & Allison Reaves



© Connections Education LLC. All Rights Reserved.

January 28, 2014

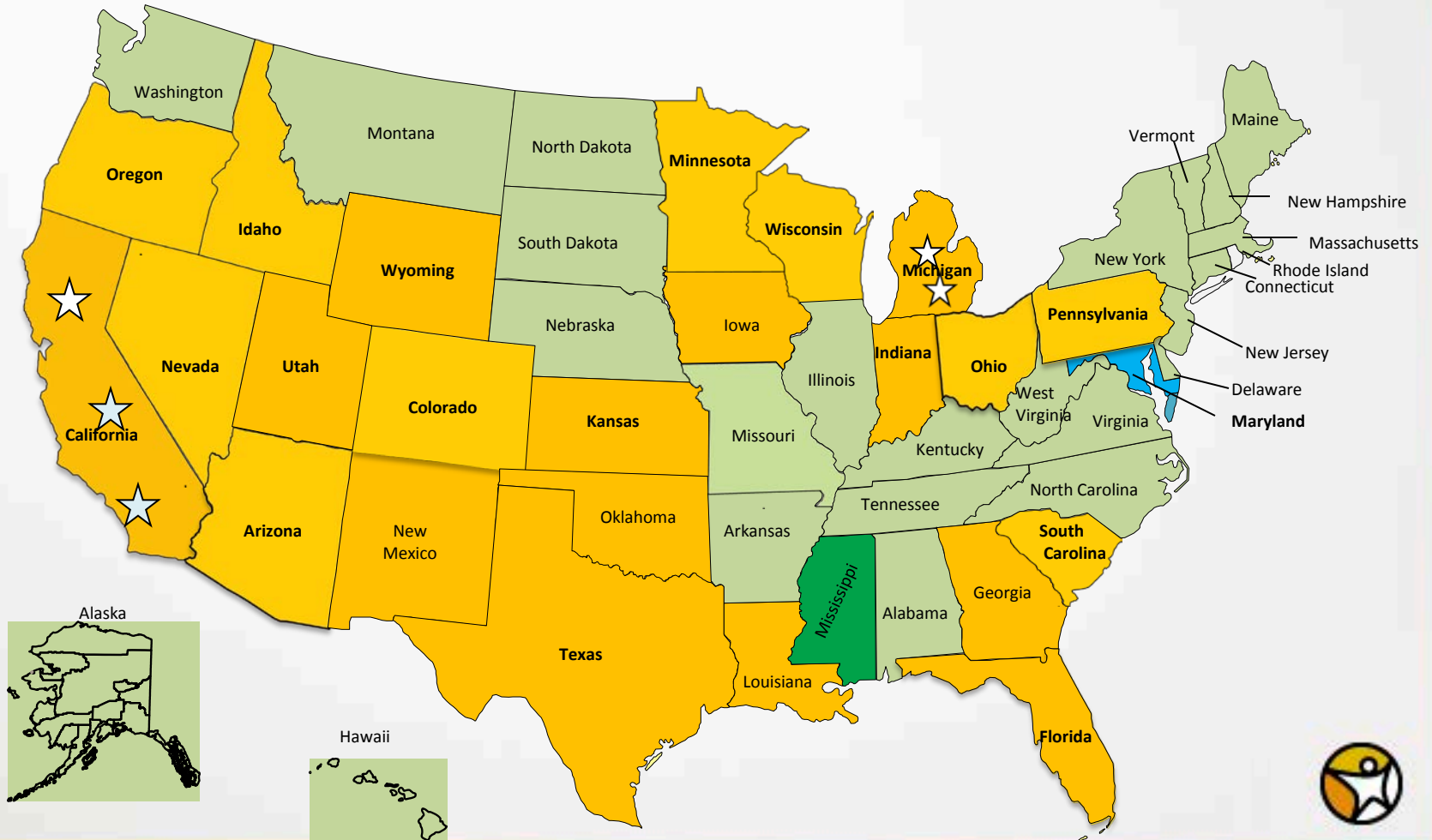


# CONNECTIONS ACADEMY MAP

26 fully charter/partnered schools

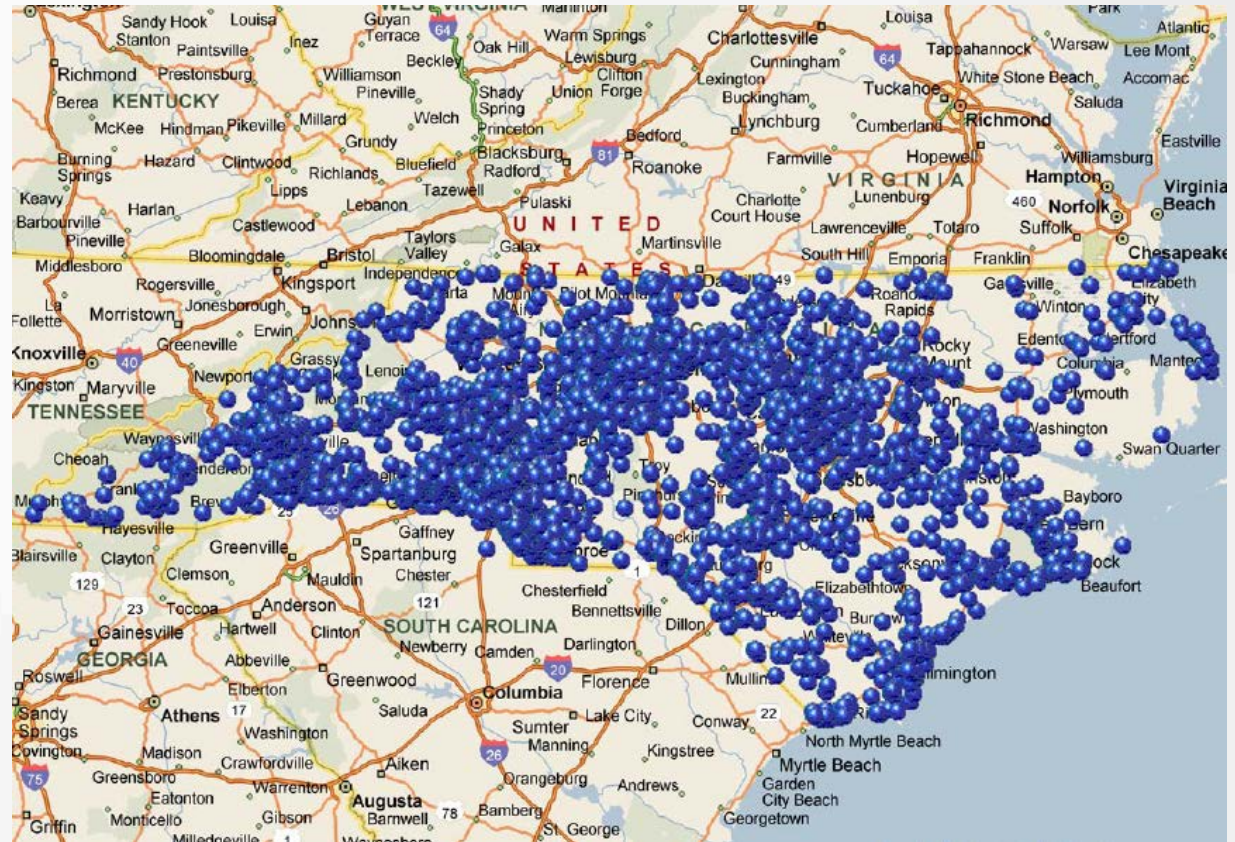
1 state sponsored program

1 international private school



# NORTH CAROLINA FAMILY INTEREST

- Over 4,200 information requests via Connections Academy website.



# NCCA FOUNDING BOARD

---

- **Bryan Setser**  
Education Consultant and Parent  
NCVPS Director
- **Donna Sullivan**  
Information and Communications Professional
- **Russ Jones**  
Executive/CTO Web Marketing
- **Eric Strother, M.D.**  
Physician/East Carolina MBA Candidate
- **Marcus Green**  
Doctoral Student/Assistant Principal  
NCVPS Math Instructor



## SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: Independent, Accountable, Transparent



- North Carolina Connections Academy (NCCA) operated by independent, non-profit board of directors.
- Charter school model = accountability and transparency.
- Charter school leadership and board = personnel, budget, and instructional decision making authority.
- Connections Academy = support NCCA mission, students, personnel, and board.

# SEA/LEA RELATIONSHIPS: Collaboration



- Collaborate with stakeholders.
- 11 district partnerships: Wisconsin, Oregon, Colorado, Oklahoma, Iowa, Kansas, Texas, Wyoming, California (3).
- 15 state entity or college partnerships.
- Connections Learning serves and supports school districts across the country.

# STUDENTS: Diverse Backgrounds & Needs



- All supported schools  $\approx$  50,000 students
- 28% K-5; 28% 6-8; 44% 9-12.
- All supported schools  $\approx$  48% eligible for free/reduced school meal programs.
- Supported schools that are a LEA  $\approx$  12+% school enrollment are students with disabilities.

# STUDENTS: Diverse Backgrounds & Needs



- NCCA anticipated enrollment:
  - Year 1 = 1,000 students (0.068% total NC pop.)
  - Year 2 = 1,500 students (0.10% total NC pop.)
  - Year 3 = 2,000 students (0.17% total NC pop.)
- Initial enrollment: Anticipate 50%-60% from public schools, 20% from homeschool, remainder from private schools or new NC residents.



# STUDENTS: Diverse Backgrounds & Needs



- Parental choice.
- Students needing flexible schedule (athletes, musicians, dancers, actors).
- Students seeking an educational program that best fits their needs (more rigorous & challenging curriculum).
- Family living arrangements (parents working abroad/frequent travel, young mothers/fathers, students must work to support family).
- Students with medical conditions.
- Students subjected to bullying.
- Students not successful in traditional classroom.

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



- New instructional model = need for information and education about the model.
- Accountability and funding frameworks designed prior to fulltime virtual charter schools.
- Access to student transcripts, records, and prior assessment data = statewide longitudinal data systems.
- Assessments measuring achievement but not individual student growth over time.

# SCHOOL FUNDING: Wide Variance

## State & Federal Only

- Georgia and South Carolina.

## Local, State & Federal

- Louisiana, Michigan, Nevada.

## Other Policy Considerations

- ADM, count dates, fulltime compared to individual courses.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STUDENT

---

If you're a Connections Academy student, your typical day is anything but typical.



**LOGAN**



**AALIYAH**



**JAMES**

---

7 AM – Morning Practice  
10 AM – Algebra LiveLesson®  
11 AM – Sign Language  
2 PM – U.S. History  
4 PM – Debate Club  
5 PM – Language Arts

6 AM – Chinese  
8 AM – Language Arts  
10 AM – Horseback Riding  
12 PM – Science Experiment  
1 PM – Math  
2 PM – Social Studies  
3 PM – Book Club Meeting

6 AM – Work  
1 PM – AP Art History  
2 PM – Call teacher about  
U.S. History essay  
3 PM – Calculus  
4 PM – Chemistry LiveLesson®  
9 PM – Submit English paper



# PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

---

## LEVEL OF LEARNING COACH INVOLVEMENT

- A strong commitment to student growth in all grades.

LEARNING COACH INVOLVEMENT

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Record attendance
- Significant daily oversight
- Consult with teacher and monitor grades

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Record attendance
- Monitor work and grades
- Assist or refer to teacher

### HIGH SCHOOL

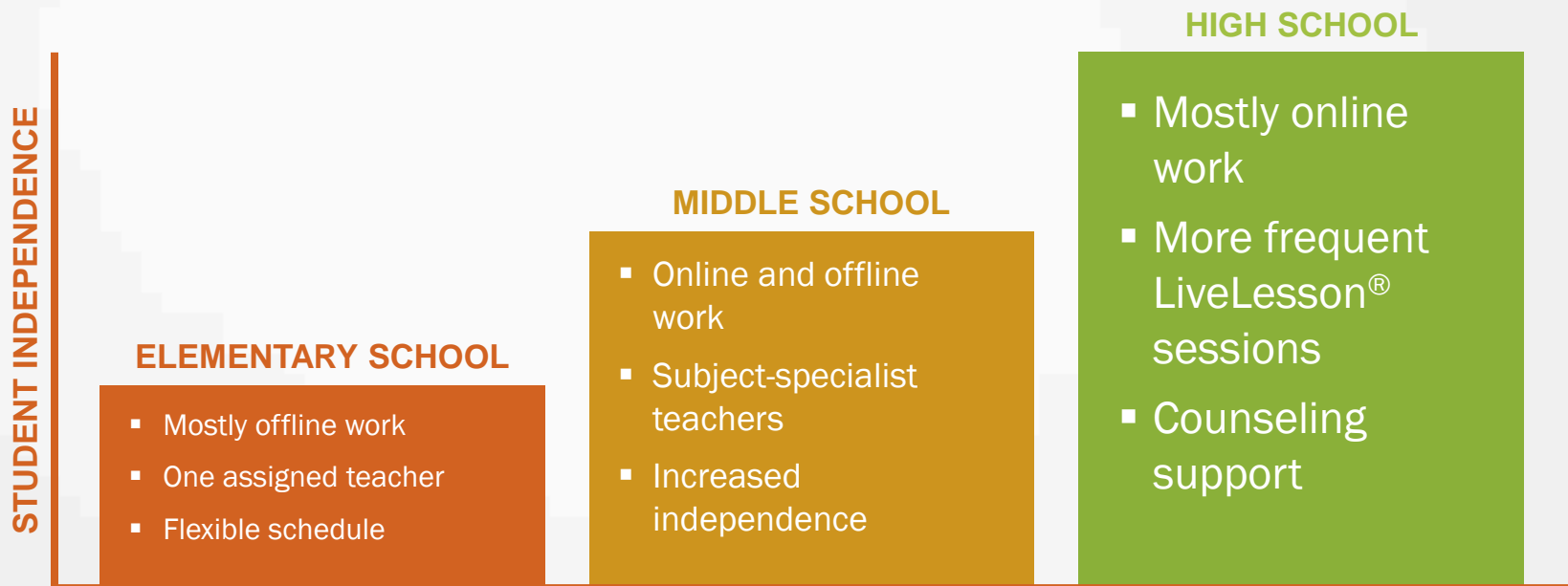
- Record attendance
- Monitor work and grades
- Consult with teacher



# STUDENT INDEPENDENCE

---

- Students' responsibilities increase as they mature.



# PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR EVERY STUDENT

---



# CURRICULUM: DESIGNED TO GET RESULTS

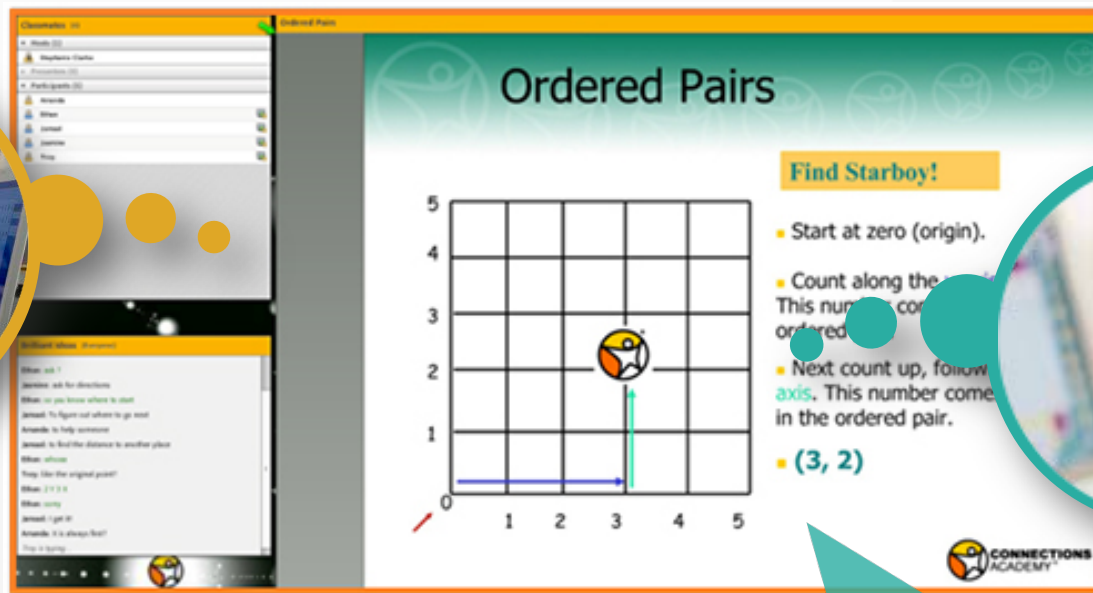
---





# INSTRUCTION AND INTERACTION

- Teachers instruct, assess work, and grade
- Phone, email, and live classroom interaction
- Group and one-on-one instruction



The screenshot displays a virtual classroom interface. On the left, a sidebar shows a list of participants and a chat window with messages. The main area features a lesson slide titled "Ordered Pairs" with a grid and a character named "Starboy" at the coordinates (3, 2). A list of instructions explains how to find the ordered pair: start at the origin, count along the x-axis to 3, and then count up along the y-axis to 2. The final ordered pair is given as (3, 2). The "Connections Academy" logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

**Ordered Pairs**

**Find Starboy!**

- Start at zero (origin).
- Count along the **x**-axis. This number comes first in the ordered pair.
- Next count up, follow the **y**-axis. This number comes second in the ordered pair.
- **(3, 2)**

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

## LiveLesson® Sessions

- Chat and audio for class discussions
- Virtual whiteboard lessons
- Live and recorded
- Frequency varies by course and grade



# EXTRA ATTENTION FOR STUDENTS

---

- Ongoing assessments
- Personalized learning plan according to student needs
- Success and support in challenge areas
- Reading and math remediation



“He started caring about and taking responsibility for his own education, wanting to do well in school.”

Connections Academy Parent



# MULTI-TIERED INTERVENTION



## Multi-tiered Instruction Model

### Tier 1 - Core Instructional Program

- Differentiated Instruction (e.g., basic, standard, honors, GT, AP, lesson modifications)
- Skill Instruction – (e.g., Study Island)
- LiveLesson sessions– (live synchronous instruction)
- Ongoing teacher professional development

### Tier 2 - Supplemental Programs and Support

- LiveLesson sessions – live synchronous remedial intervention
- Targeted Skill Instruction – (e.g., Study Island, Skills Tutor)
- Headsprout - online systematic reading intervention
- FastForward – “Fit Brains Learn Better”

### Tier 3 - Alternative Programs

- PACE (Program for All Children to Excel)
- Alternative courses program (Alternative Math - Compass Learning)
- Special Education support/IEP implementation

LET'S GROW.



# ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Section Grade Book for Math 3 A (ID 102336)

Section Details

Course ID: 1274  
Course Name: Math 3 A  
School: My Connections Academy  
Type: User Scheduled with Course (User)  
Period: Fall  
Start: 7/1/2010  
Finish: 12/18/2010  
Teachers:

Section ID	Section Name	Teacher
102336	Math 3 A	Jen Teacher

Assessment Summary:

Type	Weight
Portfolio Item	15%
Quiz	25%
Test	60%

Reports:

- Assessment Objective Performance Report

Section Grade Book for Math 3 A (ID 102336)

Show active data for active users from Math 3 A

To Grade Students Assessments Details

Show assessments for all units, excluding custom assessments

74 total assessments

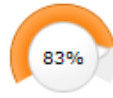
U L	Name
1 1	<a href="#">Hundreds</a>
1 2	<a href="#">Thousands</a>
1 3	<a href="#">Greater Numbers</a>
1 4	<a href="#">Ways to Name Numbers Quiz</a>
1 5	<a href="#">Comparing Numbers</a>
1 6	<a href="#">Ordering Numbers</a>
1 7	<a href="#">Counting Money</a>
1 8	<a href="#">Making Change Quiz</a>
1 11	<a href="#">Numeration Unit Test</a>
2 1	<a href="#">Addition Meaning and Properties</a>
2 2	<a href="#">Adding on a Hundred Chart/Using Mental Math to Add</a>

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY®  
Jen Teacher • Feedback • Log Out

LET'S GROW.



OBJH1CCLA03: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.



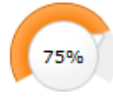
Each standard is shown, along with the number of times it has been assessed and the total number of times it will be assessed in the course.

Unit/Lesson	Lesson Name	Questions
U 1 L 9	✓ Echoes from the Past: Unit Test	3 questions
U 2 L 3	✓ Romeo and Juliet: Act I, continued	1 question
U 2 L 7	✓ Romeo and Juliet: Act III, continued	2 questions
U 2 L 14	Romeo and Juliet: Unit Test	1 question
U 3 L 5	The Lottery: Jackson	1 question
U 3 L 8	The Dark Side: Unit Test	2 questions
U 5 L 6	What Has Value? Review and Quiz	1 question
U 6 L 2	Semester Exam	3 questions

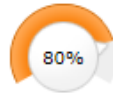
Specific lessons can be launched for review that relate to the standard.



OBJH1CCLA04: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone...



OBJH1CCLA05: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.



The "Assessment Objective Performance Report " is now available for each student.



OBJH1CCLA07: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Brueghel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).





# ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE REPORT

## Detail

Grade Book		
Assessment Objective Performance for Olivia Demo in Language Arts 8 A ?		
School Year:	2012-2013	
Section:	Language Arts 8 A	
<input type="button" value="Search"/>		
Sort by:	Lesson Order	
Objective Name	Score	Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Display Taken/Assigned
Cluster: Conventions of Standard English	79%	<div style="width: 79%;"><div style="width: 79%;"></div></div> 29/82
Cluster: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (INF)	100%	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div> 17/31
Cluster: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	76%	<div style="width: 76%;"><div style="width: 76%;"></div></div> 21/75
OBJ08CCLA19: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	100%	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div> 17/31
OBJ08CCLA36: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking...	79%	<div style="width: 79%;"><div style="width: 79%;"></div></div> 29/80
OBJ08CCLA39: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies...	76%	<div style="width: 76%;"><div style="width: 76%;"></div></div> 21/75

LET'S GROW.

# CONNEXUS<sup>®</sup> CONNECTS US

- Easy to use, user-friendly
- Secure WebMail system—no spam!
- Log on anytime, anywhere
- Access all lessons and assignments
- Scheduling tools
- Grade book available 24/7

Created specifically  
for schools supported by  
Connections.

## STUDENT HOME PAGE

The screenshot displays the Connections Academy student home page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and user information: "Stella Demo • Feedback • Log Out". A yellow announcement banner reads: "State testing is around the corner. Watch the tutorial in the announcements area below to be prepared!". Below this are three main sections: "To Do List" (with a link to check messages), "Daily Planner" (showing a schedule for Monday, March 5th with subjects like Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), and "My Courses" (a table listing various courses and their teachers). At the bottom, there is a "Links" section with various educational resources and an "Important Messages" button.

Course	Teacher	Last Lesson
Jen Teacher Homeroom	Jen Teacher	
Educational Technology and Online Learning I	Jen Teacher	
Health and Physical Education I	Jen Teacher	
Language Arts 6.9	Jen Teacher	
Math 6.9	Jen Teacher	5/16/2012
Middle Spanish I	Jean-Pierre Professeur	
Middle Spanish II	Jean-Pierre Professeur	
Science 6.9	Jen Teacher	5/31/2012
Skills for Success	Jen Teacher	3/20/2012
Social Studies 6.9	Jen Teacher	4/27/2012



# PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

---

- North Carolina-certified in grade and subjects.
- NCCA Board will hire and employ all educators including the school principal.
- Ongoing professional development and peer collaboration.
- Establish a Professional Learning Community.





# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



- South Carolina Connections Academy
  1. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in English Language Arts/Reading in 6 out of 7 tested grades.
  2. Exceeds authorizer, state, and national averages on the SAT and ACT.
  
- Georgia Connections Academy
  1. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in Reading in 6 out of 8 tested grades.
  2. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in Science in 5 out of 8 tested grades.

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



- Colorado Connections Academy
  1. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in English Language Arts/Reading in 6 out of 8 tested grades (3rd grade had no students).
  
- Louisiana Connections Academy
  1. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in Science in 5 out of 7 tested grades.
  
- Wisconsin Connections Academy
  1. Meets or Exceeds statewide averages in Reading in 6 out of 7 tested grades.

# WHAT PARENTS THINK OF CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

---



**96%**

of parents  
agree the  
curriculum is  
high quality!



**95%**

of parents  
agree their  
children are  
satisfied with  
the Connections  
Academy Program!



**93%**

of parents  
recommend  
Connections  
Academy to  
other families!



# TCS-U-015 CONSIDERATIONS

---



- Should virtual charter school accountability metrics be different than brick & mortar charter school accountability metrics?
- Should a specific student-to-teacher ratio be required? Will resources be available to achieve this goal?
- How will attendance and withdrawal rates be measured? What thresholds are SMART goals?
- Should schools be restricted from offering elementary grades?



**THANK YOU  
& QUESTIONS**

